



Global Knowledge Project

To understand the integration of Somali refugees in Norwegian labor market, a case study of Sogndal Kommune

Integration of Somali refugees in the Norwegian labor market

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Contents

Abstract.....	iii
1.0 INTRODUCTION	1
1.1 BACKGROUND	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	2
1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY	2
1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS.....	2
2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW	3
2.1 Theoretical Foundation	3
2.2 Introduction.....	3
2.3 Importance of labor market integration	4
2.4 Statistics on Asylum Seekers in Norway	6
2.4 The Immigration Act of Norway	6
2.6 Challenges in the integration of refugees in the labor market	7
2.7 Somalis and the Norwegian labor market	7
3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY	8
3.1 Data Collection Methods	8
3.1.1 Secondary data	8
3.1.2 Primary data	8
3.2 Research Instruments	9
3.2.1 Interview guide	9
3.2.2 Observations	9
3.3 Selection of Informants.....	9
3.3.1 Informants	9
3.3.2 Informant Selection Methods.....	9
3.4 Data Analysis procedures.....	10
3.5 Ethical Considerations	10
3.6 Methodical strengths and weaknesses.....	11
3.6.1 Strengths	11
3.6.2 Weaknesses	11
4.0 PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA	12
4.1 Response from the Sogndal Kommune office	12
4.2 Results from Somali refugees	13

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS	16
5.1 COPING STRATEGIES REFUGEES USE WHEN OUTSIDE THE LABOUR MARKET	16
5.2 SKILLS PROGRAMMES THE NORWEGIAN STATE OFFERS TO REFUGEES	18
5.3 CHALLENGES REFUGEES FACE IN ACQUIRING EMPLOYMENT	19
5.4 CONCLUSION.....	22
5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS.....	23
LIST OF LITERATURE	24
APPENDICES	26
APPENDIX I:	26
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REFUGEES	26
APPENDIX II:	27
INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR AUTHORITIES.....	27
APPENDIX III.....	28
LETTER OF CONSENT	28

Abstract

The research was based on finding out how Somali refugees are integrated in the Norwegian Labour Market, the area of focus was Sogndal Kommune. The research was mainly for academic purposes and research questions to guide the research were formulated which included; 1) To find out what coping strategies refugees use when unemployed. 2) To find out what skills programs the Norwegian Government offers to refugees to enable them find employment. And 3) To find out what challenges refugees face in acquiring employment. Literature review used in the study was gotten from various books and articles written by different authors on related topics. The researchers used observations and interviews as well as discussions to collect data from informants. The research covers a period from January 2015 to May 2015.

Research findings reviewed that Somali refugees are not fully integrated in the labor market. The findings from the literature review, observations and interviews conducted, showed that few Somali refugees are employed. Language was seen as the main barrier to the lack of employment among Somalis and that most of them were regarded to have poor education background from their country of origin. It was also reviewed that refugees who come with school papers from their countries of origin showing that they already have a trade were only considered if their paper was accepted in the Norwegian education system. If not, they had to be trained in Norway and have a Norwegian certificate if they are to acquire a job. The data collected has been analyzed qualitatively as this gave room for the researchers to discuss findings in detail.

The researchers faced a few challenges during the research. Language barrier was the first noticeable challenge, as most Somalis do not speak fluent English. Another challenge faced was the non availability of respondents. Most Somalis were not willing to be interviewed; this was a great challenge to the group. The researchers recommend that the Norwegian state may consider empowering refugees with appropriate skills required in the labor market and that Sogndal Kommune may consider carrying on the short courses that refugees learn whilst they are still in the Mottak as this will help them in acquiring certain types of jobs.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND

Immigration in Norway can be dated back to the 1950s and 1970s when there was a need for foreign labour. Initially, labor migrants who came to Norway were mostly from the neighboring countries, but after sometime even those from distant countries were seen entering the Nation. Later, the influence of refugees was equally felt because labor immigration created an opening for refugees to enter the country. Those who came for work during this period included the Cape Verdeans, Pakistanis' and Vlachs, states Olwig (2011). The Bosnian, Tami and other refugees and the reunified family members of the original labour migrants who came after 1980 met a society where there was a little need for labor, and outsiders tended to be viewed as a burden to the welfare system, an important aspect to this development is the 'cultural anxiety' explains Grillo (2003). Nevertheless, it is important to note that immigrants in Norway represent a group of people with combinations of different foreign back ground and reasons for coming to Norway. Further, 11 per cent of the population has some kind of immigrant background; they or one of their parents is born abroad.

However, on the focus of this study, a comparison study conducted of the labour market integration of immigrants and refugees in Canada and Norway provides yet another perspective to understand any employment variances between the two countries but also the reasons that figures or statistics may conceal as to why the situation is, as it is. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD (2008), show that Canada ranked 3rd by employment rate and Norway ranked 22nd in as far as immigrant and refugee employment was concerned. Nevertheless, it is important to know that the variations between the two countries depend on the reasons for migration. Immigrants in Canada such as; are labour migrants while those in Norway are either family or refugee migrants. This may also suggest that those in Canada may have a higher education level than immigrants coming to Norway.

Somali immigrants who are mostly refugees form more than a third of the immigrants from Africa in Norway and have low employment rates, SSB (2015). It is with this brief background that the writers of this paper seeks to understand the current scenario about the integration of Somali refugees in the labour market particularly in Sogndal Kommune, but

also it is an important aspect of the Social Work profession to generate knowledge through research to form a basis to ease social change in the society.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Integration is defined as “The process of bringing people of different racial or ethnic groups into unrestricted and equal association, as in society or an organization; desegregation”(Free dictionary, 2011). Asylum seekers come from different countries and seek refuge because of repressive regimes, fleeing political or religious persecution, escaping from unemployment and poverty as well as escaping from wars and conflict. They have altogether different needs that call for different interventions if their needs are to be met, but of course taking into account the predefined norms and cultural values already set by the majority in a society is an important aspect to carry along if proper social incorporation is to be attained. It is with this understanding that the researchers have identified the need to carry out a study to understand the integration of the Somali refugees in the labor market in Norway.

Norwegian statistics (2013) indicate that Norway has been receiving refugees from Somali and other countries; it is from this background that researchers want to understand how they have been integrated in the labour market. Employment is very important and it is not only a means of survival but also keeps people focused in a positive way regardless of their culture and religion. When refugees enter a new nation, most of them have various expectations which of course include finding employment.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

1. The study is part of the requirement for an award of one year study of Global knowledge
2. To contribute to the existing knowledge and literature of integration of refugees.
3. To understand how the integration process of refugees is done in Norway
4. To understand challenges faced by refugees as they go through the integration process.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. To find out what coping strategies refugees use when unemployed
2. To find out what skills programs the Norwegian Government offers to refugees to enable them find employment.
3. To find out what challenges refugees face in acquiring employment.

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Theoretical Foundation

Modernization theory explains the process of modernization within a given society. Modernization theory allows less developed societies to progress as they adapt better ways of doing things from modern societies. Culture plays a major role in people's lives, because it comprises of values, norms and practices of everyday life, therefore, an opportunity that brings together a group of people with different cultural background creates a platform to learn. Baker, (2000) in their book; *Modernization, Cultural Change, and the Persistence of Traditional Values*, pointed to Lerner (1958) and Weiner (1966), that lack of modernization was viewed to be the reason for underdevelopment in the United States during the post world war era. Modernization theory was then developed and they understood that underdevelopment was a result of a country's internal characteristics such as: traditional economies, traditional psychological and cultural traits. Therefore, this called for modernity in people's cultures, which meant changing or reflecting on their ways of doing things.

Modernization theory's most influential proponent, Karl Marx, claimed that economically developed societies show the future to less developed societies writes Marx (1973). This gives a sign that when refugees from another region with different cultural background especially an embedded culture enter a modern society, it should be a matter of learning and adjusting one's culture to fit in the already existing culture. The change of culture would be very beneficial to the refugees. In addition, local people also need to learn and reflect on their ways of doing things because there might be need for changing their culture as culture is flexible to change.

2.2 Introduction

Organization for African Unity (OAU) during the OAU Convention of 1969 expanded the definition of refugees to include not only people subjected to persecution, but also every person who is at risk due to prolonged public disorder. OAU (1969) reviews that a refugee includes any person, "...Owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination, or events seriously disturbing public order...is compelled to leave...to seek refuge in another place outside his country of origin or nationality.

Norway has immigrants with different cases which the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) carefully investigates and approves/disapproves. The issue of

immigration is basically due to globalization. Giddens, (1999:21) defines Globalization as "intensification of worldwide social relations linking distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away from and vice versa". Giddens states here that globalization has an effect in all areas of life worldwide such that what is happening miles away will have an impact somewhere else. For example wars occurring in Somali have an effect on population increment in Norway. In other words, Norwegians in Sogndal Kommune are made to learn a bit of Somali culture due to interactions with Somalis who came to seek refuge in Norway due to war in their country of origin. In most cases, a bigger number of asylum seekers come from countries with conflicts; therefore, they are entitled to protection from such violence by other countries, according to United Nations Human Rights Convention (1956). Globalization can be seen through the integration of refugees from other parts of the world into different societies for instance the Norwegian society.

Goldin et al (2011) provides that most migrants move to relatively more developed countries to access higher incomes, better infrastructure and public services such as Education, Health, Housing and Food which positively improve their livelihood as compared to their home countries. It is also important to note that developing societies regard developed societies as their future which means developing societies will always find their way to developed countries. Maslow (1943:388) explains human needs for an average citizen to be satisfied perhaps 85% in his physiological needs, 70% in his safety needs, 50% in his love needs, 40% in his self-esteem needs and 10% in his self-actualization needs". For these needs to be met, it is also important that people are employed so that they can meet their various needs. The integration of the Somalis in the labor market will help them in achieving the various needs needed for survival.

2.3 Importance of labor market integration

Labour market integration is an important indicator of short and long-term refugee integration and of a successful, durable solution to the middle and protection needs stemming from forcible interruption. Clear data from Statistics Norway shows that resettled refugees in Norway likewise have lower employment rates than other immigrants and native-born people states Aalandslid, (2008). The government of Norway considers employment as the main pillar for improving gender equality and for attaining economic and social equality. Norway has a high employment rate compared with most other countries, particularly women, whose employment rates are only a few percentage points lower than

those of men writes Aalandlid (2008). The government focuses on increasing employment rates for immigrants, not just so they may gain economic independence but also as a key to social inclusion and to contribute to the welfare system.

Furthermore, in order to best understand the integration of refugees and in particular Somalis in the labor market, one needs to understand first what integration means in a Norwegian perspective. Olwig, K. (2011) uncovers a shock in the Norwegian society during the economic recession of 1973 which resulted in high unemployment rates. Worth noting before this period is that immigration was not really an issue as there was a demand for foreign labour. When these laborers were displaced from the labour market during the economic recession, the expectation from the Norwegians was to see them returning to their home countries as they were regarded as guest workers, instead, they decided to stay. It was immediately after this that a stop to immigration was put.

With this brief background, the question then is, is the Norwegian society ready for further immigration regardless of the situation that may surround different immigrant cases? Refugees come from different societies, very different from that of Norway. Taking into account that Norway is a developed country and therefore, there is more pressure of modernity in doing things. High qualifications required to be regarded a useful resource in the labour market puts refugees in a less advantaged position to get employment. Furthermore, the researchers' target group come from a developing country, this simply entails a lot of things are obviously very different in Norway as compared to the country of origin.

In a homogeneous society like Norway, it's important not to overlook the fact that Integration is an emic term denoting the ability to conform to social norms and cultural values defined in a dominant discourse as basic to proper social incorporation, it is away from just being an analytical term measuring employment for example writes Olwig, (2011). Some individuals face structural obstacles such as discrimination and high qualification competence requirements which render entry into the labor market difficult Røe. M, (2011). In addition, despite years of language study, education and work qualifying programs, most refugees either find short term employment, low paid or worse still fail to find employment and remain on the cash benefits which although may look generous but only caters for a small portion of their needs due to the high cost of living in Norway. International Migration (IMO) report (2013-14) explain that the goal of the scheme for Norwegian language training and social

studies is that adult immigrants sufficiently master Norwegian in the course of their first years in Norway to be able to find employment and participate in society. It is therefore, mandatory for every immigrant given a permanent stay in Norway to learn the Norwegian language so that they participate in various activities in employment inclusive.

2.4 Statistics on Asylum Seekers in Norway

UDI (2012) annual report indicates that “a total number of 9 800 persons applied for protection, and a total of 1 100 resettlement refugees were granted residence.” However, these figures keep on increasing every year. UDI (2014) annual report indicates that a total number of 11 480-asylum seekers lodged their application to be considered as refugees. It can be noticed that a number of immigrants to Norway is increasing drastically each year.

According to Olsen, B et al (2013), in late 2011 among those aged 15–74, Somalis had the lowest employment rate. From the table below, it can be noticed that in 2011, Somalis were the lowest employed whilst Sri Lankans had the highest employment rate. The difference between Somalis and Sri Lankans is almost 45% which is a huge gap between the two immigrant groups. The table explains that it is easier for other immigrant groups to find employment as compared to immigrants from Somalia.

Table. 1.1 Employment rate among Refugees between 15-74years

Nationality	Employment % rate
Somali	30.6%
Iraq	41.1%
Afghanistan	44.6%
Sri Lanka	70.4%

Source: Olsen, B et al (2013)

2.4 The Immigration Act of Norway

The Immigration Act (2008) Chapter 4 Section 28 Part A states that “A foreign national who is in the realm or at the Norwegian border shall, upon application, be recognized as a refugee if the foreign national has a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of ethnicity, origin, skin color, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or for reasons of political opinion, and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of his or her country of origin” . The immigration Act protects refugees entering Norway and it gives them a leeway to get permanent stay in the country

that is if they qualify. When refugees get a permanent stay, they ought to be treated like Norwegians and they should have access to all services, employment inclusive. The Norwegian Integration Policy allows all types of immigrants to take part in all services provided by different sectors. International immigration (IMO) Report (2012-13) states that the policy also has some important initiatives such as The Job Opportunity, a scheme, with the aim to increase the employment rate among immigrants, in particular women, who are not participating in the labour market, who need basic skills and who are not covered by other schemes. The integration policy creates an opportunity for immigrant women to be trained in different skills so that they could fit in the labor market.

2.6 Challenges in the integration of refugees in the labor market

The Norwegian government faces challenges as they try to integrate refugees in the labor market. These include; clientification problem as well as lack of appropriate activities to meet individual needs during the integration programs. Clientification problem is a dependency on social assistance that many refugees have developed, as a result of spending much time on developing coping strategies instead of focusing on how to get into the labor market states Hagelund et al, (2009). Though this seems to be one big challenge for the system, assessing and evaluating the impact of the integration programs for refugees would be yet another revelation as to why the situation is like that. In addition, Hagelund (2009) further explains that, a program which improves both the employment and citizenship is a resounding success, but programs that lead to neither citizenship nor employment are meaningless. There are participants who struggle to follow the standard full-time program for the language classes and work placement. This is yet another challenge been faced during the implementation of programs. It is attributed to the fact that, many of the refugees may not be able to read and write, meaning the classroom activities may become less motivating. In addition, refugees are required to dedicate 30 to 37.5 hours in a week to participate in a set of activities; the hours are too long and at times can lead to some refugees failing to participate as expected.

2.7 Somalis and the Norwegian labor market

Most Somalis coming to Norway have expectations of finding employment. They intend on bettering their lives and that of their families back in their home countries. It is however, quite difficult for this group to fit in the Norwegian labor market due to so many obstacles. The main noted obstacle is language. People seeking employment in Norway are expected to learn and speak the Norwegian language which is a great challenge to most foreigners. Most

Somalis rely on the Norwegian welfare system (NAV) for survival. The Foreigner (2014) states that a growing number of Somali immigrants are feeling humiliated by The Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV). NAV employees have explained that the major problem of getting Somalis into the job market is their lack of education and language skills. The Foreigner (2014) state that according to some NAV workers, Somali immigrants are particularly demanding and reluctant compared to other groups.

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Qualitative method was used during the analysis of the data collected. Denzia. K et al, (2000:8) writes that qualitative research has an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity or frequency. Researchers used qualitative data so as to provide descriptive explanations of the data collected. It also allowed researchers to analyze and explain the findings in detail and in depth.

3.1 Data Collection Methods

3.1.1 Secondary data

Secondary Data was collected from books as well as articles related to the topic of study and the data was tabulated mostly in literature review. Information used in literature review is about immigration in Norway as well as statistics on the employment rates among different refugee groups in Norway. The immigration Act and the integration policy were also used so as to understand how immigrants ought to be treated once given a permanent stay in Norway.

3.1.2 Primary data

Primary data was collected through interviews with Somali refugees who willingly agreed to be interviewed. Sogndal Kommune Office for Refugees also provided the researchers with an officer to be interviewed. Observations as well as discussions were held at Sogndal Mottak and Sogndal NAV office. The writers also visited Luster NAV office where discussions were conducted with one of the officers so as to create more understanding on the role of the NAV Office in helping refugees find employment.

3.2 Research Instruments

3.2.1 Interview guide

Interviews were used so as to probe respondents further. Structured questions were formulated according to the research questions. Denzia, K, (2000:633) states that the interview is a conversation, the art of asking questions and listening. Denzia, K. (2000; 633) further states that the interview produces situated understandings grounded in specific interactional episodes. The interaction with respondents created trust and was an opening for getting more information.

3.2.2 Observations

Discussions were done at Sogndal Asylum camp (Lopex Mottak) with Somali refugees who visited the office as well as within Sogndal. Observations were made at Sogndal Sentrum for a week to assess if there were any Somali refugees working in there. Denzia, K. (2000:634) writes that observational research is a method that focuses on differences, on the lives of particular people in concrete but constantly changing human relationships. Observations created a clear picture on what was currently on the ground.

3.3 Selection of Informants

3.3.1 Informants

The informants included 1 member of staff from Sogndal Kommune office under the Refugee Department, and 3 Somali refugees (2 males and 1 female) above the age of 18.

3.3.2 Informant Selection Methods

a. Strategic Method

The researchers used the strategic method when selecting the Somali respondents. Researchers approached Somalis who were attending the language course at the Sogndal Kommune Hall during their class session and explained to them about the project. The researchers then asked within the class those who were willing to be interviewed. Before, it was not easy to know just how and where to get the refugees for interviews, but the officer from the Refugee Office in Sogndal assisted in suggesting the means of getting informants and later allowed the writers to talk to the refugees during their class session.

b. Purposeful (Judgmental) method

This method was used when selecting which member of staff to interview from the refugee office in Sogndal Kommune. Wetfall, L. (2009) In judgmental sampling, the person doing the sample uses his/her knowledge or experience to select the items to be sampled. The leader from the refugee office selected the officer who was deemed to have had knowledge on the programs offered to refugees and had served for some time to help with giving the researchers information through an interview.

3.4 Data Analysis procedures

Interviews were used to probe further on the questions per objective. Observations and discussions were later done as a way of collecting more information. The information collected was presented in point form according to the research questions. Data was analyzed qualitatively and a discussion was made in comparison with literature reviewed.

3.5 Ethical Considerations.

Research ethics have been exercised throughout the research work. According to Denzia, K (2000:138) codes of ethics for professional and academic associations are the conventional format for moral principles. It was therefore important for the researchers to follow codes of ethics. The researchers used the following as ethical considerations;

1. The interviewee granted consent through signing a consent form which was a way of agreeing to be interviewed.
2. The data was presented as it was collected from informants and has not been altered by the researchers.
3. Confidentiality and anonymity was maintained and the data collected was only used for academic purposes.
4. Culture as well as religion was considered during the formulation of the questions. Too personal questions were avoided.

3.6 Methodical strengths and weaknesses

3.6.1 Strengths

The research was qualitative; therefore, this is relevant for making decision regarding refugees. Research ethics were observed throughout the research process and this showed an element of professionalism. Researchers did not use their own personal views in interpreting the findings but professional analysis was of findings was used which proved an element of objectivity. The methodology made it easy for researchers to gather data and present the findings in a professional way and the use of qualitative data allowed the researchers to examine and analyze data collected in detail and in depth. It also helped in creating openness by encouraging respondents to expand their responses which led to new topics and reviewing more information. The Researchers' culture also played a role in acquiring in-depth information, as their culture was similar to that of the Somali informants.

3.6.2 Weaknesses

Qualitative research is limited in generalizing findings; therefore it was not possible for researchers to generalize the finding to a larger population. During data collection, researchers faced challenges such as language barrier as most of the Somali respondents could not speak or understand English very well. The weakness was that interviewers had to explain some questions further so as to make informants understand which consequently altered the questions to be more like leading questions. Interviewers could have had an interpreter to help during the interviews, but this was not possible. Finding of the exact target group was another challenge and the weakness was that the researchers had respondents not exactly as the initial targets for the study. However, since finding of the refugees who were already through with the introduction program remained a challenge, alternatively interviewees who were interviewed were those still undergoing the introduction program but have been living in Norway for the period of more than two years. Having the exact target group during data collection would have enabled the researchers to determine exactly how they are coping in the society after the introduction program.

4.0 PRESENTATION OF EMPIRICAL DATA

The data presented in this section includes responses from respondents that included; 1 member of staff from Sogndal Kommune office and 3 Somali refugees. Precisely, responses have been presented accordingly with specific objectives and questions. Furthermore, the responses have been tabulated below as given by the respondents.

4.1 Response from the Sogndal Kommune office

Objective 1: To find out what coping strategies refugees when unemployed.

Question 1. How do you get to know the welfare of the refugees after they have finished introductory programs?

Responses:

- ➔ Refugees are handed over to NAV Office after finishing the introductory programs.
- ➔ However, they are at liberty to go back to Sogndal kommune office for any help if need be.

Objective 2: To find out what skills programs the Norwegian government offers to the refugees to enable them find work.

Question 1: What skills program do you offer to refugees?

Responses:

- ➔ Language course
- ➔ Internship or Labor practice, this is offered to refugees to prepare them and make them understand the Norwegian labor market.
- ➔ Taking walks with the local people, this is done as a way to help them learn and practice the local language.
- ➔ Youths that wish to pursue their careers have a special program at Folkehø High school for one year.

Question 2: How would you describe the effectiveness of these programs to the participants especially in enabling them acquire employment?

Responses:

- ➔ It is effective to some people, especially for those who manage to learn the language course; however, Sogndal municipality has not been very effective because there is lack of individualization of the programs to participants. This

is due to lack of enough officers working with the refugees. The officer - bparticipant's ratio as for 2015 was at 1:35 which is not suppose to be the case.

Question 3: How often do you conduct program assessments?

Responses:

- ➔ Officers at Sogndal Kommune Office meet when there is need to do so, formal and informal meetings are held so as to address identified needs.

Objective 3: To find out what challenges the refugees face in acquiring employment.

Question 1: What possible challenges do you feel refugees are likely to face as they try to enter the labor market?

Responses:

- ➔ Language barrier.
- ➔ Discrimination
- ➔ Cultural differences.
- ➔ Lack of knowledge by employers on how to handle refugees at work places.

Question 2: What do you feel can be done to overcome these challenges?

Responses:

- ➔ Meetings to be held with potential employers.
- ➔ Meetings with decision makers and further having meetings with different social groups around Sogndal with a view to enhancing the situation or perception of refugees in the eyes of the local people.

4.2 Results from Somali refugees

The responses below are from the refugees settled in Sogndal Kommune who are still undergoing the introduction program and have lived in Norway for a period of more than two years.

Objective 1: To find out what coping strategies refugees use when unemployed.

Question 1: For how long have you been in Norway?

Response:

- ➔ It was discovered that those in kommune have been in Norway for 3 years.

Question 2: What kind of expectations did you have when coming to Norway? Are they met or not?

Responses:

- ➔ To live in peace and have a good life.
- ➔ To obtain a positive response from the state (being accepted as a refugee)
- ➔ To have some education
- ➔ To find employment
- ➔ All expectations were met though employment still remains an unmet expectation

Question 3: What social activities do you participate in as a way to interact with fellow refugees as well as the locals?

Responses:

- ➔ Soccer
- ➔ Gym
- ➔ Swimming
- ➔ Climbing/hiking the mountains during summer.
- ➔ Samba dance

Objective 2: To find out what skills program the Norwegian government offers to the refugees to enable them find work.

Question 1: Have you had any skills training from the Norwegian Government?

Response:

- ➔ The respondents have had some skills training from the Norwegian government

Question 2: What skills did you learn?

Responses:

→ Norwegian language skill.

Question 3: Do you find the skills helpful as you try to find employment?

Responses:

→ Respondents find the skills training very helpful in their quest to find employment.

Objective 3: To find out what challenges the refugees face in acquiring employment.

Question 1: Are you currently in employment? If yes, is it full or part time employment?

Response:

→ All the respondents were unemployed

Question 2: Is it easy to find full time employment?

Responses:

→ Two of the respondents said it was not easy to find full employment because employers ask for certificates and the knowledge of the language for any type of employment.

→ The other respondent said it was easy to find employment as long as one can speak Norwegian and has qualifications accepted in Norway.

Question 3: What kind of challenges do you face in finding employment?

Responses:

→ Language

→ Lack of quality jobs. Only cleaning jobs are available and they are temporal.

Question 4: Does the government support you in any way as you try to find employment?

Responses:

- ➔ The state only helps a certain group of professions to find employment such as Teachers, Nurses and Security Personnel. Apart from these categories, one has to search for employment on their own.
- ➔ While the other respondent said, the state does not help refugees find employment.

Question 5: What do you think the government can incorporate in the skills programs in order help refugees fit in the labor market?

Responses:

- ➔ The state should change the duration for training refugees in various skills as individuals have knowledge about the course they have chosen.
- ➔ The state to be flexible when it comes to language as a qualification during job recruitment.
- ➔ One of the respondents said that refugees need to make efforts and be determined in finding employment.

5.0 DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research aimed at understanding the integration of refugees in the Norwegian labor market, it also aimed at understanding what the state is doing in relation to helping the refugees acquire jobs considering that Norway is in the high-tech stage, which require technological knowhow in every operation, if one need to be functional. The discussion flows according to objectives and their specific findings.

5.1 COPING STRATEGIES REFUGEES USE WHEN OUTSIDE THE LABOUR MARKET

In line with findings against this objective, it was discovered that there is no specific coping strategy that is in place at the Kommune office for helping refugees to cope with unemployment after the introduction program. However, Refugees are handed over to NAV Office by the Kommune office once they have finished the introductory program which is a normal arrangement for every job seeker in Norway. The introductory program caters for Norwegian language, Norwegian culture as well as work practice to prepare them for work in

the Norwegian labor market. The International Migration (2013-14) report reviews that the goal of the scheme for Norwegian language training is that adult immigrants sufficiently master Norwegian in the course of their first years in Norway to be able to find employment. However, services such as employment scheme, health services and financial assistance are available at NAV as the office is responsible for people's welfare. Therefore, the system helps refugees to handle their financial problems, while social challenges such as failure to penetrate the labor market remains unsolved. However, refugees are at liberty to visit the Kommune office if they need any help after they are done with the introduction program. Furthermore, the data collected reviewed that most of the refugees in the kommune have been in Norway for more than 2 years, though others wait for so long before they get feedback from UDI whether to stay in Norway or not. Though the Somali informants are still undergoing the introduction program, they have been living in Norway for more than two years, a reasonable period for one to be integrated in the labor market.

When people go to a new place seeking refuge, they have expectations and needs they feel should be met. It was reviewed that getting a positive response from State (accepted as refugee), living in a peaceful environment and having a peace of mind were the major expectation Somali informants had. Maslow (1943:388) explains human needs for an average citizen to be satisfied perhaps 85% in his physiological needs, 70% in his safety needs, 50% in his love needs, 40% in his self-esteem needs and 10% in his self-actualization needs". With this description it's clear to state that the most basic needs of the refugees are met at the time they are being absorbed in the Norwegian society. Besides these expectations, they also expect to get education and jobs, as these are basic needs that everyone else would want to have as they increase the satisfaction of their human needs. However, it is not always possible to get what one expects, in this view all the expectations the informants had were met except for the fact that they were unemployed. Lack of high qualifications that are demanded by employers and poor knowledge of the Norwegian languages were deemed as the major obstacles to finding employment.

On the other hand, refugees take part in various sports activities as a way to interact with local Norwegians and their fellow refugees. They participate in soccer, hiking, swimming and gym. However, it depends on which sport one would like to take part in. This is optional and depends on individuals; therefore, it's not really effective to bring them all close to the local people as Norwegians are known for being cold and for taking time to open up to strangers. The Norwegian government through the welfare system (NAV) office gives living

allowances to all refugees according to the number of family members. The money is quite generous though it's not enough to cater for all their daily needs as the cost of living in Norway is very high and finding employment would be beneficial.

5.2 SKILLS PROGRAMMES THE NORWEGIAN STATE OFFERS TO REFUGEES

Refugees are offered skills programs and the program includes; Norwegian language course, internship for the refugees in different companies, a one year special arrangement at the school for those who wish to go to school and social activities such as taking walks with the local Norwegians in Sogndal. The walks with the local people are aimed at helping refugees improve their Norwegian language because they will be able to practice through such walks. Though the language skill is one key requirement for one to find a job, the question is, in a highly modernized country like Norway, can knowing of the local language be the only requirement and good reason for one to find employment? Though the Kommune offers work practice for the program participants, it's not obvious that they find places in companies for all of them to do their practice.

Despite many of the existing gaps presented above, an analysis of the introduction program is yet another important aspect of this research. Finding out the main objective of the program as it is would again give a different understanding altogether of the integration of refugees in the labor market. Having observed and actually talked to the members of staff, the clear focus of the program is to help the program participants start a life and whether this is not the end result, there are definitely hidden factors contributing to the unintended outcome. The program actually provides options where one can either go straight into the labor market through work practice in different work places or those that want to have a career to start school. The only thing they have to worry is just how many years they have to be in school, college or university for them to be regarded as an asset in the labor market. This is so because many of them come to Norway above the age of 25 and without any education background and even if they may have any education or work experience, the system does not recognize their previous education or work experience and as such getting a job becomes a challenge.

Furthermore, In normal circumstances, Work practice or internship for example is job on training and as such, it should be an added advantage to the person undertaking it to facilitate the absorption of the individual in the labor market, but this is not the case.

According to the results from the literature reviewed, this only remains an ideal situation for the system. This is so because the system and the people are two different entities. The system presents the ideal scenario while the people have altogether different perceptions of the system and therefore, have their different choices and views regarding the integration of refugees in the labor market. The key informants in the research originate from a developing country and the main challenge is the lack of basic literacy to some and also the failure by the system to recognize their previous education or work experiences is yet another explicit hindrance to entering the labor market in Norway. It is actually difficult to understand just what the system intends, especially considering the fact that while it has such a good integration program for refugees, on the other hand it does not recognize their education or work experience making it harder for them to find jobs. Just how effective then is the introduction program in enabling these individuals find employment in Norway? While some of the informants said it's effective to those who manage to learn the language, it's also vital that the system conducts an overall program assessment to determine the effectiveness of the introductory program in Norway and also regarding the different needs of program participants learnt in recent years.

The researchers had practical placement at Sogndal Mottakk (Lopex) and during the placement, they were involved in different activities. One outstanding thing discovered from the camp was the short courses conducted for the asylum seekers such as; table decorations, photography as well as baking all aimed at skills development. In as much as the courses may seem to be just activities to keep the asylum seekers busy, it ought to be seen as very important entry points for those who get positive to be prepared for the labor market. What is surprising, however, is the fact that there is lack of continuity of such courses at the Sogndal Kommune office to the individuals that get positive from UDI to live in Norway. The camp maybe a temporal arrangement, but in a way, their life in Norway starts from there. And if that is so, there is need to know the background of an individual when they leave the camp to the settling Kommune so as to have continuity of such activities for them to adequately be ready for the labor market.

5.3 CHALLENGES REFUGEES FACE IN ACQUIRING EMPLOYMENT

Most refugees face lots of challenges in acquiring employment in Norway. From the observations the researchers conducted within Sogndal, few Somali refugees were seen working and having good jobs. Some refugees have expectations of getting employed when they come to Norway but this does not become the case when they get here because they

have to undergo Language (Norwegian) course for them to be able to get employment. This can be noticed as a great challenge. All the Somali informants mentioned that they were not in employment as they were still undergoing the language course. Goldin et al (2011) explains that most migrants move to relatively more developed countries to access higher incomes, better infrastructure and public services such as Education, Health, Housing and Food which positively improve their livelihood as compared to their home countries. It can be noted that it isn't easy to get employment in Norway because the employers seek certificates obtained in Norway and not any other place. When refugees come in with their papers, they are asked to undergo some tests which will determine if their paper is good enough to be accepted in Norway. One of the informants gave an example of a person whose certificate was approved, but is still unemployed. This in reality is a big challenge to Somali refugees living in Norway that they need to start anew in every aspect of their lives if they are to be regarded an asset fit for the Norwegian Labour Market. Learning the Norwegian language and acquiring a Norwegian certificate is the main key to getting employment in Norway.

The officer at Sogndal Kommune Office mentioned that barriers to entering the labor market such as, language, cultural differences, discrimination as well as lack of knowledge on how to handle refugees are seen as challenges the refugees face when acquiring employment. Clear data from Statistics in Norway shows that resettled refugees in Norway likewise have lower employment rates than other immigrants and native-born individuals (Aalandslid, 2008). Most refugees have problems trying to get employment and are likely to face discrimination because of their race as well as their names. Some refugees are subjected to changing their names to Norwegian names so that they can be considered for a job. Most Somalis are said to have had very poor education from their home country, others lack basic literacy and as such it becomes very difficult for them to learn the Norwegian language.

The informants mentioned that the Norwegian government does provide help in acquiring employment for refugees just like they do for any other person seeking for employment but this form of assistance is only given to a few professions such as nursing, teaching and security. The government through the NAV office helps all job seeker regardless of race to be informed on different job advertisements. This can be considered as the only way that that the government helps refugees in finding employment. Refugees are treated like any other Norwegian who could be seeking for employment and they ought to wait until an opportunity is found.

Language barrier is seen as the main obstacle to refugees getting employment in Norway especially Somalis because they are considered as difficult people to integrate in the society and as such some Kommune have difficulties accepting them. This is because of their religion as well as culture and the poor education background from their country of origin. This could also be a contributing factor to their lack of employment.

Research findings review that it would be easier to get employment in Norway if the state could consider reducing the duration for training refugees in various skills. It was also suggested that the State may consider being flexible when it comes to language during job recruitment and that the knowledge of Norwegian as a qualification to fit into the labor market should be looked upon. The Norwegian state ought to be flexible with language and create opportunities for non-Norwegian speakers so as to fit them into the Norwegian labor market. One of the respondent though said that there is need to put effort or to be determined in trying to find employment. The respondent further mentioned that refugees should not just sit back and wait for the government to help them get employed but they must go out there and find employment. Most of the Somali refugees are staying home and waiting on the state, which is not supposed to be the case.

The officer at the Kommune Office mentioned that there is need for meetings to be arranged with potential employers so as to give them information about refugees so that they can create jobs for them. The officer further said that decision makers should be having meetings with different social groups within Sogndal and give people information about refugees. When the Norwegians get to have enough information on refugees and their background, it could cut on unemployment levels among refugees in Norway. It was observed in big cities like Oslo that people who cannot speak the Norwegian language are employed and some even manage to have two jobs. As researchers, it was realized that the language qualification is mostly applicable in small Kommune like Sogndal whilst in big cities of Norway, options are left open.

The Foreigner (2014) state that according to some NAV workers, Somali immigrants are particularly demanding and reluctant compared to other groups. From the data collected, it can be noted that Somalis are actually eager to work and would work hard when given an opportunity to. This is seen as stereotype and a generalization to all Somalis. On the other hand, it can be that they are trying to adapt to a modern society. As a society shifts from an agrarian to an industrial economy and survival comes to be taken for granted, traditional religious beliefs tend to decline states Baker, et al (2000). As Somalis come to Norway, they

move to a developed nation with a whole different culture. It is important that Somalis try to learn and fit in the Norwegian culture if they are to enjoy their stay in a new, cultural and modern society. Modernity calls for people to change or reflect on their way of doing things and change where need be. Somalis ought to do away with certain cultures like not allowing their women to work if they are to fit well in the Norwegian culture. The modernization theory explains that underdeveloped societies ought to adopt modern values if they are to develop. Through this theory, it would be easy for the Somalis to adapt the Norwegian culture quickly and be able to benefit from the modern society.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the project has brought out some precise issues surrounding integration of refugees in the labor market. Through this report it was discovered that refugees are well taken care of from the time they enter Norway as Asylum Seekers to the time they get positive feedback from State to live as refugees in Norway. During this period they undergo a number of personal developments through introduction programs.

The research reviewed that refugees spend two years in class learning the Norwegian language and other programs that prepare them for work when they are integrated in the society, most Norwegian employers don't consider them as Norwegian speakers as they are left out during job recruitment. This may not wholly be the employer's fault, because some Somali refugees fail to acquire the required language skills, therefore, that becomes a challenge in acquiring jobs. While others may not really be able to write and read Norwegian as it supposed to be, they become dependent on the monthly support from the state and do not take time to find employment.

Furthermore, refugees are one of the marginalized groups in Norway and they have special needs that need to be treated in a special way. Therefore, this calls for additional measures to be taken by the state and other agencies that are responsible for refugees such as International Organization for Migrants (IOM) and Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI). The measures should be directed on the welfare of refugees when there are out of labor market to be specific. However, from the interaction with respondents it is clear that refugees are treated like ordinary Norwegian in societies for example, when they get a positive answer from the state, NAV takes over and helps them with social welfare assistance. This shows how considerate Norwegians are. But it should be known that these refugees might not be able to understand or know how Welfare State operates. Nevertheless, this project will make

a basis to make some possible changes in the Norwegian system based on the findings and recommendations.

Furthermore, there is a gap between the state and the people in Kommune where refugees are settled, this is so because there is lack of inter-culture competence and people in municipalities are a bit scared of mingling with people from other culture such as refugees. This is seen in the time it takes to find which kommune would accommodate the approved refugees as well as through unemployment among refugees. This shows that the state is willing to accommodate refugees but the people in the ground are a bit reluctant to integrate them.

5.5 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the research and the conclusion made, the researchers made the following recommendations;

1. The state may consider empowering refugees with appropriate skills required in the labor market.
2. The Kommune office may reflect on scheduling a program that will check on the welfare of refugees once they are done with the Introduction program as this will help them know how many are employed and how many are still searching for employment.
3. Sogndal Kommune may consider continuing the short courses refugees are offered whilst at the camp as these skills would help them qualify for certain types of jobs.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I:

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR REFUGEES

Objective 1: *To find out what coping strategies refugees use when unemployed.*

1. For how long have you been in Norway?
2. What kind of expectations did you have when coming to Norway? Are they met or not?
3. What social activities do you participate in as a way to interact with fellow refugees as well as the locals?

Objective 2: *To find out what skills programs the Norwegian government offers to the refugees to enable them find work.*

1. Have you had any skills training from the Norwegian Government?
2. What skills did you learn?
3. Do you find the skills helpful as you try to find employment?

Objective 3: *To find out what challenges the refugees face in acquiring employment.*

1. Are you currently in employment? If yes, is it full or part time employment?
2. Is it easy to find full time employment?
3. What kind of challenges do you face in finding employment?
4. Does the government support you in any way as you try to find employment?
5. What do you think the government can incorporate in the skills programs in order help refugees fit in the labor market?

APPENDIX II:**INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR AUTHORITIES**

Objective 1: *To find out what coping strategies refugees use when unemployed*

1. How do you get to know the welfare of refugees after they leave the camp?

Objective 2: *To find out what skills programs the Norwegian government offers to the refugees to enable them find work.*

1. What skills programs do you offer to refugees?
2. How would you describe the effectiveness of these programs to the participants especially in enabling them acquire employment?
3. How often do you conduct program assessments?

Objective 3: *To find out what challenges the refugees face in acquiring employment.*

1. What possible challenges do you feel refugees are likely to face as they try to enter the labor market?
2. What do you feel can be done to overcome the challenges?

APPENDIX III

LETTER OF CONSENT

Our Names are Chilolo Chileshe, Martha Kaunda and Kenny Mutemwa Wakung’uma. We are Global Knowledge students at Sogn og Fjordane University College. We are in our final semester and we are required to submit a project paper for us to fully qualify. Our project is on the integration of refugees in the labor market in Norway.

We would like to interview some officers from the refugee camp as well as refugees that are off the camp and are integrated into society. We therefore seek your consent to interview three (3) of your members of staff to help us with information on our topic. The questions will focus on the integration of refugees in the labor market.

All information to be collected will be confidential and strictly be used for the project report. If you consent, please suggest dates for the interview.

For anything, you can contact us on;

Chilolo Chileshe 97391578

Martha Kaunda 97391804

Kenny Mutemwa 97392120

.....

Assistant Professor

Gunner Onarheim

Supervisor

Please if you consent, sign below

I (Consent/do not consent) to be interviewed

Sign.....

Date.....