

**COPING AND RESILIENCE AMONG SKILLED IMMIGRANTS IN
NORWAY.**



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**TO FULFILL THE REQUIREMENTS FOR A MASTER'S DEGREE IN
SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND PSYCHIATRY (40 STUDY POINTS)**

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Abstract

Most countries around the world, especially in Europe, have become more diverse, with people migrating to foreign countries in search of asylum from persecution and wars, better education, jobs as well as a better life for themselves and their family. About 281 million people live outside the country of their birth and this accounts for almost 4% of the world's population. (International organization for migration 2023). Among these individuals, are a sizable number of professionals who have tertiary education such as health professionals, engineers etc.

The purpose of this research was to determine the challenges faced by skilled workers in Norway as well as the strategies used by them to cope. Participants for this research were selected in line with the inclusion criteria such as first-generation migrants with tertiary education who originally are from countries outside the Nordic region. They were interviewed using open-ended, semi-structured questions.

The interviews were transcribed and analyzed carefully. The result showed that skilled migrants in Norway faced challenges and limitations that were unique to their host country, challenges that were a direct impact of the migration process, and challenges as a result of deficiencies in individual resources. The coping strategies used include planning, establishment of adequate social network, adequate use of individual resources as well as a positive attitude to the integration challenges encountered. The coping techniques utilized was discussed extensively, in line with previous researches and the theoretical perspective of this work .and conclusions drawn. The need for policies that encourage adequate information dissemination to skilled migrants, and the necessity for them to use positive and adaptive coping strategies pre and post -immigration was emphasized

1.0 CHAPTER 1: Introduction of the study

1.1 Presentation of topic

Psychiatric disorders within migrant populations were not considered a relevant area of research until about seventy years ago (Carta et al 2005, p. 1-16, Veling et al 2011, p.65-76). Nevertheless, there is severe limitations in the availability of data showing the prevalence and severity of this disorders among these individuals (Carta et al 2005, p. 1-16), even in Europe. However, where they exist, the study population is usually small and the findings biased (Carta et al 2005. p. 1-16).

The mental health effect of these chronic and multiple stresses encountered by migrants has been described by psychiatrist working with the Psycho-pathological and Psycho-social Assistance service team (SAPPIR) based in Barcelona as Chronic and Multiple Stress Syndrome, also called Ulysses syndrome (Carta et al 2005. p. 1-16). Ulysses syndrome is a condition that is named after a legendary Greek personality who is famous for his long exploration of the Mediterranean, and it is comparable to hardship and stress these individuals pass through during the process of migration. The progression of this disorder is believed to be slow, and begin as the newcomer begins to experience difficulties during and after the process of migration (Carter et al 2005. p. 1-16).

These problems include; unemployment and problems getting a job, separation from family and friends back in their home country, discrimination based on ethnicity\religion, challenges getting adequate housing, food and residence documents etc (Carta et al 2005. p. 1-16). Migrants affected by this syndrome have shown a variety of psychiatric disorders such as higher probability of having depressive symptoms, dissociative symptoms, schizophrenia and psychosis which is connected to social difficulties (Hjern et al 2004, p. 1025-1033, Veling et al 2011, p.65-76, Chen et al 2012).

This disparity is believed to have multi-factorial causes such as discrimination, difficult socio-economic situation, problems associated with ethnic identity and acculturation, as well as the use of harmful and addictive substances such as cannabis etc (Veling et al 2011, p.65-76). Evidence of the variety of factors responsible for the relatively higher chances of mental disorder amongst skilled migrants was documented in a longitudinal study done on migrants in New Zealand. It was discovered that their mental health deteriorated in the first two years of their stay in the new country, regardless of employment status. (Pernice et al 2009, p.272-287)

However, it is erroneous to believe that migrants as a subsection of the general population are vulnerable to and suffer from psychiatric disorders (Murphy 1977, p.677-684). On the contrary, the mental health of the migrant is influenced by the; 1) characteristics of their home country, 2) circumstances surrounding the process of migration ,3) Elements in the new country (Murphy 1977, p.677-684). Hence the necessity to explore the factors that influence the mental health of these newcomers, taking into account their individual circumstances pre- and post -migration, as well as the variety of methods utilized by them to overcome these challenges and to preserve their sense of mental wellbeing.

1.1.1 Aim and purpose of research

This research was carried out with the aim of finding out and understanding the coping strategies used by skilled migrants in Norway to deal with integration stresses in their host communities and country. This involves getting a better understanding of the challenges faced, and the possible practices they utilized to deal with these problems, and well as its effect on their mental health.

1.1.2 Research question

This research tried to answer the following research questions:

1. What are the strategies used by skilled migrants to handle difficulties associated with integration into a new society, and this involves an exploration of their challenges, strategies and the mental health impact on the skilled immigrant?

1.2 Background of study

1.2.1 Immigration, types of immigrants and reasons for immigration

The origin of migration is said to be as old as human existence on earth. The need for food, shelter and better living conditions is the major driving force behind the movement of humans from one place to another. Humans are believed to have migrated from East Africa to the different parts of the world with researchers dating human movement from place to place back to 70,000 years ago. (Bhopal 2014, p 9)

The international organisation for migration (IOM) has recognized that there is no single definition for the word migrant, but explains that migration is said to have occurred when an individual moves from one place to another freely without any extrinsic coercive factor (Hannigan et al 2016, p. 5-15). The United Nations recommendation on statistics of international migration defines migrants as “any person who changes his\her country of usual residence”. In Europe context, a migrant is referred to by the European Migration Network as “someone who establishes their usual residence in an EU member state for at least 12 months, having previously been usually resident in another EU state or non-EU country (Hannigan et al 2016, p. 5-15).

Individuals who are called immigrants can be categorized into different groups based primarily on the reasons behind the decision to move to another country. These reasons might be economical (in the case of migrants who move for better paying jobs and opportunities), social (for immigrants who migrate to flee wars, persecution) or political (in situations where individuals are forced into exile because of political affiliation or association). Regardless of

the major reasons for leaving the country of one's birth, immigrants have varying levels of skills and education.

The "push and pull theory" propounded by Lee in 1966 as cited by Chang-Muy et al explains that immigrants are "pushed" out of their countries of birth by the prospects of better paid employment, promises of improved living conditions, religious freedom and the search for better education. (Chang-Muy & Congress 2015). While other immigrants are pushed out of the home country as a result of economic difficulties, joblessness, wars, famine and political persecution etc. (Chang-Muy & Congress 2015). Other migration theories have different postulations about the factors that drive migration such as the new economics of labour migration theory developed by Stark in 1978 as explained by deHaas, who reported that migration is driven by economic difficulties in a household, or occurs at a result of the families' attempt to spread their financial risk and expand their income (de Haas 2021, p.8). Skeldon in 1990 as described by de Haas asserted that the push and pull model of migration is unable to explain other factors that give rise to migration (de Haas 2021, p.8).

As a result of the diversity in the motives behind the act of migration, the challenges as well as the strategies deployed to survive should be peculiar to the individual's circumstance. In the study done on the state of the mental health in Europe's working group, it was concluded that it is not reasonable to think that all migrants belong to a homogenous group when assessing the risk for mental illness because of the differences in their circumstances e.g., residence status etc (Carta et al 2005. p. 1-16).

1.2.2 Skilled Immigration into Norway

Immigrants around the world are classified based on the reasons behind migration. Statistics Norway categorizes immigrants into; 1. Immigration for work or employment reasons, 2. Immigration for reunification with family 3. Immigration for educational reasons 4. Immigration to escape persecution, war or political unrest (refugees) 4. Immigration for other reasons or unknown reasons. Based on this classification, skilled immigrants into Norway can be categorized under all the above forms because there are skilled immigrants in all the different categories. (Statistics Norway 2023)

Immigrants constitute about 16% of the Norwegian population which is currently 5,548,887 million, with nearly a quarter of this number i.e., about 3.9% been Norwegians born of immigrant parents. (Statistics Norway 2023). Statistics Norway put the total population of immigrant at 877,227. There are about 114,385 professionals with immigrant background in Norway currently, with 62,601 of them from other Nordic countries, and about 51,783 from other countries and regions such as Western European countries, Eastern European countries, North America and Oceania, Asia, Africa and South and Central America. The total percent of migrant professionals in Norway is about 23%, while professionals from other non-Nordic countries account for about 20.4% of the population of skilled professionals. (Statistics Norway 2023)

Skilled immigrants are individuals who have a university degree, this includes engineers, doctors, researchers etc. Nevertheless, this definition may include other post-secondary

educational qualifications. (Charloff & Lemaitre 2009, p.1-54). Immigration into Norway in the last century began with the influx of central and eastern European labor migrants into Norway during the post-war era. Afterwards, there was a stop temporary in the mid-1970's which occurred as a consequence of a fall in oil prices. Norway experienced another wave of migration in the late 20th century to the early 21st century, and it occurred as an aftereffect of the migration of skilled migrants in search of jobs, reunification with their families and individuals fleeing persecution and war (Friberg et al 2012, p.147-172).

A substantial number of migrants who fail to secure jobs before migration, either because they migrated as love migrants to join their partners or migrated to flee wars or persecution experienced additional difficulties and stressors during integration into the new country (Aure 2013, p.273-284). Even when they eventually integrate, they are less likely to secure employment suitable to their skills or level of experience (Fosslund 2013, p.276-283) According to the values retrieved from Statistics Norway, about 5.2 per cent of immigrants are registered as unemployed. Skilled migrants often experience a lowering of their status when they travel across borders, and in most cases, majority of them are forced to undergo requalification to acquire new skills in a process that has been described by researchers as "brain waste" or "deskilling." (Fosslund 2013, p.276-283)

1.2.3 Integration and the health of the skilled migrant

Integration cannot be complete without the process of acculturation and adaptation. Acculturation can be defined as the phenomenon which result when groups of people having different culture come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture pattern of either or both groups. Adaptation, on the other hand, refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups as a result of environmental demands (Berry 1997, p.5-68).

The act of migrating is stressful and cumbersome irrespective of type and method utilized. Most migrants are expected to undergo the rigorous process of securing passports, tickets as well as visas to the host country. In some cases, they are expected to provide medical documentations attesting to their state of health as fit and healthy individuals who have the capacity to withstand the rigors of travelling, and are less likely to constitute a burden to the health facility of their host country. This agrees with the popular "healthy migrant syndrome" reported in previous migration research (Bhopal 2014, p 7-55). In studies done on immigrants from less developed countries into rich countries, where migrants selectivity was controlled for life contentment, some researchers found no significant difference between immigrants and the native population. (Cobb et al 2019, p.619-632)

After the tedious process of acquisition of travel documents necessary to facilitate the process of migration, the skilled migrant is faced with difficulties getting accommodation, a job, learning the language and culture of the host country etc. Bhopal suggests that the overall health of the migrant is affected negatively because of these challenges (Bhopal 2014, p 7-10). Subsequently, the immigrant who migrated with a health status that is believed to be better than average in his home country and the new host country, assumes the average health

status of the new country with possible health conditions such as obesity etc. (Bhopal 2014, p 7-10)

These newcomers face a variety of stressful experiences, many of which are specific to their immigrant status. Some of the stressors that have been identified include unemployment, discrimination in the labor market, status change, splitting of households, absent language skills, difficult family dynamics, the attitudes of the receiving community, racism and stereotyping, and acculturation. (Dow 2011, p.210-217)

2.0 CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

To properly study previous researches done on the mental health of skilled migrants, I conducted a review of previous literature beginning in September 2022 using the following databases; Cinahl, PsyInfo, PubMed. The search words used include; coping and/or migrant, coping and/or immigrant, coping strategies and migrant, coping strategies and/or immigrants, resilience and/or migrant, stress and/or migrant, stress and/or integration, coping and/or stress, skilled migrant and health, skilled migrant and mental health. The search was conducted on articles published within the last decade i.e. 2012 to 2022. Older articles were included after they were assessed for relevance.

A total of about 1,489 articles were retrieved from the initial search. These articles were vigorously screened and duplicates were removed. They were also examined carefully for relevance to the topic of the research by meticulously reading through the abstracts and summaries. During the course of this work, additional searches were conducted using search words such as personality and/or integration, religion and/or integration etc. Articles that were found to be useful were also included.

2.1 Stress

Stress can be defined as *“that quality of experience produced through a person -environment transaction, that through either overarousal or under arousal results in psychological or physiological distress”* (Aldwin 2017, p 13-54). Elements of stress include the inner state of the individual such as “strain, the exterior elements also called the “stressors” and the result of the interaction between the individual and the environment. Furthermore, the stress experienced by skilled professionals in a new country can be described as long-lasting because of its duration. Chronic stress was explained by McGonagle & Kessler in 1990 as events that span more than 12 months, and are considered to be a more potent prognostic factor in the development of psychopathologies such as depression etc (Gottlieb 1997, p.8). Wheaton in 1994 defined chronic stressors as *“problems and issues that are either so regular in the enactment of daily roles and activities that they behave as if they are continuous for the individual”* (Gottlieb 1997, p.4).

The internal element of stress can be subdivided into the physiological response to stress or stressful situations which include; the stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system and the heat shock protein activation, the depression of the parasympathetic nervous system response, the activation or depression of immune system, the neuroendocrine system as well as the mechanism responsible for the reconstruction of the DNA (Aldwin 2017, p 13-54). The effect of stress is unlimited to adverse physiological and psychological reactions, but some researchers have come to the conclusion that stress can serve as an activator whose effect can be positive or negative depending on its interaction with other factors. (Aldwin 2017, p 13-54).

The external component of stress can be categorized into the type or source of stress and the temporal aspects. The type or source of the stressor can be the result of traumatic experiences and life events, average daily struggles, stresses arising from assigned family or professional roles and increasing difficulties. The temporal aspect of the external stressor can be described

by its duration, speed of onset, in addition to the variations or alterations in its property. (Aldwin 2017, p 13-54).

The third element of stress which involves an interaction between the person and the environment can be subdivided into logical evaluation of the stress, its perceived properties, as well as the intensity of its effect. These characteristics include; its perception as harmful, a loss, threatening, mild, controllable, or uncontrollable etc. The intensity of the effect of this interaction is a part of the third element of stress, and can be categorized into weak, moderate, strong and ambiguous. (Aldwin 2017, p 13-54).

2.1.1 Factors that influence integration stress

Certain factors can influence the level of integration stress experienced by an immigrant. While some immigrants integrate seamlessly into the host country, a lot of immigrants struggle for many years, with a significant number undergoing maladaptation in the face of these difficulties. Some factors described by researchers include;

2.1.1.1 Unemployment and underemployment

In most cases the skilled immigrant is faced with underemployment in the new country either because they lack language skills or adequate social network to find more befitting jobs, or their qualification, regardless of the level of education and significant work experience, is not recognized. In such situations, they are forced by economic pressures to take less befitting or menial job with a resultant increase in the stress experienced from the process of acculturation. (FanFan & Stacciarini 2020, p.211-226).

Where the desire to do a better suitable job is present, the immigrant must be prepared to make sacrifices, and be willing to bear the economic, physical, socio-economic and psychological cost of acquiring additional education or meeting the requirements for proper recognition of their educational qualification. The problem of being underemployed in a new country is a significant source of acculturation stress and distress for the newcomer. (Reid 2012, p.120-125)

2.1.1.2 Discriminatory practices in the workplace

Skilled workers have in many cases reported discriminatory practices, in addition to limited to total absence of social communication and social contact in the workplace. This is in addition to the feeling of being under-valued and distrusted. In an article published by Dwyili et al in 2021 recounting the experience of professional African nurses in rural Australia, prejudicial practices were common in the workplace (Dwyili 2021, p.13-22). These practices include biases in promotion of African nurses such as unnecessary delays compared to their native counterparts, being limited from professional development etc. Foreign nurses who were in managerial positioned based on experience often experienced insubordination from junior colleagues who are natives of the host country.

Reports of patients expressing reservation over being treated or seen by African nurses, and in some cases patient relatives requested that the care of their relative be transferred to another health care giver of native origin (Dwyili 2021, p.13-22). Some skilled foreign professionals had their previous experience ignored by their employers, and were forced to accept positions that are beneath their education or level of experience. Furthermore, professionals from developing countries reported that their qualifications were considered inferior to their peers from more developed countries. (Xiao et al 2014, p.640-653).

2.1.1.3 Cultural differences

Differences in culture between the immigrant and the host country can be observed in almost every aspect of life in some instances. This includes cultural differences in social life, family life, habits and religion etc. When the differences are insignificant, the newcomer can be assimilated into the new culture with little or no stress. Nevertheless, in majority of cases where the immigrant is from another race with a totally different culture, these differences can be a source of stress, and can complicate the process of integration for the skilled immigrant.

Even in the workplace, the foreign professionals must be willing to learn and adapt to the work culture of the host country. This work culture may consist of unwritten rules that have their origins in the way of life and value system of the country. The unwillingness to learn the workplace culture or any difficulty encountered by the newcomer during their interaction in the workplace can be a source of stress for both the host and the immigrant skilled worker. Occasionally, this learning curve can be too steep for a lot of foreign professionals especially in situations where available resources to bridge the gaps are limited. (Xiao et al 2014, p.640-653).

2.1.1.4 Language barrier

Difficulties associated with language barrier is a source of stress for a lot of immigrants in the host country because it comes in the way of getting a suitable job, and making proper connections necessary for entry into the labour market. In a review of literature done on African and Caribbean immigrants in the US, limitations in language skills were associated with a higher level of stress. (Fan Fan., & Stacciarini 2020, p.211-226)

2.1.1.5 Difficulties raising children

Migrant who are parent experience additional stress as a result of the lack of support system and family around them in the new country. This further compounded the socio-economic pressures they faced as a consequence of migration. Research done on intergenerational support in Chinese families and its influence on parental stress showed that increase support from grandparents and relatives in child care was associated with significantly reduced stress. (Sun & Mulraney 2023, p.40-61)

Salami et al in a study of parenting challenges of African immigrants reported that differences in culture and orientation around parenting were a source of stress for the parents and a social problem. They also found that the exposure of children to western culture and the knowledge of children's rights placed a limit to the authority exercised by immigrant parents, and was a source of stress and conflict. (Salami et al 2020, p.126-134)

Parents also expressed their displeasure over the loss of social support in the child-raising process due to the absence of collectivist culture (where the community was involved in the child-raising process), and their experience of the more individualistic approach used in many Western cultures to raise children. They also reported that the state's over-involvement in the parenting process is for a lot of migrants a source of stress, as it weakens parental control and authority, and encourages children to be rebellious. (Salami et al 2020, p.126-134)

2.1.1.6 Gender differences

The effect of migration on the immigrant can be influenced by their gender, and many studies have reported this. The rigors involved in migration and acculturation affects the female immigrant more than her male counterpart. A study done on the mental distress caused by migration related stress, and the resultant somatization among immigrants from Asia, South America and Sub-Saharan Africa significantly affected women. (Garcia Sierra et al 2020, p.557). Older Korean immigrant men functioned better physically and had fewer limits when faced with emotional problems compared to older Korean women in a study to determine stressors and coping strategies in the United States. (Lee & GlenMaye 2014, p. 66-83).

2.1.1.7 Family and relationship difficulties

The state of the immigrant's family and interfamily relationships plays a significant role in the prevention or the escalation of pressures faced during acculturation. There was a negative correlation between the bond in the families of Latin American immigrants and the level of stress experienced as a result of acculturation (Fan Fan & Stacciarini 2020, p.211-226).

On the other hand, Haitian immigrants disclosed that the reduction of the distance between them and their families increased the stress associated with immigration (Fan Fan & Stacciarini 2020, p.211-226). The decision to move to another country can result in the loss of close relationships, social as well as professional network. This loss has been termed "migratory grief" to explain the feeling of loneliness, the loss of social status and network that most migrant experience in the new country. (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104)

2.1.1.8 Discrimination in the social context

The rise in the popularity of conservative policies in most parts of Europe and the western world has led to an escalation in the amount of discrimination and animosity against migrants from other countries. This hostility has been experienced regardless of the educational status of the migrant. Prejudice from the host country is dependent on some factors such as ethnicity, gender and pre-migration conditions. (Fan Fan & Stacciarini 2020, p.211-226)

In a study of society's distrust, hostility and anger against newcomers done by Da silvo rebelo et al in 2021, migrants, especially black and Muslim migrants reported a high amount of hostility directed towards them from their host. The study also stated that the colour of the migrant's skin and the mode of dressing was a source of additional distrust, anger and hostility. Bias reporting and criminalization of migrants in social media resulted in the perception that these individuals were harmful and criminally minded. Heightened ethnic and religious prejudices was documented against migrants even beyond the social context, with most migrants battling discriminatory policies, and struggling to get housing, employment and other basic social services. (Da Silvo Rebelo et al 2021, p.1142-1162, Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104)

They are also portrayed as economic liabilities that seek to endanger the economic and physical wellbeing of the host country. (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104). This discriminatory treatment and negative perception persist despite the fact that statistics from US Federal Bureau of Investigation showed that crime rate declined dramatically when the number of documented and undocumented workers tripled between 1990 to 2013 in the United States. (Cobb et al 2019, p.619-632)

In an exploration of the contextual influences on psychological distress and acculturation amongst Latin- American immigrants, the environment was found to be the connection between acculturative stress and psychological distress (Bekteshi & Hook 2015, p.1401-1411). Contrary to the widely held belief that regular and persist interaction with the host community would improve the chances of proper integration and understanding of the societal norms by the immigrant, some researchers reported that some Latin-American immigrants found that socialization with their host in clubs, churches, libraries worsen integration related stress due to the increase in contact between them and the native population. (Bekteshi & Hook 2015, p.1401-1411)

2.1.2 Stress and health

The connection between the mind, the neuroendocrine system and the immune system has been the subject of research for many years. Contrary to the biomedical model of disease proposed by Virchow in 1863, where sickness was believed to be the result of only external factors, it is now widely accepted that the development of any illness is multifactorial. An interplay between environmental factors and physiological resilience\ makeup is the major determinant in an individual's health and wellbeing. (Aldwin 2007, p 13-22)

Psychoneuroimmunology is the study of the relationship between the mind, the immune system and the neuroendocrine system. The fundamentals of psychoneuroimmunology involve the exploration of the body's response to stress and its possible outcome. This model suggests that stress triggers negative emotions which cause neuroendocrine changes and changes in the immune system in ways that are harmful to the individual. Stressful situations cause the activation of the neuroendocrine system and the sympathetic nervous system which is responsible for the fight or flight response to that situation, which can be regarded as an adaptation to that situation. It is also believed that stress causes the release of hormones and other neuroendocrine substances such as beta-endorphin, which helps the individual to adapt to the uncomfortable event (Aldwin 2017, p 13-22).

In addition, it has been discovered that in some cases stress can weaken or diminish the functions of the immune system. This has been observed in instances where the individual is exposed to chronic stress, as is seen in immigrants or in individuals who have experienced traumatizing situations (Aldwin 2017, p 13-22). The connection between stress, emotions and the health of the individual has been reported by some researchers, and emotions are believed to be the factor that connects stressful circumstances with the health and physiological wellbeing of a person. These events that trigger the neuroendocrine system, especially for an extended period, can have a negative effect on the health of an individual (Aldwin 2017, p 13-22).

2.2 Resilience

Resilience is the capacity to recover from a stressful situation, and it can be regarded as a protective factor against mental disorders such as depression, anxiety etc. It is also connected to better life satisfaction and better psychological balance. (Revens et al 2021, p.904-916). These factors can be internal, external, interpersonal, communal or a product of the personality type or the social support available (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104).

It is important to note that this is a lifelong process that involves the continuous adaptation and development of positive skills and traits necessary to overcome challenges. It is therefore not seen as a fixed personal quality, but as the ability to transform, change or alter oneself to a certain situation or environment in a constructive and healthy way. Its focus is the handling of challenges in a manner that focuses on the positive factors such as wellbeing, skill set and fortitude, as opposed to dangers and weaknesses (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104). External factors that can affect resilience include factors such as family, community, society, environment, culture etc. (Reven et al 2021, p.904-916). A positive correlation was reported between social support and resilience, and the same study described a similar relationship between religiosity and resilience (Reven et al 2021, p.904-916).

Resilience for a skilled migrant can be categorized into; Individual resilience, resilience derived from contingent protective factors such as assistance from family members and colleagues at work, as well as protective factors that are structural such as assistance from the public (Dahl 2022, p.405-415). Resilience on the individual level involves the use of factors focused on the individual that contribute to the handling of integration related stress such as self-confidence, positive peer influence etc. Other factors such as personal values, belief and the strength of character play an important role in the determination of how an individual deals with stress. (Dahl 2022, p.405-415)

2.3 Coping

Lazarus and Folkman defined coping as “*constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage (that is master, tolerate, reduce, minimize) specific external and internal demands and conflicts that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person*”. (Folkman 2011, p 22-24). The process of coping is believed to be influenced by the demands of the unique situation and the individual's personality. Individuals use the problem focused or the emotional focused coping style in about eighty percent of situations (Folkman 2011, p 22-24).

These strategies can be classified into cognitive or behavioural, as well as individual or social. Age, as well as vulnerabilities to physical and psychological stressors are considered factors that can affect the style of coping utilized by an individual (Folkman 2011, p 9-54). The process of coping is also believed to occur as a multi-level adaptive system which can be adaptive, episodic, as well as interactional. The interactive elements include the nature of the stressor (i.e., its intensity and manageability), the surrounding circumstances, assessment of risk, as well as the individual and social resources available to the person to handle the situation (Folkman 2011, p.36-40).

2.3.1 Types of coping strategies

An immigrant is expected to adapt to some changes in his\ her life situation. These changes may be necessary because of the differences in culture, lifestyle, societal norms and in some instances language. There are two broad categories of adaptation required for the proper integration of skilled migrants into the new country. This includes; 1) Internal or psychological adaptation which involves the rational and comprehensive evaluation of life satisfaction and the emotive indications of well-being (Cobb et al 2019, p.619-632). 2) Sociocultural adaptation, involves skill-based activities which are targeted at cross-cultural living such as building positive social network, adaptation to the way of life and laws of the new country, as well as acquiring the necessary language proficiency where necessary. (Cobb et al 2019, p.619-632)

Coping mechanisms were classified by Skinner et al 2016 into two major types: adaptive coping mechanism and the maladaptive coping mechanism. These major types can be subdivided into six different families which include; problem solving, accommodation, information-seeking, support seeking, negotiation, self-comforting. These are coping families under the adaptive coping mechanism. While the coping styles classified as maladaptive comprise of helplessness, delegation, submission, escape, social isolation, and opposition. (Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck 2016, p.27-49)

Mak et al explained in details the different subdivisions, and it includes :1) Information-seeking: the collection of relevant information about the stressors. 2) Problem -solving actively planning and strategizing to reach a desired goal. 3) Self-comforting: constructive control of one`s emotion through relaxation and self-encouragement. 4) Accommodation: which involves positive adjustment of the options available through cognitive restructuring. 5) Negotiation: Making necessary compromises to achieve a goal by bargaining and prioritizing. 6) Support seeking: Seeking support from religion and other persons. (Mak et al 2012, p.389-404)

On the other hand, subdivisions under the maladaptive coping strategies include: 1) Helplessness- resignation and giving up control over a situation without making efforts to ameliorate the situation. 2) Delegation: Negatively focusing on stressors by complaining etc, and overdependence on the support of others. 3) Submission: Capitulating to stressors by ruminating over negative thoughts and self-blaming etc 4) Escape: Use of denial, detachment, or rational avoidance of the stressor. 5) Social isolation: Physical and emotional withdrawal to conceal stressors and its effect from others, mostly due to feelings of humiliation and depression. 6) Opposition: the use of aggression, hostility, anger and other negative emotions to address the stressors.

A different classification of coping described by Folkman et al 1985, Carver et al 1994 as reported by Cobb et al 2016 involves the broad classification of coping styles into problem-focused coping style and emotional -focused coping style. In the problem -focused coping style, the problem or stressors are addressed directly, in addition to the identification of a strategy or plan to handle the problem. Emotional -focused coping involves the management of the emotions connected to a problem. It can be active- emotional where the problem is confronted directly, or avoidant-emotional where the individual avoids the problem. The problem-focused coping style and active-emotional coping style are adaptive in nature, while avoidant -emotional coping style is viewed as maladaptive. (Cobb et al 2016, p.864-870)

2.3.2 Previous research on the use of coping strategies and the mental health outcome.

The outcome of the different coping measures can affect the physical health and mental wellbeing of the skilled immigrant. These consequences may be related to the coping style used, in addition to other intrinsic and extrinsic factors. The coping strategies used include;

2.3.2.1 Use of Hobbies and social support

Skilled professionals applied support- seeking strategies when they sought for emotional and financial support from other migrants, family members as well as from religious leaders and government institutions in a study done by Mak et al in 2020. Migrant Korean women were reported to use both healthy and unhealthy coping strategies in combating integration related stress. Examples of the healthy coping measures include walking, hiking, travelling, doing household chores such as cooking, baby sitting etc. Unhealthy coping techniques used include isolation and the retention of negative emotions. (Mo-Kyung 2015, p.52-59)

Covington et al described the use of unique techniques by African immigrant in Pennsylvania, as well as interpersonal coping strategies in the attempt to deal with integration related stress. These individual techniques include watching television, consumption of alcohol, listening to music, walking, sleeping, reading the Bible, and paying more attention to things that bring happiness (Covington-Ward et al 2018, p.253-265). Support from family, colleagues, patients and friends, as well as the use of an ironic sense of humour and joking were strategies used by the nurses to deal with challenges related to integration. (Dahl 2022, p.405-415)

While the use of social network, family support and spirituality as strategies to cope positively is commonplace in most studies done on migrants, some researchers have also identified other negative measures implored by immigrants to deal with these stresses such as isolation, suicide ideation, passive resignation, aggression to others and self, joining organized criminal organizations etc. (da Silva Rebelo 2021, p.1142-1162, Anleu& Garcia-Moreno 2014, p.i88-i104)

2.3.2.2 Coping strategies in the workplace

A systemic review of literature done to investigate coping with stresses related to migration by Mak et al in 2020 reported the use of a variety of coping strategies in the handling of these pressures. To cope with pressures related to their jobs or job seeking, migrants used strategies such as problem solving, negotiation, support- seeking as well as opposition, accommodation, and escape. Examples of the use of problem solving as reported include the adjustment of their conduct to impress employers, cutting down expenditure and working in multiple places simultaneously (Mak et al 2020 p.389-404). Some migrants were also able to use the negotiation strategy to bargain for better working conditions, while others used the accommodation coping strategy by accepting more work for less pay during an economic crisis (Mak et al 2020, p.389-404).

African nurses who worked in rural Australia used a variety of strategies to deal with the discrimination they faced in the workplace. These strategies include- removing themselves from situations where they are discriminated against (avoidance) such as when a client requests for an indigenous caregiver. Others chose to look at their immigration goals and the hope of a better life for themselves and their families as a source of comfort for the discomfort experienced in their host country. Zimbabwean social workers in Britain formed an association to help each other handle the pressure connected to starting a new life in Britain. This association was created to give both social and job-related support to the newcomers, as well as assist in preventing conflicts and discriminatory practices in the workplace. (Tinawo 2017, p.707-719)

The use of avoidance and rationalization was described by Chen et al in a cross-sectional study done on unemployed Chinese migrants. Other coping strategies used include fantasizing, seeking help and blame oneself (Chen et al 2012, p.1-12). Some skilled immigrants take additional courses, start tertiary education afresh or in some cases, switch careers as a means of coping with the difficulties associated with the workplace and the labour market of the host country. This investment in further education is used to compensate for the loss of status and discrimination encountered. (Tinawo 2017, p.707-719)

2.3.2.3 Host country related factors

The attitude of the native workers or professionals in the host country plays a major role in the proper integration of the skilled professional. Professional immigrant reported that the attitude of their native colleagues at work was crucial in their pathway to proper assimilation into the workplace and the country. This is because a significant amount of their time would be spent in the working environment, and their first impression of their host country would be derived from the workplace. In addition, they believed that proper education of the native workers about the newcomers would help to reduce conflicts and discrimination and encourage tolerance (Tinawo 2017, p.707-719). The belief that they would return to their home country in future served as a coping strategy for some immigrants. The hope of returning to what is familiar and to extended family and friends served to encourage and strengthen the skilled migrant despite the prevailing circumstances. (Tinawo 2017, p.707-719)

2.3.2.4 Internal resilience factors

The education possessed by the skilled immigrant has been reported as a protective factor in the management of integration related stress. Most skilled professional found it easier to overcome some integration or migration related problems with the use of their education, and were better equipped to adapt themselves to the labour market of the host country. (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104). Other internal resilience factors include the possession of a good sense of humour, a healthy self-esteem and self-confidence and being extroverted. (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104, Tinawo 2017, p.707-719). Being a close family member with a more experienced migrant or having migrated before is described as a factor that prepares a migrant to integrate adequately. (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104)

2.3.2.5 The use of faith and spirituality

Having a relationship with God and other supernatural deities was used by some skilled immigrants to handle the challenges related to integration into their host country. Zimbabwean social worker used prayers to God and depending on him for supernatural intervention and strength to deal with the discomforts they felt. (Tinawo 2017, p.707-719). These workers stated that they worried less and were better able to manage the prejudice, loneliness and stress because of their faith and relationship with God. This was particularly significant with women of African origin. (Tinawo 2017, p.707-719)

2.3.2.6 Health Impact of the utilization of the various coping strategies

A study of Chinese immigrants found that high amount of social support and the reappraisal style of coping resulted in a reduction in the cardiovascular system's response to stress (Lee et al 2012, p.174-185). Amongst adolescent Hispanic and Somali immigrants, the use of problem-solving coping strategies in the handling of discrimination was associated with a reduction in depressive symptoms (Forster et al 2021, p.488.495). A study carried out by Wang et al (2022, p.1278-1288) on the association between depressive symptoms and social integration amongst older Chinese immigrants reported that limited personal coping resources is connected to depressive symptoms. Environmental stressors in the neighbourhood were found to have a negative impact on the mental health of older Chinese immigrants, and the coping methods used were a vital link in this association.

Guo et al (2022) studied the relationship between the use of coping repertoires in the handling of migration and acculturation related stress amongst older Chinese immigrants. The study sought to determine the best coping style associated with an optimal psychological result. The coping repertoires discovered and studied in this research include low resources (which may be due to unemployment or underemployment), spouse-oriented (marital status and state of the marital union), religiosity and community-oriented repertoires (such as neighbourhood cohesion, friends and family support). They reported that the optimal coping method should consist of the use of multiple coping methods and sources, both intrinsic and extrinsic. The outcome of the study showed that relying on a limited number of repertoires

was harmful for the mental health and wellbeing of these migrants. (Guo et al 2022, p.1385-1394)

The effectiveness of different coping strategies used by unemployed migrants was reported to influence the severity of mental health disorder experienced. Migrants with undeveloped type of coping strategy showed more symptoms of psychological distress when compared to other migrants who utilized developed or a variety of coping strategies. Foreign workers who used immature coping strategies reported more noticeable symptoms such as depression, hostility, paranoia, psychosis etc compared to their counterparts who utilized more developed coping skills. (Chen et al 2012, p.1-12)

3.0 CHAPTER 3: Theoretical perspective

This project was done from the perspective of protecting the mental health of skilled immigrants by the exploration of the mental health impact of coping styles used. It was done based upon the following theories;

3.1 Castro and Murray's stress–appraisal–coping scheme

Within this perspective 'resilience' or 'positive cross-cultural adaptation' is defined as the outcome of adaptation resulting from the migrants' persistent efforts at coping with multiple and often chronic stressors encountered within the new environment' (Castro & Murray, 2010). Hence, coping abilities and resources on the part of migrant is viewed as essential in promoting and strengthen their resilience to psychosocial adjustment. Castro and Murray (2010) hypothesized that migrants' resilience in cultural adaptation is dependent on the interactions between individual, familial, and community factors. These factors play a key role in influencing the process of settlement in the host country. (Ben 2014, p.16-33)

This model also proposes that the pathway to adaptation for a migrant unveils itself in 8 areas which include; 1) Condition in homeland ,2) Context of migration, 3) The new environment ,4) Events that are challenging, 5) Responses to adaptation, 6) Return migration, 7) Momentary results such as integrating socio-culturally into the new country, 8) Long -lasting results such as financial and career advancement as well as individual well-being. The ability of the migrant to assess these stressful events cognitively would eventually influence their physical, psychological and mental well -being. Resilience and coping strategies are connected to the individual migrant`s skills or ability to achieve their desired objectives and attain a beneficial result. This includes the migrant`s capacity to make decisions, as well as control and regulate self. (Ben 2014, p.16-33))

3.2 The acculturation stress theory

This can also be used to explain the difficulties encountered by skilled migrants in a new country. Acculturation can be explained as "*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*" (Redfield 1936, p 149).

Berry in 1997 proposed a model to explain the 4 strategies used by immigrants to deal with acculturation related stress, and these include; 1. Assimilation – occurs when the newcomer desires to separate himself from his old culture and seeks to socialize daily with other different cultures (Berry 1997, p 9). 2. Separation- occurs when an individual preserves his culture and avoids interaction with other cultures (Berry 1997, p 9). 3. Integration – takes place when a migrant maintains his old culture while participating and interacting with other cultures (Berry 1997, p 9). 4. Marginalization – occurs when the newcomer does not seek to maintain the old culture or losses the old culture, but is apathetic toward socialization with other cultures (Berry 1997, p 9)

This model makes the assumption that the migrant is in control, and can decide which path he\she would take (Berry 1997, p 10). However, this is often inaccurate because the decision

and attitude of host country or community can be a deciding factor in the determination of which route or strategy the newcomer adopts (Berry 1997, p 10). Where the receiving community restricts the choices or strategies the newcomer can utilize, the alternative strategies would be explored (Berry 1997, p 10). Newcomer who chose the separation strategy, but the attitude and influences of the host community can result in the individual being coerced into other types of strategy such as segregation (Berry 1997, p 10). Similarly, individuals who choose to be assimilate, might be obligated by feedback from the host community to be marginalised (Berry 1997, p 10). Even when the migrant pursues integration, it is dependent on the host community to facilitate proper integration by more inclusive attitude and policies that encourage multiculturalism (Berry 1997, p 10).

Mental illness and psychiatric disorders can result when the newcomer's ability to adapt to the pressures associated with migration and integration (Berry 1997, p 13). This occurs because the enormity, frequency or other inherent quality of the changes encountered exceeds the individual's ability to cope. Consequently, they can develop psychopathologies such as depression, anxiety etc (Berry 1997, p 13). Stress associated with acculturation has been reported to be positively correlated with depressive symptoms and frustration in children (Ren &Jiang 2021, p.4751).

3.3 John Henryism

In the face of difficulties and real or perceived discrimination, some immigrants use active measures to handle acculturation related problems. These measures are termed active coping strategies, and are considered positive because the focus is directed at overcoming any obstacle in the way of proper integration. These measures can include learning a new language, doing unpaid or voluntary etc.

Despite the positive results from these active coping strategies, there remains a price to pay for this progress. The cost of the effort put into coping, regardless of the type of coping strategy used can under certain conditions be overwhelming that it becomes a physical and mental health menace in itself. This delirious effect was first reported in the US amongst African-Americans, who were formerly enslaved and still constitute an ethnic minority in the US today (James 1994, John Henry Wikipedia).

In the US, this phenomenon was termed John Henryism by an Africa- American researcher and epidemiologist Sherman James. It was used to describe the damaging physiological impact of the active coping strategies utilized by disadvantaged individuals to overcome systemic and social hindrances in their path to success, and a better life for themselves and their families (James 1994, John Henry Wikipedia). The concept of John Henryism involves the use of three crucial steps which include the constructive application of mental and physical strength, devotion to hard work and the relentless resolve to succeed (James 1994, p.163-182, John Henry Wikipedia).

Some researchers have proposed that the persistent effort at coping over an extended period of time can result in stimulation of the sympathetic nervous system in the individual. The consequence of the continuous and frequent stimulation is the release of stress hormones, which in turn cause a rise in the heart rate and increase blood pressure seen in these individuals. (James 1994, p.163-182)

Contrary to this hypothesis, a study done on Korean immigrant found that a high level of John Henryism active coping was associated with a decreased level of anxiety, integration stress and depression and a better mental health (Logan et al 2017, p.168-178). A negative correlation between the application of John Henryism and depressive symptoms was documented in a study of black women (Bronder et al 2014, p.115-137). However, it was positively correlated to adequate social support. (Bronder et al 2014, p.115-137)

4.0 CHAPTER 4: Method

This study was done using the phenomenological qualitative research design to explore the strategies used by skilled immigrants in Norway. The use of qualitative research was informed by the need to explore the phenomenon i.e., Coping and resilience amongst skilled immigrants, in a way that adequately scrutinizes their individual experiences, as well as their perceptions and understanding about that experience. Consequently, relevant data was collected and analysed to improve knowledge in this field (Cypress 2018, p.302-309). The purpose of this study also sought to describe the techniques used to handle acculturation and integration related stress. (Kim 2012, p.1-10)

4.1 Data collection

Data was collected by a voice recorder and participants were interviewed using an interview guide. An in -depth interview was carried out using open-ended questions. This approach was necessary to obtain deep understanding of the subject matter, and explore their experiences as immigrants in Norway. An advantage of this method is the unfettered access to the thoughts and perceptions of skilled migrant in Norway concerning their life situation. This is especially important for skilled immigrants in difficult situations and is a way to give a voice to the voiceless. (Kim 2012, p.1-10)

A brief information about the purpose of the study was given, and interested participants were given a detailed information letter about the project, and a written consent was collected. Selected participants were interviewed and data collected from participants who met the inclusion criteria. The research work was properly explained to them in addition to any obligations they may have as a result of their participation. A semi- structured approach was used during the interviews with the participants. Structured questions in an interview guide were used to ensure that the data collected can be compared across individuals, situation, location, and researcher. (Kim 2012, p.1-10).

The participants were interviewed in a variety of locations such as; in their homes, over the phone etc, and each interview was recorded with an audio recorder. Individual interviews lasted an average of 40 minutes. The interview guide contained 7 main questions with many follow-up questions around the category. These questions were designed to probe deeper into individual experiences and thoughts about coping and resilience through everyday life challenges as skilled migrants in Norway. The interviews began with a demographic survey of the participants with questions such as age, gender, nationality, educational background, marital status, length of stay in Norway etc. (Kim 2012, p.1-10)

4.2 Selection of participants

Purposeful criteria- based sampling technique was used in the selection of participants for this study. The participants for this study were selected because they fit the predetermined criteria for selection, and were believed to be an adequate match to achieve the aim of the research. Patton as cited by Coyne 1997 described that the logic and strength of purposeful sampling depends on the selection of information- rich cases that fit the selection criteria for

in-depth study. An information- rich case is a participant from which an investigator can acquire a lot of knowledge around the crucial aspects of the subject being investigated. (Coyne 1997, p.623-630, Lee et al 2007, p.1-10).

Inclusion criteria includes: 1) must be a skilled immigrant (Utlendingsdirektoratet (n.d.). (i.e., meet the OCED definition of skilled migrant); 2) must not be born of Norwegian parents or have Norwegian relatives; 3) must have had tertiary education before entrance into Norway (Utlendingsdirektoratet n.d.); and 4) must have lived continuously in Norway for at least three years. 5) Should not have family members in any of the Nordic countries. 6) Speaks English. Immigrants from other Scandinavian countries such as Finland, Sweden etc. were excluded because they have close ties to Norway and have identical language and culture. Therefore, they are expected to face significantly reduced challenges to proper integration if they choose to migrate into Norway.

4.3 Research design

This research was designed as a phenomenological type of qualitative research, with emphasis on the exploration of lived experiences, in this case integration- related stresses, resilience, coping strategies used by skilled migrants in Norway.

4.4 Recruitment method

Participant were recruited by the use of social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. The participants were selected from social organizations, public gatherings, educational institutions as well as religious organizations mainly from personal contacts and references around the Rogaland district.

4.5 Data analysis

Oral data was collected using a voice recorder, and the information collected during the interview was transcribed using Microsoft office transcribe function. This transformed oral conversation to written words. The words generated by this software was reviewed carefully and corrected where necessary. The transcribed data was coded using thematic analysis, i.e., the method described by Braun and Clarke (2006) in analyzing qualitative research data.

This involved identifying themes important to the research. The themes used concerned obstacles to proper integration in Norway (such as unemployment, language barriers etc.) and the different coping strategies used to protect their mental health (e.g., hobbies, faith-based practices etc.). Pseudonyms were used to keep the identity of the study participants confidential, and places mentioned during the interview slightly altered also.

The transcribed data was analysed using Braun and Clark`s six steps method of analysis of qualitative data.

This includes:

Step 1- Familiarization with the data collected from the interviews - The audio recordings of the interview were listened to several times, and afterwards carefully compared to the transcripts generated by the Microsoft transcribe software. A lot of errors were corrected and unnecessary words or repetitions were removed. This step involved thorough reading and re-reading of the transcribed data in other to assimilate properly the information conveyed by the interviewee (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, p.3351-33513, Clark & Braun 2017, p.297-298).

Step 2- Generate codes- This step was carried out after the transcribed data was read thoroughly. The aim was to identify initial codes in the transcripts of the interview. The transcripts were read and coded line by line. In addition to the use of line-by-line coding, thematic analysis was also used because only relevant data that would help answer the research questions were coded. The data was color-coded to fit individual themes and reduce confusion during the process of analysis (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, p.3351-33513, Clark & Braun 2017, p.297-298).

Step 3- Search for themes- After the data was coded, I conducted a search for themes from the codes which would help answer my research question. Codes that were similar or had the same meaning were recoded and grouped into an individual theme to enable adequate interpretation of the data (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, p.3351-33513, Clark & Braun 2017, p.297-298).

Step 4 – The various themes that emerged after coding was properly reviewed, and other sub-themes generated after proper categorization and classification. During the process of revision, I ensured that each theme was reasonable and relevant to my research question, I conducted a search through my data \transcripts to ensure that I had data to support each theme. The theme was examined multiple times to avoid oversized themes or unnecessary duplication. The sub-themes were also examined properly and the transcripts re-examined for other possible themes (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, p.3351-33513, Clark & Braun 2017, p.297-298)

Step 5- The themes that were identified were defined and characterized properly to enable smooth interpretation. I described the meaning of the individual theme and the interrelationship between the different themes (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, p.3351-33513, Clark et al 2017).

Step 6- The result of the analysis was properly documented. (Maguire & Delahunt 2017, p.3351-33513, Clark & Braun 2017, p.297-298)

4.6 Validity and Reliability of the study

Validity of a study involves determining if the research truly measures that which it intends to measure or how truthful the research results are (Joppe 2000 cited by Golafshani 2003, p.596-606). To establish the validity of my research work, I ensured that the results obtained from this study was credible and trustworthy as well as transferable. The use of in-depth semi-structured interviews and open-ended questions improved the trustworthiness of the study because the study participant got ample opportunity to speak about their experiences concerning the subject of the study (Joppe 2000 cited by Golafshani 2003, p.596-606). The use of study participants from different ethnic background, as well as religious and cultural affiliation went a long way to increase the transferability of the research. The results gotten from this study is transferable, and can be easily reproduced in similar circumstances (Joppe 2000 cited by Golafshani 2003, p.596-606).

Reliability refers to the extent to which results are consistent over time, and are an accurate representation of the total population under study. If the results of a study can be replicated using similar methods, then the research instrument is considered reliable (Joppe 2000 cited by Golafshani 2003, p.596-606). While I conducted this research, I ensured that the results

gotten after analysis are reliable and representative of the experiences of skilled immigrants in Norway. There was adequate and random selection of the study participants that met the study's inclusion criteria from the different ethnic nationalities that make up the skilled migrant population in Norway.

4.7 Ethical consideration

Permission to undertake this study was gotten from the ethical committee of the University and also from the Norwegian Centre for research data (NSD\SIKT) (see Appendix 3 below). The participants used in this work were all foreigners in Norway with diverse backgrounds, educational qualifications, ethnicity and socioeconomical status. The objective of the project was explained to them and they were given an opportunity to consent to be a part of it. Every participant was informed that it was voluntary to partake in the project, and that they had the right to withdraw from it at any time. In addition, all participants were assured of confidentiality. and no information that can directly identify them was collected.

The use of pseudonyms in place of actual names helped to protect the identity of the participant. The participants were also advised not to say anything that would make them identifiable during the process of the interview. Recordings of the interviews and transcribed data from the interview was anonymized also after the study is completed. This is to prevent any physical, psychological and social risks to the study participants

5.0 CHAPTER 5: Results

Data collected during the interview showed many similarities and differences, depending on the individual's experience in Norway. These experiences were strongly influenced by circumstances unique to the individual. The names of the participants have been changed for sake of anonymity.

Participant 1- Barnabas is 45-year-old male of mixed European and North African origin. He has two masters' degrees and migrated to Norway for a job assignment. He is married and has children.

Participant 2 – Isabella is a 39-year-old woman with a master's degree who migrated to Norway with her spouse after a job transfer. She has European and Latin American ancestry.

Participant 3 – Afonso is a 44-year-old man of European origin. He has a bachelor's degree and was transferred by his employer into Norway, and is currently single with no children.

Participant 4- Sade is a 43-year-old woman of West-African origin who has a master degree. She is single and has no children.

Participant 5- Timi is a 50-year-old man of West African origin. He migrated to Norway with a bachelor's degree and is married with children.

Participant 6- Carmelita is a 36-year-old woman of Asian origin. She migrated to Norway with a bachelor's degree, and is married with children.

Participant 7 – Hana is a 61-year-old woman of mixed Middle Eastern and European origin who migrated to Norway with a bachelor's degree. She is divorced and has children.

The model below summarises the findings of this work. It has the stresses faced by the skilled migrant on the left and the coping strategies used by them on the right. The individual handles these challenges with the different coping strategies in line with the Castro & Murray stress-appraisal- coping scheme, and is vulnerable to the health consequences of either the negative or positive coping strategies.

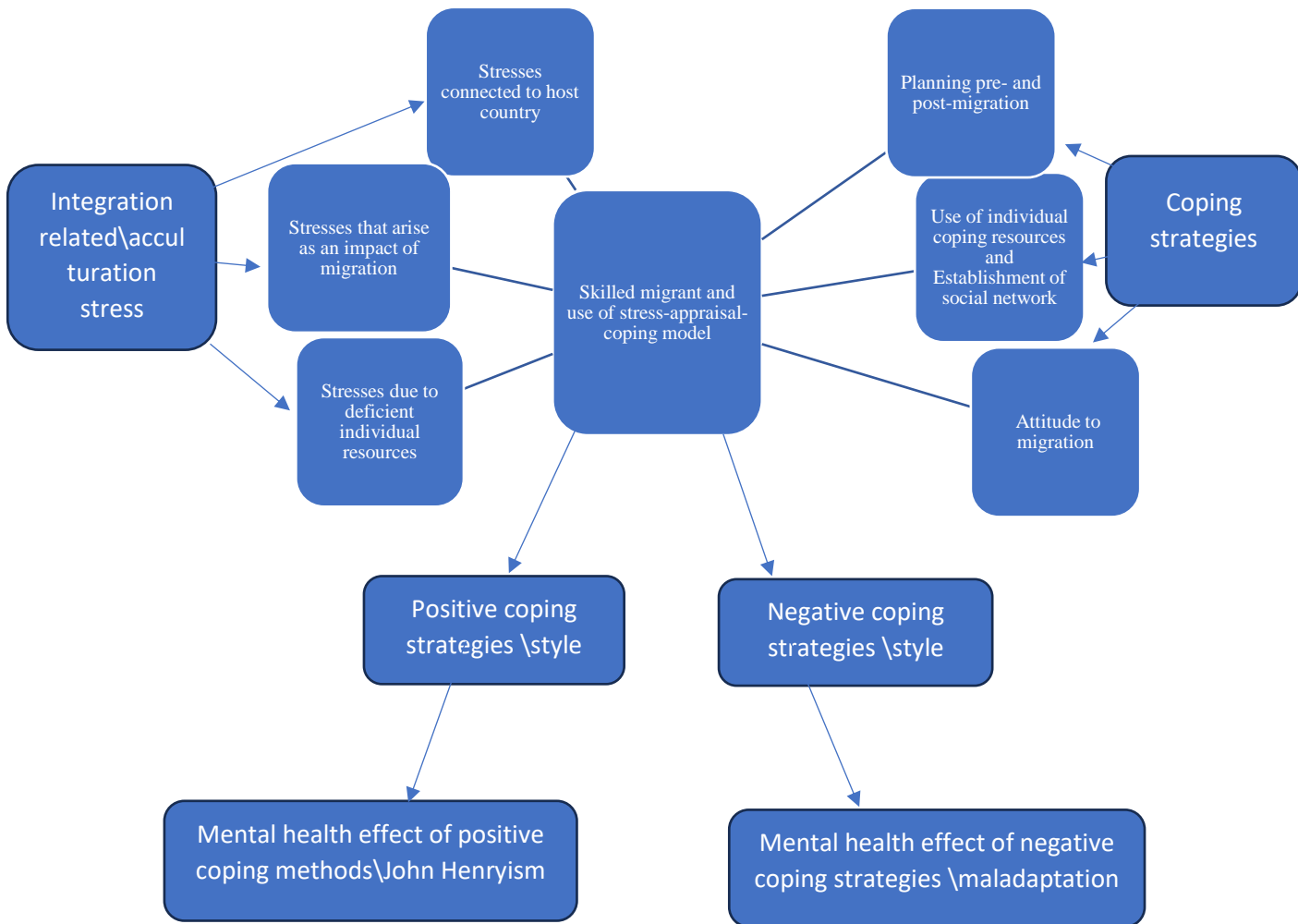


Figure 1 - Diagram illustrating the stresses encountered by skilled migrants in Norway, the coping strategies used to handle them, as well as the possible mental health outcome.

5.1 Stresses encountered during integration into Norway.

The themes from the data collected that describe the stresses experienced by these migrants can be divided into three broad sub-categories. These include:

1. **Limitations associated with or unique to the host country**
2. **Impact of migration on the skilled professional**
3. **Deficiencies in Individual resources**

5.1.1 Limitations associated with or unique to the host country

These limitations encountered by the migrants in Norway can be further sub- divided into;

5.1.1.1 Language Barrier- The inability of the migrant to communicate in the official language of their host country is a source of extreme distress, feelings of exclusion and frustration as expressed by my participant Carmelita.

Actually, in the beginning I was so stressed because of the language emotionally. The language was different, so I couldn't communicate with people.

-Carmelita

The language difficulties resulted in other difficulties as well, such as problems accessing information in Norway which is necessary for self-development in the host country as recounted by another participant Timi.

In terms of the language, it was a barrier because you do not understand all the things going on. You cannot have access to information and information is an important tool for any foreigner or anybody that wants to build your career or get education in any country.

- Timi

This barrier was also associated with difficulties socializing and communicating adequately in Norway, as well as being a hindrance to proper job search within the local institutions and organizations where Norwegian is the main language of communication as described by Isabella.

The language was the biggest challenge, but when the language difficulty was solved, I believe the labour market opens up for you. Many people, including I feel that the Norwegian market is very close, if you don't have the language. They will always prioritise the people who speak versus people who speak English only.

- Isabella

Socialization among Norwegians and the local non-English speaking population is restricted and, in some cases, these newcomers felt excluded from social interaction with other individuals as a result of absent or limited language skills as narrated by another participant Barnabas.

By not speaking the language I created a physical barrier because I can't catch conversation as frequently as I would like to. It could be at school with the kids, with neighbours. It could be in the park where 2-3 parents are speaking together and they might want to introduce you or get you into the group, but unless you speak the language you already put yourself behind.

– Barnabas

5.1.1.2 Cultural barriers - For majority of the indigenous population in Norway, migration into Norway, especially from other continents beyond Europe is still seen as a new phenomenon. Therefore, the country remains relatively monocultural in many aspects of human life. This expresses itself in the way the average Norwegian forms new connections

and relationships, the work culture, food culture, child upbringing methods etc. The average Norwegian is perceived to be reserved and wary of outsiders, a perception that can constitute itself as a stressor for many newcomers in the country as reported by some participants below.

Whereas I found that here people don't accept multiculturalism yet. It's still a question of whether to accept it or not. People are much more skeptical, and you feel it in your day-to-day contact with people. And it's tiring and it feels like people are looking at you through strange glasses and it takes a lot of time.

- Hana

Norwegian people are reserved and shy and keep to themselves. Usually when you go into a place, the people who are there can help absorb you into the system. But it is different and it will be difficult here in Norway because Norwegians are very reserved themselves, so they're not going to be very helpful in that regard.

- Sade

The culture of being reserved or shy is an obstacle to social contact with foreigners and this makes the formation of a social network which is crucial to integration in any new environment very tasking, and in some cases only serves to heighten the sense of isolation the migrant experiences as described by Timi and Isabella.

There's a lot of isolation. People are mostly isolated in the sense that they don't socialize so much among themselves.

- Timi

The challenge in the beginning is getting to know Norwegians because they are quite closed, so they take time to open to somebody that they don't know. It is the opposite in other countries. So, it was harder in the beginning to make friends. But now I'm very well settled. But it took us 10 years, isn't it?

- Isabella

Some found the food culture in Norway challenging, especially in areas where the migrant population was significantly low with a paucity of international food shops as reported by Isabella below.

The food was a bit difficult for me and I struggled to cook my way because I felt there was very, very few choices.

-Isabella

5.1.1.3 Unemployment and the labour market forces – The search for jobs in the Norwegian labour market can be a very challenging task for some skilled migrants. While some skilled migrants are lucky to get good jobs that match their level of education and expertise before they arrive the shores of Norway or immediately after their studies, other equally skilled professionals struggle to secure jobs. This has been a source of frustration and hopelessness for many new-/comer such as Hana depicted below.

I started applying for you know anything really. It was a very difficult period because I could send, I remember I've still got all the applications, it was application after application after application, and almost no response whatsoever. It was very, very disheartening I have to say, and much worse than expected.

- Hana

There are many factors that my participants believe might be responsible for their difficulties securing a proper job despite having suitable education and many years of experience in their field. Some believe that their lack of social network maybe responsible for these difficulties, while others think that Norwegians are less likely to employ foreigners because of their culture of reservation towards foreigners in general. A factor that puts most new-comer at a disadvantage as reported by Hana.

I didn't find that that was the case here. It was much more relaxed. Much more informal and so many times it was like you have to know somebody and stuff like that.

- Hana

Some participants also experienced the problem of underemployment and difficulties getting full working hours in their place of employment, as a result many skilled immigrants are forced to not only do jobs that are way below their level of education, but were given only limited hours a week to work. In addition to this, the menial jobs they got was described as physically, mentally and economically demanding because they are forced to work in multiple places to make ends meet. The physical and emotional strain experienced while shuttling from one place of work was described as a cause of despair and exhaustion by some of the participants as reported below.

And I was combining about three or four different small jobs here and there. So, like working as the personal assistant and it was really awkward because it was like 2-hour shifts. 2 hours here, 2 hours there, 2 hours in the middle of the day, 2 hours in the evening and no car. So, I was like using a lot of time travelling back and forth.

- Hana

This exhaustion can be sometimes compounded by the occasional exploitation of the vulnerability and desperation of these newcomers who are pressured by other socioeconomic factors such as the need to be self-reliant and independent by some employers. The result of this is the migrants is more vulnerable to having unsuitable working conditions and inadequate remuneration for the work done as recounted by Hana below.

I realised that it that was very demanding because you were working much more than 40 or 50% and when you work part time, then you know you have almost a full-time job stuffed into your half time job.

- Hana

5.1.1.4 The climate and location – Some migrants had some difficulties adjusting to the climate in Norway, and this initial challenge with adaptation resulted in stress, and in some

cases inability for some skilled migrants to be properly integrated into the Norwegian society as stated by one of the research subjects below.

Because of the climate, people use it as a reason not to come out often, we have a longer winter here. So, you don't really see your neighbours to interact with them.

- Timi

5.1.2 Impact of migration on the skilled professional

This category can be divided into the following;

1. 5.1.2.1 Economic factors\cost of living in Norway-

Unlike most countries in the world, the cost of goods and services in Norway has been high for decades. The situation was worsened by certain events around the world such as the COVID-19 pandemic and the war in Ukraine. The consequences of the exorbitant prices of essential materials such as food, gas prices, electricity prices and mortgages are that the already economically vulnerable newcomer struggles on a daily basis to make ends meet such as reported by Sade, one of the subjects below.

You know having financial challenges affects your health without a doubt, and you know you have less security. Not knowing what's coming in the future, it's going to affect your health.

- Hana

It is the financial implication first and foremost. Most people especially those coming from developing country find it financially tasking when coming into the system.

– Sade

Even the more fortunate skilled professionals with stable jobs such as Barnabas, one of the study subjects as reported below, found that their purchasing power had drastically reduced, and they are forced to prioritise and reconsider their expenditure more carefully.

If I compare before when I lived in Asia, I was eating out in restaurants every day. It was so cheap but here I wouldn't go necessarily everyday you know. I obviously have to restrict myself in what I'm buying here or the way I'm consuming.

– Barnabas

5.1.2.1 Separation from family and Support system –

Upon arrival into Norway, the skilled migrant is disconnected from all or some family members, and can be said to have lost a vital source of both emotional, physical, psychological and in some cases financial support. This separation for the newcomer means he or she is cut off from vital support that is necessary for proper functioning in the new country. The average migrant is economically beneath the indigenous population who have the privilege of enjoying financial stability and social support from their parents, grandparents, friends and acquaintances. The pressure of balancing family life and work life can be tough for some immigrants, and can result in feelings of frustration, exhaustion and isolation as described by a study subject below.

It's more challenges and there's less security, in a way you don't have those in-laws. You don't have all the structures around you that the Norwegians have, you know, going to their cabin in the weekend. You know meeting their grandparents and the cousins and everything you don't have that life around you, so you feel much more isolated."

- Hana

5.1.1.3 Lack of social network and social isolation – One of the impacts of migration into a new country is the initial lack of an adequate social network, which can in turn result in social isolation and other effects which is inimical to the physical and mental wellbeing of the newcomer.

There's some other aspect besides having food on the table, shelter and having a job that can pay your bills. The other aspects of social interaction like companionship, laughter that I feel like I have let go of or that I lost by moving to a new place and to a new country where I didn't really know anybody.

- Sade

Even when efforts are made to establish a social network by increasing social contact, some migrants struggle with the lack of depth and distant nature of these fragile relationships.

You can build your circle of friends, but just day-to-day contact with people in a shop or wherever it is quite for me...I experience it as lacking human warmth sometimes".

- Hana

5.1.2.4 Difficulties related to child upbringing and parenting - Most migrants who have young children have expressed their reservations about the way children are raised in Norway. This is especially noticeable amongst non-European migrants whose culture on child-raising are in some aspects different from the way it is done in Norway. The reputation of the child welfare organisation in Norway called Barnevernet especially among migrants

has resulted in a lot of emotional distress and anxiety among skilled migrant who are have young children.

Therefore, the skilled migrant with children under 18 years has to grapple with additional stress and anxiety due to raising children in Norway because some children take advantage of the differences in child rearing to rebel, disrespect and disregard their parents. An outcome that is a source of psychological and emotional distress for parents who struggle with enforcing their authority as parent and the fear of rebellion or separation from their child if they are taken by the Barnevernet.

I think when it comes to disciplining as well, it's challenging because here in Norway you need to handle kids lighter than in my own country. But I think disciplining in my own country is stricter. So here I feel like some kids become less respectful and grow up a lot different from how kids grow in my home country. When I'm trying to discipline my kid here sometimes, they have more tantrums, you know, because they feel like they have more freedom in a way.

- Carmelita

5.1.3 Deficient individual resources

This refers to the capabilities, assets and means that the skilled migrants lack as individuals that predisposes them to migration related stresses. It can be subcategorized into;

5.1.3.1 Deficiency as a result of unrecognized or inadequate educational qualifications-

Some skilled professionals face difficulties getting their education recognized in Norway and others have their education not recognized at all in Norway. In some cases where it is recognized, it is not considered equivalent to Norwegian education of the same level. This is especially true for skilled migrants who have completed their education in countries outside the European Union. The result of this is that the skilled migrant affected is faced with very difficult and challenging choices in Norway. A lot of very skilled immigrants are forced to either return back to their home country, or take menial jobs below their level of education and training.

This is despite the fact that they have acquired excellent education and probably have many years' experiences in fields where the demand for labour is very high and there are currently significant shortages in Norway. This is a major source of stress and many skilled migrants have battled with feelings of depression, worthlessness and being undervalued. This is particularly arduous if the individual involved has little or no opportunity for self-improvement in terms of a career change or making up for the deficient education because of economic limitations or lacks adequate support system necessary to take these steps as reported by Timi and Carmelita below.

In Norwegian labour market it was quite challenging, that is why I had to do more courses, and I had to look for opportunity to update some of the courses.

- Timi

My level of education in my home country is equivalent to healthcare worker here, not nursing. So, to be a nurse here in Norway I needed to go back to the university and I needed to take some courses and take some couple of years of practice.

- Carmelita

5.1.3.1 Visa and Residency restrictions-

A lot of skilled migrants, especially migrants from relatively poorer countries outside the EU expressed their despair and frustrations about the visa policies in Norway. These rules place an enormous burden on the struggling migrants to meet certain strict requirements before they can become a part of the Norwegian society. The fear of loss of income from whatever kind of job they are able to get, and strict rules about financial independence means the skilled migrant is strained emotionally and physically as expressed by Sade and Carmelita underneath.

Because when I came to Norway, I was just a student. I took Norwegian language course for one year, and that visa is not renewable. So, I had so much pressure in me that within one year I needed to get a job. And not just any other job, I needed to find at least 80% to 100% permanent job that is related to my degree, which should be health related.

- Carmelita

But also because of anxiety and fear of not doing well enough and losing your place. So that comes from being an immigrant and having only a temporary resident status. I think all this pressures with time it can lead to burnout and depression.

- Sade

5.1.3.2 Economic and Social factors from home country –

In many cultures and countries, adult children are expected to shoulder the economic burden of the family. This is particularly true for skilled migrants who come from lower middle-class and poor families. As a result of this expectation, the skilled migrants bear the economic burden for himself, as well as for his family back home. In such cases, the skilled migrant is forced to find any kind of work regardless of its suitability to his educational background and work extra hours or shifts so as to make enough for himself and his family in Norway, as well as for the family back home. They are also forced to appease extended family members and explain in many cases why their needs cannot be met as reported by a participant below.

For my family back home, one has to explain that there are so many factors that made it not so easy for one to move at the pace to which one aspired to move. So, they have a clearer understanding of what life is like here.

- Timi

Even skilled migrants from relatively financially stable homes are under immense pressure to find their feet in their new country, instead of coming back home to an unstable and insecure socioeconomic environment back home.

I travelled back to my home country before and I felt depressed because I was used to earning good in the other European country. And then I travelled back home and I was not earning enough.

- Carmelita

5.1.3.3 Personality-

The personality of the skilled migrant is an important factor in the determination of the ease and effectiveness of the integration process. This aspect of the migrant's life is important for the formation of important social connections that are necessary for adequate adaptation into the new country. Although humans have little control about their personality type, an extroverted personality type can encourage the formation of friendships and social connections as expressed by Isabella underneath.

It has helped definitely that I'm not ashamed or shy to approach people. So, you can easily meet people. I do feel that helps a lot that.

- Isabella

5.1.3.4 Minority status –

Like many countries in the world today, the treatment of individuals differently based on their ethnicity is illegal. Nevertheless, some individuals still have prejudices against people who are different from them in terms of race, religion, ethnicity etc. In Norway, some migrants are confronted with difficulties getting properly integrated into the Norwegian society because they are faced with certain biases and negative preconceptions. This can result in a lot of depression, frustration and despair mainly because these attributes are unchangeable as conveyed by Hana and Sade below

So, she said to me put a photo on your CV so that people could see that you don't wear a hijab. Then I gradually learned that a lot of employers see your name and a little bit of my background, that's it. They don't even look at it again. You know, so it was very frustrating.

- Hana

You never feel like you belong or you are understood. Of course, there's the black aspect also, the micro-aggression to micro-racism to even outright racism to deal with. I have spent my whole life in my home country and I wasn't a colour until I got to Norway then all of a sudden, I am a colour.

- Sade

The result of this is that the skilled migrant sometimes faces challenges becoming a productive part of the society despite several efforts to get the skills necessary to overcome

the barriers to integration they are faced with. This too is a cause of depression and frustration to the skilled migrant affected.

I haven't been called back over or selected for any of the professional jobs I have applied for. And I know other people too, who have Norwegian educations, who have not been able to successfully get professional jobs in their field of study. So, it's really difficult to say if Norwegian education has been a plus.

- Sade

5.2 Coping strategies used by skilled migrants in Norway

The coping strategies used by skilled migrants in Norway to handle migration and integration related stress gotten after analysis of the data collected from this research can be explained using the following categories;

- 1. Planning**
- 2. Establishment and reliance on social network**
- 3. Use of Individual resources**
- 4. Attitude to integration related stresses**

5.2.1 Planning

At the centre of every properly executed project is adequate planning. Therefore, it is imperative that any skilled migrant who intends to migrate plans carefully for their intentions and for unforeseen challenges. The participants in this study used planning as a coping strategy to deal with the stresses they encountered. The steps taken include planning for the following;

- 1) Purpose of migration**
- 2) Educational recognition in Norway**
- 3) Willingness to switch career path**
- 4) Pre- immigration planning**
- 5) Post- immigration planning \ prioritizing**

5.2.1.1 Purpose of migration – From the data collected in the course of this work, the reason behind migration played a major role in the determination of the amount of stress the migrant experienced. Skilled professionals who came on job transfer as shown by Barnabas and Isabella below or were employed immediately after studies experienced significantly

lower integration related pressures compared to their counterparts who probably migrated without a job or concrete plans based on knowledge of the Norwegian labour market.

I didn't look for a job in the Norwegian labour market. I came as a job transfer so I was already hired by my company before arriving Norway.

– Barnabas

5.2.1.2 Educational recognition in Norway- Skilled professionals who had their education recognized in Norway coped relatively better (as illustrated by Isabella below) compared to their peers who struggled with getting the required certifications necessary to work in their professions as recounted by Timi underneath.

I got to NOKUT to get my university education approved, and then after that it just went by itself basically. I do feel that everything is very fast. It took us few weeks to have everything ready.

- Isabella

Coming to Norway, which had a different standard compared to my home country, one had to do these courses again because they were really necessary. So basically, it's almost the same thing as starting all over again.”

- Timi

5.2.1.3 Willingness to switch career path – For some skilled migrants, the willingness to change their career path and pursue, in some cases, a totally different path as dictated by the Norwegian labour market was the approach they used to avoid or reduce the pressures from prolonged unemployment and other integration related stresses. While some took jobs that were closely related to their former area of study, other were willing to consider and pursue a totally different path during their journey to integration into Norway as described by Isabella underneath.

Initially, I worked in marketing for a company. Then I moved to education for kids, so I took another course within the school. Because I had worked a lot in the past, I used the opportunity of being here to change career.

- Isabella

5.2.1.4 Pre- immigration planning – The pre- immigration preparations made by some skilled migrants played a significant role in reducing integration related stress. Planning for issues like accommodation, finance and actively seeking for information about jobs and the labour market in Norway before migrating was used as a strategy to avoid or reduce stress. It also helped to make the transition from their home country to Norway smoother as narrated by Isabella below.

We had sold our house before coming to Norway. Yes, we planned everything before coming when we found out we were moving. We tried to contact people here to rent a home and have everything settled before we came.

- Isabella

5.2.1.5 Post - immigration planning \ prioritizing – Planning and setting their priorities right after migration was another strategy used by skilled migrants to cope with migration and integration related stresses. This involved actively prioritizing and taking steps to pursue certain goals as reported below by Timi.

You need to set your priorities right first and foremost. You don't go to parties all the time if you have too many things to do. Again, it helps you when you are able to plan your time. The moment you lock yourself inside and do not go out at all, you can get depressed, so it helps to get the balance right.

– Timi

Taking steps to tackle barriers such as language barrier by taking language classes etc. Volunteering in companies or organization in Norway as a way to get the necessary exposure and Norwegian work experience as was done by Timi and Carmelita underneath.

I was watching the TV and reading newspapers. I even volunteered in a nursing home in Sandnes.

- Carmelita

5.2.2 Establishment and reliance on social network

A broad social network was used as a strategy to cope by nearly all the skilled migrants interviewed. This involved the use of the following;

- 1. Increasing social contact**
- 2. Maintaining contact with family and friends**

5.2.2.1 Increasing social contact- This involved taking steps to interact with other individuals from within and outside your ethnic group and cultural affiliation. Some skilled migrants joined different clubs and social groups such as skiing club, dance club as reported by a subject participant below etc.

I go skiing with the skiing club. It is a way to get to know people there.

- Afonso

While others attended parties and other social activities with individuals from other cultures. Newcomers who were parents to small children were actively involved in extra-curricular activities with their children. A significant number of skilled migrants depended on the help, guidance and support of older and more experienced migrants to get information necessary to

integrate in Norway. These individuals play a crucial role in supporting and advising the newcomers, as well as serving as a source of motivation, physical, psychological and financial support as reported by Sade and Timi.

In the city I moved to, I started to meet other immigrants who had been here much longer, so they knew the things that I had to do, and so I had access to information.

- Sade

There were some friends who were able to accommodate me for a month till I was able to get cheap accommodation. That was a big measure in the beginning. But the fact that I was able to stay with a friend helped me to be able to save money and then stand on my own gradually.

- Timi

5.2.2.2 Maintaining contact with family and friends – Some skilled professionals- maintained communication with family members and friends in their home country as a way to deal with integration related stress. This was especially important during the first few years of arrival in Norway when they had little or no friends as reported by the study participant below.

I have my sister, so sometimes when I feel down, I tell my sister please I am feeling stressed. Can we just meet, you know, so. It's basically communicating with family and people from my home country.

- Carmelita

5.2.3 The use of individual resources

One of the approaches used by skilled professionals to cope involved the use of unique individual resources. These resources include;

- 1) **Personality**
- 2) **Past experience as a migrant**
- 3) **Hobbies and Leisure activities**
- 4) **Religion and Faith**
- 5) **Culture and Cultural practices**

5.2.3.1 Personality –

Skilled migrants who are extroverted, friendly and more sociable found integration into the Norwegian society much easier compared to their introverted and reserved counterparts (see Chapter 5, paragraph 5.1.3.3). One of the participants narrated their experience underneath

I strongly believe that my personality helped because the few Norwegian friends and of course people from other cultures that I met in my first few years in Norway was because of my friendly attitude.

- Timi

5.2.3.2 Past experience as a migrant –

Having past migration experience before arriving to Norway was observed to be helpful and advantageous to the newcomer. Skilled migrants who have lived in many countries or at least one other country before coming to Norway showed better ability to deal with stresses that arose from migration into Norway. These past experiences were used as a source of motivation, as well as an avenue for the skilled migrants to develop a lot of the skills and knowledge needed to thrive and integrate properly into Norway. This experience also includes the experience of some skilled migrants as second-generation migrants as explained by Isabella and Barnabas below.

We had to learn a new language and adapt to new customs. But we were used to it because me and my husband we are used to moving and living in different places for all our lives almost, we are both kids that were raised by expatriates”.

- Isabella

5.2.3.3 Hobbies and Leisure activities –

Hobbies and other leisure activities were used by some newcomers to cope with the pressures from integration. While some of these activities were used to build social network such as membership in some clubs e.g., dancing skiing etc, others were used as a source of relaxation and pleasure as explained by Sade underneath.

I like reading novels, watching movies, engaging in do-it-yourself projects to cope with stress. I started going to the gym also.

- Sade

5.2.3.4 Religion and Faith –

The engagement in religious activities, religious belief and faith in God was used as a coping strategy by some skilled migrants to deal with pressures during the process of integration. It helped them avoid feelings of isolation, and gave them the opportunity to associate with other individuals from different cultures, as well as build a social network. Sade and Carmelita narrated their experience;

My faith has given me hope so yes, actually it is also an important support system, just the need to go on however difficult it is now, it will get better. It has given me the strength to not give up”.

– Sade

Yes, I am catholic and I attend services and this helped to build my confidence, and by exposing me to people from different countries. Because after the service we usually spend time having snacks, sitting down, talking to each other. So, it helped a lot as well.

- Carmelita

On the other hand, a significant number of these newcomers did not think their religious affiliation was useful to them at all despite the fact that some belonged to a religious organization and believed in God. These group did not believe that their faith played any role because they were either not practicing their faith or have become agnostics or spiritual but not affiliated. Barnabas, Isabella and Hana recounted that;

I gave up on that, my mum is a Christian but my dad was a Moslem, but I do not believe in religion. I don't need much spiritual support just because I read and I see some testimony that, yeah, good God, my life is good.

– Barnabas

Not, I mean not like organised religion. I have my own spiritual beliefs, but I wouldn't say I'm this or that. I think I wouldn't call it a faith, but my spiritual approach to life is to value life, you know, and trying to value life in everybody that I meet. That is a kind of faith in a way, Although I wouldn't call it like a particular form of a religion or anything.

- Hana

Not at all. I mean I haven't used my faith for anything. To be fair, I was raised as a Catholic, but I didn't practice it. I. Haven't been to church in years.

- Isabella

5.2.3.5 Culture and Cultural practices –

Some cultural practices from their home country were useful for some skilled professionals during their process of integration. These practices include; the culture of communality, preparation of traditional cuisine and other food materials, the celebration of special occasions and public holidays etc. These practices provided an avenue for these newcomers to socialize among individuals with similar cultures and belief, as well as encouraged the formation of a social network. The feeling of being at home away from their homeland served as a way to relieve stress also as reported by Carmelita below.

Actually, it's part of our culture to celebrate the special days like parties e.g., birthdays, Christmas, even valentine's day. It's a part of our culture, so I think it helped me a lot as well because I like socializing. I think that's one of the

culture methods I used to integrate. So that's the thing I think I used in my own culture, and eating our own traditional food.

- Carmelita

5.2.4 Attitude to integration related stress

This concerns the skilled migrant's disposition to difficulties and pressures connected to the integration process. It can be described using sub-categories such as;

- 1) **Willingness to adjust and make personal changes**
- 2) **Seeing the bigger picture and focusing on positive things**
- 3) **Recognizing self-imposed limitations**

5.2.4.1 Willingness to adjust and make personal changes –

The willingness to adjust and make personal changes was used by some migrants to cope with the stressors they encountered during integration. These changes include making adjustments in their economic, social and professional lives. These adjustments were unique on the individual involved, and can be said to be associated with other factors such as personality type, personal goals, life/family situation etc. A lot of these changes involved methods the skilled migrants used to improve themselves to adjust also to their new environment.

My eating habits have changed a lot here positively, and I also do more sport here.

– Alfonso

5.2.4.2 Seeing the bigger picture and focusing on positive things –

A vital strategy used by some immigrants to overcome integration related stresses include taking cognizance of the strong points of the Norway system, and the advantages and benefits of living and being an integral part of the Norwegian society. This approach helped to reduce the frustrations over unfulfilled dreams and expectations. Hana had this to say;

It is really fantastic for kids here, the safety and the innocence that they can keep you know a bit longer and when you go out on the street here, you're not on the alert.

– Hana

5.2.4.3 Recognizing self-imposed limitations –

This entails awareness about possible self-made obstacles that are placed by the skilled migrant as an individual that hinders the process of proper integration. This can sometimes be described as deficiencies in the individual's adaptation or coping resources, but in this instance, it is within the control of the newcomer to decide where, when, how and whether or

not he or she would take the steps necessary to integrate properly into the Norwegian society. It can point to an unwillingness to do the work needed to integrate properly as expressed by Alfonso below;

It would have been nice having a bigger circle of friends again. And then I don't maybe put too much effort into it. I became comfortable working, coming home, doing my own stuff".

– Alfonso

6.0 CHAPTER 6: Discussion

The result from this work will be discussed in the view of the theoretical perspective (see Chapter 3) and prior researches done on the coping strategies and mental health of skilled migrants. This would be based on the following areas as illustrated in the result chapter above:

- A) **Planning**
- B) **Establishment of a social network**
- C) **Use of individual resources**
- D) **Attitude to integration related stress**

6.1 Planning

The ability to plan and reassess any plan to cope is the bedrock of the Castro and Murray`s scheme of coping. This involves the use of stress- appraisal method of coping where the strategies used to cope are flexible, and are determined by the uniqueness of the stressors. (Ben 2014, p.16-3). This is in concordance with the report of Anleu in 2014 which describes resilience as a lifelong and continuous process targeted at adaptation in a positive way. (Anleu &Garcia-Moreno 2014, p.i88-i104). Planning as an approach to coping can be reviewed using the following;

- 1) **Pre- immigration planning**
- 2) **Employment status**
- 3) **Flexibility to possible career changes**
- 4) **Prioritizing**

6.1.1 Pre- immigration planning –Findings from this work showed that individuals who moved to Norway after getting a job and making concrete arrangements for housing etc experienced less stress, and had better opportunity to integrate faster into the Norwegian society. This involved pre-immigration planning and the use of adaptive coping mechanism such as information seeking, and is in agreement with the study done by Skinner &Zimmer-Gembeck 2016, p.27-49, Cobb et al 2016, p.864-870. Study participants (Barnabas, Isabelle and Alfonso) who made more concrete plans pre-immigration experienced little or no pressures after immigration into Norway as illustrated below.

My transfer was organized by the company, so everything was quite smooth and we had this relocation agency helping us.

– *Barnabas*

In a qualitative cross-sectional study done in the United States by Fang et al to explore the correlation between adult attachment, stress coping and resilience in adult immigrants, a statistically significant relationship between high income and an increase in positive coping strategies was reported (Fang et al 2022, p.332-340). One of the participants explains;

It is also good to have financial stability because when you get to Norway. If you don't have a stable financial background, you can't afford a lot of things because things are quite expensive. And have a plan, of course.

– Isabella

6.1.2 Employment status- To handle the pressures from unemployment and underemployment, some participants (e.g., Timi and Carmelita below) utilized problem-focused and other adaptive coping strategies such as volunteering in organisations, working in jobs that are below their educational qualification etc. Previous research done by Mak et al (Mak et al 2012, p389-404) also showed similar results, and it illustrates the use of planning after cognitive appraisal of the stressor i.e., unemployment as postulated by Castro & Murray (Chapter 3, paragraph 1).

I worked there as a volunteer and it helped me to be in the system so that the boss there also saw how I was eager to learn and how I work. Even if I was just a volunteer. She saw and then she gave me a job offer.

- Carmelita

Others (e.g., Timi) used other adaptive coping mechanisms such as doing menial jobs to deal with pressures from joblessness and unemployment. This is similar to the findings reported by Xiao et al in 2014(Xiao et al 2014, p.640-653). Timi describes below:

I also did menial jobs that I would not do in my home country just to survive.

- Timi

While these strategies are considered positive, and is targeted at solving the problem of unemployment, one needs to examine the short- and long-term cost in terms of the health and wellbeing of the migrant in the light of John Henryism (see Chapter 3, paragraph 3). Carmelita and Hana recounted the enormous physical and mental health discomfort they faced during the active phases of the use of these strategies. This questions the effectiveness of the strategies, and also the impact of migration on the migrant as an individual regardless of the coping strategy utilized. This is because of the negative effects of chronic stress which results in the prolonged release of stress hormones from the neuroendocrine system as the bodies response to stress. (Aldwin 2017, p 13-54). Carmelita, one of the study participants had this to say;

It affected my health because I was not really eating well. I was not sleeping well. I was just always on the go because I needed money to support myself. So, it affected me emotionally and physically. The first year was the most stressful part of being here in Norway.

- Carmelita

The findings of this project are similar to the findings of Covington in a study done in 2018 on migrants of African descent. African immigrants in Pennsylvania described the effect of stress experienced because of difficulties faced in the integration process, and its impact on their physical and mental well-being. The physical signs and symptoms include increased blood pressure, extreme exhaustion, lack of appetite, increased body temperature, migraines, sleeping difficulties, fainting spells, panic attacks, dizziness. While psychological effects of

this stress were reported as follows: emotional distress, depression, nervousness, anger, uncontrolled crying, loss of consciousness etc. (Covington-Ward et al 2018, p.253-265)

Hence it is easy to understand why despite the utilization of problem- focused strategies, the skilled migrants might struggle with emotions that tend towards maladaptation such as hopelessness. Nevertheless, some participants such as Carmelita dealt with feelings of hopelessness by confronting such overwhelming emotions actively using active emotion-focused coping techniques such as motivation etc as shown below

I have already experienced travelling back home from another European country, so I use that as motivation that whatever happens, even if it's too difficult here, I will not give up because in that country I did not have the opportunity to have a working visa.

- Carmelita

Some might argue that challenges experienced by skilled migrants such as unemployment can create an opportunity for them to integrate properly into the new society despite the initial stress and discomfort faced initially. This assumption seems correct especially when one takes into cognizance the fact that majority of skilled migrants who were employed before migrating or were employed immediately after their international education in Norway struggle to speak the Norwegian language or understand the work culture which exist outside the international working environment despite living in Norway for decades. This finding suggests that some of the fortunate skilled migrants might pursue separation as suggested in Berry's acculturation stress theory (see Chapter 3, paragraph 2), as opposed to proper integration into Norway as illustrated below by Barnabas.

I don't really read the news in Norwegian. I don't really watch Norwegian TV and I don't exactly know what's happening around me, and if I don't know what's happening around me, how can I be part of the community? I put myself into a position where I am not integrated”.

- Barnabas

One can argue that they thrive and feel significantly reduced pressure unlike their less fortunate counterparts because they are in an “international bubble” where they do not necessarily need to adapt to their new environment to survive. This is because financial and economic considerations are the most important factor that drives the need to integrate, and migrate in the first place, as explained by the new economics of labour migration proposed by Stark in 1978 (de Haas 2021, p.8). The fact that they are employed means they have some social network (mainly amongst other foreigners) and are financially stable. The consequence of this is that they feel less pressure after migration, and are therefore less motivated to do the work that is required to integrate themselves properly into the Norwegian society. One of the study subjects reported;

I'm talking mostly to foreigners not because I want to, but because they speak English. If I want to belong to the Norwegian population, I just have to learn the language. But I did not give myself any chance of being integrated because I did not make any effort”.

6.1.3 Flexibility to possible career changes – This is also connected to other factors such as unemployment and recognition of educational qualifications in the host country. Charloff & Lemaitre reported in 2009 that employers were less likely to employ skilled workers who were educated outside the OECD countries. Consequently, some skilled migrants chose to alter their career path to fit the labour market forces in the new country, as well as acquire more recognition for their skills.

This is a problem focused strategy that is believed to be adaptive in nature. It involves active pre- and post- immigration planning and information seeking about the labour market of the host country. Followed by an appraisal of possible challenges (see Chapter 3, paragraph 1) and active adaptation to its expectations, provisions and realities as reported by Tinawo et al 2017. (Charloff & Lemaitre 2009, p.1-54, Tinawo et al 2017, p. 707-719)

This conforms to the description of resilience by Anleu in 2014, where it was described as an extensive and long-lasting process of adaptation which involves the development of positive skills and traits that are vital to prevail over stresses and challenges connected to integration in a positive and constructive way (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p.i88-i104). While this is a practical way to adjust to the difficulties navigating the labour market and work culture in Norway, some skilled migrants take jobs they are ill-prepared or over-qualified for. This can be perceived as settling\avoidance and Carmelita describes her experience;

My level of education in my home-country is equivalent to healthcare worker here not nursing. So, to be a nurse here in Norway I need to go back to the university or I need to take some courses and take some couple of years of practice, but I did not go that far.

- Carmelita

A lot of them struggle in those jobs, and are exposed to a combination of chronic physical and mental stress which eventually can be a precursor for mental disorders such as depression, anxiety etc. Even though some migrants utilize the active coping strategies and John Henry style coping, they are not immune to the physical and mental health effect of prolonged and chronic stress which result from the application of these active coping\John Henry coping styles. This finding is in keeping with the result gotten by Chen et al in 2010 on skilled migrants in Canada who had jobs that were below their educational qualification. These individuals experienced a deterioration in their mental health and sense of wellbeing four years after migration (Chen et al 2010, p.601-619). A participant describes her feelings below;

You go through an internal struggle to cope. You know, to not let yourself be broken down and not let yourself feel devalued. You keep going, and not give up. It is an internal process.

- Hana

Furthermore, some professionals reported inability to get jobs even when they are willing to change careers or settle as recounted below by Hana. This might be as a result of unalterable features in the newcomer, and the host country's attitude to them (Chapter 5, paragraph 5.1.3.4)

So, it was very disheartening that period where I applied and applied and applied and applied. It did not get a response. For things that you're more qualified for and even then, you still do not get a response.

– Hana

In accord with this, Chen et al reported that immigrants who have been unemployed for a prolonged period of time showed higher risk of mental problems and psychiatric disorder compared to migrants who had shorter durations of unemployment (Chen et al 2012, p.1-12). These symptoms were particularly pronounced in individuals who used inadequate coping styles and was dependent on the length of unemployment (Chen et al 2012, p.1-12).

6.1.4 Prioritizing – The ability to assess the different stressors and use the appropriate coping strategy involves the ability to prioritize properly. This is a problem-solving approach, and it was used by some of my participants. The decision to migrate and adapt to the culture in Norway involved planning and prioritizing for their present and future needs as individuals. However, for migrants who are parents, living in Norway provided them with a socio-economic, cultural and religious safety net where they and their families can live comfortably compared to their countries of origin. This is notwithstanding the acute and chronic stressors connected to integration they encounter in Norway as recounted by Timi below.

I later started enjoying my life in Norway, especially when I had started settling down with my family and having kids. It changed my perspective about life because it was no longer about myself, but it was about doing what it takes for myself and my kids to have a better life and a better future. And of course, having kids in Norway, which is a very good thing because it is a very family-friendly environment, so peaceful.

– Timi

Some might argue that it has components of emotional-focused coping because the individual is forced to accept a lesser evil or is pressured to settle for a state of existence that constitutes less harm to his mental health and sense of wellbeing. It can also be viewed as a way to accommodate these changes \stressors, in addition to a means of achieving self-comfort regardless of the difficulties faced as reported by Mak et al 2020, p.389-404, Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck 2016, p.27-49. The use of multiple coping strategies was documented by Guo et al 2022, p.1385-1394, and is considered to give better result compared to the use of a single strategy.

6.2 Establishment of a social network

Participants established and maintain social connections with the native population, their friends and families back home as well as with other more experienced migrants as a way to deal with integration related stresses, and reduce or avoid the physical and mental health implication of isolation and loneliness such as depression etc. They also obtained information about the Norwegian system and society with the help of these social connections established. This is in accordance with the findings of Connor in 2016, where adequate support from family members living in and outside the host country was vital in the handling of integration associated stress amongst Immigrant Filipino nurses interviewed. (Connor 2016, p.195-201). Studies done on older Korean immigrants found also that high level of support socially was associated with higher functioning. (Lee & GlenMaye 2014, p.66-83). The words of Sade and Timi as quoted below further illustrates this;

I was lucky in the sense that I met other immigrants from my country who have been through this system. So, they were able to put me through it and this helped me out a little bit in integrating into the system”

- Sade

So, you need the support of your countrymen that have been here longer and understands the situation much better than locals in the country because for most of the challenges that you're facing, each one of them are passing through or have passed through it and understand.

– Timi

The coping style used above by these participants is in concordance with the findings gotten earlier by other researchers Tinawo 2017, Dahl 2022, and it involved the use of adaptive coping techniques such as information- searching, problem-solving and support seeking. These individuals served as a means to reduce the mental health effect of isolation, and were a vital source of information for the newcomer. (Tinowo 2017 p. 707-719, Dahl 2022, p.405-415). Previous research has shown that these coping mechanisms are adaptive in nature (Cobb 2016, p.864-870, Skinner & Zimmer-Gembeck 2016, p.27-49).

On the other hand, they also can be seen as a distraction or escape from the pressures the migrant has to deal with on a regular basis in the new country (Mo-Kung 2015, p.52-59, Dahl 2022 p.405-415), as well as a much-needed break from the constant and chronic stress of integration which can have a negative effect on their mental health. Some researchers have documented nevertheless conflicting opinions on the use of family and social networking as a coping tool by some migrant groups. Guo et al in 2018 reported that family support was associated with greater depression and anxiety. Stronger community cohesion was also associated with fewer depressive symptoms but greater anxiety. (Guo et al 2018, p.1385-1394)

6.3 Use of individual resources

Aldwin in 2007 explained that the perception of any activity as stressful is based on a paucity of resources to deal with the stressful situation. (Aldwin 2007, p.13-54) With more knowledge and experience about the situation, an individual is placed in a better position to be able to manage this stress better, and that situation is no longer perceived as stressful. In the case of the immigrant, the perception of stress may differ depending on the resources available to the individual at the time of migration, as well as the resources at his or her disposal after arrival into the new country. The individual resources used by skilled migrant in Norway includes;

1. **The use of past migrant experience (including experiences as second-generation migrants)**
2. **Hobbies**
3. **Religious practices**
4. **Cultural practices**
5. **Personality**

6.3.1 Use of past migrant experience- Some of the participants who had previous experience as migrants or second-generation migrants showed significantly better understanding of the stresses that can be encountered during migration, and were more eager to use adaptive coping strategies such as information- gathering, problem- solving through acquisition of relevant skills such as learning the Norwegian language etc. Anleu & Garcia-Moreno posited in 2014 that a crucial individual or intrinsic resource used by skilled migrants is having a past history of migration or having relatives who were or are migrants (Anleu & Garcia-Moreno 2014, p. i88-i104). Barnabas expressed his knowledge of this below;

My dad also migrated from another country into Europe. When he came to the new country, he was already speaking their language. So, I knew that language is everything if you want to belong or if you want to have a proper network and speak freely with whoever.

- Barnabas

6.3.2 Hobbies – All the research subjects engaged in hobbies such as exercising, watching movies, reading, dancing as a way to deal with integration related challenges. These practices involve the use of distractions and can be considered as an emotion- focused coping style. It is viewed as a maladaptive way of handling stress because this approach does not tackle the problems arising from migration, but seek to avoid it. Sade explains below her use of hobbies to cope;

I became addicted to my TV and Netflix. I think my support system was watching movies, watching so many movies. It's a pastime \hobby that does not involve anybody. You don't need anybody to watch movies. You don't need anybody to just be home and search for movies. So, I found myself watching movies. Lots and lots of movies more than I did when I was back home in my country.

This strategy has been reported by other researchers who studied migrants in other country such as Cobb et al 2016 and Mo-Kyung 2015(Cobb et al 2016, p.864-870, Mo-Kyung 2015, p.52-59). Nevertheless, some might argue that it is an effective means of relaxation, and it reduces the effect of stress hormones on the individual involved. If this approach is seen in that light, it is a positive way to handle stress because of its effect on the mental and physical health of the migrant. A similar finding was reported by Morgan et al in 2017 in a study of the coping style used by military officers, and the use of hobbies was found to be associated with a reduction in depressive symptoms, anxiety and stress (Morgan et al 2017, p.e1620-e1627).

6.3.3 Religious practices – The influence of religion or faith on coping was notable amongst first-generation migrants from non-European countries. This approach was used to establish social connections amongst individuals of similar faith. This report is similar to the results of the study carried out by Tinawo in 2017(Tinowo 2017 p. 707-719). In this context, the use of religion and religious practices can be described as a problem-focused or active emotion-focused coping strategy, both of which are adaptive coping strategies. The newcomer seeks to address the challenges faced after migration, and cope with the stress positively by the establishment of social connections, which in turn are necessary for information-seeking, support-seeking and self-comforting during difficult times as narrated by Sade below;

The Christian services I attend on Sunday is the kind of fellowship where a lot of times people get help, for example when people need to move, others volunteer to help them with moving.

- Sade

Results from this research is in keeping with the findings from previous research done by Liwei et al in 2022, where church services and religious gatherings were used to break social barriers and provide a means for the immigrant to overcome the social anxiety associated with cultural differences. Religious practices and teachings also helped to make the migrants more tolerant and flexible to cultural differences in the host country, and more likely to understand unwritten social rules (Liwei et al 2022, p.448-461). Others depended on social event in the church such as church services etc to combat the loneliness and isolation they felt during the process of integration. (Liwei et al 2022, p.448-461, Mo-Kyung 2015, p.52-59)

Nevertheless, individuals who are agnostic can argue that reliance on God can be a maladaptive coping strategy where the individual prays, and then delegates responsibility (avoidance) to another besides himself to handle the stresses connected to integration. This is especially true when no other proactive step is taken by the individual as a human to cope. Negative religious coping was correlated to greater psychological distress in the study done by Silva et al 2017 (Silva et al 2017, p.213-236).

While some believe in praying to God and other religious practices as an acknowledgement of their limits as humans and the sovereignty of God over their affairs, others can argue that it can breed a sense of unrealistic optimism or pessimism in face of integration related

challenges. The outcome of this can be inimical to the mental wellbeing of these individuals. Moreover, the pressures from integration can result in hopelessness, unstable relationship with God and doubts about one's faith which are negative religious coping strategies that has been documented by prior studies to have a strong correlation with anxiety, depression, poor mental health and psychological outcomes. (Silva et al 2017, p.213-236)

6.3.4 Cultural practices- This study reported that some skilled migrants used some elements of their cultural background, such as the culture of collectivism and communality to deal with the pressures of integration. These practices include attending parties, celebrating special days etc was also reported in a qualitative study done by Connor in 2016 to study the impact of cultural affiliation on coping among Filipino nurses. It reported that new immigrant Filipino nurses depended on other immigrant Filipino nurses for social support, and this behaviour was termed intracultural coping. The exchange of ideas and experiences was crucial to the new-comer and served as a vital source of emotional and psychological support whilst they faced acculturation related pressures (Connor 2016, p.195-201). This style of coping can be referred to as an adaptive coping strategy where the individual seeks to ease the pressures of integration by using aspects of his own culture in Norway as explained by Sade;

The communal culture that I grew up with helped in the sense that being able to rely on other immigrants for information, and also being able to help others too reduces that feeling of isolation that you have. You know that you have a community here that you can rely on. Being a part of this tradition has been helpful for me.

- Sade

However, adherence to some cultural practices, especially if these practices are alien to the host countries' culture, can lead to a situation where the migrant is forced into social isolation and segregated (Berry 1997, p.9-13).

6.3.5 Personality – Personality can be described as distinctive pattern of conduct, perception and emotion in a variety of situations and over an extended period of time. (Connor-Smith & Flachsbart 2007, p. 1080-1107). Neuroticism describes the disposition to experience negative emotions such as embarrassment, fear and despair, while extraversion describes the disposition to be sociable, cheerful and optimistic. Expatriate who had good work engagement and resilience, in addition to a positive outlook to life were reported to cope and integrated much better than their counterpart with less developed skills (Genkova et al 2018, p.132-135). The outcome of this study showed that participants who are outgoing and extroverted such as Isabelle, Barnabas, Carmelita and Timi had a more positive attitude to the challenges they faced as reported below;

I think being extroverted helps you to integrate because then you're used to meeting people and are open to change.

- Isabella

This is comparably with the results of a study done on Asian-American student which showed that high neuroticism and low extraversion was associated with social anxiety and maladaptation. (Fang et al 2016, p.58-68). The more extroverted participants were open to the use of adaptive coping strategies (such as problem -solving) to cope with the challenges they faced. The steps include taking languages classes to overcome the language barrier etc. Similar findings were reported by Cobb et al 2019 where active steps were taken to acquire language proficiency (Cobb et al 2019, p,619-632). Contrary to this, participants who had introverted personality became more introverted as a protective mechanism to deal with the pressures they faced as recounted by Hana below.

I've become more and more reserved, more withdrawn into myself, not seriously, but with people I don't know. Where it would be more natural for me to be open and friendly before, I would think that I can't be bothered because often you don't get the response that you expect or you get response that hurts you sometimes. So, after a while you sort of stop bothering so much with people that you don't know and how they're going to respond. I would say I've become more introverted, probably deliberately. I think it's like a protection thing, you know.

- Hana

This type of coping is maladaptive, and involves the use of social isolation and escape instead its more adaptive alternatives. This result is in accord with the work done by Mo-Kung in 2015 where migrants used isolation to cope, and as a result, some retained negative emotions which can have an adverse effect on their mental health (Mo-Kyung 2015, p.52-59). Some might argue that it is the result of persistent failed attempt to integrate into a non-receptive host community, resulting in a change in the approach to adaptation in the face of acculturation stress (Berry 1997, p.9-13). Nevertheless, some participants argued that being introverted had its advantages such as serving as a shield that helps them cope better with isolation compared to their more extroverted counterparts as narrated by Sade below;

“It's maybe harder for me to integrate because I'm an introvert. So, I think maybe being an introvert might be a negative when it comes to networking or making friends. But when it comes to dealing with loneliness and isolation, my introverted self is a plus for me because the extrovert needs to be around people constantly. But I don't need to be around people that much, so the isolation is a bit easier for me to cope with”.

- Sade

However, some researchers have reported findings in the contrary from studies done on other migrant groups. These investigations showed that a decrease in the use of negative coping methods such as denial and behavioural disengagement was connected to resilience amongst immigrants. (Fang et al 2022, p.332-340)

6.4 Attitude to integration related stress

The attitude of the skilled migrant played a crucial role in the determination of the coping style utilized. This study found that skilled migrants adopted the following attitudes to handle integration related stresses;

1. **Willingness to adjust individual expectations and make personal changes**
2. **Recognition of self-imposed limitations to integration**
3. **Taking into consideration the positive attributes of the host country**

6.4.1 Willingness to adjust individual expectations and make personal changes –

Self-adjustment can be described by the readiness at which an individual is able to adapt himself to the customs, culture, standards and expectations of a new environment that is required. (Evans et al 2006 as cited by Jangsinwattan & Sangjan 2021, p.18-30). Even in stressful situations where there are significant cultural differences, for example in the aspect of parenting as earlier reported by Sun & Mulvaney 2023 and Salami et al in 2020, the willingness to adapt and focus on self-development was crucial (Sun & Mulvaney 2023, p.40-61, Salami et al in 2020, p.126-134). The utilization of adaptive coping strategies such as negotiation and problem-solving resulted in reduced stress amongst the skilled immigrant while parenting as narrated by Carmelita below;

“Concerning child discipline here I've learned that you need to be calm first and the kids should be calm first before I talk and it helps. Actually, it helps both ways. It helped me as well because I learned how to control my temper and because of that I've matured as well”.

- Carmelita

Nevertheless, this strategy can be worthless in face of an uncooperative host community. This difficulty was reported by Berry in 1997 in a study of acculturation stress and coping response styles used by immigrants (Berry 1997, p. 9-10). The proper integration of a newcomer into the new society depends to a large extent on the receptive nature of the host, and the presence of policies, attitudes and mechanisms that encourage multiculturalism and discourages racism, discrimination and the segregation of the migrants involved (Berry 1997, p 10). Some migrants might choose to adopt positive strategies to cope, but may be coerced by the attitude of the host country to utilize another strategy which may be maladaptive (see Chapter 3, paragraph 3.2 above). A participant explained;

But again, you don't make friends with somebody who doesn't want to talk to you. So, when I talk to people and they interact with me, of course I keep the interaction on, but if someone doesn't want to talk to me, then I respect their space. No one wants to try to intrude into their privacy.

-Timi

6.4.2 Recognition of self-imposed limitations to integration-

The attitude to stress also influenced the individual's ability to identify possible self-imposed limitations which hinder proper integration into Norway such as not putting enough effort to learn the language as was seen in the case of Barnabas and Alfonso. This approach to coping can be described as maladaptive and involves avoidance and rationalization of the integration related stresses as earlier delineated by Chen et al in 2012 (Chen et al in 2012, p.1-12).

I would say that there is no problem of integration if you want to be integrated, but I did not give myself any chance of being integrated because I did not make any effort.

- Barnabas

Nevertheless, this knowledge is important and shows that the individual involved has insight into possible self-imposed limitations. This attitude can be helpful for other individuals who decide to use more positive and adaptive coping strategies such as problem-solving to handle these challenges.

6.4.3 Taking into consideration the positive attributes of the host country-

It is beneficial for the mental well-being of the individual to have a positive perspective about the host country. Seeing the big picture and considering carefully the advantages of living in a country like Norway where the welfare and social system is excellent, and newcomers enjoy a lot of privileges which may be absent in their country of origin, can have a positive impact on the individual. It alters the individual's perspective on the difficulties encountered, and encourages a more optimistic approach to the integration process.

This is especially true for skilled migrants from poor countries or countries with very strict religious laws and autocratic system of government where citizens have limited individual freedom. This may include the right to freedom of speech, personal preferences on spiritual belief, sexual orientation and association as described by the United Nations declaration of human rights. (United Nations 2023). Some of the study participants expressed their thoughts below;

I would say think of the total package, OK. Do not focus on your economic power or the cost of living in Norway. Think about all those countries where you might have a better economic power but are you free to talk? Are you free to read whatever you want? Are you free to practice your religion if you have one?

- Barnabas

Maternity leave is fantastic; you know the welfare system and health system are all fantastic positives for Norway I have to say.

- Hana

6.5 Limitations of the study

The strengths of this study include the use of individuals from different parts of the world, and from different races, ethnic groups and religious background. The result of this choice implies that the information gathered explored the experienced of skilled migrants from different perspectives and circumstances. This decision improved the validity of this research (Lee et al 2007, p.1-10). Also, the research design and the use of open-ended questions during the interview process improved the reliability of this study. The findings of this research are also transferable to other populations which match the inclusion and exclusion criteria used (Lee et al 2007, p.1-10). The research results were consistent with the data gotten, and a proper explanation of each step of the process was given to show the dependability of this work. (Ryan et al 2007, p.739-744)

However, some limitations of this study include the use of only English-speaking skilled migrants as opposed to the use of a wider variety of skilled migrants regardless of the language spoken (Lee et al 2007, p.1-10). As a result of this, the results obtained might only apply to this group of skilled migrants. Furthermore, it is difficult to ignore bias in this study since the researcher is a skilled migrant, and that might have had an influence in the way data and themes were interpreted (Lee et al 2007, p.1-10). Regardless of these limitations, the result of this study is confirmable because some of the color-coded transcribed interviews was examined by a more experienced researcher to reduce any possible subjectiveness during analysis and interpretation of the data collected (Lee et al 2007, p.1-10, Ryan et al 2007, p.739-744).

7.0 CHAPTER 7: Conclusion

The stresses experienced by skilled migrants in Norway and the variety of coping strategies used by these individuals to handle integration related pressures was investigated in this work, with the aim of exploring the effectiveness of the different approaches in line with the protection and prevention of mental disorders and illness. These strategies can be categorized into adaptive coping mechanism where the individual uses effective methods that not only reduce the effect of the pressure on his mental and physical health, but aids the process of proper integration. Conversely, other less optimal and maladaptive coping methods were used by some of the skilled migrants, and the complications arising from this was explored and discussed in line with its possible implication on the mental health of the individual. However, the use of the adaptive style of coping, although considered positive, is not without its negative health implications in some situations, as suggested by John Henryism style adaptation.

7.1 Significance for policymaking

This work has shed more light into the challenges and hardship faced by skilled migrants in Norway, and the methods used by these individuals to handle these problems. Previous research done in Norway focused on the general migrant population, but this study is unique because it focuses its attention on skilled migrant with the aim of preventing possible mental disorder. This was done taking into account the present political and socio-economic realities in Europe and Norway, and the migrant crisis fuelled by plans and illusions of a better life.

Sometimes these individuals migrate despite having little or no information about the current political, economic and social realities of the host country. In addition to the possible challenges, they might face which might have severe health implications when mismanaged. It is therefore imperative that policies are implemented to create more awareness around this subject as an approach to preventing or reducing the physical and mental impact of migration on these individuals.

7.2 Significance for further studies

The challenges faced by migrants during the integration process can be seen as one side of the story, hence research into the challenges faced by the indigenous population as a result of the migration and integration of foreigner into Norway is necessary. Proper and smooth integration involves the concerted effort of the skilled migrant and the receiving community. Consequently, the exploration of the attitudes, stresses, challenges of migration and its physical and mental effect on the host community and indigenous population in Norway would help shed more light on their reservations and expectations for the skilled migrant in Norway.

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9.0 Appendix

9.1 Consent form

I have received and understood information about the project - Coping and resilience amongst skilled migrants: the role of religion and culture and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give consent:

- to participate in this interview.
- For my personal response in the interview to be stored after the end of the project for follow up studies
-

I give consent for my interview and data collected to be processed until December 2023, and then stored in an anonymized form for possible further studies.

(Signed by participant, date)

9.2 NSD\SIKT project information letter

Are you interested in taking part in the research project?

” Coping Strategies used by skilled immigrants in Norway to handle the mental health effect of integration and work-related stress.”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to research the strategies used by skilled professional immigrant in Norway to cope with the stress they encounter. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This project seeks to explore integration related stressors faced by immigrants and the coping and adaptation mechanism developed by them to survive and thrive in their host country. During this project I intend to explore the personal experiences of skilled immigrants from different parts of the world with an exception of the Nordic countries.

This research would try to answer the following research questions; What are the strategies used by skilled migrants whilst grappling with difficulties integrating into a new society and what are the effect on their mental well-being? Are cultural and religious practices used, and when they are used, what is the effect of this on their mental wellbeing?

It is a master`s thesis. The information you provide would be used only for this research work.

Who is responsible for the research project?

The University of Stavanger is the institution responsible for the project.

Why are you being asked to participate?

I intend to use friends and acquaintances for this research, as well as social media platforms such as Facebook to recruit participants for this project. The participants are expected to be skilled professionals who have university education. In addition, they should have lived in Norway for at least 3 years, with no close family ties to Norway and not from a Nordic country.

What does participation involve for you?

As a participant you are expected to tell your story regarding the stresses experienced whilst they integrate into the host country. I would conduct an interview which would be with a tape recorder, but would be anonymized to prevent the participant from being identified. Personal information such as name, address would not be collected.

The interview would last about one hour to one hour thirty minutes. No additional information would be collected besides what you give during the interview. I would ask you questions and take notes during the interview.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose 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).

My supervisor and I alone would have access to the tape-recorded conversations and it would be strictly for the purposes of this research. I would replace your name or contact details with codes that I alone would have access to.

Participants would be acknowledged for their participation in the project but their names would not be mentioned to protect their identities.

What will happen to your personal data at the end of the research project?

The project is scheduled to end by December 2024, and the audio recordings would be anonymized after the project is completed.

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:

- *The University of Stavanger* via Adaobi Okoroafor – 91577269, Dr Stig Bjønness – Tlf ; 57832746 , Dr Stein Sørli Eriksen - Telephone : 95732429
- Our Data Protection Officer: Rolf Jegervatn -Tlf ;51833081
- 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- Dr. Stein Sørli Eriksen (Supervisor)
Student – Adaobi Okoroafor

9.3 Project approval form from NSD (SIKT)

Vurdering av behandling av personopplysninger

Referansenummer

491805

Vurderingstype

Standard

Dato

06.10.2022

Tittel

Coping and resilience among skilled immigrants in Norway ; the role of religion and culture

Behandlingsansvarlig institusjon

Universitetet i Stavanger / Det helsevitenskapelige fakultet

Prosjektansvarlig

Dr. Stig Bjønness

Student

Adaobi Okoroafor

Prosjektperiode

01.11.2022 - 31.12.2023

Kategorier personopplysninger

Alminnelige

Særlige

Lovlig grunnlag

Samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a)

Uttrykkelig samtykke (Personvernforordningen art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a)

Behandlingen av personopplysningene er lovlig så fremt den gjennomføres som oppgitt i meldeskjemaet. Det lovlige grunnlaget gjelder til 31.12.2023.

[Meldeskjema](#) **Kommentar****ABOUT OUR ASSESSMENT**

Data Protection Services has an agreement with the institution where you are carrying out research or studying. As part of this agreement, we provide guidance so that the processing of personal data in your project is lawful and complies with data protection legislation.

We have now assessed the planned processing of personal data in this project. Our assessment is that the processing is lawful, so long as it is carried out as described in the Notification Form with dialogue and attachments.

IMPORTANT INFORMATION

You must store, send and secure the collected data in accordance with your institution's guidelines. This means that you must use online survey, cloud storage, and video conferencing providers (and the like) that your institution has an agreement with. We provide general advice on this, but it is your institution's own guidelines for information security that apply.

TYPE OF DATA AND DURATION

The project will process general categories of personal data and special categories of personal data about ethnic origin, religious beliefs and philosophical beliefs until 31.12.2023.

LEGAL BASIS

The project will gain consent from data subjects to process their personal data. We find that consent will meet the necessary requirements under art. 4 (11) and 7, in that it will be a freely given, specific, informed and unambiguous statement or action, which will be documented and can be withdrawn

PRINCIPLES RELATING TO PROCESSING PERSONAL DATA

We find that the planned processing of personal data will be in accordance with the principles under the General Data Protection Regulation regarding:

- **lawfulness, fairness and transparency** (art. 5.1 a), in that data subjects will receive sufficient information about the processing and will give their consent
- **purpose limitation** (art. 5.1 b), in that personal data will be collected for specified, explicit and legitimate purposes, and will not be processed for new, incompatible purposes
- **data minimisation** (art. 5.1 c), in that only personal data which are adequate, relevant and necessary for the purpose of the project will be processed
- **storage limitation** (art. 5.1 e), in that personal data will not be stored for longer than is necessary to fulfil the project's purpose

THE RIGHTS OF DATA SUBJECTS

We find that the information provided to data subjects about the processing of their personal data will meet legal requirements for form and content, cf. art. 12.1 and art. 13.

So long as data subjects can be identified in the collected data they will have the following rights: access (art. 15), rectification (art. 16), erasure (art. 17), restriction of processing (art. 18) and data portability (art. 20).

We remind you that if a data subject contacts you about their rights, the data controller has a duty to reply within a month.

FOLLOW YOUR INSTITUTION'S GUIDELINES

Our assessment presupposes that the project will meet the requirements of accuracy (art. 5.1 d), integrity and confidentiality (art. 5.1 f) and security (art. 32) when processing personal data.

To ensure that these requirements are met you must follow your institution's internal guidelines and/or consult with your institution (i.e. the institution responsible for the project).

NOTIFY CHANGES

If you intend to make changes to the processing of personal data in this project it may be necessary to notify us. This is done by updating the information registered in the Notification Form. On our website we explain which changes must be notified. Wait until you receive an answer from us before you carry out the changes.

FOLLOW-UP OF THE PROJECT

We will follow up the progress of the project at the planned end date in order to determine whether the processing of personal data has been concluded.

Good luck with the project!

Contact person: Henriette S. Munthe-Kaas