Implications of digital competence for refugee integration and social inequality.

Bachelor thesis in sociology

University of Stavanger

Kaidi Pahapill
Student number: 260981

Supervisor: Hande Eslen Ziya

Submitted date: 04.05.2023
Word count: 9100

Can the assignment be used for teaching purposes? YES: ✓ **NO:**

ABSTRACT

In recent years, the integration process of newly arrived refugees has become an increasingly important concern. Digital competence has an essential role in the process of refugee integration as well as in later societal outcomes for the host society (Abujarour & Abujarour, 2020; Alencar, 2018; Bønnhoff, 2021; Potocky, 2022).

El Amrani et al. (2022) conducted a study on digital competence levels for newly arrived refugees, as a part of research conducted for IMDi[1] to shed light on potential differences in this area in Norway. The study found that over half of the participants exhibited low levels of digital competence (El Amrani et al., 2022). The report`s lack of theoretical presentation raised my interest in investigating this matter more closely. I was curious to find a theoretical framework as well as facilitate a reflective analysis about the implementation of digital competence and the ensuing societal implications, for refugees. This concern became the research topic of this paper, looking into the implications of digital competence for refugee integration and inequality. The aim is to review recent scholarly works to gain insight into existing knowledge and identify gaps in the literature. In doing so, the aim is to critically analyse current academic literature in the Norwegian context.

The findings indicate that digital competence, having such a significant role within refugee integration and their perspectives on later societal possibilities, needs further investigation to better understand its underlying mechanisms and outcomes when holding and lacking this competence. To comprehend the gap between the importance and need of digital competence for refugees in society, a Bourdieusian perspective of digital capital, as presented by Ragnedda and Ruiu (2022) will be examined.

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[1] The Directorate for Integration and Diversity *Integrerings- og mangfoldsdirektoriatet* https://www.imdi.no/

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.1. THE RELEVANCE OF THIS PAPER

The pervasive impact of digitalisation in contemporary society has seamlessly integrated our daily routines with a result so fundamental in its nature, that it is often overlooked or taken for granted (Rolstadåsas et al., 2021). Digitalisation is according to Rolstadåsas et al. (2021) seen as one of the most powerful causes for change in contemporary society. That kind of impact has its price in several societal domains, and Norway is considered among the countries with the most extensive impact on the technological and societal digitalisation process (Rolstadåsas et al., 2021). A process, as influential as digitalisation, comes with many strings attached, leaving society in a situation where not everyone has the possibility nor the potential to keep up with the changes. Specific competence is necessary to keep pace with a societal impact that vast.

Digital competence is seen as an essential skill for living, working and participating in the contemporary highly digitalised society (Meld. St. 27 (2015–2016); Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021; Muszyński et al., 2022). *"Digital competence involves the confident, critical and responsible use of, and engagement with, digital technologies for learning, at work, and for participation in society."* (European Commission, 2018). Further, it is seen as an important skill in managing information and data literacy, communication and media literacy, handling digital content creation, individual safety online, problem-solving and lastly, dealing with critical thinking (European Commission, 2018). It is an essential skill in society today and should be available to everyone and is therefore considered a Norwegian national knowledge goal (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021).

Therefore, without possessing the essential skill of digital competence in society today, the digital divide, referring to the gap between those who have access and knowledge of using digital technology and those who do not (van Dijk, 2005), will be wider in society. The outcome of this divide can contribute to more inequality in society as individuals may find it difficult to participate fully in many aspects of modern life, including education, employment, communication, access to information and services among many aspects. Studies indicate that refugees are considered a group of people impacted by this outcome as they often lack digital

competence to gain a fully integrated and independent life (El Amrani et al., 2022; Potocky, 2022; Rybalka & Brevik, 2022).

The increasing disparity of digital competence within societies and the increasing number of displaced people play a part in the digital divide while contributing to and worsening existing social inequality in all aspects of life (Potocky, 2022; van Deursen & van Dijk, 2019). Jan van Dijk (2005) explains the digital divide as an approach where five dimensions interact with each other while influencing people's inclusion, exclusion and life chances in society. Accordingly, he argues that these five dimensions are: access - as infrastructure and ICT[2] possibilities; usage - as the purpose of how people use ICT; skills - as the ability to use ICT; motivation - as people's interest and willingness, and all these combined with their cultural and social norms as the fifth dimension. They are seen as important in interaction with each other and define the digital divide.

1.2. THE RESEARCH TOPIC

The outcomes of the digital divide can be seen within a society where its members enhance low digital competence. Accordingly, refugees are considered a population that is prone to experience social and cultural differences and therefore contribute highly to increasing and regenerating pre-existing social disparities and inequality, through the digital divide (Rybalka & Brevik, 2022).

Therefore, this paper aims to investigate the *Implications of refugees' digital competence within integration and social inequality – a literature review*. As my research question is: "How refugee's digital competence implements integration and social inequality?"

This topic has interested me since I came across an article by Amanda Alencar (2018) about the impact of social media on refugee integration. Curiosity increased even further after reading a recent study conducted in Norway by Proba Research[3], El Amrani et al. (2022) for IMDi. While Alencar`s (2018) article demonstrated the importance of social media's impact on refugee integration as a valuable cultural, communicational, and social capital-building concept, then the latter showed how the integration situation in Norway today is complex, indicating to variations in refugee's digital competence levels and the gap between the

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[2] ICT refers to information and communication technologies. ICTs are a set of tools that individuals as well as organisations use to access, process and communicate electronically (van Dijk, 2006).
[3] *Proba Samfunnsanalyse* https://proba.no/english/

competence level of refugees as well as the practice and outcomes of gaining digital competence. There is a need to examine this situation more closely, to get a better understanding of the underlying reasons for this gap in Norway, while the digital skills have essential value in individuals' autonomy and well-being, recognised by the government.

It is clear that ICT not only has an important role within a highly digitalised society from a structural perspective, but its role in the integration process and within the later possibilities for refugees from their individual, micro perspective, is also important (Abujarour & Abujarour, 2020; Alencar, 2020; Potocky, 2022). Norway has resources and possibilities to provide refugees with technology, but as an important aspect, technology availability alone does not result in social inclusion, and as indicated in earlier studies, does not alone contribute to the digital divide. Consequently, this is where the digital divide and the competence level of refugees, matter today. How is this phenomenon treated and what kind of role it plays within the integration process? An investigation of this question will be conducted in the coming chapters.

1.3. THE STRUCTURE

Chapter 2 will demonstrate the significance of the study while drawing a background for this paper within the context of structural perspective, where Norwegian governmental and integrational expectations while referring to the digitalisation of the public sector, will be looked into. Chapter 3 will present the theoretical framework of digital capital by Ragnedda and Ruiu (2020), aiming to acknowledge digital competence from a theoretical perspective. Following Chapter 4 where the methodology and the approach of the "Six Steps Method" (Machi & McEvoy, 2016; Persson, 2021) on how this research was conducted, is demonstrated. Chapter 5 will present the empirical viewpoints and earlier research done on the subject matter of digital competence and the outcome this has for refugees within the integration and in society both in Norway and outside. Chapter 6 will be the analysis and discussion of key findings, and lastly, Chapter 7 will conclude this paper.

CHAPTER 2
BACKGROUND FOR THIS STUDY

To comprehend the context of my research question, this chapter aims to examine the contextual background of digital competence and its relevance in society highlighting the significance and defining digital competence in Norway. In addition, explanation of the Norwegian integrational expectations for refugees will be presented.

2.1. DIGITAL COMPETENCE

Digital competence and the relevance of this in society is seen as an ability to encompass gathering and processing of available information, as well as the ability to effectively communicate, interact and use online public services in a safe way (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). It is also noted that individuals should be able to responsibly use technology to practically solve tasks while developing digital judgement. From the perspective of digitalisation, these skills are seen as crucial for active participation in a constantly developing and evolving society and job market. According to (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017), digital skills are seen as essential and natural components in life today, as they set the grounds for better learning, communication and self-expression.

2.2. NATIONAL STRATEGY TO INCREASE DIGITAL COMPETENCE

The national strategy aims to increase digital participation and competence in relation with the digitalisation of the public sector in Norway in the coming years (Meld. St. 27 (2015–2016); Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021; Muszyński et al., 2022). The same strategy is seen in a literature review conducted by Muszyński et al. (2022) where European Commission's (2018) proposal was quoted. According to the proposal, people should possess a range of digital competencies, such as understanding ICT principles and its limitations, while being critical of the information and data they constantly are being presented with. Individuals should be able to protect their identities and the content they share and produce. European Commission (2018) finds that these skills can benefit one's personal, social and commercial goals. More importantly, they require education and certain learning platforms. Notably, similar expectations for individuals are indicated in a Norwegian framework for basic skills, presented by the Norwegian Ministry of Education.

In fact, the Norwegian Ministry of Education has established a goal of defining five fundamental knowledge proficiencies, that every individual should possess (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). The "Framework for basic knowledge"[4] holds a goal for the population`s five basic competencies, and one of these skills is defined as digital competence, indicating particularly, that the level of digital competence expected from individuals in Norwegian society is notably high (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017). Accordingly, the Norwegian national program "Digital Throughout Life"[5], was established in 2021 to increase digital participation and competence in the Norwegian population, associated with the White Paper nr. 27 (Meld. St. 27 (2015–2016)). This program has a national goal to counter digital exclusion and to ensure that all people can use ICT and reinforce digital competence (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021) with regard to the digitalisation of the public sector, as mentioned earlier.

Muszyński et al. (2022) write about how digital competence is considered a key element for both living and working according to European Commission. A framework of key components is presented for successful digital competence increase possibilities which include technical, cognitive, communicational, social, and ethical approaches. Accordingly, a European framework for mapping the digital competence of people, named DigComp, recognises five components. Accordingly, the European Union Commission presents information, communication, content creation, safety, and problem-solving as DigComp measuring tools (NOU 2019: 2). The article of Muszyński et al. (2022) does not include the aspect of refugee integration but does nevertheless implement an important insight. As their proposal offers a framework with five important components that could be implemented in integration programs and could give valuable supplement for developing integration programs with regards to the many challenges refugees face within the integration.

2.3. INTEGRATIONAL LAW IN NORWAY

Despite the fact of national expectation and goal of digital competence for all people living in Norway, this expectation does not reflect in the integration law. The latter brings forward the importance of four following proficiency aspects for refugees in integration: education in the Norwegian language, education in social studies, courses in life skills, and the focus on elements for work and education (Integreringsloven, 2020, § 26-37). Certainly, we

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[4] *Rammeverk for grunnleggende ferdigheter* (Utdanningsdirektoratet, 2017)
[5] *Digital hele livet* (Ministry of Local Government and Modernisation, 2021)

can include digital competence within the social and life skills, but the lack of this specification within the integration law is an important gap between practical implementation within integration programs' interdisciplinary work as well as the outcome of this supplement. How this is practised in Norway today, will be presented and discussed in chapters 5 & 6.

Consequently, the cultivation and depth of digital competence education is a freedom given to the local authorities to decide, both on the importance and the scope of digital learning, and as study indicate, can therefore vary in form and performance from location to location (El Amrani et al., 2022, p.47). While the law does not explicitly mandate digital competence education for refugees, a notable advantage is that such education is often seen as a goal within the integrational educational programs of refugees, even though varying largely from municipality to municipality. The variation is often seen through differences in the mapping of the skills of refugees, and as El Amrani et al. (2022) indicate, the outcomes of these mappings are, as a result, treated differently as well. The national expectations from one side and the lack of practical instruction and performance of the value of digital competence for refugees from the other side are creating a gap. To investigate if this approach and gap can be amended for improvement, a theoretical perspective of digital capital will be presented in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3
THEORY OF DIGITAL CAPITAL

This chapter will demonstrate the necessity of digital skills through a theory of *digital capital*. The theoretical approach about to unfold in this paper has the potential to serve as a complementary addition to the gap of Norwegian national regulations and the constraints as well as the needs of migrants within digital literacy. Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020) comprehend digital capital as compromising both internalised digital competencies, such as reserves of individual`s abilities and skills, as well as externalised digital technological resources available.

According to Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020), digital capital constitutes a distinctive type of capital, similar to Bourdieusian economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital, and should therefore be considered accordingly. In addition, they point out that digital capital acts as a bridging mechanism to link offline experiences and resources to online ones. This has an important role in influencing both the quality and diversity of experiences online, while at the same time enabling the actual conversion of digital experiences into measurable advantages and outcomes in the physical world as a part of digital capital (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). In that sense, theory suggests that digital competence as digital capital enhances the possible development of social relationships while giving people a wider platform to succeed as socially autonomic individuals through the capital in hand (Alam & Imran, 2015; Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). Moreover, as Ragnedda and Ruiu (2020) suggest, this approach extends beyond conventional economic interpretation to encompass immaterial aspects and values for society. To understand the role of digital competence as a part of individuals capital and digital capital to be more precise, we can according to Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020) as a starting point, look at digital competence through the interpretation of Bourdieusian *habitus*.

Habitus is seen projected through individuals` actions, while being constituted provisionally while slowly, through life, incorporating a set and ways of thinking, feeling and acting, being a part of that individual's origin for the future practices (Bourdieu, 1995; Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). Habitus is not a simple conception, it is rather an internalisation of dispositions one adapts and produces within a social context and the understanding of capital, one holds. In other words, habitus is an integral element, intertwined within individuals'

lifelong experience and in one's capital, while having a crucial role in determining their success or lack thereof. Consequently, it could be argued that the incorporation of the concept habitus into the digital competence comprehension, is not only feasible but also advantageous in that perspective.

3.1. THE PERSPECTIVE OF CAPITAL

From the Bourdieusian perspective, one is dependent on capital in various aspects of life and both the quantity and the structure of capital, while inherited, can be accumulated and used as an influence to better life chances or reinforce social inequalities and hierarchies within society (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1993; Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). Bourdieusian capital is valued and determined by the appreciation and profitability of this specific good within the society and is seen as something that changes and accumulates through time (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). This happens both qualitatively and quantitatively, through the process of converting itself into something else. Given the Bourdieusian phenomenon of public valuation determining the value of the capital, it is as well apparent within digital capital comprehension. A more detailed explanation of capital conversion when presenting the implementation of this theory, will follow.

Therefore, the understanding of capital and habitus within, the constitution of this within individuals, is a vital part when analysing one's position within society and the outcomes it will have for individuals. It is indeed clear that contemporary digitalised society, heavily influenced by ICT, and digital competence as digital capital, assumes a critical but sometimes profitable role in comprehending social stratification and societal disparities. It is also evident according to Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020), that digital capital includes all the characteristics identified by Bourdieu in relation to accumulation, conversion and profitability. As digital capital grasps both internalized digital competencies as well as externalised digital technological resources available, as shown at the beginning of this chapter, these reserves and resources can be accumulated, transformed, and reinvested while creating new forms of capital and in that sense, shaping societal possibilities.

Further, it is important to note that there is a distinction between Bourdieusian understanding of media technology influence and the Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020) way of linking this together. As Pierre Bourdieu was consistent that media technologies ought to be studied separately and autonomously from society, Ragnedda and Ruiu (2020) suggest on the other hand that because of the embodiment of ICT and media technologies into contemporary

society, this phenomenon requires to be studied as a subject having a societal texture changing and inequality implementing issue. Moreover, digital capital embraces a more immaterial form through intangible goods and values in contradiction to the Bourdieusian economical capital. As an example, it could be convergent to for example social capital (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). They point out that just like social capital, digital capital may satisfy people's social needs and more importantly, improve their life chances, while it can be accumulated. Furthermore, they argue that the latter needs the investment of time and effort, as known from a Bourdieusian self-improvement perspective. In other words, to effectively accumulate digital capital, one should invest its time to improve the skills.

3.2. IMPLEMENTING DIGITAL CAPITAL.

As the rapid development of ICT and the following digitalisation of society is seen everywhere today, Ragnedda and Ruiu (2020) express the need to define capital that is directly connected to digital experience and the outcome to society from a comprehensive perspective. Even more, they not only explain this phenomenon but show the implementation of digital capital in society.

As described earlier, Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020) explain digital capital as an accumulation of both material and immaterial resources, enabling digital capital conversion into other forms of beneficial capital. Accordingly, digital capital can be converted into economic capital as money, into social capital through valuable networks expanding online and offline, and even into cultural capital through online courses. The conversion can also be seen from a personal capital aspect, by learning and developing personal interests, and skills and making lifestyle changes and furthermore, into political capital, while acting online with a political activism interests (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). In that case, digital capital has an essential role in society today as an important capital for self–improvement and autonomy. They point out, that digital capital is not static and has an inbuilt need to accumulate over time. From one side the constant societal needs and from the other side the digitalisation that creates those needs, are pulling this capital to be constantly updated and accumulated, otherwise lacking its value and goods as an amendable capital.

Given those aspects described, an important societal factor is that those who approach ICT from an already poor socio-economic and cultural background will also have limited possibilities to use and accumulate their digital skills according to societal pressure (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020; van Dijk, 2005). This in turn creates digital divide (van Deursen & van Dijk,

2019). While on the other hand people coming from a better socio-economic background have better possibilities to use the diverseness of online possibilities and other goods digital competence offers. Consequently, the digital divide and eventually social inequality will be reinforced and accumulated. In other terms, a clear interconnection exists holding digital capital from the micro perspective, and the impacts of this on individuals` opportunities in life, in the digitalised structures.

As a last important aspect of capital utilization in society, an important key factor is presented and can be seen as a feature only within digital capital. As Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020) explain, even though interconnected with other capitals, digital capital has a certain feature, which gives this specific capital a variance and a sort of independence from other capitals. This independence lies in the virality of its digital technological character and gives it a specific advantage today. They explain that with the digital and technical features, digital capital can create and contribute to individuals' life chances and possibly increase their social and economic capital, despite having no or very little other capital available previously (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). This indicates a difference from the classical understanding of capital accumulation. The aspect gives digital capital an even more important part of one's life chances and the outcomes of this for accumulation and conversion into other capitals while emphasising the competence of using digital technology.

To conclude, digital capital from Ragnedda & Ruiu`s Bourdieusian perspective is seen as an important ubiquitous capital. The significance of digital capital lies in the intertwining and virality mechanism which, when not owned, does increase the digital divide, and plays a vital role in societal inequalities. It is therefore important for policymakers to encourage the work to increase individual digital capital, while reducing the digital divide, so that this again would foster people's life chances and in the long run minimise the inequality within society, Ragnedda & Ruiu (2020) note.

CHAPTER 4
METHOD

In this chapter, the methodological set-up as a literature review will be described. The necessity of transparency of methodology and the process of identifying evidence is the strength of this kind of study, as this will allow someone else to reproduce the method described if necessary (Booth et al., 2016).

As the aim of this paper is to provide a comprehensive overview of the current state of knowledge and a deeper understanding of my research topic, a literature review was chosen. This method is seen as an application of critical thinking (Machi & McEvoy, 2016), and more importantly, a process that helped me to acknowledge the need for further necessary analyse of integration and digital competence knowledge and practice gap. This literature review was conducted with the six steps method from Persson (2021) and Machi & McEvoy (2016), which will be explained in the following.

Due to the rapidly evolving character of technology and increasing numbers of displaced people, the objective of this study is to investigate the latest academic literature available from the past five years. The reviewed literature itself in addition to the volume of relevant literature found for this paper, shows that this phenomenon has yet to be extensively explored in Norwegian academia. On the other hand, even though little recent research done on this area, the literature review offered valuable insight, and nevertheless provided essential information that there is a gap between the needs of society and the expectations of government within the perspective of digital competence.

4.1. STEPS FOR SCREENING THE LITERATURE

I conducted my literature review according to six steps method presented by Machi & McEvoy (2016) and Persson (2021). The process started by selecting a research topic. Next, by developing tools for argumentation in cohesion with searching, surveying, critiquing, and interpreting the literature, while writing the review (Machi & McEvoy, 2016). Hereafter, while progressing, the method with these steps repeated as it advanced towards completion.

The process of finding relevant literature, the following sorting, by first title screening continuing with abstract screening, and synthesising has been the most time-consuming part of this thesis. Oria.no and idunn.no were used to gather and scope the scholarly publications, while also finding information from the Norwegian government and the IMDi pages on the internet were used as a supplement.

4.2. LIMITATION OF LITERATURE REVIEW

A disadvantage at this level of a literature review may be present, as the method may be subject to certain limitations. These limitations can be seen first, as a potential inability to use all the information, because of the amount of data obtained during the search process, as well as the likelihood of overlooking relevant data because of the availability of relevant studies, as well as too narrow use of search platforms. Next, another limitation for significance can be seen within the risk of subjectivity as there is only one reviewer. As a result, the ability to generalize findings from this review may be compromised.

Given the circumstances and the scale as well as the purpose of this literature review, statistical significance was not the main focus, nevertheless providing valuable insight into the topic and contributing to a deeper understanding of existing research in the field of digital competence essentiality within refugee integration in Norway.

4.3. INCLUSION OF SOURCES

To identify information relevant to my topic, searching for literature first involved choosing search engines, tools within search engines, and the inclusion criteria with relevant keywords. The goal of a successful search is to find "*research gaps*" (Booth et al., 2016), while giving aspects to study within the topic.

The inclusion criteria on oria.no and idunn.no, both in English and in Norwegian, included combinations of keywords like: "*digital skills*", "*digital competence*", "*integration*", "*digital divide*", "*inequality*", "*refugee**", "*migrant**", "*immigrant**". Table 1 below, will present the search numbers. The keyword combinations were shorter on idunn.no, as the first hits only gave 3-7 sources, leaving out "inequality" as well as "migrant", and "immigrant", as the full combinations used on oria.no.

Table 1. Keyword search.

Keyword search	Oria.no	Idunn.no
Norwegian		
Integrasjon, flyktning, innvandrer, digital kompetanse og digital ferdighet	561	54
English		
Integration, refugee, immigrant, digital competence, digital skill, inequality	2187	3

In the exclusion criteria, keywords like "children" and "social media" were used, because of their irrelevance according to the research question. Another exclusion was done on all master theses.
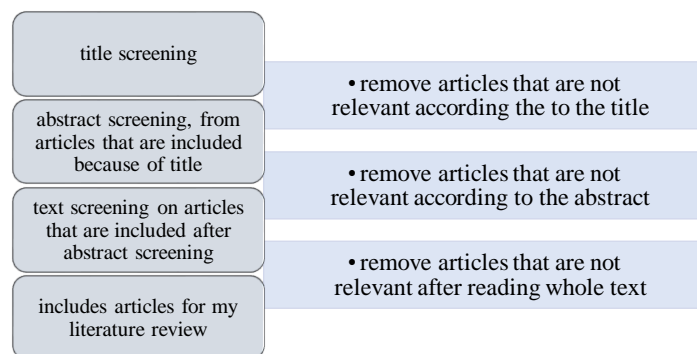
The already chosen literature was supplemented, by conducting the bibliographic and reference list examinations, also known as snowballing (Booth et al., 2016). This is a method where already found literature reference lists are examined. It is seen as an important supplement to the literature review because digital searching from search engines might miss important literature, particularly when the research question is narrow like the one presented

here, or difficult to define (Booth et al., 2016). This method contributed by adding to further search criteria while at the same time widening the research platform.

4.4. SCREENING PROCESS

The next step within the literature review has the purpose of giving the process evidence bases that have value within the later review (Booth et al., 2016). Following Machi & McEvoy, (2016) and Persson's (2021). The process of title screening left me with approximately 70 sources. Thereafter following the abstract screening and exclusion of ineligible studies, 20 relevant sources were chosen. The number of final studies and articles has been somewhat changing as conducting further research and snowballing the literature within the whole process. The following process of screening is seen in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Screening process (Persson, 2021)

title screening

abstract screening, from articles that are included because of title

text screening on articles that are included after abstract screening

includes articles for my literature review

• remove articles that are not relevant according the to the title

• remove articles that are not relevant according to the abstract

• remove articles that are not relevant after reading whole text

4.5. SYNTHESIZE

Synthesising refers to a process where different literature is evaluated against each other while putting the data into context (Persson, 2021), and in my case putting the literature into the context of my research question as well as implementing theory to data.

The synthesizing process began with reflecting and asking critical questions about chosen empirical data from the perspective of digital competence in refugee integration. This allowed to gain a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the data and helped to focus the approach on relevant insights in academia within integration and societal outcomes for refugees. The sources were categorized into three main categories and two under-categories within the previous research empirical literature sample, as integration and inequality, shown in table 3 on page 19. The process of categorization was a good indication and a starting point for the synthesizing as well as the analyses and discussion. The synthesizing of chosen data gave a more comprehensive picture of the findings.

Table 3. Categorization of chosen literature.

Previous research, inequality perspective	Previous research, integration perspective	Background	Theory
Bønnhoff H.E.D. (2021), Fostering 'digital citizens' in Norway: Experiences of migrant mothers.	Abujarour, S., & Abujarour, M. (2020). Connecting Human Potentials and Opportunities Through Technology: A Digital Integration Use Case.	Alencar, A. (2020). Mobile communication and refugees: An analytical review of academic literature.	Bourdieu, P. (1995). Distinksjonen: En sosiologisk kritikk av dømmekraften.
Lexander K.V. (2020), Norsk som digitalt samhandlingsspråk i fire familier med innvandrerbakgrunn – identitet og investering.	Alam, K., & Imran, S. (2015). The digital divide and social inclusion among refugee migrants: A case in regional Australia.	El Amrani, S., Skaug Sætra, H., Lunnan Hjort, J., Solvoll, L., & Thornbjørnsrud, T. (2022). Nyankomne flyktningers digitale hverdag. Proba samfunnsanalyse	Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. J. D. (1993). Den kritiske ettertanke: Grunnlag for samfunnsanalyse.
Potocky, M. (2022). Role of Digital Skills in Refugee Integration: A State-Of-The-Art Review.	Potocky, M. (2022). Role of Digital Skills in Refugee Integration: A State-Of-The-Art Review.	European Commission. (2018). Proposal for a Council recommendation on key competences in lifelong learning.	Ragnedda, M., & Ruiu, M. L. (2020). Digital capital: A bourdieusian perspective on the digital divide
Rybalka, M., & Brevik, R. (2022). Digital sårbarhet: Hvem har høy risiko for å falle utenfor?	Alencar, A. (2018). Refugee integration and social media: A local and experiential perspective.	Integreringsloven, LOV-2020-11-06-127, § 26-37	van Dijk, J. (2005). The deepening divide: Inequality in the information society.
	Muszyński, M., Pokropek, A., Castaño-Muñoz, J., & Vuorikari, R. (2022). Can Overclaiming Technique Improve Self-Assessment Tools for Digital Competence? The Case of DigCompSat	1. Meld. St. 27 (2015–2016) & 2. Digital Throughout Life. (2021). National strategy to improve digital participation and competence in the population. 3.Kunnskapsdepartementet. (2019). NOU 2019: 2	van Dijk, J. (2006). The network society: Social aspects of new media (2nd ed)
		Utdanningsdirektoratet. (2017). 2.1 Digitale ferdigheter som grunnleggende ferdighet. Rammeverk for grunnleggende ferdigheter.	van Deursen, A. J., & van Dijk, J. A. (2019). The first-level digital divide shifts from inequalities in physical access to inequalities in material access.
		Rolstadåsas, A., Krokan, A., Dahle Øien, G. E., Rolfsen, M., Sand, G., Syse, H., & Husby, L. M. (2021). Den Digitale Hverdagen	

CHAPTER 5
LITERATURE AS EMPIRICAL DATA

The underpinning of my argument will be supported by the data presented in this chapter, as the aim is to examine digital competence's role within integration and in society, by looking into empirical examples and studies investigated in Norway and outside.

5. 1. THE ROLE OF DIGITAL SKILLS WITHIN REFUGEE INTEGRATION.

I will first summarize a comprehensive study made by Miriam Potocky in 2022, where she highlights the importance of access to digital technology as well as digital skills as crucial for refugee integration. She also shows the importance of digital competence regarding educational and later employment possibilities for refugees. However, also the barriers many refugees face because of their cultural, communicational, and economic differences are considered in her study.

Miriam Potocky conducted a comprehensive literature review in 2022 to investigate the emerging issues as well as to find gaps within academia on digital migration studies. She explains the reasons for this study with the extraordinary and growing number of forced refugees', as well as the ubiquity status of ICT in society. She focused on studies between January 2020 - April 2021 on the practical use of digital technology within the integration of refugees.

Initially, the study supports digital competencies' importance and essentiality for refugees within all ranges of integration. Subsequently, an important finding in her study was the low digital competence of many refugees and the impact of this on their integration tasks and outcomes. Alencar (2020), whom Potocky references, states that even though many refugee settlers are good with technology and mobile devices, they lack digital literacy, as their socioeconomic, linguistic, and cultural barriers constrain them to get better in the use of ICT. To explain more closely, mobile devices are found to be insufficient in the circumstances of developing good digital literacy skills, according to Alexis Cherewka, as Potocky (2022) writes. Thereof the digital divide becomes visible within the data she presented.

The significant role of digital skills is presented both in Potocky`s (2022) and Lexander's (2020) study from Norway. While Potocky (2022) explains the refugee's ability to

understand and comprehend the digital technology intertwined with their cultural, communicational, and linguistic skills, then Lexander's (2020) study shows a relevant point in the communication skills from a more practical, language learning, process. The latter also points out an important intertwined relationship between, the interest and ability to change and learn from refugees aspect from one side, and the host societies' rules and dominant views in the perspective of immigration and integration, on the other side (Lexander, 2020). To be more precise, she explains that the success of integration on many levels is connected to their socioeconomic and cultural background, in other words how refugees comprehend society, is important in their integration process.

Looking at Lexander's research on four migrant families in Norway and their use of digital communication technology in their daily as a supplement in language learning in interaction with generations, an important indication of family identity creation and reproduction of their own culture, is shown. Meanwhile, also Potocky`s work demonstrates the significance of digital literacy in the context of language and vocational learning for Syrian refugees, as evidenced in a 2020 study conducted in Sweden, and a study examining the role of digital competence through e-learning on adult educations role in the USA. The importance of digital communication for language learning and therefore also for integration and identity creation, is seen as a safe platform through interaction and was according to Lexander (2020) indicated by the families included in her research, who indicated motivation for that kind of interaction.

However, good digital communicational skills or the lack of them has both positive and negative possible impacts on integration, Potocky (2022) indicates. Visible integration enabling functions are shown as network expanding and information flowing (Lexander, 2020; Potocky, 2022) and expanding one`s cultural and symbolic power as well as identity creation, by learning new abilities. On the other hand, certain constraints are visible and impede the process of integration, the researchers indicate. These limitations are seen through tendencies to create virtual communities with fellow countrymen while disconnecting from the host society (Potocky, 2022, p. 76), therefore decelerating the integrational purpose.

Another aspect and limitation for integrational purposes are shown as Potocky (2022) explains a certain fear of surveillance and the mistrust in digital technology as well as its algorithmic systems, among many refugees. This is seen as being connected to refugees' educational and cultural background, in addition to overall trust in society. However, the indication of trust

issues was not visible in the Norwegian refugee and migrant context as this was tested in the study conducted for Statistics Norway[6], by Rybalka & Brevik (2022).

5. 2. THE ESSENTIAL TASK OF MIGRANT MOTHERS.

A Study from Norway

Heidi Esma Dahl Bønnhoff conducted qualitative research in 2021, analysing 16 migrant mothers, residing in Norway. She argued that fostering digital citizens in Norway is a societal project, that involves many actors, including both educational institutions as well as parents (Bønnhoff, 2021). The mothers involved in this research had all dependent children between ages 0-19 years and had migrated to Norway from Africa and Asia, living in Norway between six months to 19 years. The interviews were conducted to interpret the experiences of migrant mothers, managing their children's ICT development and use in contemporary Norway, while the skills, challenges, and opportunities of these mothers to incorporate such tasks, were analysed. Bønnhoff (2021) indicates that certain key concepts like having early digital education and parental dialogue about digital risks, are important in this context. It became evident that migrant mothers expressed their inconvenient knowledge as well as differences in their experience, both, because of their various socioeconomic backgrounds, as well as from the perspective of their interest in digital technology, while most of them were fully aware of the regulated governmental and societal expectations. These expectations were often felt like a constraint to migrant mothers with inconvenient ICT knowledge (Bønnhoff, 2021).

Migrant mothers, both in the process of integration and living in contemporary Norway, are in a situation where they have to engage with a society that is often far more digitalised than the society they migrate from (Bønnhoff, 2021). As shown, there is a clear Norwegian governmental aim to foster children as future citizens that are informed, productive, self-governed and can contribute with their well-being to the surroundings and communities they belong to. Therefore, the structural regulations become visible within the micro perspective of these mothers' immediate environment and affect their daily life. Bønnhoff (2021) references to Norwegian Directorate for Education and Training (2016; 2017) research articles and adds

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[6] Statistisk sentralbyrå https://www.ssb.no/

that according to the latter research articles, parents are important supporters and their need for involvement in the process of growing digital citizens is substantial. To clarify, Bønnhoff (2021) demonstrates that schools and kindergartens have a regulated role in this digital competence-achieving part, while migrant mothers are expected to have an equally essential element within this task, as this is structurally expected, both socially and financially.

As shown, there are two important key concepts that Bønnhoff (2021) brings forward and that becomes evident through her research. First, early digital education and the importance of developing digital judgement. To be more precise, she points out that children ought to acquire digital education by gaining digital competence that provides them with the ability to cope with life and attain happiness within, education, employment, and social involvement. Next, the importance of digital judgement, which she clarifies as the importance for children to learn handling online risks, digital media uses for both beneficial and legal purposes, while practising source criticism and protecting their privacy, through ethical communication. Bønnhoff (2021) traces these key concepts and societal expectations to governmental regulations within her article. With all this in mind, she concludes that too little is known today about the migrant mother's experience and the important task that lies on their shoulders regarding digital education for their children as future Norwegian citizens.

5. 3. BRIDGING THE GAP WITH SKILLS.

A study from Germany

Before moving to the next chapter of discussion and analyse, a qualitative case study by Safa`A Abujarour and Mohammed Abujarour (2020) will be shown. The authors in this study present a learning platform in Germany that they believe has the potential to reduce unemployment rates and bridge the skills gap between refugees and host societies' labour market for integration purposes.

Abujarour & Abujarour (2020) conducted a qualitative case study from the perspective of digital education in Germany. They investigated the function and effectiveness of the ReDi[7] school for digital integration. The goal of ReDi school, mainly voluntary driven, is to contribute to successful integration, as it offers its students valuable ICT insight while allowing them to

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[7] ReDi school is a digital school for refugees and locals with ICT interest (https://www.redi-school.org/)

look into the digital industry and network expansion with valuable and professional tech leaders (Abujarour & Abujarour, 2020). They explain the specialization of this school with the value it has in the job market. To be more precise, the value of digital competence within the job market in Germany.

Their findings indicate refugees` willingness and ability to use digital technology in Germany, as many migrants in that study had purchased powerful and expensive technology to increase the efficacy of their study time and to enhance their career prospects as job seekers. The key finding of their study indicates that the participants in the school are largely, over 40% accordingly, very well educated and with good communicative and language skills, as around 70% have at least a bachelor's degree, while on the other hand, only 17% of student do not possess any digital skills previously and have lower education, according to Abujarour & Abujarour (2020). Altogether, there is a minor difference between students who receive social benefits or salary while studying in ReDi school, while slightly under half of the participants do not receive any social support. This dimension adds another key finding to their research, Abujarour and Abujarour indicate that even though many refugees hold a prominent level of digital competence, the job market in Germany is suffering from the need for highly competent employees. This gap needs to be investigated more according to integration level, they indicate. While digital competence is an essentially important factor within the process, the study of Abujarour & Abujarour (2020) indicates however a multifaceted aspect of fully being integrated into the host society and finds that this kind of learning platform can contribute to diminishing the gap between unemployed refugees and the labour market.

CHAPTER 6
ANALYSES & DISCUSSION OF PRESENTED LITERATURE

In this chapter, an analysis and discussion of the empirical literature sample presented will be conducted. A deductive approach utilizing the digital capital theory as presented by Ragnedda and Ruiu (2020) will be considered and explored in the context.

6. 1. THE KEY OUTCOMES

Despite the limited size and non-generalizability of the empirical sample in this paper, it nevertheless indicates the significant role of digital competence as digital capital for refugees in society. It can be argued based on the Bourdieusian digital capital theory and possession of habitus intertwined within, proposed by Ragnedda and Ruiu, that digital capital provides an important advantage for refugees during the integration process in digitalised society. Studies examined in this paper further underscore the importance and relevance of digital capital in all integrational aspects, including identity creation, communicational, cultural, and socio-economic as well as ethical, moral and privacy security perspectives in addition to a more practical, language learning process (Bønnhoff, 2021; Lexander, 2020; Potocky, 2022). Moreover, it can be argued that possessing digital capital is an advantage not only within the process of integration from an individual micro perspective but for later societal outcomes such as reducing social inequality.

As demonstrated by the empirical evidence, a significant factor of digital capital lies within one's habitus through self-management, autonomy, and overall well-being after the integration process. It can be argued that possessing digital capital provides an advantage in reducing, rather than reproducing, the digital divide, consequently reducing inequality among refugee populations in host societies. The significance of digital skills in the well-being of migrant families is evident in the studies conducted by Bønnhoff (2021) and migrant mothers, who are tasked with passing these skills to their children as future independent and self-governing citizens. Similarly, Lexander`s (2020) research highlights the importance of digital skills in promoting inclusion and fostering a sense of belonging among migrant families.

6. 2. NATIONAL EXPECTATIONS

Despite the structurally regulated governmental expectations for individuals to possess digital competence in Norway shown in this paper, this perspective encompasses a range of diverse aspects and skills. As suggested by the literature reviewed, measuring, and determining digital competence in Norway is not a straightforward task, as evidenced by El Amrani et al.`s (2022) study on newly arrived refugees in Norway. Even though a positive development from the structural perspective, through local authorities possessing the interest, skills, means, and technological possibilities to address the issue of low digital competence among refugees in the context of integration, as shown in El Amrani et al.`s (2022) report, is seen in Norway. The studies however indicate a lack of national regulation regarding the importance of digital competence in the integration of displaced people, as well as the lack of regulations for mapping instructions for their digital skills, as seen in the integration law of Norway. Consequently, the determination of the necessity for digital competence often falls upon the availability of resources and the knowledge of the integration leaders in different municipalities, as also suggested by the latter study. This indicates that there is a gap between the macro-level structural expectations and the intermediate influence of this on refugees. Consequently, this kind of lack of concrete instructions could contribute to the digital divide. That can be explained, as the measurements for mapping the knowledge of refugees' digital skills, available digital education and the necessity are treated differently within different municipalities, as indicated in the studies shown. Given these points, this leaves room for both, value and quality differences in municipal treatment of digital competence education provided to refugees, with the consequent divide of knowledge.

It can therefore be argued that disparities in digital competence education and resources across municipalities in Norway as well as the values of digital capital's importance and its presentation for the refugees, could potentially result in mistrust towards authorities among migrant populations. In situations where one municipality provides thorough digital knowledge mapping and subsequent relevant competence education, while another lacks the same resources, the latter may reflect poorly on the overall trust in the structural support system for refugees. In that way, this situation may result in more inequality and segregation as a few examples of social outcomes.

6. 3. BRIDGING THE GAP WITH THEORY

These findings indicate a gap and a significant disparity between the needs and practise while raising questions about how competencies are valued at the intermediate, meso-level, which leads to possible differences in competence measurements, despite the availability of clear macro-structural guidelines, as shown previously.

As demonstrated by the report from El Amrani et al. (2022) and Lexander (2020), in Norway, refugees from their immediate social environment, indicate a clear desire to acquire digital skills and actively participate in Norwegian society. The same indication is evident in other geographical areas and host societies shown in Potocky`s (2022) study, as well as Bønnhoff``s (2021) study from Norway and the German study conducted by Abujarour and Abujarour (2020). The studies conducted by Lexander (2020) and Bønnhoff (2021) both demonstrate a prominent level of interest among refugees in utilizing and improving their ICT skills in Norway. It is important to note that the level of digital skills among refugees varies, with the majority demonstrating proficiency in using mobile devices.

However, on one hand, this type of digital skill is not considered sufficient in terms of the value of digital capital as well as from a structural level of digital competence within society today. Some studies even indicate the disadvantage of mobile skills as of too much use, in that way. Refugees rather interact online with fellowmen than interact with the host society and integrate, Potocky (2022) reports. In that way, mobile use is seen as a disadvantage regarding integration into host societies and cultures. The inadequate digital competence among refugees is attributed to their interpretation of society which again is intertwined with their socioeconomic and capital background, as Lexander (2020) and Potocky (2022) show.

On the other hand, while mobile technology use is considered insufficient in terms of digital capital, I argue that it remains an easily accessible tool for refugees and a potential study object for digital capital and one's habitus. Firstly, mobile technology requires minimal resources and is held by many, and secondly, it has various economic possibilities, as shown by Ragnedda and Ruiu (2020) by digital capital and is already possessed in many people's habitus. Moreover, addressing the mobile technology use through better digital competence education, can facilitate the production and improvement of this capital. Refugees who lack access to or the skills to use ICT efficiently may face challenges in integration and building their social capital (Alam & Imran, 2015; Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). However, this situation can be improved as digital capital can generate other forms of capital without requiring prior existing

capital as shown previously. A resourceful utilization of mobile technology within refugee integration and digital proficiency education should be looked more closely into.

Another example of the positive implementation of digital capital importance within integration and social inequality is indicated by in-depth research conducted by Abujarour and Abujarour (2020) in Germany, where the ReDi school for digital integration was studied. As a result of this work, they concluded that the findings indicate the willingness and ability of refugees to use digital technology for work and societal purposes. Given these findings, it is still unclear why there is a gap in the possibilities of putting these skills and the willingness to work in Germany. On the other hand, as we know, a key factor is that the availability of digital technology alone does not contribute to, nor develop the digital divide and social inequality. This development can have several explanations which were not shown in this study and need further investigation for better comprehension of this phenomenon. The need for further investigation is something researchers also acknowledged themselves.

The latter study also shows that as a majority, over 40% of the participants were qualified jobseekers with high ICT, educational and communication backgrounds, and in contrast, only 17% of participants had no previous ICT skills with lower education. This as well can have several reasons and was not analysed in this study. First, the interest in digital education was not studied among refugees outside the school at that time. As a result, the interest of the rest of the refugee's preferences regarding that kind of education is not known, nor is the level of education for the rest of the refugees that are not included in the study. Now again, this draws the next questions, as either is the disinterest related to cultural or for example the not discovered value of digital capital for those refugees included? The question is drawn here because previous studies indicate that the education level of refugees is largely variable, often depending on the cultural, socioeconomic, and geographical circumstances.

Given that an integrational program within the host society, where digital capital is important and the value of holding this capital in society is highlighted, is included in the education, can in that perspective possibly raise the number of refugees interested in that kind of knowledge expansion. Notably, as the background of the German integrational system was not studied, it cannot be comprehensively analysed within this paper, nevertheless opening up interesting insights and possible future research.

Furthermore, if the disinterest of hiring migrant employees lies on the side of the employers, who do not see the value of digital competence from the digital capital perspective, then again, the education of digital capital's amendable value could be presented to the job market and entrepreneurs. In that way, the value of digital capital immateriality and as a capital that has an advantage of conversion to other capitals, with previously possessing low or none of any other capitals, becomes visible and becomes a bridging source for diminishing inequalities. As shown here, the bridging nature of digital capital has a vital role in helping to understand the importance of micro-level individual digital proficiency and its impact contributing to the digital divide, disparities, and even social stratification within society.

6. 4. MORAL PERSPECTIVE

As the last important aspect, I argue that there is a moral perspective to holding digital competence within one's habitus. As shown, the concept of digital capital goes beyond practical advantages in sending and receiving information. Digital capital has a moral dimension that is increasingly valued today. I argue that the moral perspective can from one side be seen as a capital that can empower, by giving a voice to marginalized individuals, including refugees, which from a structural level equalizes society, while on the other hand, from the micro-level, possessing digital capital can help one make choices and navigate the digital network in a way that the outcome is ethically sufficient directly to themselves and others around them. Morality lies in the consideration of the consequences and the choices made online and that as well can be seen intertwined within digital competence from a digital capital perspective and has, above all, both individual and structural outcomes.

As an example, this is especially true for poorly integrated foreign young women in Norway, as indicated in Rybalka and Brevik`s (2022) study for SSB[8] in Norway, as well as looking at the phenomenon of migrant mothers who possess low education and poor socioeconomic background, nevertheless having an important role for their children growing up in highly digitalised Norwegian society. Holding digital competence within one's habitus can be seen as having high value. Furthermore, as the value is underscored by the structural contribution of schooling education through the governmental aim, there is a need to address the gap in digital skills between the growing number of refugee parents who lack the necessary skills from their habitus, and their children. The children's digital education grows exponentially due to the structural competence goal regulations at school, while parents, having

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[8] *Statistisk sentralbyrå*, Statistics Norway, ssb.no

no such habitus in their possession, lack the skills and knowledge to keep up with both the national expectations and their children's daily activities (Bønnhoff, 2021; Rybalka & Brevik, 2022).

This phenomenon can create a societal clash, as refugee children, as future citizens of Norway, will have less valuable digital competence, as of lacking from their habitus from the home arena. This again, highlights the importance of ensuring that digital competence education as possible capital is made accessible for refugees within integration. Furthermore, the accessibility and availability of this competence to build one's digital capital, from an ethical perspective, might contribute to a more democratized society. The children of mothers with low or no digital competence will not as one possible outcome, develop digital competence habitus, contrarily to children with parents who possess a strong digital background, growing up in digitalised society. Arguably, habitus links the possibilities of individuals' socialisation processes (Ragnedda & Ruiu, 2020). Therefore, having a habitus with digital competence background will have an important arguable advantage for those possessing this from an early age as their parents also possess habitus from a digital capital perspective and can pass this on to their children. On the other hand, having parents with no digital competence and habitus, could, as one outcome, decrease the value of digital capital for those children, leaving them in a fortuneless position in society, and creating an unequal position for many refugee children.

However, the question remains of how to ensure that everyone, regardless of their socioeconomic background, can have access to digital competence education, and more importantly to see the value of this proficiency as one's capital. One challenge is how to measure digital competence without knowing someone`s social background. This is where the theoretical perspective as well as practical tools of measurement can be acknowledged. National methods, such as DigComp, can provide a starting point for measuring digital competence. However, a deeper understanding is needed to bridge the gap between the national expectation and the actual digital skills of individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds, and what will be the societal impact of not doing so.

In conclusion, digital capital has a moral dimension that can empower marginalized individuals and contribute to a more ethically equal society in Norway in the future. Ensuring access to digital competence education for everyone is a crucial step towards achieving a more democratized society, as it can bridge the gap of the digital divide and prevent further reinforcement of inequality while giving a voice to marginalized people.

CHAPTER 7
IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

This thesis was an attempt to study and evaluate a selection of sociological studies and frameworks related to digital competence among rapidly growing numbers of refugees and their integration into digitalised society. The findings were discussed, and the theory of digital capital was examined within the context, indicating that digital competence as digital capital implements social inclusion and counteracts social inequality. Considering the above and based on Norwegian structural expectations, these frameworks impact and shape our society and future individual possibilities. The findings indicate that despite the importance of this societal phenomenon, little systematic research on the effectiveness of integrational programs targeting the meso-level application of digital competence education for refugees and their later societal possibilities exist in Norway. This gives room for future research on this matter.

Moreover, as digital competence integral aspects for refugee integration were demonstrated along with the practical use of digital tools by resettled families in Norway, it can be argued that the acknowledgement of that kind of micro-level knowledge in relation to structural outcomes can contribute to structural inequality and segregation. Further, highlighting the essential, complicated role of migrant mothers in the digitalised Norwegian schooling system, indicating the importance of digital competence within one's habitus, as this again creates a digital divide and later societal inequalities, if not possessed.

However, as the study indicates, the implications of refugees' digital competence importance within integration and social inequality show an existing gap in academia and require more recognition as a phenomenon in Norwegian society and integrational programs. From that perspective, a theoretical approach of digital capital might help to bridge the gap in the perception of refugees' micro-level need for guidance from one side, as well as improve our ability to see the societal impact more clearly so that necessary competence implementation to municipalities can be carried out. Considering the findings illustrated in this paper, this can be seen as a proposal for further investigation of digital capital from the aspect of digital proficiency within refugee integration, and more importantly, its later outcomes for the reduction of social inequality and its contribution to a stable and sustainable democracy.

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