The socio-cultural integration of refugee children in Norway in everyday life - from professional perspectives

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ABSTRACT

Since 2015, the number of refugees has increased rapidly and there are emerging needs for the protections of these populations. Refugee children are especially victims of the brutal conflicts and one of the most vulnerable populations in the world. Refugee children are fragile and sensitive and also hold unwilling memories in vicious events through pre- and post-migration phases. The memories can be caused by future trauma that might negatively influence the well-being of these children. Moreover, refugee children are required to integrate into a new society. Many children are often faced with difficulties and challenges in terms of language acquisition, culture, social adaptation, isolation and separation after their arrival. Success in socio-cultural integration of refugee children general social cohesion that positively affects the well-being of both Norwegian children and non-Norwegian children in a community. This study is a qualitative study based on the results of semi-structured interviews with professionals working with refugee children in Norway. The professionals are either working at nonprofit organisations (NGO) or governmental institutions. The purpose of this study is to examine the challenges and difficulties refugee children experience in everyday life in Norway. The main results of the study indicate that there are cultural, social, academic and linguistic challenges. Especially, the lack of networks in schools and communities decrease children's opportunities to participate in social activities with Norwegian peers. As a result of a lack of interaction with Norwegian children, many of the refugee children experience difficulties in establishing friendships and integrating well into a new environment. Moreover, Norwegians are less careful about the cultural and religions backgrouds of refugee children; as a consequence, many children experience feelings of isolation, separation, discrimination and other negative emotions. The conclusion is that there is a need to reconsider the structure of integration strategies and education system in order to make refugee children be recognised and understood, and included in a community well.

Key words: Refugee children, sociocultural integration, education, assimilation

ABBREVIATIONS

CRC: Convention on the rights of the child

EU: European Union

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

HRC:Human Rights Commission

IMDi: Directorate of Integration and Diversity

MOE: Ministry of Education

IMDi: Directorate of Integration and Diversity

NAV The Norwegian Labour & Welfare Administration

NGO: Non-governmental organization

NSD: Norwegian Centre for Research Data (Norsk senter for forskningsdata in Norwegian)

PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

UDI: Norwegian Directorate for Immigration

UN United Nations

UNICEF United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

UNHCR: United High Commissioner for refugees

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

WHO: World Health Organisation

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1.0 Background

Globalisation generates pros in terms of economic growth, cultural diversity, improving information and technological resources and so on, whereas, as a result of globalisation more conflicts between countries have increased. Following a global migration trend, the integration of migrants has gained recognition as a worldwide issue. Each year, the number of asylum seekers has differed based on the scale of the crises or the conditions of receiving countries regarding asylum policies. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) defines refugees as persons who are forced to leave their home country and cannot return due to a fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political belief (*Figures at a Glance*, 2021). By the end of 2018, the UNHCR recorded the highest refugee numbers in history 25.9 million refugees and 3.5 million asylum-seekers throughout the world (Ogata, 2020). About 40 percent of the displaced population is children, and they are both vulnerable and the primary victims of 'any form' of abuse or neglect. These children are exposed to multiple dangers in wars and conflicts that affect their development and lives (Ogata, 2020). As a consequence of violent conflicts and the subsequent migration, the number of immigrants throughout the world has dramatically increased, especially after the Syrian War (Spindler, 2015). According to the UNHCR report by Spindler, more than 911,000 migrants and refugees had reached Europe. Most of them are forced migrants as the statistics recorded 75% of them came from war-conflicted countries like Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan in 2015. There are approximately 13.5 million forced Syrian migrants, more than half Syrian's whole population. 80% of Syrian refugees settled in neighbouring countries , and Turkey hosted about 3.6 million. Also, 6.7 millions people migrated to 128 countries in 2020 as a result of the Syrian war (Spindler, 2015).

In addition, they might experience social exclusion or discrimination through integration process in a new country. Social exclusion has two-sides: one, a rejection or expulsion from the place or the community, and two, being denied the possibility of accessing the host

culture and being defined as an 'outsider' (Fangen, 2010). In addition, another form of exclusion is 'othering' where the person is treated differently based on ethnicity, religion and culture. This case of 'othering' from one's ethnic background treats the person as 'different', discrimination targeted to specific groups of people, usually minority groups, in society (Fangen, 2010).

Ward and Kennedy (1999) indicate that the newly arrived immigrants' knowledge about the culture of the host country and their ability to negotiate effectively in the new society is at the core of sociocultural integration. Socio-cultural integration refers to 'the acquisition of a set of appropriate knowledge, skills, and abilities that enable newcomers to live in their new intercultural milieu' (Nakhaie 2020, p143). Moreover, Berry (2010) indicates, socio-cultural integration should be focused on the dimensions of language acquisition, social achievement, cultural learning and social competence. The acquisition of cultural skills helps refugees to fit into the new society and positively affects an individual's well-being, a sense of belonging, and also leads to an empowered sense of self-esteem and satisfaction for refugee children.

After the resettlement in the new country, refugee children are required to learn and understand a different culture and society, but many of them struggle due to cultural differences and a lack of language skills Norway where focus on this research. This lack of language skills leads to a lack of understanding the cultural norms of the host country and is directly related to a lack of social skills (Sbertoli 2016). Norwegian policies focus on efficient integration of refugees, such as language acquisition and learning social skills in order to provide the same opportunities as Norwegian in terms of education (Taguma et al., 2009). In addition,volunteer organizations also assist newly arrived immigrants to practice language acquisition (Sbertoli 2016). Norway recognises the responsibility for newly arrivals and, as a welfare state, takes responsibility for the migrants' incorporation into Norwegian society by supporting their integration process. Norwegian authorities established extensive introduction programmes in order to help refugees learn about the culture, customs and language and to improve their education (Wrench, 2007).

Thus, school plays an important role for refugee children where they can access education, learn language, culture, social skills, build social connections and gain support both from the school and local communities. Many refugee children missed school years due to a journey through pre- to post- migration phases; also they faced cruel events that have negative

impacts on school performance due to their psychological distress and emotional problems (Hart 2009). Therefore, education helps refugee children to cope with a new environment, improving their life and bringing a stable future. At the same time, learning could be a source of controlling themselves and overcoming post-traumatic experiences and finding purpose and hope in their life (Mason and Orcutt 2018). To provide a better environment for refugee children, schools are required to adapt to the diversity of the child population, and a good integration policy is directly correlated with a good welfare model.

However, understanding social and cultural norms of the host country is often difficult for refugee children at the beginning. Social and cultural norms here are defined as rules or expectation of thoughts or behavior based on shared beliefs with specific social or cultural groups. Social norms create certain social standards that judge appropriate and inappropriate behavior among a particular group (Betancourt et al. 2015). A consequence of misunderstanding social norms could lead to isolation or exclusion from the community or society where refugee children belong. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to focus on the socio-cultural dimension of the integration of refugee children in Norway through daily activities from the lens of professionals working with refugees. More specifically this study will focus on the barriers and challenges that refugee children face in daily life through an integration process and the supports are provided by institutions working with refugees to cope with those difficulties together with the host society.

1.1 Problem statement

Ward and Kennedy (1999) emphasised that the importance of knowledge of the host culture and language and of negotiation skills in the new environment are at the core of socio-cultural adaptation. Socio-cultural adjustment refers to 'the ability to negotiate interactive aspects of the host culture' (Nakhaie 2020). In this sense, integration is explained as the ability to know about, understand, and negotiate the socio-cultural environment of the host country. Learning language is directly related to learning culture and, furthermore, understanding the culture of the host country helps refugee children to integrate into a new environment effectively.

As the proficiency of language is a key to integration, many refugee children face difficulties learning the new language and culture (MacLeod, Meziane, and Pesco 2020). A study by

Walsh et al. (2011) indicated that lower proficiency of the host country language created more challenges for children in their communication with friends and teachers and in their academic outcomes. Another study indicated that low proficiency in the language of the host country leads to acculturation stress (Betancourt et al. 2015). Language is a source of gathering information, understanding culture and social norms of the receiving country, as well as being a tool of communication, and aid in developing the identity of children. Thus, language competence is one of the most important factors for promoting social participation of immigrants in all kinds of social settings. While learning a new language and culture, it is also important to value the culture of origin of the refugee children during the integration process. Primarily, integration entails a form of double competence, one coming from the immigrants' own ethnic and cultural groups and the other from the new culture and society (Berry 1997). This double competence helps individuals cope with cultural transition by getting adequate social support from both cultural groups (Martiny et al. 2020).

Earlier research shows the importance of compatibility of two cultural identities that can bring positive outcomes for the wellbeing and self-esteem of immigrant children. A study conducted by Martiny, et al. investigated the interrelation of immigrants' ethnic identity and national identity and how these affect their integration and well-being in Norway. A positive relation was found between the national identity of the host country and ethnic identity when immigrants tried to construct a dual identity in order to avoid conflict between the culture of origin and the receiving country (Martiny et al. 2020). On the other hand, if a negative relationship is strong, conflicts arise between the two cultures. In addition, immigrants have a positive outcome in their dual identity when their endorsement of the national identity of the host country is high. (e.g Kurdish-Norwegian) (Martiny et al. 2020). Positive contacts with members of the host country promote immigrant children to integrate and give them a sense of belonging in Norwegian society and this relationship is mediated by national identity (Martiny et al. 2020).

When refugee children resettle in a new country, they cannot avoid facing challenges of socio-cultural integration in the new society. However, relatively less research has focused on the determinants of socio-cultural integration of refugee children (Nakhaie 2020). At the same time, it has been argued that avoiding these cultural conflicts between the two cultures is essential for refugee children, while maintaining their own culture of origin actually helps reduce acculturation stress. However, many refugee children often experience acculturation

stress due to pressure from the host country. In helping to avoid this stress and conflicts between two cultures, it is important to shed light on the individual assessment of adaptation experiences of refugee children and their challenges through socio-cultural integration.

1.2 Research question

The aim of this study is to explore the experiences of socio-cultural integration of refugee children from the lens of professionals working in the field with these children in Norway. The goals of this study are to understand how the professionals define the future aims of socio-cultural integration of refugee children in the community these children belong to; to understand how refugee children should perceive and value their culture of origin while adapting into Norwegian culture; and to understand how social workers support effective integration of refugee children in the new society.

The following research questions were addressed;

- How do professionals engage in supporting socio-cultural integration of refugee children;
- What is the goal for socio-cultural integration of refugee children in Norway;
- What kind of challenges do the refugee children face;

1.3 Limitation

The study has the following limitations:
1. The sample of the study was drawn from a single municipality in Norway; therefore, results may not be generalizable to other municipalities in Norway or other countries;
2. Due to the Covid-19 situation, some educational institutions had been under pressure of strict restrictions (e.g., needed to reorganise the structure of their integration programme) and they were not willing to participate in the interview process, although they may have accepted being involved if there was not Covid-19.

1.4 Overview of the research structure

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first chapter discusses the background of the study by identifying the necessity of this study and presenting the research questions. The next chapter focuses on the literature review and theoretical framework which guide the discussion and analysis of the data. The main focus of the discussions are the definition of socio-cultural integration used in this study, Norwegian integration policies, and issues for refugee children found from the literature. Then, in chapter three, the discussion moves to theories that are applied to analyse the collected data. In the following chapter, chapter four, the coded-data and analyses from semi-structured interviews are discussed, aiming to answer three research questions. Finally, the last chapter begins with a summary of the study and moves to discussions by reflecting on the findings, analyses, and literature reviews. After the discussion, the research implication and recommendations are presented, and finally the study is concluded.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

Chapter will present an overview from existing literature of information related to socio-cultural integration of refugee children. First, I discuss the concept of integration used in this study. Afterwards, I will explain an introductory programme for refugee children, the importance of language, social connections and cultural competency in the host country. Then, the discussion moves to a theoretical framework that is used to analyse and discuss the finding in the future chapters.

2.1 Literature review
2.1.1 Integration

Integration of refugees has been one of the challenges in Norway; however, the term has many definitions and is therefore understood differently. This is a sentiment echoed by Castles et al (2001), 'There is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration. The concept continues to be controversial and hotly debated' (p12). According to UNHCR, the successful integration of refugees is considered in legal, economic and social domains (*Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in the European Union*, 2011).

Figure 1

Figure 1 indicates a conceptual framework defining core domains of integration explained by Ager and Strang (2008). According to the framework, the public arenas such as employment, education, housing and health are widely suggested as key indicators for successful integration. Those areas are essential to achieving social rights of refugees that provide the same opportunities to access social welfare in the host country (*Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 1996).

Usually, integration takes place in the community where refugees belong; thus support and activities with other members of the local community are essential to successful integration. For refugee children, school is an important place for contacting members of the host communities and establishing supportive relationships of integration (Ager and Strang, 2008). However, refugee children often meet barriers of integration in the school due to differences of culture from the host country. Macdonald cited one respondent who said (McDONALD, 1995):

> It was difficult; it takes time. In my country I used to sit in class listening to lectures. Here you have to contribute, discuss, ask questions, which is more difficult. If I was used to these things in my country it wouldn't have been very hard, but it takes time to get used to it.

Refugee children often experience isolation and exclusion (difficulty making friends, racism, bullying) due to a lack of sufficient support for learning the new language, culture, and school system. In some cases, the population of the host country simply discriminates against different ethnic groups due to the lack of understanding. Thus, school plays an important role for refugee children to enable them to acquire essential social skills in surviving in a new society. Moreover, several studies indicate that post-migration stressors have an effect on mental health just as pre-migration traumatic experiences do (Eide and Hauge 2020; Calhoun & Tedeschi, 2006; (Phillimore, 2011). Moreover, a part of the refugee childlrens' family might still remain in the conflicted areas, triggering their trauma and anxiety. Those experiences through migration stressors increase the psychological vulnerability of the refugee children.

After resettlement, refugees first meet linguistic and socio-cultural barriers in a new society. When refugee children enter new cultural environments, they lack an understanding of the norms and basic values of the host culture, the characteristics of the lifestyle, and the norms of interpersonal communication that they need to learn to integrate into a new society (Chilingaryan and Zvereva 2019).

According to Chilingaryan and Zvereva (2019), there is a three-level model of adaptation of migrant children: education, socio-psychological, and cultural adaptations.Chilingaryan and Zvereva recognise that educational adaptation is essential to the integration of migrant children. In school, children can learn to assimilate 'prescribed norms and clues of school behavior', especially by their being included in 'educational activities' and 'their participation in extracurricular activities' (Chilingaryan and Zvereva 2019). Furthermore, socio-psychological adaptation refers to the interpersonal interaction with classmates, developing harmony and relationships in the class. Finally, cultural adaptation emerges with 'the development of students' creative abilities, their knowledge of the history and modern life of the host society, readiness to follow the cultural samples prescribed for adolescents and young people' (Chilingaryan and Zvereva 2019, p7).

The main goal for the Norwegian government's comprehensive integration policy is to ensure that all refugees have the same rights as its citizens, including access to resources and the expectation of participating in the community. Norwegian society values 'gender equality,

equal rights, freedom of speech, freedom of religion and belief, solidarity, socio-economic equality, tolerance, participation in working life, democracy and civil society, protection of children's rights, diversity and multilingualism as resources' (*Immigrants and Norwegian-Born to Immigrant Parents*, 2021).

 Also, all people who live in Norway have obligations and rights for participating in and contributing to working and social life. Thus, employment is a key for participation because it provides people financial independence and equality. Moreover, the Norwegian government promotes gender equality, expecting that both men and women should participate equally in political, economic and social activities. This provision is expected of immigrants as well. This participation strengthens the sense of belonging of immigrants. Successful integration increases employment among immigrant populations that promote equality with the rest of the population.

As the population of immigrants increasd, Norway has become a more diverse population, and the government promotes a multicultual society without discrimination and segregation by ethnicity, nationality and other factors. In Norway, the number of residents with immigrant backgrounds is 997,942, i.e.18.5% of the total population, and the number has been increasing in the last decade (*Immigrants and Norwegian-Born to Immigrant Parents*, 2021). The Norwegian comprehensive integration policy claims equality and diversity in the population, stating that (The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion 2012);

> You may be a woman or a man, immigrant or born in Norway, young or old, employed or unemployed, religious or atheist, homosexual or heterosexual or have a disability. Categories and labels attached to individuals or groups may have stigmatizing effects and contribute to exclusion from the community. It may put individuals into a category which create and reinforce differences which lead us to think in terms of 'us' and 'them'. Language must be inclusive. There must be acceptance for the fact that there are many ways of being Norwegian. Differences within the group 'immigrants' will usually be greater than differences between immigrants and the rest of the population (p,5).

Also, the Ministry of children indicates that children are main actors for the future; thus rights should be granted to (The Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion, 2012);

- immigrants and their children to have received a quality education that is adapted to their needs;
- all children to have equality early-development conditions and to fully use their abilities in their best interest;
- young girls and boys to make independent choices about their own life and future;
- to create a sense of belonging in Norway through citizenship policy;
- to combat racism and disctimination;
- activities in the voluntary sector to be open and inclusive.

Also, all members in society should be aware of diversity in the population, and public authorities have obligations to ensure all people residing in Norway have equal access to public services.

2.1.2 An introductory class for refugee children

Before transferring to local educational institutions, refugee children are placed in introductory classes for one to two years. The main purpose of the introductory classes is to enable refugee children to learn sufficient levels of Norwegian to be able to follow academic studies as soon as possible. At the same time, refugee children learn Norwegian culture and customs to adapt to Norwegian society and interact with Norwegian peers (Eide and Hauge 2020). Four types of introductory programs are categorised below (Eide and Hauge 2020):

1. Inclusion in *regular classes* in primary or lower secondary school (either from day one or after introductory class). Newcomers may still get special Norwegian language tuition, bilingual subject teaching and/or mother tongue teaching;
2. *Special introductory classes,* with a particular focus on Norwegian language training. When the refugee students master Norwegian 'sufficiently' (a relatively indistinct term), both orally and in writing, they are transferred to regular classes;
3. *Combined classes*, i,e. regular classes combined with participation in introductory classes;
4. *Special introductory schools,* where newly arrived students follow a special introductory course at a school, not necessarily the local school. (p.25)

Inclusive education is a fundamental principle in Norwegian education and schools must provide adequate education for everyone. Under the Norwegian Education Act (1998), section 1-3 indicates 'all education and training—throughout primary and secondary education—must be adapted to each student's abilities, qualifications and personal circumstances' (Eide and Hauge 2020). Moreover, refugee children have different starting points from native students in Norway, although Section 1-3 of the Education Act states that 'the training must be adapted to the abilities and prerequisites of the individual student.' This means schools have obligations to ensure that each student, no matter their national background, has a satisfactory learning outcome from their education. (Eide and Hauge 2020). There is a special need for newly arrived children in preparatory classes to gain additional teaching aid (Rambøll, 2013). Newly arrived children are entitled to special education (or special needs education), either in the regular classes or alternative classes. face challenges in supporting newly arrived students in terms of promoting their adaptation in a new environment and meeting with satisfactory learning outcomes (Rasheedah & Nontokozo, 2020)

2.1.3 Education for refugee children

Both immigrant children should have satisfactory results in education and social life and the government has an obligation to provide adequate education for them. Thus, the provision of government includes efforts to improve multicultural competence for staff working at educational institutions, to expand the benefit schemes for immigrants with poor language skills, and to recruit more people with immigrant backgrounds as teachers (Security, 2017).

Education is important for individuals, in order to provide opportunities for refugee children to gain knowledge and necessary skills to live satisfactorily and independently. Every country that receives refugee children has responsibilities to supply an adequate education for those children (Eichler 2019). Importantly, education is a fundamental human right, indicated in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that insists not only on the right of access to education, but also to the quality of the education (*Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, 2015):

Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and

to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among… racial or religious groups…. (Article 26)

Thus, education is a powerful tool to empower the social and economic wellbeing of children in the future and enrich their lives. Norway follows the UN Child Convention that insists every child has a legal right like the other Norwegian children. 'Article 22 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) lays out state authorities' responsibilities concerning asylum children (*Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1990):

> State Parties shall take appropriate measures to ensure that a child who is seeking refugee status or who is considered a refugee in accordance with applicable international or domestic law and procedures shall, whether unaccompanied or accompanied by his or her parents or by any other person, receive appropriate protection and humanitarian assistance in the enjoyment of applicable rights set forth in the present Convention and in other international human rights or humanitarian instruments to which the said States are Parties (CRC Article 22.1).

School intervention is a key to fulfilling the rights of children; however, not all Norwegian schools are able to provide the right inclusion strategy due to the lack of experienced and trained teachers, facilitators and practical methods (Eichler 2019). In some municipalities, schools do not offer adequate support for refugee children and their families. As a consequence, refugee children are not recognised as a vulnerable population, because some people do not understand the reluctant situation and frustration of the refugee population (Eichler 2019). This is a problem in Norway that some municipalities lack support for refugee children in terms of adapting to a new society.

2.1.4 Language acquisition

Language competence is one of the most important factors for promoting social participation of immigrants in all kinds of social settings. Language is a source of gathering information, understanding culture and social norms of the receiving country, as well as being a tool of communication and aid in developing the identity of children. Nakhaie also emphasises

successful integration based on language proficiency of the host country that enhances immigrants to fit into the host cultural milieu (Nakhaie 2020).

According to Behavioral Perspectives (Cultural Learning Approach), people often lack the necessary skills in cultural transitions in order to engage the new culture. To overcome these difficulties, individuals are required to learn culture-specific behavioral skills (such as language) to be able to communicate and negotiate within the new culture (Bochner, 1972). The cultural learning approach emphasises the importance of learning an intercultural communication style, as well as learning values and norms in order to be successful in sociocultural adaptation. Moreover, language proficiency and communication competence are key factors that operate in both daily communication and in establishing interpersonal relationships in society. Thus, a cultural learning approach emphasises the interconnection between language fluency and sociocultural adaptation, promoting both the acquisition of social skills and social interaction (Sam & Berry, 2010).

A study conducted by Swami, et al. (2010) that recruited 249 Malasian national undergraduate students at univeristy in Britain found that higher sociocultural adjustment was related to lower percieved cultural distance and less discrimination by immigratns in the host society. In addition, Swami et al. showed that language proficiency is one of the most important factors for better socio-cultural adjustment (Swami et al. 2010). Another study by Khoury observed 214 participants from 12 different countries in Germany, investigating the hypothesis that higher levels of language proficiency are associated with better sociocultural adjustment. In Khoury's study, 40% of Syrian refugees reported that language was the biggest barrier in adjusting in the new society (Khoury 2018). Also, higher educational levels of immigrants directly correlated with better language acquisition and sociocultural adjustment. In addition, a study conducted by (Daniel et al., 2020) emphasised that learning Norwegian was a protective factor for successful adaptation of immigrants and the ability of speaking the language of the host nation promoted social inclusion and association with Norwegians.

At the same time, ethnic identity is formed by culture, including language. Thus, native language loss may cause a lack of a sense of belonging (Vadder and Horenczyk 2006). Therefore, maintenance of the mother tongue is important for all immigrant children for identity formation and their well-being, while learning the language of the host culture leads to a sense of belonging.

Regarding children and second language acquisition, age is an important factor for how well they can be fluent with the second language. In fact, it is believed that children learn the second language faster and easier than adults (Ward & Kennedy, 1999). In addition (Collier, 1987) analysed that the optimal age of arrival for fully acquiring the second language is between 8 to 11 years. For instance, a study by Gibson (1988) examined Punjabi immigrants in California. He indicated that age of entry into the American school system was a significant factor for second language acquisition for non-native students. In addition, second language acquisition theory states 'there is a period during which learners can acquire a L2 (second language) easily and achieve native-speaker competence, but that after this period L2 acquisition becomes more difficult and is rarely entirely successful' (Rod, 2008, p39).

2.1.4 Social connection and social bridge

The satisfaction of social life depends on the relationship with family, friends, and neighbours in the community. In addition, rich social connections of individuals enrich [Don't say 'rich' and 'enrich.'] the social trust and leads to social cohesion. Many refugee families struggle to build social networks in their community and feel distress with the new environment in the host country. Thus, the community should provide more resources for enhancing healthy social relationships and social cohesion(Forrest & Kearns, 2001). This role of social connection is to enable refugees to access necessary public services, and the connection also helps develop a sense of belonging in the community (ECRE, 1998):

> Integration is a long-term, two-way process of change, that relates both
> to the conditions for and the actual participation of refugees in all aspects
> of life of the country of durable asylum as well as to refugees' own sense
> of belonging and membership of European societies.

According to the Refugee Council Working Paper document of 1997, integration is described as (Landgren, 1999):

> a process which prevents or counteracts the social marginalisation of refugees,
> by removing legal, cultural and language obstacles and ensuring that refugees
> are empowered to make positive decisions on their future and benefit fully

from available opportunities as per their abilities and aspirations

As refugees gain more experience living in the host country, they expand social networks and connections that enhance their knowledge of the host country and improve their social connection (Nakhaie 2020). It is very important for refugees to feel 'at home' and be accepted by the members of the host society; also they need to develop the sense of belonging in the host society. Thus, participating in everyday activities with people in the host society, such as school- or work-related, communal, political and social, promotes the integration of refugees. Intensive involvement and acceptance with the local people helps develop a sense of safety and security of refugees that is associated with positive outcomes (Ager and Strang, 2008).

2.1.5 The culture of immigrants and cultural similarity

The culture of immigrants can be a cause of misunderstanding among part of the host population. Refugee children bring their own background and customs which are unfamiliar in the host country, and these are often not well represented to the members of the host society that may lead to feelings of isolation in the host society. As a consequence, many children experience cultural shock between the two cultures (Chilingaryan and Zvereva 2019). To cope with these shocks, it is important for children to be ensured to have a safe environment and to be surrounded by people with healthy self esteem, a desire for cooperation, courage, and self control.

Alkan, (2011) introduced an ethnic identity model that emphasizes the importance of a strong ethnic identity for healthy integration and well-being of immigrants. In fact, many children face difficulties learning a new language of the host country; but at the same time, it is also important they continue to develop the language of their origin as it strengthens their self-esteem and identity (MacLeod, Meziane, and Pesco 2020; Vadder and Horenczyk 2006). On the other hand, the language assimilation model emphasises that acquisition of the host country language (second language), rather than relying solely on the mother tongue, contributes to a better outcome of academic performance and social participation (Driessen 2000). Lastly, language integration indicates that children with proficiency in both the host country's language and their own language of origin reported higher social adjustment and wellbeing rather than children with lower levels of bilingualism (Vadder and Horenczyk

2006). The relationship of acquisition of the language and culture of the host country and refugee children's origin affect their well being and integration outcome. Children grow up between two cultures and experience identity confusion and adaptation problems if they lack skills, knowledge and feelings related to their cultural background (Vadder and Horenczyk 2006). In particular, children and young people might lose their ethnic identity and 'develop a new identity by attaching more significance to the host culture' (Nakhaie 2020, p145).

A study conducted by Martiny et al. investigated 'the relationship between ethnic, national, and dual identity and the role of perceived cultural conflict with young immigrants in Norway' (Martiny et al. 2020, p314). The research hypothesis was that Norwegian and ethnic identity would be negatively related , whereas they predicted that immigrant children's national and dual identity would be positively related (i.e., compatible) Also explored what role perceived cultural conflict plays in the relationship between the national and dual identities of young immigrants in Norway (Martiny et al, 2020). Positive contacts with members of the receiving country promoted immigrant children to develop a dual cultural model, while fewer contacts and wide distinction from the receiving country could lead to discrimination or separation. Contact with members of the receiving society is considered an important predictor of dual and national identity (Martiny et al. 2017). If children endorse more national identity of the receiving country, the positive consequence arose in their integration process.

2.1.5 Cultural competency

Professionals working with refugee children with various cultural backgrounds play a significant role in supporting their integration in the new society. On many occasions, professionals are required to be culturally competent with those refugee children from different cultural backgrounds. The practises in refugee resettlement should take a holistic approach that both assesses the multiple needs of refugees (social, cultural, political, spiritual or psychological, etc.) and provides adequate services in a long-term process (Negi and Furman 2010). Additionally, the services and support should be culturally competent, where assessments should be non-judgemental and non-discriminatory. Also, refugee children should be included and their voice should be reflected in the practice (Potocky, 2010) Also, those supports are supposed to be focused on the needs of refugee children, conducting

individual assessments, including their own goal setting and flexible supports. This involvement of refugee children empowers independence and strength and supports the right to choose. Also, those supports are supposed to be focused on the needs of refugee children, conducting individual assessments, including their own goal setting and flexible supports.

Emphasising the importance of the culture through a transnational perspective, understanding and respecting cultures and embracing differences are essentially important to make harmony in the society. Cultural competence is one of the core values of social cohesion. In working with immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers, professionals are required to examine carefully the backgrounds of newly arrivals to avoid discrimination and provide adequate services. (Abrams & Moio, 2009) have noted that 'cultural sensitivity was originally coined in response to the need to work in culturally appropriate ways with minority ethnic groups; over time, ideas about cultural competence have evolved to incorporate all groups at risk of social exclusion with reference to disability, sexuality and a range of other identity markers' (Harrison & Turner, 2010). A lack of cultural competence leads to attitudes of anti-immigration and causes various types of discrimination regarding nationality, race, gender, language and culture.

The study by MacLeod et al. (2020) investigated language proficiency and problems through an introductory programme and assessed the approaches of teachers and schools for those children. Commuting to introductory school can be an extra burden for some students, as the schools for refugee children are often centralised. Also, those children who are in special education need to transfer to the local school after finishing an introductory programme. Moreover, it can be an extra burden for refugee children to reintegrate into a new environment again. However, teachers in this study showed sensitivity and deep consideration for childrens in terms of differences in language abilities and cultural diversity of children in the classes. The teachers also emphasised that the consequence of not mastering both first and second languages leads to difficulties in the refugees' social interactions with peers and in understanding academic studies. This study emphasized a strong encouragement for teachers to learn about an individual family's strengths, including 'home language knowledge, valuing of education, and high levels of parental education, and then building on these to support children's language learning' (MacLeod et al. 2020) .

2.2 Theoretical framework

2.2.1 Acculturation theory

Berry's acculturation theory is used to explain how cultural groups and individual members cope with the issue of how immigrants fit into a new society or new environment. Thus, acculturation is a two-way interaction between the dominant cultural group and the other and influences one and all in daily life . The culturalization theory is used to discuss an ideal moral of integration of refugees and criticisms in the present conditions. The classical definition of acculturation is that it 'comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups' (Herskovits 1936 cited as (Berry, 1997). More specifically, Berry introduced a framework for understanding acculturation as 'the compatibility (or incompatibility) in cultural values, norms, attitudes, and personality between the two cultural communities in contact needs to be examined as a basis for understanding the acculturation process that is set in motion.' (Sam & Berry, 2010)

Berry introduced acculturation strategies categorised into four terms: 'assimilation', 'separation', 'marginalisation' and 'integration'. These terms are used to explain how well people adapt to a new society. First, assimilation is the strategy in which individuals prefer to seek close interaction with other (or new) cultures, and are less likely to maintain their culture of origin. Assimilation is often used as a synonym of acculturation; however Taske and (Raymond H. C. Teske & Nelson, 1974) indicate acculturation and assimilation are two distinct processes. Acculturation is potentially a two-dimensional process in which the two groups influence each other through interaction, while assimilation is a unidirectional process in which the host country has an absolute influence on the other group (Sam, Berry, and Sam 2006). Second, separation strategy explains that individuals preserve their original culture and do not wish to interact with a new culture. Marginalisation is rejection of bothe the culture of origin and the dominant culture. In the theory, integration is considered the preferable model because individuals maintain their cultural values while interacting with another culture. Thus, individuals, as an ethnocultural group, are willing to take an integral part in the larger social network. Lastly, marginalisation strategy indicates that individuals are less likely to maintain their original culture, but, at the same time, do not interact with the other culture.

As a consequence, this strategy often explains reasons for exclusion or descrimination (Sam and Berry 2010). These four acculturation strategies are described by five intercultural issues: 'include acculturation attitudes, cultural identities, language knowledge and use, social relationship, and value' (Sam and Berry 2010, p477) According to Berry (2006) integration strategy is explained as the most preferable approach in acculturation. Primarily, integration entails a form of double competence, one coming from the immigrants' own ethnic and cultural groups and the other from the new culture and society (Berry 1997). (Khoury, 2018) found integration is positively affected to both sociocultural adjustment and the wellbeing of refugees. This double competence helps individuals cope with cultural transition by getting adequate social support from both cultural groups. The acculturation theory is useful to explain how well refugee children can adapt to new societies and the importance of maintaining the heritage culture while acquiring the culture of the host society.
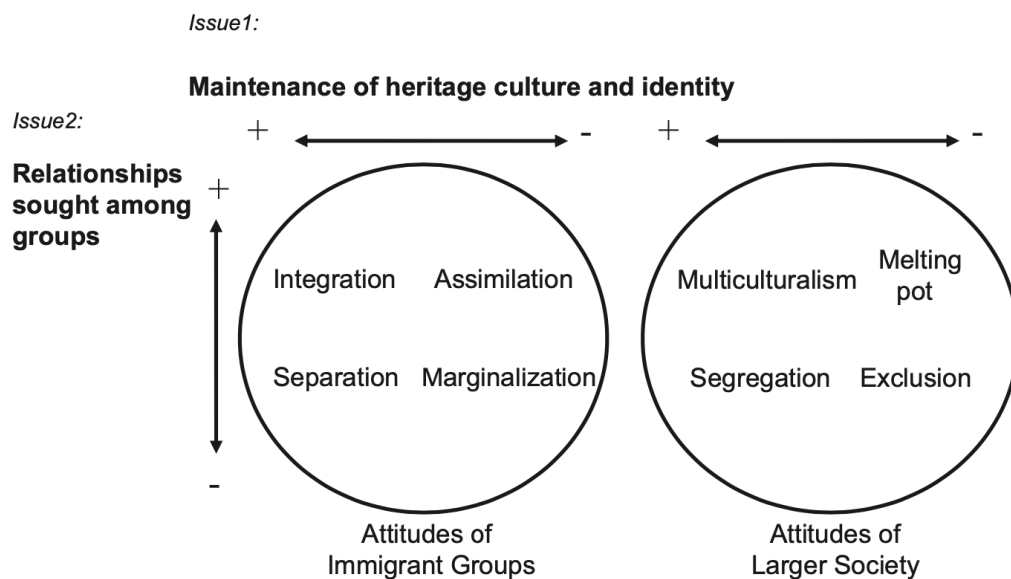
Figure 2. Acculturation strategies in ethnocultural groups and the larger society.

(Sam and Berry 2010, p477)

Also, the acculturation theory explained how cultural adaptation positively affects the individual wellbeing and sociocultural integration of refugee children in a new society. Khoury (2018) observing 214 immigrants from 12 different countries in Germany, found a relationship between assimilation and sociocultural adjustment and the well-being of

immigrants. The study found assimilation positively correlated with a high level of sociocultural adaptation, while the relationship between assimilation and well-being had negative outcomes. (Khoury 2018) Specifically, refugees from Syria, in which the culture is relatively different from Germany, faced more acculturative stress and depression, since assimilation requires more sociocultural changes of individuals. (Khoury 2018) In addition, Oh et al. (2002) discussed two types of assimilation: language assimilation and interaction with the host society, and identity assimilation. Their study found that higher language-associated assimilation positively correlated with psychological distress by reducing acculturative stress, while a high level of identity assimilation led to high stress and depression levels. (Oh, Koeske, and Sales 2002) Thus, the theory can be used for the discussion of the challenges of refugee children in daily life regarding culture, language, social connections and so on. And the discussion will include suggested approaches in the legal, economic and social sphere.

2.2.2 Social identity theory

The cognitive perspectives of social identity theory concern how people think and what they recognise about themselves and others in society in intercultural encounters. (Sam and Berry 2010) Immigrants often encounter questions about their own identity in society or the community. More specifically, cognitive aspects mainly focus on how the refugees' own groups (such as sharing the same ethnicity or nationality) and the other groups (groups in the host country, for example) are identified and categorized in society (Hogg and Abrams 1988). People automatically distinguish 'the in-group' and 'the out-groups' and naturally establish distinction between national (with the larger society) and ethnic (with their heritage) groups. Subsequently, people often have a more positive image and strong bonds with members of 'the in-group 'and naturally establish a boundary between well-liked in-group members and disliked out-group members (Mangum and Block 2018). According to the theory, people naturally categorize themselves in a particular social group and share the thought, this natural human behavior defined as self-identification (Tajfel and Turner 1986). This self-identification is directly related to social identification, discussed by Tajfel. This social identification creates a sense of belonging of people in particular social groups that leads to wellbeing of individuals (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Also, it is important that most individuals satisfy their feelings of social belonging as all humans need social interactions with others,

such as family, friends, lovers and so on. In this context, the sense of belonging to the society or group helps to motivate people to satisfy their self-esteem.

Also, social identity theory describes how prejudice and discrimination toward memebrs of ethnic outgroups occurs from the members of ingroups who are comperatively superior to the other groups. In society, people who are members of an ingroup are perceived to be similar and share positive qualities. In constant, ethnic outgroup members are considered to be different from ingroup members and hold less favourable qualities, thus they might attract disctmination and prejudice (Nesdale 1999). This tendency can be explained in children from researchers, as children started to develop awareness of their group identity and make a comparison between their standing as a member of one social group (ingroup) versus another ethnic outgroup. Moreover, children prefer to be members of a group which is superior to the others that possess lower social status (Nesdale 1999).

According to developmental social identity theory, children started to recognise ethnic differences at around 3 years, particularly children living in multi-racial societies (Nesdale 1999). The categorisation is following adult' identification/labelling of an outgroup member, such as skin colours, nationality and so on. However, children do not construct racial categories on an idiosyncratic basis, they are more likely to categorise the others based on the social categories such as race and gender which are already specified in their intergroup relation (Nesdale 1999). At this stage, children started to be aware of their race or ethnic categories where their self-identification begins.

Children around the age of 6 to 7 years, they start to learn social identity, where they belong to, or a member of a particular (ethnic) group. First, children focus on their intergroup qualification, which means more on similarity rather than differences (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Moreover, children more focus on favour and preference of intergroup and have positive affective response on their self-identification. Thus, children are less likely to instigate ourgroup prejudice and their friendship preference is not related to ethnic preference or any stereotypical view towards outgroup members (Hraba & Grant, 1970); Fishbein & Imai, 1993). This means, children at this stage are less likely to reject the outgroup stimulus. Indeed, ethnicity is ' typically not an especially salient social category to young children and certainly pales in comparison with the gender category - friendship and playmate preferences are typically determined by gender, at least up to 10 to 11 years of age' (Nesdale 1999, p6).

2.2.3 Social capital theory

According to the theory, social capital includes three levels: social bounds, social bridge and social links. The first level of the theory, social bonds, focuses on the significance of common identity, sharing strong relationships such as family. The strong relationship also refers to people sharing the same ethnicity, culture and settlement experiences (Pittaway, 2009). A strong attachment with people who share common identity (ethnicity, culture and nationality) increases well-being and solidarity. Thus, strong attachments (social bonds) within refugee communities or ethnic groups in a host country generate a sense of safety and identity (Zetter et al., 2006). However, lack of interactions with people in the host country (social bonds) can be a cause of being 'the outsider' from the majority population (Norwegian). If the tightness of the social bridge is weaker, social exclusion will be more clear, as a majority group can exclude or not be recognised as a part of a community or society. The next level is bridging connections with other groups within society. Increasing relations between groups sharing different identities promotes diversity in the community. The interaction between Norwegian and refugees through social activities in the wider community develops collective norms and values while maintaining their own identity. For instance, positive interactions with neighbourhood and community generate the sense of belonging and security of refugees in a new country (Ager & Strang, 2008). Lastly, social links within society at national and institutional levels, refugees can gain authority and power in society (Pittaway, 2009). Gaining authority in society increases the participation of refugees that directly influence government policies at state level. By gaining power in society, refugees can gain access to resources within social service and welfare. Increasing positive social capital in the community might reduce or end harming others (refugees) in society. Thus, the bonds and bridge between people who are refugees are surrounded by local, communal and societal leave is essential to build trust and ensure harmony in community and society.

2.2.4 Ecological theory

There is an emergency necessity to promote integration of refugees in the host countries and the best practical way for this to happen for refugee children is through their school environment as a primary source for children in daily life (Rasheedah & Nontokozo, 2020).

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory provides a useful framework from which to determine various contexts that affect refugee children's well-being, integration and development. This theory applies for a dynamic perspective on the interaction of refugee children in the environment where they belong, and explains how the children are influenced by their environment in numerous ways. Thus, this theory is useful to examine both the intervention factors that should be implemented for refugee children (Betancourt & Khan, 2008).

Bronfenbnner (Bronfenbrenner, 1996) is a pioneer of introducing an ecological system model of human development. The ecological system theory shows the different levels of environments, such as micro- to chrono- levels of relationships, that may influence the belief of people in the community and society as whole.

Figure 2

Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory

Chronosystem
Changes Over Time

Macrosystem
Social and Cultural Values

Exosystem
Indirect Environment

Mesosystem
Connections

Microsystem
Immediate Environment

CHILD
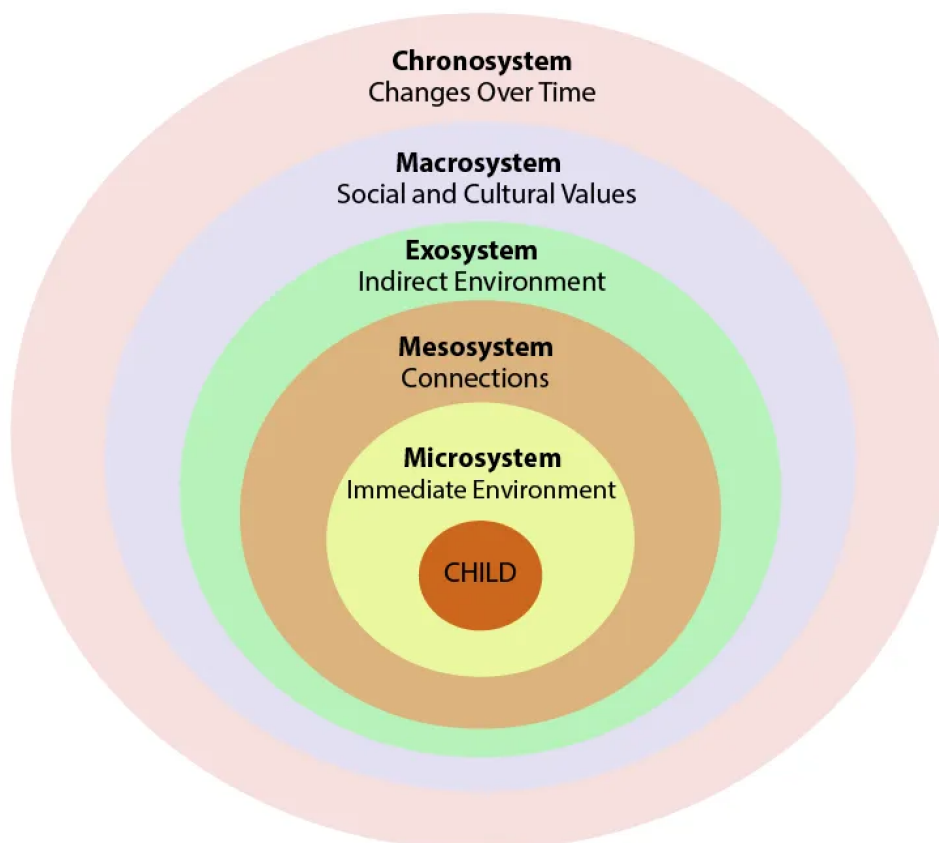
(*What Is Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Systems Theory?*, 2019)

Figure 2 explains that the theory includes the micro-, meso-, exo-, macro- and chrono-systems. In Bronfebnner's ecological system theory, a macrosystem environment is nested within layers and each system is involved in the next level. The microsystem refers to the child's immediate setting such as family, school, neighbour and peers (Bronfenbrenner, 1996). The mesosystem refers to relationships and interactions of how the home and family of a child affect school and vice versa. An ecosystem explains how a child is indirectly affected by the environment of the parents. For instance, unemployment conditions and refugee status of parents affect the child. And a macrosystem focuses on the structures of a society in terms of political and economic policies and so on on a larger scale. Therefore, systems and setting of children's influence far beyond their direct contacts includes mutual contacts between the individual and one's environment (Bronfenbrenner, 1996). As stated by Bronfenbrenner, 'Development is defined as the person's evolving conception of the ecological environment, and his relation to it, as well as the person's growing capacity to discover, sustain, or alter its properties'' (Bronfenbrenner, 1996, p9). Social integration occurs when the developing system is well coordinated and individuals have adequate support in the environment.

The Bronfenbrenner theory recommended that the microsystem is the smallest and the closest relationship and environment in which children are surrounded. As an example, the microsystem refers to relationships with family, school, community and peer groups of the refugee children. (Bronfenbrenner, 1996) In the micro-system a family is a good example that is the smallest and immediate environment in the system. For instance, the parents and the children are both interdependent and interrelated.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Research method and sample description

In this section, the research method for this study is introduced. Then, the sampling method and a process of collecting the empirical material data are explained. Afterwards the process and what approaches were used to analyse the data are discussed. Lastly, ethical considerations are considered, and data collection is reviewed.

3.1 Research method and sample description

To conduct my study, a qualitative research method was preferable in order to gain an in-depth insight and understanding of the experiences of the socio-cultural integration of refugee children in everyday life through the lens of social workers. Qualitative research is a way of understanding social reality because it is able to explore social phenomena, to 'unpack the meanings people ascribe to activities, situations, events or artefacts; build a depth of understanding about some aspect of social life; and build "thick descriptions" of people in a naturalistic setting' (Leavy, 2014, p2). Also, Silverman (2017) indicates that qualitative methods allow researchers to enter into the targeted participants' worlds and to understand their experiences and perspectives. Thus, a qualitative approach is suitable for this study, because an inductive theory is generated after the data collection and proposed toward the end of the research process (Silverman, 2017).

3.2 Sampling method

A purposive sampling was used in this study. The method is widely used in qualitative research. Within this method, participants are recruited based on the researcher's judgment about who will be most suitable at providing specific perspectives on the particular phenomenon of interest (Patton, 1990). According to Patton (1990), the 'logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for the study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term "purposeful sampling' (p 169) Important for the recruitment process for this study was to gain the perspective from

professionals about the socio-cultural integration of refugee children, exploring the issues of the children's experiences in every daily life. Thus, this aspect of the study endeavoured to include the phenomena of integration at a particular institution, in addition to which purposive sampling allowed me to focus on information-rich data from each participant.

3.3 Data collection and limitation

Before starting the interview, the process for Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD) was reacquired, is a supervisory body for all research projects in Norway. After receiving approval for data all participants gave informed consent.

In this study, semi-structured during in-depth interviews were used to explore the everyday experiences of refugee children through the integration process in Norway. By using this type of data collection, a blend of closed- and open-ended questions were prepared for flexible interviews designed to get in-depth information of the participant's experiences.

The data for this study was collected in Oslo, Trondheim, and Stavanger municipality in Norway. Seven people were willing to participate, four of them were of Norwegian nationality, two were of US nationality who had immigrated 5 to 10 years previously, and one was of Syrian nationality who had immigrated to Norway and gained refugee status about 5 years ago. Those non-Norwegian participants actually experienced difficulties in integrating in Norwegian society, especially in terms of language and culture. Their experience enriches the different perspectives on the research questions, because they are also known-Norwegian and deal with integration processes. These participants were working professionally at either governmental organisations or humanitarian organisations for supporting refugee children and families. and Stavanger. People from these three major cities conducted the interviews because these cities accept more immigrants and refugees than most of the other cities in Norway. The interviews were conducted during the period of spring in April and May 2021. Each interview was held online according to the restriction of Covid-19.Each interview took 40 to 60 minutes and was recorded.

3.4 Data handling and analysing

In this study, an inductive qualitative thematic analysis was selected to establish the findings. Nowell et al. (2017) indicate that 'can be widely used across a range of epistemologies and research questions.' (p2) The analysis makes it suitable for this study. There are both pros and cons for using thematic analysis. The disadvantages of thematic analysis is a lack of substantial literature compared to other well-known methods, such as ground theory, phenomenology, and ethnography. Thus, there is an uncertainty for researchers in conducting a rigorous thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). 'While thematic analysis is flexible, this flexibility can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes derived from the research data (Holloway & Todres, 2003)(Holloway & Todres, 2003). Consistency and cohesion can be 'promoted by applying and making explicit an epistemological position that can coherently underpin the study's empirical claims' (Holloway & Todres, 2003), p345). On the other hand, the advantage of thematic analysis is its flexibility because it is able to modify the needs of the study. Also, thematic analysis allows researchers to gain rich, detailed analysis and a complex account of data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Importantly, an advantage of using thematic analysis is that it is a useful tool for examining the perspectives of various participants in the research, examining similarities and differences and generating unanticipated insights (Nowell et al., 2017). Also, the method allows researchers to summarise key features and themes of a set of data, with a well-structured approach, and generate a well-organised final report.

In thematic analysis, the process steps are: '1) getting familiar with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report.' (Nowell et al. 2017, p4). Those six steps were followed for data analysis.

The transcripts and recording were uploaded and I corrected, read and reread, relistened to the content of the interviews (Nowell et al. 2017). Thereafter, open codes were developed from the significant parts of the transcripts. Then the codes with similar meaning or relations were categorised together and categories and subcategories were corrected based on existing patterns. Throughout the analysis process, I actively searched for similarities, differences, and patterns in the data gathered and reviewed those patterns several times. Afterwards, gradually categories and subcategories emerged suited to represent the identified themes (Nowell et al.,

2017). The categorisation was reviewed until every selected data and each sentence's meaning was explored. Thus, the review and analysis of data was done rigorously and carefully until all relevant data was identified.

3.5 Ethical consideration

There were several ethical issues in this study. Ethical considerations were important in order to ensure confidentiality. Before conducting the interview, all participants were informed about the aim of the research and they were asked to sign a consent form. They gave permission to record the interview. The data would be stored for two years after the end of the research. Have the right to withdraw from the interview or use the data for any reason in the period until the end of 2021.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

The study describes socio-demographic characteristics of the participants, discusses findings from the interviews and interprets the outcomes in light of the collected data. The purpose of this study is to address three research questions: professional engagement in supporting socio-cultural integration of refugee children; to examine what is the goal for socio-cultural integration of refugee children; and to consider the challenges refugee children face in daily life in Norway. The research question assesses the goals of the refugee children through the integration process and the challenges faced by refugee children in their daily life in Norway.

4.1 Socio-demographic information of participants

This study involved seven service providers (three public servants and four employees working at NGO/NPO). Table 1 below presents the information of participants. All participants shared their experience in regards to the research topic under the study. Of the public servants, one was from Malvik municipality, a part of Trondheim region located in a central part of Norway, and the other two were from Stavanger municipality, a part of Rogaland region situated on the south coast of Norway. Of employees working at NGO/NPO, one was from Oslo, the capital city that has the largest immigrants population in Norway (*Oslo Population 2021 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)*, n.d.)), two were from Stavanger municipality, and the last was from Bergen, Norway's second largest city located on the west coast. All participated in the interview with English; however, there were some ideas hard to interpret in English from Norwegian. Thus, after the recording, one volunteer helped both to interpret for the researcher and to transcribe the interviews.

According to the research targets for participants, all have at least three years experience working with refugee families and children. All had different experiences based on their work experience and nationalities. One of the participants from the NGO was from Syria and actually had experienced the migration process after fleeing Syria in 2015.

4.2 Professional perspectives

The focal point of the first research question was to explore the participants' professional perspectives through their experience interacting with refugees. Findings from the professionals explored seven themes in response to this research question. In this section, themes are issues in the Norwegian integration policy, integration versus assimilation, stereotypes through media, Norwegian expectation, trust, social capital, and sense of belonging and ~~security~~ are discussed. This section begins with discussing the themes by comparing them with existing literature.

4.2.1 Issues in the Norwegian integration policy

The participants considered the perspective that the Norwegian refugee system is not sufficient for children and is more focused on adults. According to the Ministry of Education and Research, the aim of integration is to increase the participation of immigrants in the labour market and social activities in general. Thus, the main challenges are to focus on ensuring economic and social sustainability, opportunities for all, and to create a welfare society with trust, unity (Hagelund, 2020). One participant, PS2, commented:

Refugee children are a special case. The Norwegian refugee system is adult oriented. It is all about getting adults into work, more focus on the work force in the future to contribute to society.' (PS2)

Another professional (PS3) remarked that the social system was not focused on refugee children populations until after the rise of the crisis in Syria in 2015:

'It started to focus on the minor population after the refugee crisis in 2015. That has been only five to six years. I hope the society includes refugee children better. Since 2015, the government introduced a special class for all refugee children aged under 16 that offers learning Norwegian for preparing their ordinary classes.' (PS3)'

(Hernes, 2018) has argued that Scandinavian countries including Norway shifted policies in a restrictive approach to refugees after the rise of the crisis in Syria in 2015. In the first time, more than 1,2 million‑ asylum-applicants were reported and the registered number in Norway

was 30,470, ~~t~~about 2.8 times more ~~of~~ than 2014-figures (10,910) (Record Number of over 1.2 Million First Time Asylum Seekers Registered in 2015, 2015).

As a consequence of overwhelming migratory movements, Norway has struggled adapting the existing social politics and the welfare model into the response of the crisis, and policy reform was required. The financial burden in terms of the social security bill was concerned by the government, to 'ensure that asylum seekers' social benefits are on a level where Norway does not appear as economically attractive in relation to comparable European countries' (*Tiltak for å møte flyktningkrisen*, 2015).

UNHCR recommends that refugees who are beneficiaries of protection are recommended to receive long-term residence permits and rights,which were recommended at the early stage. In the other words, refugees need to receive initial integration support and should be involved in the mainstreat efforts (including social fundings) to integrate into the third-country-nationals (*Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in the European Union*, 2011).

 Establishing a sustainable development in the policy, activation of refugee populations in the labour market was key (Hernes et al., 2019). Thus, the strategies include the requirement of language acquisition and promoting self-sufficiency that is based on labour-intensive outcomes.

4.2.2 Integration vs assimilation
Like other European countries, Norway has a challenge to strike a balance between equality and difference, 'between unity and diversity, as the government attempts to foster a fair and just a society that includes both old and new Norwegians' (Eriksen, 2013). Regarding social integration in Norway, a Norwegian multicultural policy stresses diversity and equal opportunities participating in education and the labour market. Also, UNHCR stressed an importance of integration of refugees in a host country integration of refugees in a host country that contribute to strengthen positive attitude in the host community by respecting refugees that enhance social cohesion (UNHCR,2011. However, many scholar criticised the fact that Norwegian society leans towards assimilated-oriented tendency.

The reason for this is based on the history of Norwegian nationalism, 'partly an indirect
        outcome of the Labour-led
construction of the welfare state, where equality has always been associated with cultural
homogeneity' (Eriksen, 2013), Thus, many scholars discuss the distinction
between segregation, assimilation and integration in Norway, defined as an egalitarian state
(Gullestad, 2002; Riemsdijk, 2017; Andersen, 2007; Jacobsen, 2018).

Berry's acculturation theory is widely used for analysing the correlation between well-being
of refugees and resettlement experiences, how cultural and personal factors collaborate to
either positively or negatively impact on individual resettlement experience. Integration,
refers to a two-way process, between the receiving society and migrants, is considered as the
most preferable model by many scholars (Berry & Hou, 2016; Adams-Ojugbele & Mashiya,
2020; (Raymond H. C. Teske & Nelson, 1974; Raymond H. C. Teske & Nelson, 1974). The
potential role of the host society that accepts immigrants to preserve their own culture while
adapting to the cultural norm of the host society (Berry, 1997). In contrast, assimilation is
acknowledged as the phenomenon in which individuals are expected to accommodate the
cultural norms of the host society or dominant culture over the cultural origin of immigrants
or minorities in society (Berry, 1997). In the case of Norway, the country is homogeneous and
egalitarian, thus mainstream culture and identity dominate the society and minorities. Norway
is leaning more towards assimilation that could be an inclusive approach towards the cultural,
social and religious differences of ethnic minorities (Eriksen, 2013) .

All professionals provided valuable insights into integrational processes of refugee children
in Norway. Interviewer PS2 stated:

'Norway tries to strive for integration, but I don't think that most Norwegians know the
differences between integration and assimilation. And the society forces immigrants and
refugees to assimilate in Norwegian society.' (PS2)

Participant EN4 discussed an integration model he preferred,

'Assimilation is not a goal, integration is a goal. A lot of Norwegians expect some
differences, but as expected more assimilation. Integration is better. I mean some cultures

don't fit in the Norwegian context. Keeping some aspects of culture of origin is preferable.'
(EN4

All participants perceive Norwegian society as 'monocultural and not inclusive', deeply rooted into static social and cultural norms such as equality, the Norwegian social code, and mono-culturalism which may turn into 'social exclusions' and 'otherness' in the society. Both refugees and Norwegians believe that there are high expectations about what it means being a Norwegian, about how non-Norwegians should assimilate into society.

4.2.3 Stereotype through social media

The participant from Syria (EN7) emphasised the fact that media contributed to the cause of discrimination. In the 21st century, social media has become one of the dominant sources for gathering information in terms of political, economic, cultural, and social issues. As a consequence, media possibly forms stereotypes or preconceived images depending upon the local-cultural context. (Sutkutė, 2019) For instance, Muslim terrorist incidents (especially from the case of attacks of 11 September, 2001) created stereotypical images in many parts of the world (Døving, 2020). As a consequence, prejudice and stereotyping proved widespread expeditiously and 39% of respondents stated in 2019, 'Muslims pose a threat to Norwegian culture.'according to a survey by the Pew Research Center (Døving, 2020) The statistic from Population survey and minority study, the figure. 1 The hate attitude towards Jews in Norway increased 5.1% from 2011 to 2017, the number of the Norwegian representative participants in 2017 was 1575 (Hoffmann, 2017).

Figure 3

"I have a certain dislike of Jews." How well does this statement fit with your own opinion?

Population 2011 (1522)	43.4	33.9	11.4	0.1	9.5	1.7
Population 2017 (1575)	48.5	32.7	10.8	0.5	5.9	1.6
Muslims (586)	35.7	13.4	36.1	5.7	6.9	2.2

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

■ Not at all ■ Rather badly ■ Impossible to answer ■ No response ■ Rather well ■ Completely
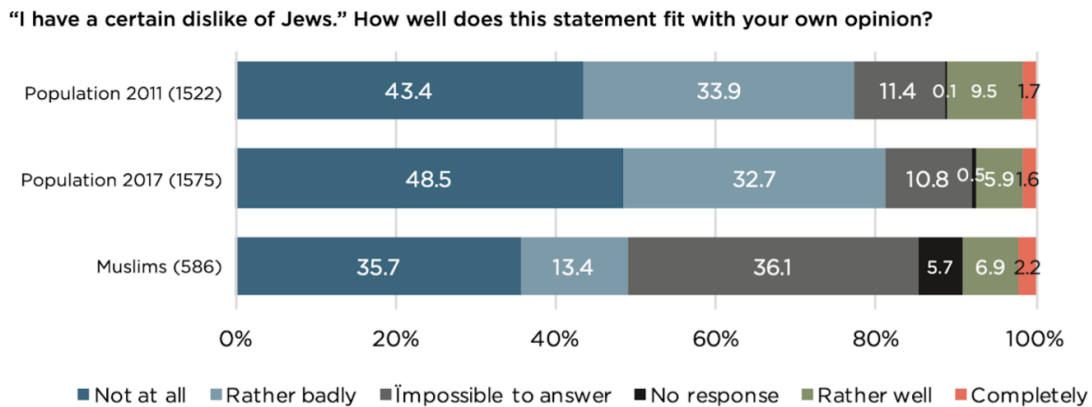
(Hoffmann, 2017)

The participant EN7, mentioned about stereotypical views toward Jews in Norway;

'Any kinds of social media, but especially with the news, said, every refugee from the Middle East has a terrorist background, so people here are afraid to contact with Muslims. Thus it is not easy for refugees from Syria.' (EN7)

Those images of refugees, especially Muslims, are wrongly understood as islamophobia by the world that generate hate, prejudice and fear against Islam population in general and these images create strong racism and discrimination towards Muslims (Sutkutė, 2019). Refugee children experience racism and discrimination due to their religious backgrounds, the report by Save the Children indicates ('Protection Beyond Reach', 2020). Many Norwegian children do not understand what it would be like being a refugee and their experience of being forced to flee. In the report, some of Muslim girls talk about their experience of being questioned about the reason for wearing a hijab, and those girls claims there is a lack of cultural sensitivity towards other cultures in Norway (Sævig, 2020). Participant EN5 also indicates,

'It is a lack of understanding. People perceive cultural norms from different lenses that leads to stereotype towards Muslims. For instance many people in Norway don't know a lot about *halal*, the Arabic word means permissible or lawful in terms of food, dressing, and many things. Thus, Norwegian can be very suspcious in Muslim's behaivour and habits.' (EN5)

The stereotypes of immigrants as terrorists create for refugees a sense of marginalisation, of 'otherness' (Sutkutė, 2019). The theory of stigma and otherness is employed by sociologists to emphasise how social identities are contested in a social context. Erving Goffman's social stigma theory explains how refugee status is negatively labeled based on perceived social characteristics every day. Goffman (1986) explains stigma as a construction of social control and marginalisation for certain groups of people in a vulnerable position. In the early 1950s, Simone de Beauvoir argued that stigma is a foundational category of human thought and it aligns to how society classified women as 'Others' (Kruks, 2012). Thus, the concept is relevant for our discussion of refugees in the Nordic context. de Beauvoir argued that woman is set up as the 'other' of man. Masculinity is therefore socially constructed as the universal norm by which social ideas about humanity are defined, discussed and legislated against. The findings of this study corroborates de Beauvoir's argument of 'otherness' in the context of immigrant (or ethnic) minorities. Thus, it is not surprising that the majority of the society in general sets themselves up as the 'One' (superior) while at once setting up the 'Other' (non-Norwegian) to feel inferior, which triggers stigma.

In the social work literature, Dudley (1997) working from Goffman's theoretical stances, explains stereotypes or negative views assigned to a person or groups of people when their characteristics or situations are viewed as different from or inferior to societal norms or practices. Dudley's (2000) definition offers an excellent stance for our discussion of the theory of stigma and 'Otherness' and contextualizes our findings on refugees in Norwegian society.

The next step is to understand the social construction underlying the concept of stigma and 'Otherness' on refugees and ethnic minorities. These social constructions describe the intersectionality through which stigma and otherness develop on the phenomenon of immigration. Building from Goffman's conceptualization, Jones and colleagues (Jones, 1984) identified six dimensions of stigma and otherness. These include concealability, disruptiveness, peril, origin, and aesthetics (Feldman & Crandall, 2007: Jones et al, 1984.

Bauman (1991) also indicated that the notion of stigma and otherness is central to the way in which societies establish identity categories (boxes). He argues that identities are set up as dichotomies: 'Woman is the other of man, animal is the other of human, stranger is the other of native, abnormality the other of norm, deviation the other of law-abiding, illness the other of health, insanity the other of reason, lay public the other of the expert, foreigner the other of

state subject, enemy the other of friend' (Bauman 1991, p. 8) Thus stigma is a socially constructed belief of social acceptance based on identity that are major causes of discimination and exclusion to certain groups of people, especially Muslims. This stigma negatively affects refugee children in daily life.

4.2.4 Norwegian expectations

Since the 1990s, multiculturalism has become the object of policies in Norway. For instance, White Paper No.17 (1996-7) on 'Immigration and Multicultural Norway' and White Paper No.49. (2003-4) on 'Diversity through Inclusion, Responsibility and Freedom' emphasise that respect for cultural distinctiveness should be restricted to practices that reaffirm prevailing norms and values grounded in the ideal of equality (Jacobsen, 2018). However, critics of Nordic gender equality argue that the sameness and solidarity of egalitarianism, oblige people to fit into certain norms:

'There are a lot of expectations of what it is like living in Norwegian society. I think that is very important to understand, because for many children and youths, they can feel like, if one is Norwegian, they have to be following cultural norms or customs in Norway. and it is hard for them, because there are a lot of things that are important.' (EN6)

Interestingly, all professionals mentioned that Norwegians are generally less communicative and open and are more introverted:

'They are not open to other cultures, they don't understand, and they are scared and criticise what is new to people, especially elderly, but young people can be negative, just not understanding and giving people chances. Norwegians don't understand foreigners' culture.' (PS3)

Another informant (EN4) described:

'Norwegian people, kids, don't always ask refugees to join in together with them. It is because Norwegians keep to themselves a lot, so refugees or immigrants think Norwegians are cold. Therefore, many non-Norwegian people think Norwegian is not easy to contact. So it is very important for Norwegians to be more inclusive and open.' (EN4)

Norwegian professionals mentioned some aspects about Norwegians that makes it tougher for refugees to communicate with them: 'Norwegians are not open minded and talkative as Americans, they are more similar to Arabic people in a way who also do not approach easily in the street'. (EN7)When it comes to interacting with neighbors, Norwegian often have barriers with the people: 'At least everyone working for our NGO has as their mission promoting people's integration, and even though local people are not very open to refugees, we are making an effort to work on that in order to have a more open and inclusive Norwegian society.'(EN5)

4.2.5 Trust in society and child welfare system

Comprehensive trust among refugees and natives is a vigorous indicator of successful integration. (Kumlin & Rothstein, 2010) The benefit from these trustworthy relationships generate meaning of social connections and work for increasing an advantage to individuals, communities and the whole society (Putnam, 2001) Moreover, social trust is strongly correlated with the levels of trust of ethnic minority populations. In fact, social interaction with family, friends, neighbours, group members and other non-kin, generate general trust that frequently comes from ongoing social experiences. (Glanville & Paxton, 2007) Furthermore, generalising trust in people is an indicator of integration between societal status or identification, and leads to a healthy society. Vårheim (2014) found that the trust between immigrants and native public institutions or volunteer organisations generate trust in society. In the interviews, all informants emphasised the importance of building trust:

'It is very important to build up more trust with minority families at kindergartens, schools and leisure activities. There is a lot of focus on creating a safe environment and a sense of security. The immigrants know there are people who care about them. Then you can build relationships. It might be trusting people. A lot of people have experience with trauma, their brain feels offensive after their arrival when it comes to trusting people.' (EN5)

The highest level of social trust among refugees and the Norwegian population can be established depending on the quality of interaction. The name of a positive syndrome of personality characteristics in which the symptoms are personal optimism, cooperation and confidence. According to social capital theory, trust creates homogeneous societies, honest government, and equal opportunities that generate positive effects on the interconnection within society (Jasinski, 2011). In society, trust between people is found in the social circumstances and it is associated with social variables. A survey by Pew Research Center shows the result that there are lower levels of trust among the socially vulnerable such as minority groups and low income groups. Those disadvantaged groups tend to be less well-fortified to cope with the outcomes of mislaid trust (Jasinski, 2011). Moreover, people with a higher educational level develop trust with others in their community and society rather than less educated people. High levels of social trust among the host population and refugees within society contributes positive effects in social integration, co-operation and harmony. Trust is also committing to the satisfaction in daily life of happiness, well-being in individuals and the community, and educational attainments (*Chapter 1: Social Trust and Its Origin | ESS EduNet*, n.d.) . Compared to Norway, most of refugees come from society with low trust level in society, as a professional (EN6) indicated,

'After arrival, most refugees experience a different level of trust in society compared to their home countries. We as Norwegian will do the right things. The government helps us, and the police are safe and not function well. These are things refugees are not used to. It is very important for them to learn about trusting.' (EN6)

Refugees come from countries which all have different characteristics and various levels of trust in society on account of cultural, religious and political beliefs. The trust is estimated by a degree apparently based on 'the distribution of trust scores of individuals within societies. Richer and/or more democratic nations are more trusting than poorer and less democratic ones.' (Warren, 1999). For instance, countries like Venezuela, Syria, and Afghanistan are at the lowest scale of the international trust scale, while welfare states like Norway, Sweden, Finland and Iceland are scored higher. (*Chapter 1: Social Trust and Its Origin | ESS EduNet*, n.d.) In Norway, people are bonded by high social trust at sociental, community, and at local levels that generate well-being of (Warren, 1999), including the refugee population. (Warren, 1999))

Minority groups (including refugees and immigrants) experienced different levels of trust in their previous communities and society. As mentioned above, people have stereotypical images towards particular ethnic minorities generated by information related to unfavorable incidents (e.g terrorism) that establish mistrust in society. The study by Karerine K.D researched experiences of refugees living in Rogaland, Norway. Many refugees felt disctimination based on their appearance (e.g., dark skin) and non-Western names (e.g., Muhamad). Kindergarten children between the age of 1 to 5 years, are more playful and are less conscious about culture and skin colour. (Karerina, 2016)If there is discrimination towards non-Norwegian population in children's surrounding, those children possibly develop racial aspects towards minorities by parents or another aduls. Discrimination might affect for immigrant's trust and vice (Karerina, 2016)

In addition, there are some concerns and mistrust that refugees' parents are not confident when it comes to the Norwegian child welfare service, called '*Barnevernet*' in Norwegian. Many cases were reported as '*Barnevernet* stealing children' from both Norwegian and immigrant parents, illustrated by one of the most influential court cases in 2015. ('Hundreds of Romanians Protest in Bucharest Child Protection Service of Norway', 2015; *Norway, stop child kidnapping!*, a.n.d.; Journeyman Pictures, 2016) In this case, five children from a Romanian couple living in Norway were taken away by *Barnevernet* in November, 2015. After the event, , in May, 2016, a demonstration was held by 5,000 Romanians in both Romania and abroad , protesting against the Norwegian child welfare system. Also, from other cases related to child protections with *Barnevernet*, many immigrant parents have negative preconceptions towards the service ('Hundreds of Romanians Protest in Bucharest Child Protection Service of Norway', 2015).

The most common issues is related to corporal punishiment, which is illegal and judged as an act of child abuse in Norway. (Whewell, 2016) For instance, participants EN7 and PS2 talked about their experiences:

'In Syria, parents hit children to educate them. But it is different in Norway. If parents hit children, the police or child welfare service is going to take their children out of the home easily. Because we use hit and shout to raise children, but Norwegian law does not allow this.' (EN7)

'One family came from Congo. They used to punch their children to discipline before coming to Norway, but they heard, if they shout at children in Norway, the *Barnevernet* will take the children out. In general immigrant parents are normally scared of *Barnevernet*. However, there is misinterpretation between the service and parents. Therefore, the child welfare service needs to interact with parents through dialogues to make sure they understand the service correctly.' (PS2)

There is another most crucial concern with social trust, the fact that refugees' parents are not confident when it comes to the Norwegian child welfare service, called '*Barnevernet*' in Norwegian. Many cases were reported as '*Barnevernet* stealing children' from both Norwegian and immigrant parents, illustrated by one of the most influential court cases in 2015. ('Hundreds of Romanians Protest in Bucharest Child Protection Service of Norway', 2015) (*Norway, stop child kidnapping!*, n.d.). ; (Journeyman Pictures, 2016) In this case, five children from a Romanian couple living in Norway were taken away by *Barnevernet* in November, 2015. After the event,in May, 2016, a demonstration was held by 5,000 Romanians in both Romania and abroad , protesting against the Norwegian child welfare system.From cases related to child protections with *Barnevernet*, many immigrant parents have negative preconceptions towards the service.

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service needs to interact with parents through dialogues to make sure they understand the service correctly.' (PS2)

4.2.6 Sense of belonging and security

As much as trust, a sense of security is a crucial factor for the well-being of refugee children. The core element of child protection is to keep children safe and to ensure their feeling of safety. (Connie & Johanna, 2018) According to the UNHCR report, 'I Want to Feel Safe', refugee children indicated that they need to feel safe and they are more willing to participate in activity

'It is very important for them [refugee children] to feel safe and to have a good life and to be able to manage their life. They need to know that they are a part of a community, not being outside. They are also participants in their community.' (EN6)

The opposite of belonging is loneliness and isolation, those emotions negatively affect mental and psychological health and they feel a strong sense of exclusion from society. (Sanders & Brown, 2015). . Refugee children often experience relational break downs, as many of them left families and friends at home. Moreover, this social isolation often leads to severe mental and psychological issues. In addition, the sense of alienation and exclusion create difficult situations of sustaining their life.

'Integration is kind of like inclusiveness and knowing someone in your neighbourhood and developing a sense of belonging. If you do not feel a part of the community, you feel isolated. ' (EN5)

And another participant, EN6, stated:

'What important things are to help integration by understanding how society and community work here, and people are not feeling outside of the community. Because somebody comes from outside of the community, they actually are at a very high risk to be in no groups. Maybe they are isolated, maybe they … some people…maybe…. doing drugs. So it is very important to make an inclusive community that will prevent being an outsider.' (EN6)

It is very important that refugee families know somebody in their community outside of the schools or work that helps lead to a sense of belonging. Thus many volunteer organisations provide the support for refugee families to link up with Norwegians to do some activities together ('Protection Beyond Reach', 2020).

4.2.7 Social capital

The theory of social capital explains how humans and social connections generate positive effects on the well-being of those people. Ludy Hanifan defined social capital as 'those tangible assets [that] count for most in the daily lives of people: namely goodwill, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit.' (Hanifan, 2011) Under Hanifan's definition social capital works as the links between people in terms of sharing values and beliefs in society that helps to generate trust among individuals and groups.

Ager and Strang (2008) indicate that social connection is an indicator of refugee integration. and used three terms to identify the aspects of connection: social bridges, bounds and links. Social capital is included in the Refugee Resettlement Strategy in Norway, mainly focusing on promoting participation that leads to a strong sense of belonging. Alexis de Tocqueville and John Stuart Mill indicate the core elements of social capital. People living in the same community or society learn that 'enhancing participation is generated by participating, and by connection in close contacts with others on a voluntary basis. We learn the habits of the heart of trust, reciprocity, co-operation, empathy for others, an understanding of the common interest and common good.' (Wolloch, 2018) Bourdieu defines social capital as 'the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition. The volume of the social capital possessed by a given agent thus depends on the size of the network of connections he can effectively mobilise and on the volume of capital (economic, cultural or symbolic) possessed in his own right by each of those to whom he is connected.' This idea basically indicates interaction between social capitals. Social capital focuses on social life, norms, networks and trust that increase participation and create harmony in the community and society.

According to the theory, social capital includes three levels: social bounds, social bridge and social links. The first level of the theory, social bonds, focuses on the significance of common identity, sharing strong relationships such as family. The strong relationship also refers to people sharing the same ethnicity, culture and settlement experiences. (Pittaway, 2009) A strong attachment with people who share common identity (ethnicity, culture and nationality) increases well-being and solidarity. Thus, strong attachments (social bonds) within refugee communities or ethnic groups in a host country generate a sense of safety and identity. (Zetter et al., 2006) However, lack of interactions with people in the host country (social bonds) can be a cause of being 'the outsider' from the majority population (Norwegian). If the tightness of the social bridge is weaker, social exclusion will be more clear, as a majority group can exclude or not be recognised as a part of a community or society. The next level is bridging connections with other groups within society. Increasing relations between groups sharing different identities promotes diversity in the community. The interaction between Norwegian and refugees through social activities in the wider community develops collective norms and values while maintaining their own identity. For instance, positive interactions with neighbourhood and community generate the sense of belonging and security of refugees in a new country. (Ager & Strang, 2008) Lastly, social links within society at national and institutional levels, refugees can gain authority and power in society (Pittaway, 2009). Gaining authority in society increases the participation of refugees that directly influence government policies at state level. By gaining power in society, refugees can gain access to resources within social service and welfare. Increasing positive social capital in the community might reduce or end harming others (refugees) in society. Thus, the bonds and bridge between people who are refugees are surrounded by local, communal and societal leave is essential to build trust and ensure harmony in community and society. (Ager & Strang, 2008)

4.3 Goal for children from professional perspective

The second research question of this study was to explore the goal of professionals in terms of socio-cultural integration in Norwegian society. The focus was to determine the future perspective and vision of professionals working with refugee children. Findings discovered

four themes. All interviewers shared the future goals and direction of support regarding challenges of refugee children in a new country by reflecting on their experiences and knowledge. Four sub-themes were founded within this study: Network in local communities where refugee children belong, promoting participation, ensuring refugee children have the same opportunities as Norwegian children, and financial support for refugee parents.

4.3.1 Network in a local community where refugee children belong.

Refugee families often miss interaction with the local Norwegian community and it is difficult to create their own network. All professionals found refugee families meet difficulties to reach out to networks to create connections in the community, and it is a challenge faced by refugee children in daily life. Due to the lack of social connection between refugee families and the community they belong to, building a social network is definitely a central goal for refugee children and families in a new community.

Professional PS2 mentioned:

'What I heard from refugee families I met is that they miss interacting with the local Norwegian community and they find it difficult to reach out to the challenges faced by children.' (PS2)

More specifically, building a network and relationships with the neighbourhood is essential for a refugee family to fulfill social life. Sin Yin Chung and Jenny Philimore researched the interconnection between social networks and health. The research found that refugee children who have interactions with friends and neighbours (speaking and meeting) in the community and their relatives are less likely to have emotional and physical problems. (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013) In contrast, having no social network is negatively associated with poor health of refugees. (Cheung & Phillimore, 2013) One of the professionals EN5 mentioned the problems among refugee families:

'Refugee children want to play football, they do not know where they can play. Maybe back in Syria children play football on streets, while children play in the teams and they need to find a team. Also, the parents need to know that it is important that children show up to every

practice and game and children need to go to a game alone and to take a bus. There are a lot of details that refugee families face to follow and understand.' (EN4)

Another problem professional EN5 from a small municipality in Oslo is many refugee families live in the same public building, thus they are separated from Norwegian families:

'In the backyard of the apartment, everybody is out there, especially families with kids. Because children play together and parents are having a BBQ, it is a nice place to meet with neighbours. A problem is all refugees are concentrated in the same building, and when they go out, they only meet refugee families. It is nice sometimes, because they meet people with the same language and culture, so it is good for Syrians to know other Syrians, but at the same time they miss opportunities to meet Norwegian families.' (EN5)

Generally, for refugees who are granted a resident permit on humanitarian grounds, resettlement is set by the decision of the municipality and of the national government. As participant EN5 mentioned above, the Norwegian integration strategy tends to be less concerned about the concentrated settlement of refugees in urban areas, thus it can generate urban spatial segregation across refugee populations sharing different socioeconomic and ethnicity that explains the level of separation from majority groups in the city area. A report by the Ministry of Research and Education (Kunnskapsdepartementet, 2018) indicates

'Some areas in large cities have many inhabitants with large and complex welfare problems [levekårsproblemer]. A concurrence of low labor market and societal participation, discrimination, and poor living standards, act as a barrier to participation.'

The strategy is more focused on central areas, highlighting support from the central government focusing on more major cities. Staver et al., (2019) indicate a 'High share of people without education beyond primary school than the rest of the city, children in low-income families, higher requirements for social assistance and disability benefits come from urban cities where there is a high immigrant population.' This statement is more likely to fit refugee children due to the financial situation of their parents as some of the participants of my study mentioned. (PS2, EN 4, EN5, EN6) The integration strategy and subsidy aids

for refugee families depend on the municipalities; however it is one of the reasons how refugee families can be segregated from mainstream society.

4.3.2 Promoting participation

Responses from professionals showed that refugee children need to participate in activities in the community or the municipality, like afterschool activities. This participation promotes refugee children's integration in the new community and provides a valuable opportunity to not only socialise with Norwegian children, but also promote the well-being of children. The document called, 'Inclusion of Children and Youth in Organized Leisure in Local Community in Norway' (ICY VOL) by The Research Council of Norway found participation in leisure activities generates positive effects on the well-being and psycho-social development of children. As a consequence, it recorded that children have less chance of commitment to social problems and increased life chances by developing positive minds. (*Inclusion of Children and Youth in Organized Leisure in Local Communities in Norway (ICY VOL)*, 2021) All professionals indicate that participation of refugee children is a crucial fact for creating harmony within the community::

'The main goal is for more children to participate in volunteer organisations and participate in leisure activities.' (PS1)

An interviewed professional remarked that in order to meet this objective, parents also need to make an effort together (EN5):

Participation from the parents is also crucial when it comes to kids' education and activities due to increasing the chances to meet Norwegian and other immigrant children in the beginning. The advantage of attending leisure activities is fostering new language acquisition, learning social codes, and building the network in the local area.' (EN5)

According to professionals, leisure activities are mainly organised by volunteer organisations, such as Save the Children, Red Cross, SOS-barnebyer and the mission church in Norway. And those volunteer organisations provide leisure activities such as hiking, something that strengthens an interconnectedness with children and youth in the community. For example, the SOS-barnebyer programme, 'TOGETHER', implemented programmes of activities for

both Norwegian and refugee children and youth while collaborating with municipalities. In the projects, 25 municipalities and districts are involved and more than 600 young people participated. (*Sammen*, n.d.) The aim of the project is to build respect, trust, intimacy, and equality in the youth environment through creating positive experiences together. Interaction between refugee youth and Norwegian youth builds respectful relationships and refugee children and youth are introduced positively into the community without precondition of refugee status. That helps to promote better integration for non-Norwegian peers. (*Sammen*, n.d.) There are resources for refugee children; however, all professionals mentioned that promoting participation is a current challenge in the community.

'The goal is to give refugee children opportunities to have a good life in Norway. Good life is that they feel safe, that they manage to understand what life will be like in Norway, and they feel they are a part of the community.' (EN6)

As the Norwegian Children Welfare Act claims, 'children have the right to be heard and to participate in decisions and actions that affect them and to have those views taken into consideration. To make sure a child is heard and able to participate falls under the responsibility of the Child Welfare Services.' (regjeringen.no, 2001) Thus all participants agreed the same right as Norwegian children must be provided for non-Norwegian children.

However, many refugee parents do not have resources and information to access those activities. Additionally refugee children in some municipalities go to special schools for refugee and immigrant children. Thus, those children do have fewer opportunities to meet Norwegian children in the first two years after arrival. In order to increase interaction within the community, many volunteer organisations and governmental institutions are responsible for enhancing and supporting the participation of refugee children.

'Volunteers spend time with refugee families, making them understand how to get information, particularly about activities for refugee or immigrant children. Children in Norway have opportunities to participate in activities that they are interested in. It is very important to make sure refugee families know there are volunteers who can support them. There are several supportive systems in different ways.' (EN5)

4.3.3 Financial supports for refugee parents

There is a significant income difference between Norwegian families and refugee families (especially during the first two years), thus refugee children are often not able to join costly activities such as trips abroad provided by youth clubs or some organisations for children's activities. Participant EN4 emphasised the fact. Approximately 80% of children in Norway participated in some leisure activities in their childhood. ('2018', 2018) In order to increase the participation rate of refugee children in leisure activities, volunteer associations collaborate with a few public and private organisations to organise leisure activities for refugee children or with Norwegian children together. Also, participants EN5 pointed out the negative correlation between the financial situation of refugee parents and the participation rate of their children.

Depending upon the municipality, refugee children have better opportunities to participate in leisure activities depending on the municipalities they are located. . As an example, Modum municipality has implemented a strategy named 'All children, irrespective of their parents', providing subsidy aids for low income families for ensuring the equal opportunity for all children in Norway. Also, some municipalities, where they are more experienced with refugee children, focus on increasing participation of minorities in leisure activities. Participation in activities positively affects the well-being of refugee children, by creating networks, reducing loneliness and gaining social support. This empowerment strategy achieved the inclusion of more children in leisure activities with different socio-cultural backgrounds. Moreover, participant PS2 indicated the case in Malvik municipality:

'In Malvik, we decided that the Norwegian Labour and Welfare Administration (NAV) would cover all expenses for the leisure activities for refugee and immigrant children. So in principle it is free for refugee children. But there is a central level of income for receiving this financial support. If you make slightly above the qualified amounts, families can not receive it, even if they [the activities] are not affordable.' (PS2)

4.4. Difficulties the refugee children face in daily life

As discussed above, professionals evaluate their experience by working with refugee children and set further goals. Finally, this section discusses the challenges that refugee children face

in everyday lives based on the discussion above. Crenshaw (1991) noted that understanding the intersectional dynamics of the crisis (e.g., refugee crisis) by practitioners and researchers may help in identifying the high levels of interferences who attempt to support vulnerable populations. In this section, three sub-themes were presented, which is considered an obstacle for refugee children in daily living.

4.4.1 Language

Because of the negative effect of not speaking the language of a host country, refugee children may feel isolation and alienation. The language comes to the first step to understand culture and society and is an essential tool for communication. Furthermore, learning language is essential to communicate with Norwegian peers and teachers at school.

Therefore it may be quite difficult for them to get connections and it is in this circumstance that the community should play an active role. Participant EN5 claims that language and culture can be learnt at first, but the real problem is that refugee children lose their social connections, leaving all their friends in their home country and they might not have any new friends in Norway:

'They have been struggling with language and how they can participate in more activities with Norwegian children, while they are in an induction programme. Due to the school programme, then they are not so separated. But in general, after two or three years, they go to ordinary classes, and they are of course easy to integrate, because they pick up language very fast and are surrounded by kids and talk Norwegian all day.' (EN5)

4.4.2 Social codes and expectation in Norway

Furthermore, children face other challenges requiring understanding, the social and cultural codes in Norway. Otherwise, children face more difficulties in their daily lives. However, there are organised events focusing on discussing cultural codes, on how to live in Norwegian society.

'Once a week in this place, we discuss different cultural codes, how to understand living situations and Norwegian society every one or two weeks. Then we discuss a different theme, for instance, a theme is called *Tvangsekteskap* (arranged marriage), when you marry someone your parents decide for you forcibly that it is not your own consent. This activity base, we discuss important subjects. At the same time, children play pool, Playstation, and other games together. Thus it makes a more comfortable environment for children.' (EN 6)

Institutions do not teach unwritten Norwegian social codes for new comers, thus many volunteer organisations take responsibility for that. In a speech by David Nikel, who established the volunteer organisation 'Given Hånd', where the aim is building bridges and effectively integrating minorities in Norway, he discusses the unwritten rules of Scandinavia. In Norway, people belong to certain social groups, where people like to play the same sports or organisations share their particular interests. Another example is '*dug nad*' where the community agrees to voluntarily clean the common spaces (like the parking area, garden outside of the building, and so on) at the apartment (Cappelen & Dahlberg, 2017). The *Janteloven* are social concepts created by and shared with Scandinavian countries and they emphasize a sense of egalitarianism in Norway. 'The Law of Jante (*Janteloven*) defines societal expectations of behaviors in society and emphasizes equality. The contents include (Nikel, 2021):

- You are not to think you are anything special;
- You are not to think you are as good as we are;
- You are not to think you are smarter than we are;
- You are not to convince yourself that you're better than we are;
- You are not to think you know more than we do;
- You are not to think you are more important than we are;
- You are not to think you are good at anything;
- You are not to think you can laugh at us;
- You are not to think anyone cares about you;
- You are not to think you can teach us anything.

A study by Turausky Kevin K explores the racism behind equality in Sweden (The Law of Jante). Many immigrants with non-Swedish backgrounds found the philosophy to interpret in

the right ways and actions. Specifically a Kurdish girl expressed her struggle as a means of 'being equal.' One interpretation can be equal distribution of wealth and well being for a more meaningful life for more residents in Sweden. On the other haad, 'being equal' by the Law of Jante could be interpreted as oppression of freedom of expression. (Turausky, 2014) As the girl in the report (interviewer) said (Turausky, 2014);

"Hmm. So *Jantelagen* is not allowed to feel you're better than another Swede."

She emphasised a hidden social codes in Swedish society, like

she should not be better and smarter than others in the class which explains hidden social codes that make her uncomfortable. Thus, the Norwegian social codes could force some children to be equal following its egalitarian norms and social, cultural and religious homogeneity. The girl felt oppressed by the Norwegian norms even though she can perform better than how she reacted.

In general, expectation is developed by the social codes and norms, and professionals discussed the Norwegian expectation in society that creates the hidden obstacle for non-Norwegians. Since the 1990s, multiculturalism has become the object of policies in Norway. For instance, White Paper No.17 (1996-7) on 'Immigration and Multicultural Norway' and White Paper No.49. (2003-4) on 'Diversity through Inclusion, Responsibility and Freedom' emphasise that respect for cultural distinctiveness should be restricted to practices that reaffirm prevailing norms and values grounded in the ideal of equality. (Jacobsen, 2018) However, critics of Nordic gender equality argue that the sameness and solidarity of egalitarianism, oblige people to fit into certain norms:

'There are a lot of expectations of what it is like living in Norwegian society. I think that is very important to understand , because for many children and youths, they can feel like, if one is Norwegian, they have to be following cultural norms or customs in Norway. and it is hard for them, because there are a lot of things that are important. ' (EN6)

Another informant (EN4) described:

'Norwegian people, kids, don't always ask refugees to join in together with them. It is because Norwegians keep to themselves a lot, so refugees or immigrants think Norwegians are cold. Therefore, many non-norwegia people think Norwegian is not easy to contact. So it is very important for Norwegians to be more inclusive and open.' (EN4)

Norwegian Professionals mentioned some aspects about Norwegians that makes it tougher for refugees to communicate with them: 'Norwegians are not open minded and talkative as Americans, they are more similar to Arabic people in a way who also do not approach easily in the street'. When it comes to interacting with neighbors, Norwegian often have barriers with the people: ' At least everyone working for our NGO has as their mission promoting people's integration, and even though local people are not very open to refugees, we are making an effort to work on that in order to have a more open and inclusive Norwegian society.'

4.4.3 Muslim customs

On top of that, ome of Muslim religion is extremely strict in their culture and religion that are not understood by the norwegian society. All professionals mentioned the importance for refugee children to preserve the original culture while assimilating the new local culture:

'Dealing with a new culture is very difficult while maintaining what refugee children originally have, and understanding what it is like to be living in Norway and also how to…… integrate into a new society. There are many things going on for refugee children at the same time.' (EN6)

The more striking the cultural difference, the more difficulties refugee children face. One of the interviewed persons mentioned that the Muslim school system was completely different from the Norwegian one. Depending on their parents' religious background, parents struggle between their native cultural code and Norwegian values. In Islamic countries single-gendered school is common traditionally, females are not allowed to wear bikinis when they go swimming and take off their hijab and fasting tradition (McClendon et al., 2018; *Single-Sex Education*, 2008) as a participant EN7 emphasised the points. Refugee families are sometimes quite restrictive in a sense they would not allow children to adapt quickly to the hosting country values as they fear about the new community. Therefore, it is

important to spend time talking to refugee children and families to learn and explain to them the social and cultural code in Norway. However, they are also parents who want their children to improve their life condition to better standards they used to live in.

4.4.4 Individualism vs Collectivism

There are different cultural values among Western countries and so-called third-world countries, in terms of the former present as individualism and the latter as collectivism. Usually, refugees coming from countries are preferable in collectivism while Norway is favored in individualism. The first of all, culture defined by Hofstede is 'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one human group from the another.' (Hofstede, 1980, p.25) A culture is formed by everyday interactions between people in community and society and people share certain beliefs and cultural values, such as liberty, equality and justice. (Hofstede, 2001) Thus, different cultural values emerged among different nations. Secoundy, Western world promotes Individualism based on their cultural values. It is an issue addressed by the degree of interdependence a society maintains among its members, whether people's self image is defined in terms of 'I' or 'we'. In individualistic societies people are supposed to look after themselves and their direct family only. Whereas in collectivist societies people belong 'in groups' that take care of them in exchange of loyalty. (What about Norway?, online: ND)

As an example, the figure 4 illustrates the scale of individualism and collectivism by countries. Norway scores 69 in individualism, and other Nordic countries score 68, while Islamic countries like Syria marked 35 and Iraq was 30. (Tuleja & Schachner, 2020) As a score is higher, the country is defined by individualism.

Figure 4
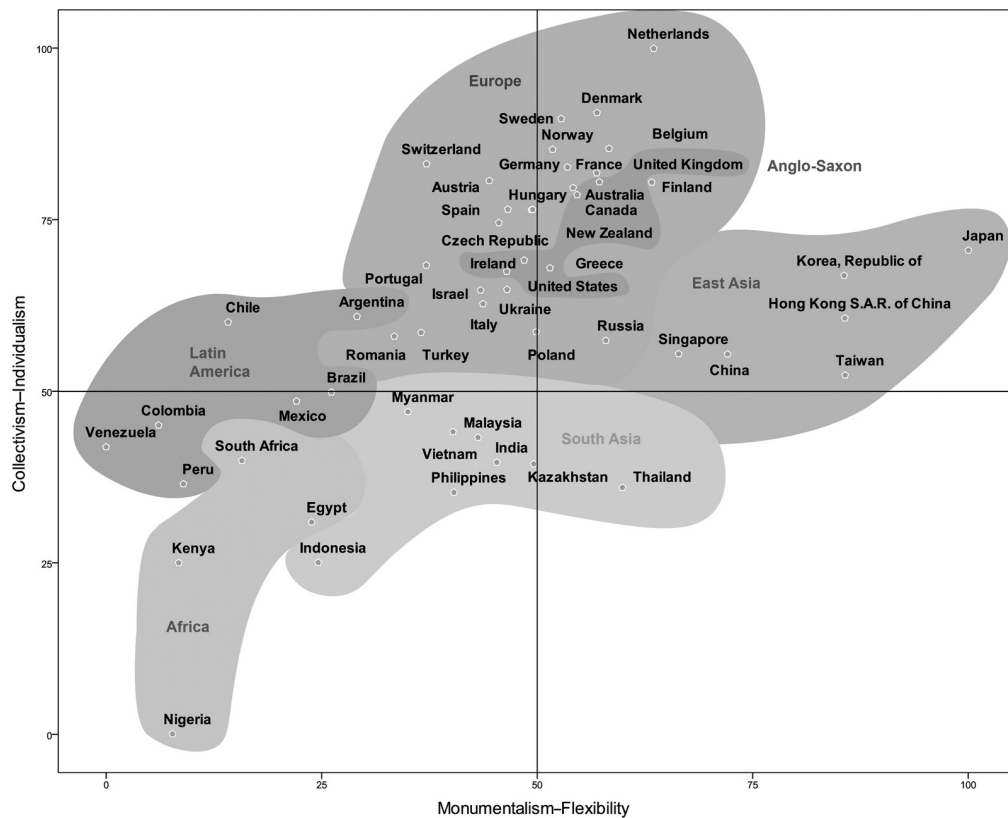
(Tuleja & Schachner, 2020)

Here, specific differences between individualism and collectivism among Norwegians and refugee's population are discussed. Norway, as an individualistic society, is in favor of self importance and expects individual autonomy; also personal opinions and values are regarded as important (Author 380mcsc & inavia, 2015). The expectation in Norwegian society is financial independence and equality among citizens. In other words, the individual expectation in life is that career comes first and then family (Borchorst & Siim, 2002). On the other hand, countries more leaning towards collectivism have the opposite lifestyle and attitude of society. From a Western viewpoint, collectivism is defined as an opposing platform compared to its implications from Islamic doctrines (Author 380mcsc & inavia, 2015). The concept of collectivism in the Muslim world strongly prefers that mutual association is essential for human beings (strong interconnections) within the relationship. The collectivism emphasises the importance of maximum restraints on liberty and autonomy that individual in favor of (Ahmad, 2011). Moreover, family members are generally bound by strong ties, and the society or community acts for collective or group interests.

As a consequence, the discrepancy of social theories in the Western World, Europe in particular, and some non-Western countries like Muslism and Asian follows collectivism attitudes. The fact generates cultural conflict within social ideology between individualism and collectivism, especially refugee children. Their feeling of being stuck between the family's expectation from their cultural origin and the host country's expectation for individuals is unavoidable (*Conflict between Family and Culture*, n.d.) The professional PS3 indicated about the difficulties refugee parents meet based on their believe;

'Refugee parents might want to hold their children at home a little bit and might stay home in the afternoon, evening. Especially girls. Mom and dad are afraid that children will go to a party with Norwegian teenagers and drink, which is prohibited. Actually the refugee parents over caring children, however, Norwegian parents are not holding children at home because they respect the independence of the children and believe the community is safe.'

Some Muslims are extremely strict in their culture and religion that are not understood in Norwegian society. Therefore, professional EN4 emphasized the importance of talking time for refugee children and families to learn and understand together the social and cultural codes in Norway and the differences from their home.

CHAPTER FIVE
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

In the preceding chapter, the analysis of data has been presented. Chapter 5 consists of a summary of the study, discussion of the findings, implications for practice, recommendations for further research, and conclusion. The purpose of the following sections is to expand the topics which were studied in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the challenges that refugee children face everyday in Norway and to find out what are the pros and cons of assimilation of refugee children. Finally, a synthesizing statement is provided to represent the scope of what has been aimed in this study.

5.1 Summary of the Study

This chapter begins with a summary of the purpose and structure of the study and is followed by the major findings related to the theories presented in this study. Conclusions from the findings of this study are discussed in relation to the definition and characteristics of theories. Finally, the implications for practice and recommendations for future research are discussed.

First of all, the purpose of this study was to discover the challenges refugee children face in daily life in Norway from a professional perspective and to examine potential resources in the future. According to the findings, professionals saw Norwegian society as a socially and culturally homogeneous society that requires refugees to assimilate the cultural and social norms of the host country. However, Berry's acculturation theories and many researchers indicate integration is the most preferable model compared to the other models—assimilation, separation and segregation. In contrast, assimilation prefers refugees to adapt fully into Norwegian values, social and cultural norms, while discarding those values mentioned of the country of origin. In contrast, integration refers to refugees to acquire the culture of the host country while maintaining their culture of origin and the host country also respects the other cultures. Thus, cultural differences are respected and valued in the host society.

Even though the Norwegian integration policy emphasises the importance of a multicultural society and integration of immigrants, including refugees, many refugee children and adults

experience some segregation and isolation when they do not assimilate into Norwegian values. In addition, Norwegian society is closed and not inclusive; thus, those refugees are easily stigmatised and discriminated against. From the discussion above, the main focus of the research was to discover problem elements for the assimilation of refugee children and families in Norway through qualitative research.

An interpretative and semi-structured qualitative research approach was used in this research. Due to the COVID-19 situation, a face-to-face interview was not recommended, so the interviews were based on zoom meetings. The interviews were conducted with seven professionals working with refugee children at NGOs and municipalities to explore the professional perspiective。

This study includes three qualitative questions below:
- How do professionals engage in supporting socio-cultural integration of refugee children;
- What is the goal for socio-cultural integration of refugee children in Norway;
- What kind of challenges do the refugee children face?

To answer these questions in the qualitative study, data were collected from the zoom interviews with semi-structured questions that were transcribed in word documents, categorised, coded, analysed and interpreted from the all collected information. This qualitative research was used to determine the commonality and phenomenon of a living experience within refugee children to extend understanding of refugee's issues in daily life in a new country.

5.2 Discussion of the finding

5.2.1 Research question one: How do professionals engage in supporting socio-cultural integration of refugee children?

The first research question examined the professional perspective towards problems in the Norwegian integration approach. All professionals mentioned the deficiencies of the Norwegian approach towards refugees, and emphasised the necessities of community based

development. For generating interactions among refugees and Norwegians, developing the networks from the individuals to neighbours and then within the community.

The findings resulting from the research question indicate how Norwegian integration policies and strategies need to be developed into more inclusive approaches at individual, community, society and national levels. Due to the insufficient interactions within the networks between refugees and Norwegian in communities, misunderstandings and stigmas are established by preconceived ideas.

The reason why the stigma and cultural mistrust exist in Norway is based on the characteristics of Norwegian social values, such as a homogeneous societal culture, egalitarianism, and a lack of cultural competency of the citizens. Norway is a homogeneous society, with an assimilation-oriented approach towards the refugee population, requiring them to fit into Norwegian social and cultural values. The social expectations are constructed by societal and cultural norms and values that normalise people's beliefs. Thus, if non-Norwegians are not fitted in the specific Norwegian values, they are gradually excluded and isolated in community and society. (Hovdelien, 2015)

For avoiding exclusions, the efforts for integration at individual, community and societal levels is essential to understand the differences between the culture of the host country and the others. Understanding the experiences and difficulties is showing empathy for others. Rogers (1954) defines empathy in the context of acceptance (p. 358):

'If I say that I "accept" you, but know nothing of you, this is a shallow acceptance indeed, and you realize that it may change if I actually come to know you. But if I understand you empathically, see you and what you are feeling and doing from your point of view, enter your private world and see it as it appears to you—and still accept you—then this is safety indeed. In this climate you can permit your real self to emerge, and to express itself in varied and novel form as it relates to the world.'

Empathy is defined as 'the skill of understanding others' feelings, predicaments, and challenges.' (Holt & Marques, 2012) Empathy involves 'the ability to experience the same feelings as others after listening and paying attention to what others have said.' (McCormick, 2017). Thus, empathy is directly related to trust in relationships, in family, neighbours,

community and society. However, all professionals mentioned the lack of trust between refugee populations and Norwegians in the community. However, building trust, network, and harmony are important to make a better environment for all in the community.

5.2.2 Research question two: What is the goal for socio-cultural integration of refugee children in Norway?

The successful integration of refugee children and families in Norwegian society generates social and cultural advantages for society and sustains the security of the country. The professionals emphasised the importance of the networks among refugee families and residents in the community for promoting participation in communal activities. In general, there are offers from state founded volunteer centres, NGO organisations, and cultural centres to provide after school and leisure activities for all children. However, not all leisure activities are free, some of them are expensive. Thus, promoting financial support for the children with the extra budgets enhances equal opportunities for refugee children.

According to the ecological system theory, the relation between the micro- and mesosystems is explained as the close connection between culture, language and family relationships. Language is a main resource of communication that influences relationships within the family and a new society. All refugee children are required to learn Norwegian after arrival, and difficulties in acquiring new language and culture was a common theme across the interviews. There are various language-related challenges such as basic language barriers to the relation with culture and language abilities within the family. In addition, language barriers create the feeling of not belonging, isolation, and being not understood by Norwegian peers.

Another language and cultural challenge is refugee children often face difficulties and conflicts between the family's cultural expectation and that of the host country. In general, children are more open to the new environment, so they learn new languages and adapt well into the culture quicker than adults (Fazel et al., 2011). Thus, professionals highlighted cultural conflicts between two cultures influence the sense of one's identity, which refers to the relation to bridging different system levels within Ecological system theory (Thommessen & Todd, 2017).

In the ecosystem, social support from the host society is essential, especially given the school's impact on educational choices and the future of refugee children. According to the study by (Thommessen & Todd, 2017), the findings discuss how teachers provided positive impacts on refugee children and their efforts affect the educational achievement of children. (Thommessen & Todd, 2017)

Participants indicated the need for openness and inclusion in the host society, for instance, encouraging interactions between Norwegian peers and refugee children. Moreover, professionals emphasised the importance of the roles of schools and communities as agents of enhancing the interests in refugee's experience and cultural background. Refugee children often face language and culture related barriers that create feelings of not belonging and not being understood by Norwegians (Thommessen & Todd, 2017). The engagement of the school and the community, teacher and mentor are essential. As refugee parents are not able to guide their children well, since they are not native and familiar with the educational system in the host country. As an example, the teacher can provide opportunities for children to speak about their culture, traditions and the positive aspects of their countries of origin. As integration is a two way process, understanding from both the host country's population and refugee's population is essential for developing multiculturalism in the school, the community and society (Berry, 2006). All professionals emphasised the developing social support and community support for enhancing the sense of secureness and belonging of refugee children.

However, the professionals indicate the lack of educated teachers who understand the backgrounds of refugee children and how to support integration both academically and socially at the school. As Vollmer (2000) indicates, the perceptions and attitudes of teachers have a powerful impact on the educational environment in the classroom. According to Banks(1989), pedagogues are required to recognise the major ideologies linked with ethnic pluralism and to be able to determine their own ideology. He depicts the two major positions, the assimilationist ideology and the cultural pluralist ideology (Banks, 1989). The pluralist ideology explains about the importance of ethnicity and culture within society. Therefore, the pluralistic philosophical approach explains the school and also focuses on the education of immigrant students. This approach values the cultural differences and diversity in the school. (Dubbeld et al., 2019) In contrast, the assimilationist ideology discusses the educational

institutions needed to socialise students. And the students are educated within the common culture and commitments to the values and ideologies are worthwhile (Dubbeld et al., 2019). In the assimilationist-oriented approach, integration of immigrants is defined as marginalisation, and a structural educational system is constructed for mainly the majority of students. As Berry's acculturation theory indicates, integration is the most preferable approach, and the Norwegian integration policy also promotes a multicultural society and social cohesion. For developing diversity in Norwegian society, ideological and structural shifts will be required in educational institutions and pedagogy in the macro-level of ecological system theory.

5.2.3 Research question three: What kind of challenges do refugee children face?

Based on the two former questions, this section discusses the challenges refugee children encounter in daily life. The first challenge for refugee children is language acquisition and literacy. Individuals who learn non-native language experience different progression based on their family environment, age of arrival, educational factors and language environment. First, the family environment directly affects the children's contribution to language acquisition. Children learn culture and tradition through language in everyday family life and refugee children have strong attachments with their mother tongue. Thus, the networks outside of the family are essentially important, especially schooling. The age of arrival affects the adaptation speeds, as younger children, at least kindergartens, are more playful and quickly adapt to a new environment. As children get older, language becomes the primary tool of communication, thus individual efforts for interacting with Norwegian children is essential (Riemsdijk, 2017).

Professionals mention that schools' efforts should be improved into more inclusive and multicultural approaches. Educational institutions are places that provide study space, opportunities to enhance social skills, abundant knowledge and develop the interests of the child's future path. The learning outcomes are encouraged by teachers, schools, and the board of education. However, professionals stress the lack of cultural sensitivity of teachers' education in terms of teaching in multicultural environments (Berry et al., 1992).

Another point stressed by the professionals was an education programme for newly arrived children. The study by Rambøll researched the educational approach for newcomers in separated programmes in three different elementary schools in Norway. He points out the deficiency of inclusiveness in separate classes in the mainstream educational programmes; that generate distance between Norwegian peers and newcomers (Rambøll, 2016). In 2012, the Norwegian Education Act was implemented to offer education in deprived groups for newcomers for up to two years. In 2016, approximately 65% of immigrant students in elementary schools were placed in the separated programme from the mainstream groups in Norway (Rambøll, 2016). The challenges of the educational strategy is how the separated programmes provide adequate pedagogy for non-Norwegian students and the programmes help the children to function socially well. function well socially. According to the Core Curriculum of Education in Norway, the primary and secondary schools are encouraged to develop an inclusive atmosphere for all students regardless of ethnic backgrounds (Curriculum, 2017). This inclusive approach involves not only academic achievement (including language and cultural acquisition) but also fostering social integration of newcomers in the school community(Manzoni & Rolfe, 2019). Newly arrived students are placed in the separated programmes for the first one to two years depending on their language acquisition progress. When students reach a satisfied language level, they are transferred into the mainstream programme with Norwegian peers. All three schools by the study provided newcomer students to join the mainstream classes only one or two times a week, that is not enough for children to socially interact with Norwegian peers.

Being placed in a separate programme for a period of 1–2 years, as might be the case in Norway, is challenging for the newcomers´regarding academic performance and developing social skills. Moreover, the arrangements for combining both mainstream and introduction programmes are not well organised. Thus, professionals in the interviews insisted that the absence of systemic interactions between non- and Norwegian students. A qualitative report by Save the Children, indicates that refugee students often feel like being excluded and treated as 'other' in school (Sævig, 2020) .

In the interview, professionals discuss about Muslims ' struggle in Norway, and how the family's religious background influences children's everyday life. For instance, Muslims has the strict rules and beliefe according to Halal (permissible) that are difficult understood by

non-Muslim population. The majority of the refugee population comes from countries where people believe themselves as religious and practicing. (Henriksen, 2017) Religions and religious resources are internal to human beings and influences the foundation of how people think and identify themselves. Also religious belief connects the world. People believe in the same religion. Henriksen discusses the interconnection between people and religious orientation, how people reason about life and make a sense of their experiences in daily life. (Henriksen, 2017) In general, religion is 'a part of an individual's larger system of orientation; they afford directions in life.' (Robleda, 2021) Moreover, people develop a sense of belonging and identity through religion, thus the transformation of religious orientation can be demanding. (Henriksen, 2017) the religion has strict rules according to Halal (permissible) that are difficult understood by non-Muslim population.

As an example, Crown Prince of Norway Haakon visited Islamic Mosque in Baerum showing his respect and condolences for the mass shooting at the mosque by a Norwegian nationalist (Choudhury, 2019). He tried to shake hands with Muslim women, but women refused do the same. The Muslim women did not shake hands due to religious reasons, thus politely greeted him by putting their hands on their chests, as a way of showing their respect accoding their traditions and cultural codes. However, shaking hands is a respectful way of the first greeting in Norwegian culture. Therefore, the Muslim women were extremely criticised by native and right-wing nationalists and used as a tool to blame the entire Muslim community. This case explains how a part of the Norweigna population are not respecting the cultural background of Muslims that create discrimination. Also, Norwegian expectation of cultural assimilation of non-Norwegian population.

Many cultural traditions and customs are related to religion and influence each other. Also, religious behaviors and practices are rooted in personal values. Participant EN7 mentions about taboos and traditions in Muslim culture; however, many of these are not respected and understood by Norwegians, such as wearing a hijab, Ramadan, strict rules between males and females, and so on. The expectations of Norwegians are high and obligate refugees to assimilate and learn Norwegian ways of living as quickly as refugees can. As with all participants, refugee children tend to face cultural conflicts between the host country's and the family's cultures. This is a demanding challenge for refugee children,
because it is deeply rooted in religion, culture, tradition and family expectation.

5.3 Recommendations of Further Research

The aim of this study was to determine the challenges of refugee children facing integration in a new country in daily living. Data was collected to explore the answers of three research questions relating to integration of refugee children. The information was studied and many outstanding findings resulted from the examination of the collected date. One of the limitations is the numbers of the participants and stakeholders, the study focuses on only a professional's perspective. Thus, it would be better to interview both the professionals, refugee children and their families. However, there are very strict regulations for recruiting children in a social science study, due to difficulties of ensuring consent for the interviews. (Backe-Hansen, 2016) Therefore, interviewing children was not ethically and practically recommended in this study. For collecting more practical and useful data for the study, it was preferable to collect data from both professionals and the target group in this study. Thus, there are inadequacies in this study design. Unlike the traditional research, the research method focuses more on the bottom-up approach where the research is carried by the professionals working in the fields, researchers and the people of the target group is different from the traditional research To determine the most preferable implications, discussions among different stakeholders is important for empowering self-esteem by including in the process for creating new strategies. So that, discussing the actual problems of refugee children, the voices from them are very important to understand the phenomena of this target group and examine the data from children based on the professional views (more likely to be experience based) and researchers views (based on theoretical frameworks). Thus, the future research in this subject should include different stakeholders to collect rich data. Therefore, the preferable model of study was to collaborate with the different stakeholders to find the better solutions to tackle the actual issues of the refugee population.

Another implication is to focus on a certain population within the study, such as Muslims, and on specific countries in Asia or other places. Due to the difficulties to focus on the specific groups of refugees, this study is more focused on the generalised idea of refugee experience after resettlement in Norway. Also, this study was more focused on the negative aspects and challenges of refugees children generally face. However, there are more successful experiences depending on nationality and municipalities where refugee children were located. Thus, the comparison between the negative and positive experiences will help

to define the actual issues of refugee children who are struggling to integrate into Norwegian society.

At the same time, there are less studies focused on how Norwegian children perceive refugees and non-Norwegian children. The result would be different by their age, the younger children are more easily adapted into a new environment acquiring language and making friends. (Paradis et al., 2020) However, if the study could be implemented both quantitatively or qualitatively, there might be useful data to determine how to approach different age groups (e.g., age 0 to 3, 4 to 6, 7 to 9, 10 to 12).

5.4 Implications for practice

The findings of this study have implications for people living together with refugee children and families in the same community. The study identified several links to integrational achievements and importance of the networks. Also, professionals emphasised the importance of building bottom-up, inclusive and friendly environments to make social cohesion between refugees and the host nations.

For educational institutions where accepting refugees, the study offers insight into the difficulties and risks refugee children might face every day. Educational ins is the place where children interact, gain knowledge and develop their thoughts with classmates. The study implies the importance of developing cultural sensitivity and diversity due to the increasing numbers of migrated people in neighbourhood, community and society. Research question number three demonstrates the difficulties refugee children might face in daily bases that need to be improved to prevent them from being excluded from a majority population. Adding the sentences from the interview memo

The study is also useful for the organisations where organising the activities for children. The organisations like UNHCR, Save the Children, and Red Cross working with cultural integration of refugee children through leisure activities, promote the importance of community-based intervention. An intention of the community-based intervention encouraging participants, accountabilities and generating positive changes in the community through leisure activities (*Integration of Beneficiaries of International Protection in the European Union*, 2011).

APPENDIX

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Interview guide
For the theme: "Sociocultural integration of refugee children in Norway professional's experience working with refugee children"
The experience of refugee children in Norwegian society and the way professionals approach them to what consideration they follow when promoting socio cultural integration for refugee children. What are the challenges and barriers these refugee children face in every daily life?

1. How do you define sociocultural integration? How do you support the sociocultural integration of refugee children?

2. How do you think children perceive their own culture and Norwegian culture? And how is it important to value their culture of origin while adapting in a new society?

3. Do you think there are barriers to learning Norwegian culture? If so, there are barriers, what are they?

4. Do you think there are barriers to learning Norwegian? If so, there are barriers, what are they?

5. What are important steps and measures for social workers while working with refugee children?

6. How do refugee children deal with Norwegian children? Do they have difficulties interacting with Norwegian peers?

7. What kind of activities or resources do the municipality, or the community do for promoting social integration of refugee children?

INFORMATION LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

Are you interested in taking part in the research project? 'Sociocultural integration of refugee children in Norway'

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to understand how social workers promote socio-cultural integration and well-being of refugee children through an activity at an institution. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Responsible for the research project
University of Stavanger

Recruitment
I am going to recruit social workers working with refugees at school and governmental institutions working with refugee children in Stavanger, Rogaland municipality. The criterias for participants are 1) Social workers 2) working with refugee children 4) working with refugee children more than 2 years.

Interview method
The interview method is a face-to -face or online (for safety reason under Covid-19), semi-structured interview that will approximately take 45 to 60 minutes for each interview. The questions are about how social workers support refugee children's socio-cultural integration, specific focus on language and cultural learning and social inclusion in the community. The interview will be recorded electronically.

Participation is voluntary
Participation in the project is voluntary. If you choose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason, and all information will be deleted. There will be no negative consequences for you if you choose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data
We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).
· University of Stavanger. The university is responsible for the project. I am Maya Sato, a MA student who will have access to the personal data.
· I will replace your name and contact details with a code. The list of names, contact details and respective codes will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data.
· The personal data includes, occupation, position at institution, name (anonymous), years of working will be published.

Your rights
So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:
- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?
We will process your personal data based on your consent.

Based on an agreement with the University of Stavanger , NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS has assessed that the processing of personal data in this project is in accordance with data protection legislation.

Where can I find out more?
If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:
- *University of Stavanger* via Maya Sato (student) and Richard Michael Piech
  (Supervisor) by email:(richard.piech@uis.no*) or by telephone:*
  + 47 51831192
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email:
  (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17

Yours sincerely,

Project Leader   Student (if applicable)
                (Researcher/supervisor)

Consent form regarding Master Thesis project

I have received and understood information about the project, *Sociocultural integration of refugee children in Norway*, researched by Maya Sato, University of Stavanger. And I have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

¨ to participate in an interview
¨ the audio record of my interview will be stored until the end of the project.

I give consent for my personal data to be processed until the end date of the project.

(Signed by participant, date)

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