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***THE ROLE OF WORK AND THE SENSE OF ECONOMIC FREEDOM AMONG
REFUGEE WOMEN WITH FAMILIES IN TROMSØ, NORWAY***

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Master of Philosophy in Peace and Conflict Transformation

May 2023

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Dedication

To all the refugees in the world. Your resilience is incomparable.

Acknowledgment

I thank the Almighty God for the gift of life, strength, and divine wisdom given to me throughout the research.

I appreciate the support and encouragement several people have given to me during the research process. My gratitude goes to the respondents because this research project would not come into existence without them. Thank you for sharing your time, experiences, and reflections which have been a great source of inspiration and motivation to complete the research project. Thanks a lot.

Again, I want to especially appreciate my supervisor Marcela Douglas, for the tenderness, care, and professional guidance and support given to me in the past months. Again, I want to thank my lecturer Ana Luisa for all the assistance. Thank you.

I want to thank my friends Bashiru and Nana Kwame for their support, proofreading, and for drawing my mind to the blind spots throughout the research. Thank you.

I want to thank my family, especially my mother Lydia for constantly calling to find the progress of the research work. Thank you.

Abstract

The thesis reflects on the discussions surrounding refugee participation in work. Furthermore, the thesis seeks to find out the experiences of refugee women after five years of work participation. Focusing on their personal empowerment, relationship with children, changing ideals about femininities across transnational spaces, and creation of social networks, the thesis explores how these factors influence their sense of economic freedom as women with refugee backgrounds.

This thesis is a qualitative study, which applies a phenomenal research design. Data was based on interview transcripts with eight refugee women (in and out) of employment. Again, analysing relevant articles and documents concerning work participation and the influence of economic freedom among refugees in Norway.

The findings suggest three main accounts leading to the decline in work participation of refugee women namely childbearing and large family size, discrimination at work, and old age and sickness. Also, findings concerning the influence of economic freedom in the areas highlighted suggest that the more participants engaged in work, the higher economic freedom they enjoyed in their personal empowerment, relationship with their children, changing ideals about femininities, and creation of social networks compared to participants who were out of work.

Keywords: refugees, women, work, economic freedom, empowerment, integration

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1 Introduction

People become displaced in the unfortunate event of conflicts and violence. In their pursuit for peace and security, some remain internally displaced within their home countries while relatively few people have the resources to move beyond their place of origin. Those persons usually cross the border of their countries to seek safety and asylum in other countries, mostly in the developing world (Jacobsen, 2005).

Most refugees arrive in Norway through a selection process organized by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) and the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR) (Swe, 2013). Unlike Ukrainian refugees who sought refuge in the Schengen Areas with the assistance of Ukrainian communities in member states. This is because of their exemption from the visa requirements when moving within the Schengen area (Enriquez, 2022). According to the 2018 Global Trends Report of UNHCR, 70.8 million individuals were displaced worldwide. Sixty-seven percent of refugees come from only five countries namely Syria (6.7 million), Afghanistan (2.7 million), South Sudan (2.3 million), Myanmar (1.1 million), and Somalia (0.9 million) (Albu, 2019).

As stated in the Refugee Convention, a refugee has a “ well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it” (Article 1A(2) of the 1951 Refugee Convention).

Furthermore, the UDI elaborates by stating that “a person will receive a residence permit as a refugee in Norway if the person has been persecuted for ethnicity, pedigree, skin colour, religion, nationality, members of special social group, political opinions. In addition, if the person in the home is in real danger of being exposed to the death penalty, torture, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. One is entitled to protection if you have a well-founded fear of persecution due to membership in a particular social group, such as former victims of human trafficking, lesbians, gays, bisexual transgender people or intersex people, vulnerable

groups of women and children (UDI, n.d). In this thesis, the definition above would account for who a refugee is, as refugee women in Northern Norway fall under the vulnerable groups of women.

In accepting refugees, Norway provides them with means of subsistence and possibilities for integration. Norway does so by requiring that refugees participate in the "introduction program". This program is regulated by the Introduction Act, where language tuition is the program's starting point and its ending point is either work or further education. The implementation of this program began in 2004 and it represented a shift from an integration policy relying on unconditional social assistance benefits to a compulsory work-oriented activation program with intensive qualifying measures. It is designed to qualify refugees and newly arrived immigrants and between the ages of 18 – 55 years. The purpose of the introduction program is to help newly arrived immigrants integrate and to facilitate them to quickly become acquainted with the Norwegian language, and culture, social life, start working and be financially independent with time (LOV-2003-07-04-80, §1). As stated in the reports of Statistics Norway, most immigrants with a background of escape have low occupational participation. They are mostly involved in low-skilled jobs that usually do not require higher educational qualifications to undertake. Examples are service and sales workers, plant and machine operators and assemblers, and elementary occupations (SSB, 2021). Some challenges leading to low employment rates among female refugees and migrants are gaps in education and documented work experience, gender norms, lack of language skills and information about initiatives, experiences, and physical abuse before and during refugee migration (Albrecht et al, 2021).

1.1 Experience and Problem Statement

Before my master's studies in Norway, I had a keen interest in understanding the experiences of refugees who successfully integrated into their host countries and obtained economic independence with time. Since they are new and unfamiliar with the operationalization of the host country. Thus, when I arrived in Norway, I developed a friendly relationship with Aisha, who happened to be a refugee and has lived in Norway for over 15 years. As the camaraderie relationship strengthened, there were times she recounted struggles moving from Rwanda, Kenya, and finally to Norway with the assistance of the UNHCR. Though her shared accounts were sad to listen to, she insisted it built in her the needed strength, resilience, grit, and

motivation to learn the Norwegian language and culture. Not long after, she was able to find work in Norway. Over the years, she has achieved economic freedom as this was her goal when she first arrived in Norway.

Before meeting her, I had decided to conduct this research on Liberian refugees living in Ghana. Nonetheless, factors such as listening to refugee experiences from Aisha, the challenges surrounding traveling and interviewing during the Covid era, and finally, the deep desire in exploring the work participation of refugee women in a new environment (Norway) changed my perspectives to conducting the research in Norway.

Driven by these experiences, I began to explore more issues concerning refugees, employment, the labour market, and economic freedom. Although some of the articles, reports, and news stories were in the Norwegian language, with the help of a basic translation tool. I was able to translate them to grasp the keynotes of materials. As I read these articles, I realized that most talked about getting refugees into the job market after they participate in the introduction programme. But there was a phenomenon that stood out for me, that is, the decline in the engagement of refugee women after a period of participating in work.

In 2010, research conducted by Ghazala Naz looked at the short-term effects of the scheme (1998-2000) for women from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), Asia - Africa, Eastern Europe, and the ethnic majority. The study is based on registered data and compares two groups of mothers at two points in time. Those with children between 1-3 years, and those with children between 3-5 years before and after the scheme. Naz shows that the cash support scheme has had a negative effect on occupational participation among women with low education. Both women with a majority background and non-Western women with low education are leaving the labour market (Naz, 2010).

Another study by Tronstad et al (2013), revealed that there are large differences in the labour force participation among immigrants and refugee women from different countries of origin. Although they have a high level of employment from the start, after five to six years of residence, there is a tendency for labour force participation to flatten out (Bore, Djuve & Tronstad, 2013).

Lastly, a study conducted by Bratsberg, Raaum, and Roed in 2017, compared the development in employment over time for refugees and other immigrant groups with Norwegian-born individuals. The study follows the development of arrival cohorts who came to Norway between 1990 and 2014, for up to 20 years. In the analysis of the labour market characteristics, the study shows considerable variation in how long it takes refugees to find paid work, with a general tendency towards rapid integration in the first five to ten years and a levelling off or decline in subsequent years. The study reveals that Norway's refugee women employment rate increases rapidly during the first five to seven years. The rest of the twenty years observed decreases below that of the overall population (Bratsberg et al, 2017).

Thus, this research seeks to explore the conditions leading to the lower number of refugee women participation in the labour market over the years from the refugees' perspectives. In addition to the above, the research will explore the influence of economic freedom on their personal empowerment, their relationship with their children, changing ideals of femininities across transnational space, and the creation of social networks.

1.2 Economic Freedom among refugee women in Norway

Women form a significant part of the all-round development of society and the economy. Almost half of all migrants and one-third of all refugees in the European Union are women (European Commission, 2018). Therefore, the participation of refugee women in the labour market and society at large, assists these women to transfer positive experiences directly to the younger generation (European Commission, 2018). The development of women as the human resource of the host country can be recognized as an important factor in the progress of society and economic development. Thus, economic freedom for women refers to the expansion of the capacity of women to make genuine choices about their lives through full and equal participation in all spheres of life. Moreover, it is about recognizing women's work, paid or unpaid as socially and economically valuable (Suneetha, 2018).

In Norway, financial self-reliance, a part of economic freedom, is the overarching objective of the introduction programme participated in by most refugee women (Bore, Djuve & Tronstad, 2013). Therefore, increasing employment among women with immigration background is seen as both an equality and integrational goal, and an important tool to fight against poverty (Henriksen, 2010b). In summary, Rogstad affirms that employment is an essential gateway to integration, prosperity, and self-reliance (Rogstad, 2000).

1.3 Aim of the study and research questions

Studies have been conducted on the work participation of refugees, immigrants, and ethnic minorities in Norway (Umblis, 2020, Drange & Orupabo, 2018). Some of this research focuses on introducing them to the strategies, challenges, and relevance of having a good knowledge of the Norwegian language, culture, and society. Other research also focuses on the work participation among immigrants and the benefits of being independent of the Norwegian welfare system.

So far, I am unable to find any studies that focus on the sustainability of refugee women in the job market over the years. Thus, this study aims to explore conditions accounting for the discontinuity of refugee women after years of working from their perspectives. Again, explore the influence of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, relationship with their children, the changing ideals of femininities across transnational space, and socialization skills. Based on the aims above, this research seeks to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the experiences of refugee women in participating in the labour market after five years?
- b. What are the influences of economic freedom in the lives of refugee women considering their personal empowerment, relationship with children, changing ideals about femininities across transnational spaces, and their social networks and connections?

1.4 Relevance of the study

Firstly, refugees introduce new economic, social, and political dimensions to security and development. On one hand, when refugees are not viewed as victims of violence or conflicts but rather treated with hostility, discrimination, and dehumanization, refugees risk losing trust in humanity and thus turn out as security risks. They then turn to cause tensions and instability in host countries (Horst, 2019). On the other hand, refugees can be agents of peace, peacebuilding, and development when the host country provides the necessary resources for screening and community integration. Even as part of the minority group, refugees can benefit host countries by contributing to the economy and the community's social and cultural life. Finally, the willingness to assist and accept and integrate refugees helps to promote liberal, democratic values in the global arena and counters extremist voices (Salehyan, 2019.). Consequently, this study contributes to the discussions on migration, security, and development which are important phenomena in the study of peace and conflict transformation.

Secondly, the data and recommendations generated by this research can provide decision-makers with a better knowledge base for understanding the labour market participation of refugees and immigrant women.

Thirdly, the research provides new empirical data that can be used as a basis for further research in refugee studies or other related fields.

1.5 Thesis outline

The thesis has seven chapters. Chapter one orients the thesis with a brief introduction to both refugees in Norway and the economic freedom of refugees. Also, the motivation, problem statement, aims of the study, and research questions are explained, as well as highlighting the significance of the thesis. Chapter two provides some literature reviews on the work participation of women with migrant backgrounds in Norway and the economic freedom of refugee women. Chapter three gives an overview of the research design, study area, and participants, methods chosen for data collection and analysis. Reflection on the part of the researcher, ethical considerations, and limitations are also shared. Chapter four provides the theoretical framework and conceptual frameworks explaining the choices of theory and concepts operationalized in the thesis. Chapter Five highlights findings from the main themes gathered with the aid of thematic network analysis in the research. Chapter Six provides discussions on the findings using the existing literature, concepts, and theory in the research. Chapter Seven presents the conclusions of the thesis and the implications of the thesis.

In summary, I have introduced the research topic, and motivation and outlined the research questions, aim, and relevance of the research. I would then move on to discuss the literature on refugee employment and economic self-reliance among refugees.

2 Literature review

The literature review is organized into three sub-sections. The first sub-section (2.1) introduces the existing knowledge on the work participation of women with an immigrant background in Norway. It shows how previous scholars discussed experiences, assistances, and challenges immigrant women encounter before and while they are participating in the labour market. The second sub-section (2.2) presents relevant literature based on studies conducted on the economic self-reliance of refugees in host countries. Finally, sub-section (2.3) spells out the gaps the research seeks to fill.

2.1 Labour market participation of immigrant women in Norway

In Aure and Fosslund's study, conducted in 2011, the article elaborates on reasons why highly educated immigrants have problems getting a relevant job in the Norwegian labour market when there is a need for high professional competence. The study suggests some challenges inhibit these professionals from the job market. One is the use of informal criteria and networks in the employment process as it serves as bridges for employers to reduce uncertainty in the recruitment process. Besides, the article brings to light the relevance of good command of the Norwegian language. While many of these professionals need more advanced language training the lack of employment or casual connection to the labour market makes it difficult to prioritize this goal. Also, family obligations are a great obstacle to their connection to working life. Usually, marriage migration is followed by a phase of family establishment. This makes many professionals suddenly find themselves partially or completely out of working life. For many, it becomes difficult to acquire the necessary language skills and work experience (Aure & Fosslund, 2011). The article does spell out the challenges professional immigrants face in entering the job market in Norway as mentioned above. Yet, the article did not assess the structural causes and the political solutions to this challenge but only sees success in the labour market as an individual challenge.

Drange and Orupabo's article conducted in 2018, the article explores the concepts of employability and ethnicity in a career coaching program for women with ethnic backgrounds. Although the article highlights that education increases the chances of getting a job however employers also demand competence and a way of being that is not taught in the universities

such as communication, self-management, and cultural and organizational understanding. It also posits that there is the need to redirect the focus that being part of the minority should be a weapon of strength rather than weakness. While the article acknowledges the fact that there is a need for a psychological change in mind among these minority groups. Nonetheless, the program was not organized in a way it provides the participants' experience and occupation-specific competence from the ordinary labour market. There should rather be a greater involvement on the demand side that is the local labour market and employers in the work to open doors for tomorrow's leaders (Drange & Orupabo, 2018).

Furthermore, the report by Umblijs (2020), examines immigrant women's connection to working life in Norway, based on research published in recent decades. The report deals with studies that look at women born abroad, and women born in Norway to foreign parents. Although the emphasis is placed on research on the Norwegian labour market, studies from other Nordic countries and Europe at large that were relevant to compare to Norway were included. The report examined how employment among immigrant women has developed over time and between groups, which barriers did prevent the labour market participation for this group, and what measures can contribute to increasing labour market participation. However, this report does not explore the long-term effects of measures on the different groups of immigrant women, since research suggests that labour market integration changes over time (Umblijs, 2020).

2.2 Literature on the economic self-reliance of refugees

To begin with, Jacobsen's study conducted in 2005, draws on a range of scholarly work on livelihoods to provide a contemporary analysis of refugees' engagement with economies in host and third countries of asylum, as well as the role of the international refugee regime in promoting or hindering refugees' livelihood strategies. She ultimately argues that the protracted nature of most refugees' situations necessitates directing refugee policies and assistance programs towards granting refugees their economic rights and enabling them to pursue livelihoods' (p.108). Although the study is critical of the temporariness of the international refugee regime's responses to refugees and the aim of 'rapid repatriation'. However, Jacobsen's work ultimately provides a policy rather than a theoretical critique of assistance to foster refugee self-reliance (Jacobsen, 2005).

Again, Betts et al study conducted in 2017, theorizes variation in refugees' economic outcomes, creating a conceptual framework in refugees' activities from a practical rather than a critical perspective. Their starting premise is the importance of understanding refugees' economic systems to improve refugee assistance. While careful to uphold the value of supporting refugees' capacities, their framework risks uncritically overemphasizing the positive additions of markets in refugee assistance, such as their assertion that it 'is in creating opportunities for integration in markets that refugees will ultimately achieve autonomy and self-reliance' (Betts et al, 2017). Both pieces of research help us to understand the state of refugee economies but do little to advance a critical understanding of self-reliance as linked to the economic and social development of different actors, especially refugee women.

2.3 Literature gap

The articles above do not explicitly point out accounts leading to the gradual decrease of refugee women's participation in the labour market after some years of engagement. Again, no research has been conducted on the relevance of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, their relationship with their children, their changing ideals of femininities in their host country (Norway), and their creation of relevant social networks in Tromsø (Norway). Thus, the research seeks to fill these gaps.

In a nutshell, I have outlined the literature on refugee employment and economic self-reliance among refugees and identified the literature gap this thesis seeks to fill. I move on to discuss the methodology used in conducting the thesis.

3 Methodology

This thesis presents qualitative research embedded with an inductive, interpretive, and constructionist approach. Again, the inductive approach stemmed from the analysis of the data, which emanates from the empirical material that detailed explanations of the pre-set interest in work participation emerged (Bryman, 2016). The interpretive approach is suitable for my thesis because it seeks to explore the meaning participants attach to their experiences from their participation in work. As knowledge emanates through the interpretation of the meanings, they attach to their experiences conveyed in their interviews conducted. As rightly posited by Neuman “interpretive researchers want to discover what actions mean to the people who engage them” (Neuman, 2014, p. 105). In addition, the constructionist approach stemmed from considering participants understanding of their experiences is not discovered but constructed through their participation in the job market over the years. In the understanding of knowledge, refugee women may construct meaning in different ways, even with experiences in the job market in Tromsø (Crotty, 1998). Phenomenology, as a strategy of inquiry, is considered suitable for this qualitative research to obtain data concerning refugee women’s perceptions of realities and what they think about the influence of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, in their relationship with children, changing ideals about femininities across transnational spaces, and the creation of social networks (Punch, 2014).

This chapter is structured into four sections. It presents a brief introduction to the qualitative nature of the research presented in this thesis (section 3.1), follows up with a section on research design (3.2), a section on research considerations (3.3), and a section on challenges and possible limitations of this research (3.4).

3.1 Research design

In this section, I would elaborate on and discuss the study area (in sub-section 3.2.1), the selection of participants (in sub-section 3.2.2), the data collection techniques (in sub-section 3.2.3), and the analytical tactics.

3.1.1 Study area

The Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) decides where individual refugees are offered a place to live. IMDi does this based on what is known about the individual and the

opportunities and capacities in each municipality (IMDi, 2022). Tromsø is a municipality in Troms and Finnmark County located in the northern part of Norway. In 2022, the number of refugees in Tromsø and Finnmark was six thousand, seven hundred and seventy-nine (6,779) persons. The male refugees are three thousand nine hundred and nineteen (3,919) persons while female refugees are two thousand eight hundred and sixty (2,860) persons (SSB, 2022). I chose Tromsø municipality as my study area because it is a place familiar to me. Again, there are refugee women both engaged and unengaged in work.

3.1.2 Choice of research participants

As a foreigner in Norwegian society, I did not have enough access to the desired sample unit, so I identified a colleague who served as a perfect example of the kind of refugee I wanted to interview. She is a refugee, has a family, and works as a teacher. She, in turn, introduced me to other friends of hers and her friends also introduced other friends of theirs till I reached the saturation point. Thereby, employing snowball sampling which made use of networks to select research participants. As affirmed by Skovdal and Cornish (2015), the snowball method is based on “recommendations from others who know potential participants” (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015, p.41).

Kumar posits that the snowball sampling technique is useful if the researcher knows little about the group or organization they wish to study. As the researcher needs only to contact a few individuals who can direct one to the other members of the group. This sample selection method is useful for studying communication patterns, decision-making, or diffusion of knowledge within a group. There are disadvantages to this technique, for instance, the choice of the entire sample rests upon the choice of individuals at the first stage. The study may be biased if they belong to a particular faction or have strong biases. Besides, it is difficult to use this technique when the sample becomes large (Kumar, 2018). I share the same opinion with Kumar in his claims because as an outsider who is not so familiar with Norwegian society, getting the assistance of a colleague who happened to fall in the same category of participants helped in identifying others. Nonetheless, to overcome the biases of the snowball sampling technique I was quite selective. I ensured that no two participants shared the same country, profession, religion, or ethnicity to create a variety in the empirical data of experiences given as the research is not theoretically based. Again, I stopped collecting more data when I reached the eighth participant as this was the point of saturation for this research. As emphasized by Creswell, five

to twenty-five participants are appropriate for phenomenological studies (Creswell, 2007), and in Starks et al, a typical sample size ranges from one to ten participants (Starks et al, 2007).

3.2 Data collection techniques

This subsection is organized into three subsections. The first subsection (3.2.1) presents data collection through in-depth semi-structured styled interviews, which is the primary source of data. It follows a presentation of the transcription process and information on the anonymization process and the textual adjustment to improve the clarity of the transcription (3.2.2). The last subsection (3.2.3) introduces secondary sources such as official reports, state documents, and written articles used to gain details on the integration of refugees.

3.2.1 In-depth interviews

In the phenomenological design, different types of data can be collected. Creswell highlights observation, journals, and art to be types of data one can collect, in addition to in-depth and group interviews (Creswell, 2007). Similarly, Starks et al. (2007), argued that a mix of data can be collected, but interviewing is the most frequently used method in a qualitative design. An in-depth interview is defined as a one-to-one conversation between a researcher and his or her participant, who provides information on a phenomenon from the participant's perspective (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). I chose in-depth interviews, observations, and journals over group interviews. This is because talking with people face-to-face enables me to pick facial expressions and gestures relevant to the research work. I realized this method did give me the richest (most informative) data. Observing participants' facial and body gestures assisted me to delve deeper as some facial expressions did need further clarification to clear all doubts and properly present their opinions as it is. Even though I wanted to grasp the essence of an experience shared by a group of people, I appreciate different views of a phenomenon. Group interviews were ruled out for two reasons; to commence, I wanted my participants to think in-depth about their experiences and talk about their struggles and emotions freely. Again, a group interview would have been difficult to organize due to the uncertainties of the Covid 19 situation and the numerous engagements these women happen to be involved in. As challenging as it may be, I considered it as a reminder that the purpose of writing this master thesis was not to reinforce prejudiced beliefs in alignment with Yin's claim that interviews must be free from preconceived values to avoid angled results (Yin,2009). However, Bryman et al (2016), argue that it is almost impossible to subjectively conduct a study.

The interviews with the participants I met face-to-face were conducted in locations suggested by the participants. Three of the interviews occurred in the homes of participants, one of them was conducted in a café, one via telephone although we were both in our homes at the time of the call, and the other three in a classroom at the Centre for Peace Studies (UiT). These locations felt private enough for the participant to speak freely, as the ambiance was relaxed and comfortable. Each interview lasted between twenty to forty- five minutes. I began collecting data in September 2022 and finished collecting data by the end of December 2022. Thus, making four months for data collection. Besides the fact that the interview was semi-structured in nature, I did set the outline for the topics to be covered in the interview. Nevertheless, the interviewee's response determines to some extent the direction of the interview (Rowley, 2012). In this study, I set out an interview guide with twelve questions. Because it was a semi-structured interview these questions were delivered in a set order but had flexibility in the way they were asked, as well as in the depth of probing.

Again, the interviews were constructed to be semi-structured as the conversations were guided by topics I wanted to explore, while not having a rigorous set of questions that could cause me to divert (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). This allowed me to be flexible if the participants said something particularly interesting, adapting questions to the situation and asking them questions I perhaps had not prepared in advance but were relevant to the research questions. Nonetheless, this differs from structured interviews where one has less flexibility, as questions must be asked the way they are printed (Bryman et al, 2016). I asked some open-ended questions that allow participants to talk about feelings and personal views on a topic, and I was able to elaborate if a phrase, sentence, or word was unclear. I utilized the technique of probing by Bryman et al (2016), and the interview guide was influenced by the study's theoretical framework. The first part of the question revolved around challenges in entering and accounts that lead to the discontinuity of the work participation of refugee women in the labour market. The second part of the question delved into the influence of economic freedom on refugee women's personal empowerment, parent-child relationships, their changing ideals of femininities, and finally the creation of relevant social ties. Please see Appendix 1 and 2 for interview guides in both English and Norwegian language.

3.2.2 Process of transcripts

The interviews were audio recorded and then transcribed orthographically, reproducing all spoken words and sounds, including hesitations, (indicated by a dash, e.g. thin), the interviewer's giggles (e.g. mmmm, oooooh), laughter, long pauses [indicated by (pause)], and strong emphasis (indicated by capitalization). inverted commas are used to indicate reported speech and three full stops in a row (...) signal continuation. All the words of the participants were in quotes.

3.2.3 Secondary sources (Official and written articles)

This research is based on narratives provided by the semi-structured interviews; however, to give it a broader context, I introduced rules and definitions by the Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI), and the Norwegian Directorate of Diversity and Integration (IMDi). I also referred to articles provided by Norwegian Statistics (SSB) and other articles that elaborate more on the economic freedom and work participation among refugee women in Norway.

3.3 Data process

As mentioned by Neuman, interpretive social science is related to hermeneutics, which emphasizes the process of performing a deep and thorough reading of a text to discover "richer meanings that are embedded within the text" (Neuman, 2014, p.103). Data gathered from eight interview sessions was the material used for a hybrid approach to the thematic network analysis. Braun and Clark (2012), and Attride -Stirling (2001), influenced the steps of this approach. The full process of analysis can be split into three broad stages.

The first stage is the exploration of the text. I began with the reduction of the text. As explained by Braun & Clark (2012), first I familiarized myself with the data. Thus, I began by listening to each audio recording over and over, then read and reread written transcripts of interviews to immerse myself in the data. Afterward, I underlined portions of data to highlight items potentially of interest. I was henceforth influenced by Attride- Stirling (2001), as the next step entailed breaking up the text to develop a coding framework. I read thoroughly every interview transcript and coded it. Every time I identified something potentially relevant to the research question, theoretical interest, preestablished topics, and emerging codes from the data, I wrote down the code and marked the text associated with it. I did cut and paste the text into a new-processing file created for this purpose.

The second part of the first stage of the reduction of the text. I re-read the pasted initial codes several times and started to reduce and group those that related to each other. Hereafter, I arranged themes into basic themes which happen to be evident in the text from the lowest order, and then, categories of basic themes grouped to summarize more abstract principles in the organizing themes. Finally, it was connected to the super-ordinate themes encapsulating the principal metaphors in the text. Thereby, capturing the core of the text and producing a coding framework which was the tool for my investigation of research objectives (Attride- Stirling, 2001).

The second stage is the exploration of the text. I described and explored the thematic networks where further abstraction is reached in the analytic process. First, I described the network, taking each network in turn, describing its contents supporting the description with text segments, and then, exploring the network, as a description is being woven, beginning to explore and note underlying patterns that begin to appear (Attride- Stirling, 2001).

The third stage is the integration of the exploration which includes the summary and interpretation patterns of the thematic network. Once a network has been described and explored in full, present a summary of the main themes and patterns characterizing it. Finally, I gathered the deductions in the summary of the network and the deductions and relevant theory, to explore the significant themes, concepts, patterns, and structures that arose from the text (Attride- Stirling, 2001). This would be further elaborated on in chapter five when discussing the findings of the thesis.

3.4 Research consideration

In sub-section 3.4.1, I will discuss the ethical considerations employed in this thesis, followed by sub-section 3.4.2, my positionality and reflexivity as a researcher, and finally, sub-section 3.4.3 elaborates on the challenges and limitations.

3.4.1 Ethical considerations

Due to harmful social studies in the past, the development of research ethics has been constant since the 20th century (Punch, 2013). The avoidance of harm during the research process is the responsibility of the researcher (Skovdal & Cornish, 2015). Several steps were taken to ensure this. As I would manage the personal details of participants, the study gained clearance from the Norwegian Centre for Research Data (NSD).

(1) During recruitment, I verbally or in written form explained to participants why I approached them with the purpose of my study. They received the Form of Consent, in which the purpose of the study and their rights are more thoroughly explained. The form was originally in English, but with the help of a friend, I translated it to create a Norwegian version. This was to assist my participants to know exactly what each question demanded since most of my participants had a higher level of proficiency in the Norwegian language.

(2) The consent form also stressed that the study was voluntary, and the option of withdrawing was always present.

(3) All but one participant signed the form, and either handed it back personally while keeping a copy for themselves or sent me a picture of a signed form. One participant gave her approval orally.

(4) The anonymity of their identities would be of paramount focus. Actual names were therefore replaced with pseudonyms during transcriptions.

(5) Participants also permitted me to use a cell phone to record the interview.

(6) Audio recordings were deleted after transcribing the interviews and I encouraged them to contact me if they needed to talk after our interviews.

(7) All participants would be allowed to access this finished thesis.

3.4.2 Positionality and reflexivity

This subsection presents my physical appearance, gender, and reflections on my background, values, and biases. These aspects are all part of the research process, and because of the impact, these aspects could have had during the research process. Therefore, it is important to reflect on their degree (Bryman et al, 2016).

Upon encountering participants, physical appearance is the first seen feature. Usually, this assists them to locate me as an outsider concerning the local community in which I lived and carried out my research (Tromsø). My identity as a migrant in Norway is important when considering the identity of the group of participants. As a migrant, I did experience some challenges in integrating into Norwegian society due to the difference in cultures and values. Again, as a student of Peace and Conflict studies with knowledge about the life cycle of

refugees, right from fleeing for safety through to settlement gave me a level of understanding of the resilient nature of these refugee women over the years. It propelled me to take a keen interest in refugee women with families who are thriving in a First World country such as Norway. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize my advantageous position. I voluntarily decided to move to Norway to pursue a master's program without any force. It was easy and everyone seemed open to welcoming me. I also had some friends who had lived here long enough to assist me in times of difficulty.

3.5 Challenges and limitation

The first challenge was the fact that I was an outsider, that is I was not familiar with the social welfare of the Norwegian system. Even so, it is relevant to have other perspectives from a non-Norwegian point of view.

Another aspect that occasionally created difficulty was communication. Even though many of the participants spoke Norwegian fluently and had an understandable English language level, sometimes mutual understanding was difficult to achieve. Nevertheless, the basic English language was adapted through different words to explain certain matters to ensure that all questions were understood. Similarly, the researcher and participant explained or elaborated further in cases of uncertainty or vagueness.

Again, due to the brevity of time, I was not distant familiar with most of my participants may have impacted the quality of the data gathered. I agree with DiCicco-Bloom et al suggestion on the need to establish rapport in an interview. A rapport involves trust and respect for the interviewee and their information. Subsequently, preventing surface-level response (DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To rectify this challenge, I used unplanned, non-directive followed-up questions to continue the conversation and gain profound answers. Also, I created avenues where participants could share as much information as possible in their own words.

Lastly, since the study area of the research is Tromsø some articles and books that referred to the work participation of refugee women and their sense of economic freedom in their lives were mostly in Norwegian and other Scandinavian languages such as Swedish, Finnish, and German. Nevertheless, with the aid of a translation tool, I understood relevant articles in Norwegian.

In brief, after elaborating on choices made in the methodology chapter of this thesis. I progress to explore the theoretical framework namely social integration, and concepts such as gender,

agency, empowerment, and discrimination used in providing an understanding of the phenomenon in this thesis.

4 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This thesis embraces an interdisciplinary conceptual framework constructed by four concepts namely gender, agency, empowerment, discrimination, and human capital while the theoretical framework underpinning this thesis is social integration. Disciplines such as sociology, social policy, International Development Studies, and Gender Studies are the main disciplines that have debated these concepts. The interdisciplinary nature of the conceptual framework allows for organizing the research data broadly to understand the complexities of the participants' experiences leading to the levelling off or decline in their work participation and the influence of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, relationship with their family, changing ideals about femininities across transnational space and social networking.

In this chapter, I will briefly elaborate on the theoretical underpinning of the thesis, social integration as specified by Hartmut Esser. Then, continue with a discussion on relevant concepts beginning with gender, empowerment, human agency, and finally the concept of discrimination. In conclusion, with the aid of the diagram, I would explain the relevance of the social integration theory and how the key concepts mentioned above relate to the research questions and the thesis.

4.1 Social integration

Hartmut Esser (2001), defines social integration as the involvement of refugees and migrants in social events such as the acquisition of language skills, participation in the education system and the labour market, the emergence of social acceptance, the establishment of interethnic friendships, participation in public and political life and emotional identification with the receiving country. Esser further states that social integration can be achieved in four dimensions such as cultururation, placement, interaction, and identification.

To begin with, cultururation refers to the process of acquiring essential knowledge and skills, linguistic skills, and cultural and behavioural norms. This serves as a kind of human capital enabling one to act and interact appropriately and successfully in the host society. When migrants and locals constantly engage with the host society and acquire high language proficiencies, it facilitates understanding and communication with members of the host society

(Esser, 2001). However, this does not hinder a two-way process that includes cultural adaptations by the host society (Heckmann, 2015).

Secondly, placement refers to the occupation of a specific social position by the actor in the social system. This serves as a form of inclusion and is also the most important stage in social integration. Placement can occur through the conferral of certain rights to which citizens of the country of destination are privy, such as citizenship, the right to vote, the attainment of professional and other positions usually dependent on one's education and skill set, and the availability of opportunities. Also, a person's cultururation such as their language and cultural competencies greatly affect their positioning. This is because acquiring a position requires a degree of acceptance from the host society, yet this can be impeded by the presence of discrimination. With successful placement, one can pursue a greater level of economic and human capital (Esser,2001)

Furthermore, interaction is a kind of social conduct where individuals mutually orientate themselves based on each other's knowledge and behaviour. Interaction, such as good neighbourliness, friendship, and marital relationships are all important ways and mechanisms of social integration. There are three special cases of interaction such as mental co-orientation, symbolic interaction, and communication. The ability to interact necessitates the opportunity of an encounter, which means that interactions are adversely affected by ethnic segregation. Once more, cultururation and positioning are crucial facilitators or impediments to interaction among migrants and locals of the host society (Esser, 2001).

Lastly, identification refers to an emotional relationship between the migrant and the host society. It can take the form of a collective spirit and is a process of becoming a member of collective structures of the ethnic, local, and national levels of the host country. The other three dimensions are crucial to the formation of this emotional connection. These include the emphatic value of integration, citizenship, and the acceptance of the system. Thus, highlighting the degree of interdependence among the four elements of integration. The host society also needs to be open to or at least tolerant of the refugee (Esser, 2001).

In a nutshell, Esser's four dimensions of social integration namely cultururation, placement, interaction, and identification are relevant in this thesis because it demonstrates the complexities of refugee women's integration into Norwegian society. It explores the

experiences of refugee women leading to a levelling off or discontinuity in participating in the labour market. Also, the social integration theory elaborates on the influence of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, in their relationship with their children, changing ideals of femininities across transnational space, and the creation of a resourceful social network.

4.2 Gender

In this thesis, gender and sex are differentiated. Sex is related to biological differences while gender is an individual identity. Gender can be explored from different disciplines. A more sociological definition comes from Macionis and Plummer who argue that gender is a socially created concept. This affects how societies perceive gender roles and how this links to male and female identities (Macionis&Plummer,2012). While the reasons for any woman's powerlessness (or power) are many and varied, the common factor is that women are all constrained by the "norms, beliefs, customs and values through which societies differentiate between women and men" (Kabeer, 2000). Furthermore, different cultures attribute different roles to men and women and how they should act and interact within social institutions from the household to the state. Gender, for instance, can be seen to have a political-economy dimension in that it is a key structuring principle in the distribution of labour, property, and other valued resources in a society. It structures the division between productive and reproductive labour, giving women the primary responsibility for the latter (Kabeer, 2000). However, along with this economic dimension, gender also encompasses elements of injustice that stem from the dominant values of a society (Kabeer, 2000). Gender by itself does not translate unproblematically into exclusion. However, gender can differentiate, and exacerbate, other forms of disadvantage, and thus feed into the destructive synergies which underlie hard-core exclusion (Kabeer,2000). Thus, this affects ambitions, expectations, and reality all at the same time (Macionis and Plummer, 2012).

In the same vein, Dixon and Jones argue that gender is socially constructed through differences between different groups. They argue that none of these differences is naively given to anyone unmediated, rather they are all framed through categorizations that enable a person to understand them. In such a view people, objects, experiences, or meanings have no basic meaning until their qualities and boundaries have been framed through discourse (Dixon and

Jones, 2006). McDowell has also weighed in on defining gender through geography. She also argues that gender is a social construct. Furthermore, she argues that concerning the changing definition of place, it is obvious that social practices and ways of understanding place and gender, make them interconnected and mutually constituted. Everyone acts with her intentions and beliefs, and they are always culturally shaped, as well as historically and spatially positioned (McDowell,1999).

In conclusion, the concept of gender is appropriate in this thesis as it spells out the challenges, experiences, and accounts leading to the decline of refugee women in Norway in the labour market and also the influence of economic freedom in female-ascribed roles and beyond such as their relationship with their children, changing ideals of femininities across transnational boundaries and social networking from their point of view.

4.3 Empowerment

Stromquist (1988), defines empowerment as a socio-political concept that goes beyond formal political participation and consciousness-raising. He emphasized empowerment centres on women because of their numerous experiences of subordination and the need to break the intergenerational reproduction of patriarchal authority. The typical and enduring consideration women have received from the state has been their capacity as mothers and wives. Women, therefore, need to become their advocates to address problems and situations affecting them that were previously ignored. Furthermore, Stromquist defines empowerment as a process to change power distribution in interpersonal relations and societal institutions. He further highlights empowerment must include cognitive, psychological, political, and economic components (Medel- Anonuevo, 1995).

In further explanation of this concept, Stromquist (1988), refers to the cognitive component of empowerment as women's understanding of their conditions of subordination and the causes of the conditions at both micro and macro levels of society. As stated by him, the cognitive component involves understanding the self and the need to make choices that may go against cultural and social expectations. Additionally, it involves understanding patterns of behaviour that create dependence, interdependence, and autonomy from the family and society at large (Hall, 1992). It also involves acquiring new knowledge to create different understandings of gender relations as well as overturning old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies (Medel- Anonuevo, 1995).

Next is the psychological component of empowerment, which includes the development of the feeling that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their condition and the belief that they can succeed in their change efforts. Usually, the sex role socialization of women has inculcated attributes of "learned helplessness" within women. The repeated experience then makes many women come to believe that they cannot modify their environment or personal situation and thus their persistence in problem-solving is diminished (Jack, 1992). These attributions of helplessness preclude opportunities for mediation and compromise and often women respond by complying with female stereotypes of passivity and self-sacrifice (Medel-Anonuevo, 1995). Kabeer also recognizes that the choices open to women are often limited compared to men of the same community, a manifestation of gender inequality and women can internalize their lesser status in society (Kabeer, 2001).

Furthermore, Stromquist (1988), continues to expound on the economic components of empowerment. He posits that the psychological element would be strengthened with economic resources. A prerequisite to empowerment, therefore, necessitates stepping outside the home and participating in some form of collective undertaking that can be successful, thus developing a sense of independence and competence among the women.

Although outside work for women often means a double burden, the empirical evidence supports the notion that access to work increases a woman's economic independence, creating a greater level of general independence (Stromquist, 1988). Similarly, as Hall posits, economic subordination must be neutralized for women to be empowered (Hall, 1992). This means that the economic component of empowerment requires women to have the ability to engage in a productive activity that will allow them some degree of financial autonomy. Many women, particularly those in low-income households, develop very discernible low levels of self-esteem (Medel- Anonuevo, 1995).

Finally, the political component as mentioned by Stromquist (1988), entails the ability to analyse the surrounding environment in political and social terms, it also means the ability to organize and mobilize for social change. Therefore, an empowerment process must involve both individual awareness and collective action as these are the fundamentals of attaining social transformation. When women describe their experiences, they discover their role as agents in their world and establish connections between their micro realities and macro social contexts.

The discussion of personal lives, needs, and dreams necessitates a friendly, receptive social space (Medel- Anonuevo, 1995). In a similar vein, Barbara Risman explains that even though actions are influenced by an individual's interests, the social structure is the one that establishes the options to choose from (Risman, 2004).

In summary, empowerment manifest in four areas. Firstly, empowerment is process-oriented in nature. It is a dynamic and ongoing process that can be located on a continuum (Shetty, 1992). Secondly, empowerment is holistic in nature. Empowerment encompasses economic, social, and political activities including education and income generation projects that would work synergistically towards the common goal of empowering the poor (Bhasin, 1985). Thirdly, empowerment deals with strategic rather than practical gender interests. Practical gender interests are linked to immediate needs arising from women's current responsibilities vis-à-vis the livelihood of their families and children, while the latter addresses bigger issues such as the sexual division of labour within the home and the removal of institutionalized forms of gender discrimination. Lastly, empowerment is context specific. Empowerment can be defined only within the local social, cultural, economic, political, and historical context (Shetty, 1992).

The concept of empowerment is suitable in this thesis as it specifically explores the shift in the mental orientation of refugee women in Norway, as they reside in a relatively receptive space that enables them to empower themselves. Notably, about the influence of economic freedom in the changing ideals about femininities across transnational spaces. As they begin to participate in the labour market, they feel empowered and also experience the freedom to make choices and decisions concerning different areas of their lives. Sometimes, these decisions go against the patriarchal authority and norm.

4.4 Agency

As Bandura (1997) explained, being an agent intentionally influences one's functioning and life circumstances. Personal efficacy as a core belief is the foundation of human agency. Unless people believe they can produce desired effects by their actions, they have little incentive to act or persevere in facing difficulties. Whatever other factors serve as guides and motivators, they are rooted in the core belief that one has the power to effect changes through one's actions. Belief in one's efficacy is a key personal resource in personal empowerment and change.

Again, Bandura (1997), explains that efficacy operates through its impact on cognitive, motivational, affective, and decisional processes. Efficacy beliefs affect whether individuals think optimistically or pessimistically, in self-enhancing or self-debilitating ways. Such beliefs affect people's goals and aspirations, how well they motivate themselves, and their perseverance in the face of difficulties and adversity. Efficacy beliefs also shape people's outcome expectations-whether they expect their efforts to produce favourable outcomes or adverse ones. In addition, efficacy beliefs determine how opportunities and impediments are viewed. People of low efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of effort in the face of difficulties hence they quickly give up trying. Those of high efficacy view impediments as surmountable by improvement of self-regulatory skills and perseverant effort. They stay the course in the face of difficulties and remain resilient to adversity. Moreover, efficacy beliefs affect the quality of emotional life and vulnerability to stress and depression. Finally, efficacy beliefs determine the choice people make at important decisional points.

Moreover, Bandura (2006), posits four core properties of human agency. The first property of human agency is intentionality, people form intentions that include action plans and strategies for realizing them. Most human pursuits involve other participating agents, so there is no absolute agency. Individuals accommodate their self-interest if they are to achieve unity of efforts within diversity. Effective group performance is guided by collective intentionality. Collective endeavours require a commitment to a shared intention and coordination of interdependent plans of action to realize it (Bratman, 1999).

The second property of human agency in Bandura's (2006), the view is forethought. It involves the temporal extension of the agency; forethought includes more than future-directed plans. People set themselves goals and anticipate likely outcomes of prospective actions to guide and motivate their efforts. A future cannot be a cause of current behaviour because it has no material existence. But through cognitive representation, visualized futures are brought into the present as current guides and motivators of behaviour. In this form of anticipatory self-guidance, behaviour is governed by visualized goals and anticipated outcomes, rather than pulled by an unrealized future state. The ability to bring anticipated outcomes to bear on current activities promoted purposeful and foresightful behaviour. When projected over a long-time course on matters of value, a forethoughtful perspective provides direction, coherence, and meaning to one's life (Bandura, 2006).

The third property of agency is self-reactiveness. Agents are planners and forethinkers. They are also self-regulators, that is having adopted an intention and an action plan, one cannot simply sit back and wait for the appropriate performances to appear, as Searle noted in his analyses of explanatory gap (Searle, 2003). The agency thus involves not only the deliberative ability to make choices and action plans but also the ability to construct appropriate courses of action and to motivate and regulate their execution. This multifaceted self-directedness operates through self-regulatory processes in the explanatory gap to link thought to action (Carlson, 2002).

The fourth property of agency is self-reflectiveness. People are not only agents of action. They are also self-examiners of their functioning. Through functional self-awareness, they reflect on their personal efficacy, the soundness of their thoughts and actions, and the meaning of their pursuits, and they make corrective adjustments if necessary. The agency's most distinctly human core property is the metacognitive capability to reflect upon oneself and the adequacy of one's thoughts and actions (Bandura, 2006).

The concept of agency plays an important role as it reveals refugee women's resilience and belief in themselves to produce the desired changes in the face of challenges. It addresses their agentic ability as they secure economic freedom in important areas of their lives such as personal empowerment, the relationship with their children, the changing ideals of femininities across transnational space, and the creation of relevant social networks.

4.5 Discrimination

In the opinion of Feagin & Eckberg, (1980), institutionalized discrimination considers three major lines of conceptual development leading to a comprehensive view of discrimination namely, the interest theory, the institutionalized racism theory, and the internal colonial perspective.

To begin with, the interest theory suggests that discrimination can be shaped by a desire for social, economic, or political gain. Also, institutional racism, in relation to Knowles and Prewitt (1969), suggests practices that occur without the presence of conscious bigotry and could even be unintentional. Likewise, Downs (1970), argued further that discrimination can be motivated by factors other than prejudice, and the term institutional racism can cover actions where individuals have no intention of subordinating others because of colour or are totally unaware

of doing so. Race-ethnic discrimination consists of the practices and actions of dominant race-ethnic that have a differential and negative impact on subordinate race-ethnic groups. Therefore, the internal colonialism perspective asserts that privilege was created when colonializing Europeans wrested resources such as labour and land away from native people. Once the resources of non-Europeans had been appropriated, the dominant group sought to stabilize and monopolize its advantages through policies aiming at the institutionalization and perpetuation of the existing stratification system (Hechter, 1975).

Feagin and Eckberg (1980), posited two features of institutionalized are important for analytical purposes: organizational embeddedness and motivation. Embeddedness refers to the organizational environment, to the size and complexity of the relevant social unit. Size and complexity can vary from the actions of a single individual to the routine practices of many individuals in large organizations but rather in small-scale primary groups. Modern societies are characterized by large-scale hierarchical organizations and bureaucracies that are miniature societies in themselves. These miniature societies reflect the historical and contemporary values and actions of the larger society. Racial discrimination often becomes part of these large-scale organizations and is tied to certain formal and informal rules. To a significant degree, the practices of these organizations come to represent the specific race. Secondly, motivation is another dimension in analysing discriminatory actions, we distinguish two basic types intentional and unintentional. Intentional motivation includes prejudice-motivated discrimination, conformity-motivated discrimination, and gain-motivated discrimination. Besides, much discrimination may be unintentional that is not motivated directly or immediately by a conscious intent to harm its victims. Acts of unintentional discrimination may nevertheless have harmful effects because of their close linkage to intentionally harmful practices in other areas or the past (Feagin& Eckberg, 1980).

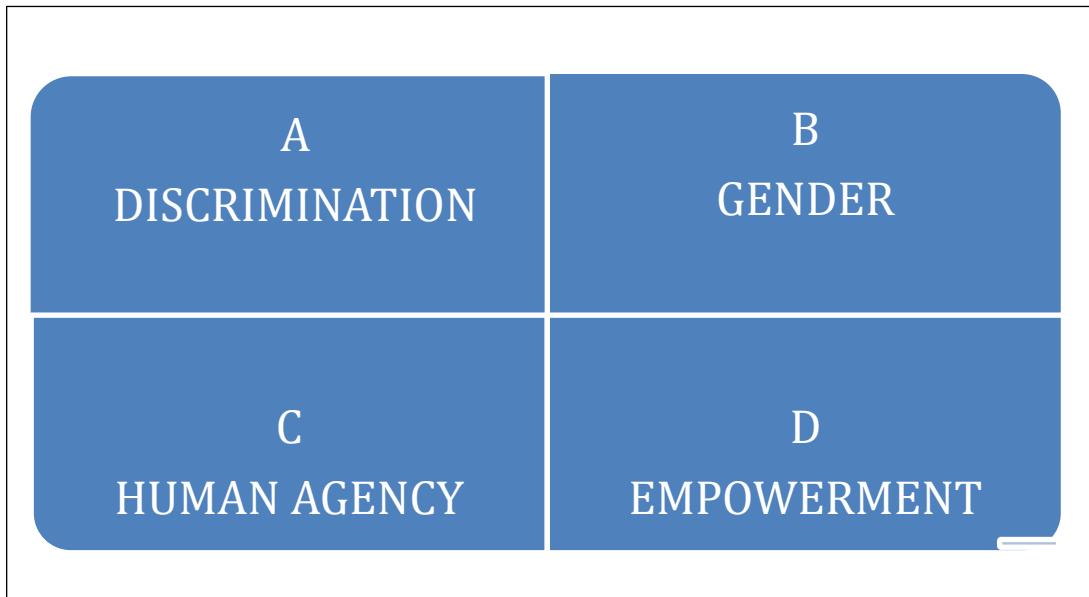
Feagin &Eckberg (1980), further elaborates on the two dimensions of discrimination, embeddedness, and intent. It is cross classified to generate four basic types of discriminatory practices namely; Type A isolate discrimination, Type B small group discrimination, Type C direct institutionalized discrimination, and Type D indirect institutionalized discrimination. Type A, isolate discrimination, consists of intentionally harmful actions by a dominant-group individual against members of a subordinate group when that action is not embedded in a large-scale institutional setting. Type B, small-group discrimination, comprises intentionally harmful

actions taken by a small group of dominant–group individuals acting in concert against members of subordinate groups, without the immediate support of a large-scale organizational framework. Type C discrimination occurs when small group discrimination has often been violent, constituting a serious threat to the lives and property of subordinate group members. Usually, direct institutionalized discrimination comprises organizationally prescribed actions that by intention have a differential and negative impact on members of the subordinate group. Type D, indirect institutionalized discrimination, consists of organizationally or community-prescribed practices, motivated by neither prejudice nor intent to harm, that nevertheless have a negative and differential impact on members of a subordinate group. On their face, and in their intent, the norms and resulting practices are neutral or fair in form (Feagin& Eckberg, 1980).

In conclusion, the concept of discrimination is significant because it seeks to address the accounts leading to the levelling off or decline in the work participation of the refugee women in Tromsø.

4.6 Connecting and contextualizing the theory and the main concepts

The figure below has its theoretical underpinning, as social integration lying outside the box, as work is an essential way of integrating refugee women into the society of the host nation. Throughout this research especially in the discussion chapter, the connection between four concepts namely discrimination, gender, human agency, and empowerment in quadrants A, B, C, and D respectively will be highlighted by the multifaceted nature of participants' experiences. Nevertheless, the concepts of race-ethnicity and gender especially female-ascribed roles in quadrants A and B above facilitate the conversation on the accounts leading to the decline in the work participation of refugee women in the labour market. Also, the concepts of human agency and empowerment in quadrants C and D assist in exploring the impact of economic freedom on personal empowerment, relationships with children, changing ideals of femininities, and the creation of a social network of refugee women. The social integration concepts used in the thesis are illustrated in the figure below:



In essence, I have discussed the theoretical and conceptual framework significant in the thesis. Thus, I advance to present the findings obtained from the data collected from the interviews with participants.

5 Data Presentation and Findings

Although a detailed description of the methodology for the research is done in chapter three of this thesis. This chapter will begin with a recap of the composition of the participants. In order to uphold the principle of confidentiality and anonymity, the actual names of participants are replaced with pseudonyms names in writing the findings obtained from in-depth interviews with participants. This is illustrated in Table One.

| PARTICIPANTS | AGE | COUNTRY OF ORIGIN | EMPLOYMENT (IN OR OUT) | NUMBER OF CHILDREN |
|---------------------|------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Flora | 35 | Somalia | IN | 1 |
| Amina | 37 | Ethiopia | OUT | 3 |
| Bintu | 37 | Ethiopia | IN | 2 |
| Memunatu | 45 | Palestine | IN | 2 |
| Ayesha | 50 | Syria | IN | 2 |
| Claire | 38 | Rwanda | OUT | 4 |
| Tania | 28 | Burundi | OUT | 3 |
| Jamila | 40 | Syria | OUT | 3 |

Table 1: Summary of the participants of the study

Thereafter, I present findings concerning two global themes I identified when conducting a thematic network analysis conforming to Attride-Stirling (2001). Thus, the section presents two global themes. The first global theme (GT) to be discussed is the perceptions leading to the

discontinuity of work participation. It seeks to address the question of the accounts leading to the decline in the work participation of refugee women in the Norwegian job market. This was further expounded by creating three organization themes (OT) in the sub-sections namely: childbearing and family size, discriminatory attitudes, and sickness and old age. Each organization theme is formed from two sub-sections known as the basic theme (BT). First, the organizational theme of childbearing and family size has its basic themes as large family size and mothers' role in the home. Second, organization theme discrimination has its basic themes as insufficient knowledge of the culture (unwritten rules) and lack of permanent positions (fast positions). Finally, the organizational theme of sickness and old age has its basic themes as health problems and strenuous physical activities. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

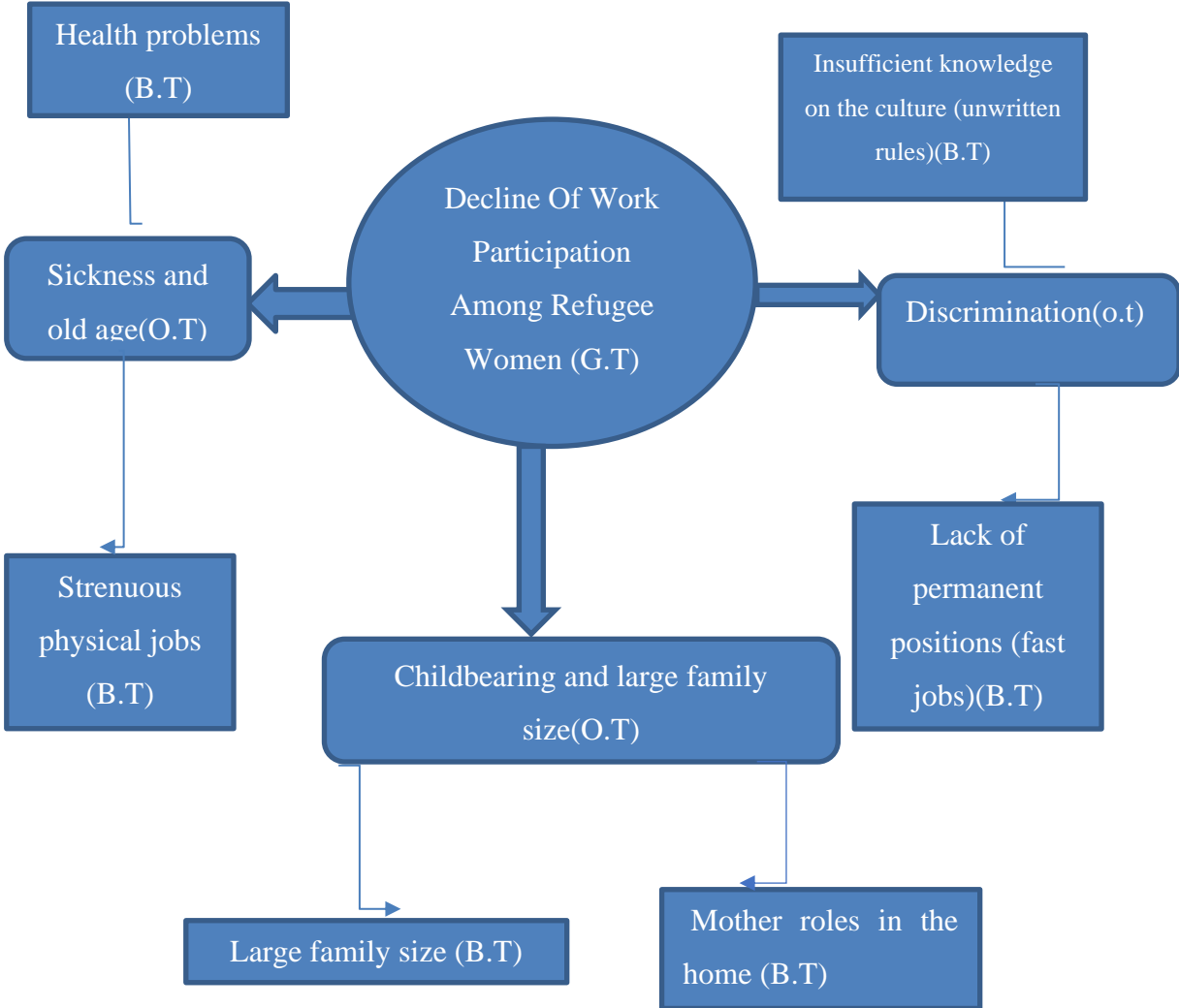


Figure 1: Summary of the thematic network analysis representation for the accounts leading to the decline in the work participation of refugee women.

5.1 Perceptions of work participation in the Norwegian market.

All eight participants did attest that work participation in the job market is pivotal in ensuring the social integration of refugee women in Norwegian society. In this thesis, participants are defined as employed if their main source of support is income from their work and out of employment if their main source of support is outside income from their own.

All participants did have a general idea of how the labour market works in Norway. All eight participants had been engaged in the labour market at one point in their lives. However, at the time of the interview, four participants had been out of work for at least three years for one or two accounts stated below. Even so, four of the participants were still engaged in the job market. Participants shared their experiences with their full-time job or part-time job and the challenges leading to their decline in work participation among refugee women. Thus, their responses enabled me to gather real-life experiences to recognize work participation as an essential aspect of social integration not only in theory but as happenings in real life. Many different opinions did however emerge as we talked, which mentioned the challenges leading to the decline in work participation of refugee women starting with personal reasons through to institutional biases, and finally to health reasons.

5.1.1 Childbearing and large family size

Having many children and a large family, in general, was identified as the major challenge impeding the continual presence of refugee women in employment. More than half of the participants had children who are in their formative years and required more attention and care from parents, especially mothers. So, I asked the research participant, what the actual challenge was since they had partners who could equally assist in the care duties. Claire from Rwanda responded by saying the following:

“Yes, if we go inside the family, we are different, I am a strong-willed mother who tries to do things in the right way for my kids. For example, I tell my children now it is bedtime, so they have to brush and sleep. I am here, (we had the interview after 4 pm). I do not know if my kids have eaten food or not, but I know that their father is at home. My husband is easygoing. He can tell the children you can eat this if you do not like you can make bread and cheese (children’s favourite). In general, at home, usually, the mother is more responsible for the children especially with this homework things, eating, and buying clothes for the children”.

Similarly, when I asked the same question to Jamila from Syria, she claimed that:

“In the past five years, I have had three children, they are all young and need my attention and care at this stage of their lives so I would be there for them”.

Nonetheless, Memunatu from Palestine insisted that:

“It is actually easy because here everything is time, maybe in Africa you go to work hoping to go home at 3 pm but then you finally arrive home at 6 pm because of heavy traffic or your boss increasing your workload and if you do not comply you may be sacked but here in Norway you know that by 3 pm you are off work and then you make a plan with the kids. Me, I do not lie to them. When I promise to do activities with them, I keep my word. And when we have time, I maximize “

As we discussed the family size further, another participant Ayesha from Syria, highlighted the high cost of living versus the low income of refugee women in Norway as a factor leading to the decline of work participation.

“ The Syrian woman I know has to wash, clean, and take care of five children and the family as a whole. When she and her husband compared what they earned in the month, it was only sufficient to pay for the house rent. They lived in a big house considering the size of the family. However, compared to the amount Nav gave them, it was more than what they earned as a couple. So, they decided not to work. It is very sad but is the welfare system”.

I realized the concern on Ayesha’s face and voice, so I asked why she was so passionate about Nav providing for families with no working parents. She said:

My religion, Islam, encourages us to work. So, in my mind, it is being selective if on one side you are following the religion and, on another side, you are not following the religion. Again, I am afraid the younger children would grow up with a low economic standard. They would not be involved in sports and other expensive activities which is important in the development of kids. These children will not be able to recognize themselves compared to an average Norwegian child who has winter and summer houses, a car, a bicycle, and is able to go on vacations. So, my concern is that the second generation will pay for the inactivity of their parents. Again, kids would also register in their minds that their mother stayed at home and would be expecting their future wife or girlfriend to do the same thing.

5.1.2 Discrimination

From my interview guide, I asked the participants if they had experienced discrimination in any form in their workplace over the years that made them not feel motivated or devalued. More than half of the participants talked about certain actions, comments, and attitudes that reduced their motivation to work. This was categorized in two ways, in the form of having insufficient knowledge of unwritten rules and inaccessibility of fast positions that is permanent jobs.

First, with insufficient knowledge of the unwritten rules of Norwegian society that are not taught in schools:

The competition is very high in Norway, it is important to know the social behaviour and the appropriate way to work in Norwegian society, they expect a lot from the foreigner, they expect that you go for lunch, sit and drink coffee with them, not isolating yourself. It is called an unwritten rule. You must do that to receive acceptance. If you really want to find a job, you need to be taught the unwritten rules because if not people get a job and are pushed to reserve after some time. The whole time, we must do more, it is not our country we are living here, we have to have an education, we have to work, and pay taxes. More effort to get a job and much effort to keep the job and follow the unwritten... (Ayesha, 55, Syria).

In another instance, a person's culture and way of doing certain things were not appreciated by their Norwegian colleagues:

Sometimes, the manner of eating, as some of our traditional food is eaten with the hands, again, eating highly scented meals and spicy foods, our manner of talking is sometimes considered impolite. I think this is racism although it is not allowed to practice at work because the Norwegian rule says that we are all equal....(Claire, 33, Rwanda).

Again, some participants talked about the inaccessibility of obtaining a fast position (100%) or a permanent job even after some years of employment as a challenge leading to the decline in job participation:

Access to a fast position (100%) or permanent job position provides economic stability. One would always have to apply to do research and they will change their minds if there is no fast position. So perhaps this year, you might be busy with work and the next year, have less or no work. (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

There was one participant who talked about having a 100% percent job, however, she signs her contract every year:

I do not have a permanent job. I sign my contract every year. (Flora, 35, Somalia).

However other participants had a different experience:

As for me, because I am a caregiver at the old people's home, I used to work 100% but now because of my kids, I work 88%. (Bintu, 37, Ethiopia).

As participants experienced these subtle discriminatory acts, about 50% of them acknowledged that attempting to be more open to the Norwegian culture helped a person to penetrate the seemingly reserved personality of most Norwegians:

if you want to be part of a group, you must do something approximately similar to their own. Sometimes, I think in Syria also we do not like people coming with

a very short shirt or something, we would like people to take care of our feeling. (Ayesha, 50, Syria).

Another participant emphasized the need to be a sociable and approachable person:

you have to be a sociable person and say hi to people. If you are too careful, they themselves would be careful. (Tania, 28, Burundi).

One participant did reflect on it as a natural process of living after spending years in Norway:

I learned that I have to do more than the others as a PhD student, at least I work eight hours a day more than the Norwegian girls I share the office with. The whole time, we have to do more, it is not our country we are living here, we have to have an education, and we have to work to pay taxes. (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

There were perceptions that when treated in an unfair way one should voice out their grievances without any fear:

“My colleagues at work know that when they do things, I do not like I will tell them..., you know sometimes people keep quiet because they fear they would lose their jobs...” (Flora, 35 Somalia).

5.1.3 Sickness and old age

Refugee women usually have lower educational backgrounds and therefore they participate in physically induced work activities together with their responsibilities towards the family and society. Some participants confirmed that fact that due to their repeated routine lifestyle of from work to the house with virtually little or no period of exercising, hanging out with friends, or taking vacations to release stress. They usually end up later in their older age with various sicknesses and diseases:

“women come to Norway When we refugee, we work in heavy and tough jobs as those are the ones readily available to us. So, as we grow older, we no longer have the strength to do these jobs, and our health is also affected”. (Jamila, 40, Syria).

In a similar vein, Flora claimed that:

Sometimes, I am stressed, there is too much work to do, and we are few. A lot of people have taken sick leave. (Flora, 35, Somalia).

Some participants also highlighted that most refugee children who grew up in Norway usually secure well-paying jobs. Therefore, they are able to support their parents financially which is culturally accepted. The children can request their mother to stop work when they believe it is not appropriate for her health conditions:

My friend’s children asked her to stay at home and be paid since she is diabetic, as it is part of our culture to care for our parents in their old age. (Tania, 28, Burundi).

5.2 Understanding refugee women's perspectives on economic freedom

The second global theme is the influence of economic freedom on four main aspects of the participants' livelihood. They are elaborated with four organizational themes in the sub-section namely personal empowerment, parent-child relationships, changing ideals about femininities across transnational spaces, and finally the creation of social networks. I begin with the organizational theme of personal empowerment which has its basic themes as personal empowerment and liberation from old patriarchal beliefs. Afterward, the organizational theme of the parent-child relationship has its basic themes as time for children and performing mother duties and role sharing with partners. Then, the organizational theme of changing ideals about femininities across transnational spaces has its basic themes as their standard of living and the ability to take initiative and lastly, the organizational theme of the creation of social networks has its basic themes as making Norwegian friends and participation of social activities. This is illustrated in Figure 2. The thematic network analysis will be presented together with information regarding the interviews themselves. I highlighted similar experiences and called attention to some differences in the experiences of the participants in each of the sub-sections mentioned below.

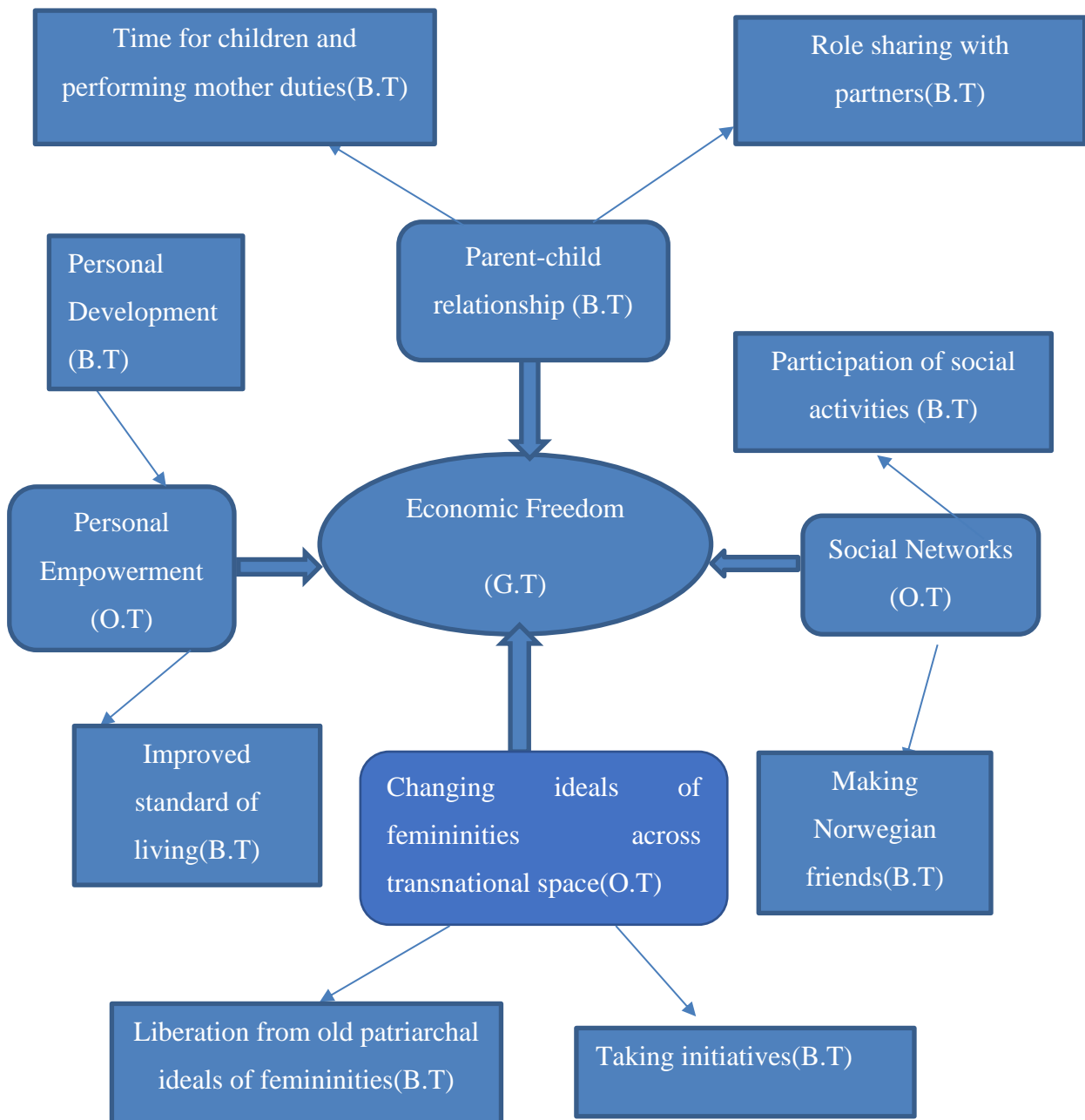


Figure 2: A summary of the thematic network analysis on the influence of economic freedom in the lives of refugee women.

Before exploring the subsequent themes under economic freedom. I wanted to know the participants' in and out of employment interpretation of economic freedom. More than 50% of the participants did understand the concept. Some participants perceived it as an influence of being gainfully employed and earning a salary. Other participants viewed it as being financially independent:

I think economic freedom is when you can decide to do whatever you want to do, invest the money you set, help your family, and start a business much more than buying stuff... (Flora, 35 Somali).

Other participants defined it as:

being able to finance yourself by yourself, to be independent, and not to be connected to somebody to decide over you... (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

Bintu, from Ethiopia, also claimed that:

It is having the confidence that you are free and not depending on anybody. It has changed my perspectives on life. Now I feel like I am part of the world. I have my own money; I can travel wherever in the world and buy whatever I want to buy. At least I am independent (Bintu, 37, Ethiopia).

Similarly, Jamila from Syria defines the concept as:

the process where you own a salary, and you can do whatever you want without asking anybody. Without asking your husband or Kommune or Nav, you get your own money, and you can make a plan. (Jamila,40,Syria).

Nevertheless, one participant expressed indifference when discussing the concept of economic freedom, in the participant's opinion, the concept had never crossed her mind:

In Norway, even if you don't work, you will get money, you would not go hungry or have no roof over her head (Claire,38, Rwanda).

5.2.1 Personal empowerment

After participants had given their perceptions on economic freedom under the pre-set themes discussed below. I realized almost all participants kept emphasizing in our interviews how their lives had improved. Thus, it propelled me to ask two main questions to clarify all nuances in my mind. I asked the participants to describe events that made them feel their living standards had improved:

A participant attested to the fact that, if I was not working, I don't think I would drive a car or have the freedom to buy a ticket. This is because money gives you the means to do different things or at least get a ticket... (Flora,35, Somalia).

Other participants also expressed acquiring knowledge, an additional language, and an education:

I have things I did not know 10 years ago. I am proud of myself. If for nothing at all I now have a degree. (Bintu, 37, Ethiopia).

I have improved myself socially, economically, and culturally. I have improved upon my knowledge; I learn new things every day. Now I speak three languages and I have experience in three jobs. (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

One participant also expressed receiving more respect from Norwegians:

Yes, my standard of living has improved, let us say I am in Jekta and I see something, I just decide to buy it. If I want to change something at home, I don't need to discuss it with my husband, I just buy it and come home. It gives me happiness, the ability to buy things on my own... Work is very important for Norwegians, they respect you more when they realize you are working. (Ayesha, 50, Syria).

In a similar vein, I wanted to find out if participants' experience preferred their newfound life in Norway compared to a similar one back home. Therefore, I asked if there was the opportunity to return to their former life in their home country where they performed tasks ascribed to females, would they prefer that? Almost all the participants responded with an emphatic no, apart from two participants. The participants who refuted this believed that they have become a better version of their old selves now. Their way of thinking, understanding, and most especially the freedom they are enjoying was unprecedented and they would not want to miss that:

NO, NO back it is too late for me because now I am a different person. While here I changed my way of thinking, belief, choices, my kids' choices, our belief in democracy, and analysing things happening around us. So, I will never go back to that people can decide whether I can go outside or not. It is a lot of limitations; the woman has a very strict lifestyle. In our country, you must be careful of what your neighbour would say, his family, and your family would say. It is kind of limiting what you choose because you have to consider the feelings of a lot of people. (Ayesha, 50, Syria).

(pause)...Hey NO because I like this life much...maybe I do not want the same life as my mother...I want a better version... I do not want to be put in a box, I am enjoying this freedom to choose, and I want to choose... (Flora, 35, Somalia).

No, my life is bigger. I had my secondary school education back home, but now I have my tertiary education. So, I would not want to go back. (Amina, 37, Ethiopia).

Of course, NO. This life and that life are different. Now I am independent I have my own money, and I feel like I and other people are the same. I do not want to go back to my former life. (Bintu, 37, Ethiopia).

I prefer Norway because you are free. In this country, people are treated equally and have freedom of speech. (Claire, 33, Rwanda).

Nonetheless, three participants embraced the idea of going back to their home countries to make a difference in the lives of their people with the knowledge, experience, and skills acquired in Norway:

I have never been a full-time housewife. I would love to go back to Palestine, but I want to continue working with this International Organization, I would love to continue to work as a teacher to teach my people the knowledge I learned from here. No, I think I have the knowledge and I am committed to giving back to my people. (Memunatu, 45, Palestine)

(laughs) ... I was actually thinking of going back because I want to improve my country especially the orphan kids, and domestic abused women by providing housing facilities for them. I want to go back and help, however, economically I have to wait. (Tania, 28, Burundi)

However, one participant expressed dissatisfaction with living in Norway:

Yes, I will go back but I have to ensure my child is an adult and there is no war. My happiness is not how much you make, I was happier in my country, I miss the forest, and neighbours, everybody is happy and talking to each other. (Jamila, 40, Syria)

5.2.2 Changing ideals about femininities across transnational space

After discussing the influence of economic freedom in ensuring personal empowerment. I probed further into the influence of economic freedom in changing the ideals set as a standard of femininity for participants across transnational space (Norway). This theme was quite challenging for more than half of the participants to understand immediately, so I had to give a broad but well-defined explanation. I also had to ensure that I did not provide leading ideas as I wanted varied experiences unique to participants as responses. Almost all participants describe experiences that had basic themes as being liberated from old patriarchal ideals of femininity and taking personal initiatives. Most participants did claim that in their home countries, they experienced and were influenced by strong patriarchal orientations. Thus, being in Norway, some participants decided to adapt to the Norwegian culture thus having a change in their mindset:

My mother did not work at all, and I knew the moment I start to study at the university that I will never be at home, and I did not want to copy my mother. This is because I just feel that this is my way to deciding on life, economically it is a lot for me to have the freedom to decide and in general, I am a shy person and I do not want to ask people (Ayesha, 50, Syria).

I came from Palestine; it is a traditional country, and we have differences between men and women. We have gender differences in my country. Yes, men

have more chances than women but now I think it is getting better when we talk about careers and jobs, women are starting to work more and more (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

Now I feel like men and women are the same. In my country even if you have the money you will depend on your husband to be the breadwinner of the household. But here if he pays for accommodation, I pay for food. If he buys something I have to reciprocate. It is like women and men are the same here (Flora, 35, Somalia).

One participant did acknowledge the new way of thinking she had received living in Norway, she did accept all aspects of it:

In Norway, there is something known as 'likestilling' that men and women are equal. Both can work the same job. Women are not inferior. I believe a woman can do what a man can do. Nonetheless, I am an African woman, and I think a woman and a man are created differently. This is because I have a culture and religion and I still adhere to it (Amina, 37, Ethiopia).

5.2.3 Economic freedom and its influence on the parent-child relationship

Thereafter, as participants had families to care for, I then lead a conversation about the influence of economic freedom on the parent-child relationship. All participants did highlight the fact there was the presence of spending time with children and sharing house chores. Also, motherly nurturing and care roles such as cooking, cleaning assisting children to do their homework happened to be prioritized by participants. Although there were times, they were simply unavailable because of working more than one job or overtime. In those situations, their partners performed those roles although for a brief period:

I have to work as a kindergarten teacher, so I could take my child to school first. Therefore, having a child has affected my choice of work because a more demanding job would not give me the flexibility to enjoy ample time with my child. (Flora, 35, Somalia).

In general, at home, usually, the mother is more responsible for the children in their eating and buying clothes for children, so I have more responsibility but now from this new year since I am busy with this new work. So, my husband has begun to make the change, he is feeding them now, and he is buying them clothes because he has more time than me now. I have many things to do now so he is now helping (Bintu,37, Ethiopia).

There was one participant who emphasized the fact that having economic freedom offers the children to have the best two world views. First, the one in which they live and have their interactions (Norway), and the other, the country of origin:

Every year, during the summer, my children and I travel to Palestine because there they can see and experience the culture and people firsthand. They can understand we belong there, but we live here. This can only happen when you have economic freedom (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

Another participant stated that her workload as a researcher has reduced her time for socialization, she divides her time between her kids and her work:

I spend a lot of time with my kids and very little time with friends. This is because as a parent it is your job to teach morals and ethics. This is something you must repeatedly talk to your children about it by having this normal conversation between parents and kids (Ayesha, 50, Syria).

5.2.4 Social networks

I conclude the exploration of findings with the influence of economic freedom in the creation of social networks among participants. Most participants talked about their participation in social activities such as visiting the mosque, attending festive celebrations inclined to their countries of origin, and on certain occasions those of their Norwegian friends. Almost all participants did affirm that they had a kind of warm social relationship with the people and most especially Norwegians around them. This relationship emanates from having an acquaintance, a friend, and a close friend. Nevertheless, they expressed their dismay, as they reflected that they could not make time for more bonding time with their friends as their work and family time almost took all their time:

Yes, I have a lot. I work at the school and there are Norwegian teachers. I attended a Norwegian friend's 50th birthday. You have to be a social person, say hi to people, if you are too careful, they themselves would be careful. Let your doors be opened... (Memunatu, 45, Palestine).

YES, I have Norwegian friends. Working in Norway has taught me a lot about norms and behaviour. You see when I am with my friends and I am with my friends and I am out of school I meet people in another context but when I am at work you meet them in a very different context, so I work I learn a lot about Norwegians because I am up close in person (Flora, 35, Somalia).

Yes, my closest friend is a Norwegian. We discuss everything. She is a very kind person (Claire,33, Rwanda).

...Yes and no, I cannot call everyone, every day but we have some agreement. One, I like to go with her to watch a movie, we go to eat at the restaurant every second month, we have a schedule but not daily or weekly, I mean I don't have time for that, and people do not have time for that... (Ayesha,55, Syria).

On the other hand, some participants expressed how economic freedom and other factors such as culture and language have created some challenges in their creation of social connections:

It is very sad to say this, but you know... for me, it does not matter if I use 500 nok for dinner, I have the money for that, but I cannot do these activities with a friend from my culture there today because of they depend on Nav and therefore do not have extra money to go for dinner or cinema. (Bintu,38, Ethiopia).

As a researcher, I work about forty-five hours a week during research and writing papers. So, I always engage with the world aside from getting money that can afford me a certain lifestyle. However, I am afraid I am losing some people who could be good friends... For example, if I am working and therefore can afford a certain lifestyle my friends are not working. It is difficult to have a conversation, especially in analysing situations. I miss a friend who is speaking Arabic in this place. (Ayesha,50, Syria).

If you talk about colleagues when I need help with work or school, I do have some Norwegians as friends. But outside of work NO. I think culture and language are barriers when making Norwegian friends. (Claire,33, Rwanda).

5.3 Summary of the findings

The first part of the presentation of findings explored the accounts leading to the decline of refugee women from participating in the labour market. Participants first mentioned having a large family with many children as a major reason leading to the discontinuity in their indulgence in the labour market. Thereafter, in one part, half of the participants also expressed not getting a hundred percent (100%) position and experiencing subtle discriminatory attitudes from their colleagues mostly Norwegians at the workplace. In another part, the other half of the participants outlined some attitudinal adjustment refugee women must emulate to overcome this challenge especially hostilities with colleagues. Lastly, refugee women engage in the most strenuous and physically engaging work activities. As time advances, they grow older and due to their routine lifestyles, they develop sickness which eventually leads to their waning away from the job market.

The second part is the presentation of findings on the influence of economic freedom in the lives of refugee women. Four organizational themes emerged. The first influence of economic freedom increased the personal empowerment of participants. The second influence of economic freedom in the changing ideals about femininities across transnational space (Norway) discussed by participants is their new orientations obtained from the Norwegian culture that confronts outmoded patriarchal beliefs in their country of origin. Then, I moved on to the influence of economic freedom on their relationship with their children. Some participants did accept their relationship with their children. Some participants did accept their motherly role but felt a bit guilty that they are not performing in the manner they would want.

Last but not least, the influence of economic freedom in their creation of a social network. The participant did attest to having Norwegian friends however expressed that language and culture as obstacles against the closely knitted relationship.

Finally, I proceed to the discussion chapter where I employ the theory and concepts mentioned in chapter four as well as literature relevant to this thesis.

6 Discussions

This chapter aims to address the research question which seeks to explore the experiences of refugee women in their work participation. Again, the influence of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, the changing ideals of femininities across transnational spaces, their relationship with children, and their creation of a social network. Having already presented the findings of the research from the interviews with eight participants: four out of employment and four in employment in chapter five. I proceed to have a discussion connecting the findings in relation to literature, the theoretical framework of social integration, and conceptual frameworks namely gender, empowerment, human agency, and discrimination accordingly in sections 6.1 and 6.2. Section 6.1 consist of discussions on accounts leading to the decrease in the work participation of refugee women namely balancing family roles and work, long-term sickness absence, and discrimination. Section 6.2 encompass discussions on the influence of economic freedom in personal empowerment, changing ideals of femininities, relationship with children, and the creation of a social network. Then, I moved on to section 6.3 to consider the limitation and recommendations for future research works. Then, I also spell out future research areas worthy of consideration. I conclude by identifying the implications and recommendations.

6.1 Discussions on the experiences of refugee women in their work participation.

All participants had a good understanding of the operationalities surrounding work in Norway. They indicated some experiences such as challenges they had faced before getting a job, in the job, and subsequently accounts leading to refugee women leaving the job market which is the focus for elaboration in this discussion.

6.1.1 Balancing family roles and work

The findings emphasize how the participants balance family roles and work. In this research, participants engaged in work and those not engaged in work had different views regarding how childbearing and large family size lead to a decline in work participation. However, the results highlight participants with a higher number of children and with no work engagement align with the claim that gender structures the division between productive and reproductive labour, giving women the primary responsibility for the latter (Kabeer, 2000). Again, men work more and women less after the first child is born. Moreover, the effect of time constraints, like

children's presence, differs for men and women. For example, as children create more work in the home, women make additional time for their work, while men, on the other hand, do not necessarily respond to the additional time made by children (Coltrane, 2000). Similarly, starting a family and having children affects both men's and women's occupational activity, but often differently (Kavli & Nadim, 2009). This is because different cultures attribute different roles to men and women and their interaction within social institutions in the household (Kabeer, 2000). Thus, emphasizing women's primary roles as mothers and caretakers (Torres et al, 2002). Furthermore, Dale et al. (2002), argue that women's participation in education and work is not only supported by the family as long it is not perceived as jeopardizing the 'family hour' and the woman is often expected to prioritize family over work. Thus, family is generally understood as representing traditional gender norms that can hinder women's employment. In a similar vein, Dale et al. (2006), rightly affirm that childcare represents a significant barrier to refugee women's attachment to work because the norm of maternal care for children is strong.

In contrast, participants engaged in work stressed regardless of family duties, because of the hourly-based work system in Norway, it is possible to balance both family duties and work. This is when one separates time for work and time for home. This result represents the first direct demonstration of Bandura's first property of the human agency, intentionality, as one participant, Memunatu in the research discussed a plan and strategy, she normally uses is keeping her word to her children and maximizing the moments shared (Bandura, 2006). In addition to that, participants portrayed work as an arena for development and stimulation. Besides, more than earning an income, it is a central ingredient for a worthy and meaningful life as participants did build on the notion that they have a duty to fulfill themselves and their potential (Beck & Beck -Gernsheim, 2002). As specified by Esser (2001), participating in work does assist in positioning refugee women in interacting with locals of the host society which is essential to social integration as emphasized by Hartmut Esser (Esser, 2001).

In summary, drawing from the interviews and the findings, I agree with Finch (1989), as I observed that participants who were out of the job market and had more children in the childhood phase did want to follow the traditional norm of being an available mother whereas other participants who viewed work as more than having a salary and had children who were a bit grown up preferred not to follow abstract 'moral rules' and discovered a way of balancing the work and mother duties.

6.1.2 Long-term sickness absence:

Some participants did attest that being sick for a long time can cause their disengagement in the job market as health is also an important aspect of labour market integration. In one part, as mentioned by Umbilys (2020), some groups of immigrant women may have greater health challenges than Norwegian-born women, this could be because they had grown up in a country with a poorly developed healthcare system, or they have had poorer nutrition, and even that they have experienced trauma in their home country. In another part, it could also be because, after arriving in Norway, they get jobs that are more harmful to their health than the jobs of Norwegian-born people. Likewise, some participants did highlight the fact that they lived a routine lifestyle involving moving from work to the house and vice versa. While having virtually no or little time to exercise, hang out with friends, or take short vacations when needed to prevent burnout and release stress. Therefore, as refugee women grow older and have worked for some time, there is a prevalence of ailment and sickness that causes them to take long-term sickness absences which eventually pushes them out of active work.

This assertion is consistent with Nortvedt et al (2015), work which deals with refugee and immigrant women with chronic pain. Participants in the study describe their health problems, chronic pain and physically tiring working days, and stressful life situations that they have experienced. In addition, they describe that they feel that experiences of discriminatory attitudes in the workplace have worsened their suffering. Again, the overrepresentation of refugees and immigrant women in occupations that are physically and mentally demanding has created the notion that they have poor prospects in the labour market and no network outside the family (Friberg & Midtbøen, 2019). Therefore, the fact that discrimination can lead to psychological suffering and physical pain means that refugees and immigrant women are more prone to long-term illness. (Nortvedt et al., 2015).

6.1.3 Discrimination:

After talking about childbearing, family and physically engaging work performed by most refugee women. A surprising similarity emerged when both groups of refugee women (those in and out of employment) talked about some discriminatory attitudes they encountered. Although, all employers in Norway have a duty to work actively, purposefully, and systematically to promote equality and prevent discrimination based on gender, disability, ethnicity, national origin, skin colour, language, and religion. The duty is enshrined in the Equality Act, the Discrimination Act, and the Discrimination and Accessibility Act (Tronstad, 2010).

Our findings highlight that insufficient knowledge of unwritten rules, and the inaccessibility of fast positions (permanent positions) are some examples of discriminatory practices experienced by participants. The results represent the first direct demonstration of Type B and Type D small group discrimination, and indirect institutionalized discrimination respectively. Type B, small group discrimination, is manifested when Norwegian colleagues who represent the dominant group of individuals behave unfriendly against members of the subordinate group such as refugee women as a result of having inadequate knowledge of the unwritten rules of working in Norway. Again, type D, indirect institutionalized discrimination is when some refugee women are not offered permanent positions (100% job position) in the jobs they do, although it is not motivated by an intent to harm, nevertheless, this has a negative impact on refugee women as they do not feel secure in the continuity of their jobs (Feagin & Eckberg, 1980).

It is important to note that daily lives and life goals are centred on coping with stressors and developing strategies to overcome them (Kanal & Rottmann, 2021). However, the emerging difference from the findings is that refugee women still in employment had developed resilient attitudes such as learning to do more at the workplace compared to their Norwegian colleagues, expressing grievances when treated unfairly, and being open and sociable as a way of building friendly relationships whereas those out of employment had succumbed to being an ‘available mother’, taking long sick leaves, or the discrimination experienced in the workplace. The results represent the first direct demonstration of personal efficacy which is the foundation of

human agency conforming to Bandura (1997). I align with Bandura's suggestion that efficacy beliefs determine how opportunities and impediments are viewed. People of low efficacy are easily convinced of the futility of efforts in the face of difficulties hence they quickly give up trying. Those of high efficacy view impediments as surmountable by improving their self-regulatory skills and perseverant efforts. They stay the course in the face of difficulties and remain resilient to adversity (Bandura, 2006). Again, efficacy beliefs determine the choice people make at important decisional points. Finally, confirming Esser's claims that when a refugee woman acquires a position in the job market, it leads to a level of acceptance from the host society, yet it can be impeded by the presence of discrimination (Esser, 2001).

6.2 Discussions on the influence of economic freedom in the lives of refugee women

Our findings revealed that both participants in and out of employment have knowledge of the concept of economic freedom. Although participants narrowed it down to mean becoming financially independent. Other participants also expressed that economic freedom gave them confidence, changed their perspectives on life, and gave them the chance to have a plan for their lives. Therefore, our conversations advanced to address the influence of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, changing ideals of femininities across transnational space, relationships with children, and creating social networks in Norway as these are relevant areas of the lives of every refugee woman.

6.2.1 Personal empowerment:

This is an interesting theme that emanated during the data analyses. All participants did attest being resident in Norway over the years, had improved their ambitions, expectations, and realities (Macionis &Plummer, 2012). It affirms Barbara Risman's assertion that even though actions are influenced by an individual's interest, the social structure is the one that establishes the options to choose from (Risman, 2004). From my findings, although these improvements are experienced, it is higher among participants still at work than among participants disengaged from work. The result is consistent with the claim that women can act at personal and societal levels to improve their life when strengthen with economic resources. This is because an essential pre-requisite to empowerment necessitates stepping outside the home and participating in some form of collective undertaking that can be successful and would encourage the development of a sense of independence and competence among women (Stromquist,1988). Likewise, economic subordination must be neutralized for women to be

empowered (Hall, 1992). In contrast, one participant mentioned that: *In Norway, even if you don't work, you will get money, you would not go hungry or have no roof over your head. (Claire, 38, Rwanda).*

One interpretation given to this finding is that the longer participants had been out of the job market the deeper they become enmeshed in the sex role socialization of women, inculcating attributes of “learned helplessness” among women. This attribution of helplessness hinders opportunities for mediation and compromise and often women respond by complying with female stereotypes of passivity and self-sacrifice (Medel- Anonuevo, 1995).

Again, the result strongly implies that most participants preferred their newfound life in Norway to that of their home countries. Most of the participants bluntly refused to go back to their home countries. They expressed sentiments such as the freedom to voice opinions, being independent of themselves, having higher education, and being a better version of themselves. A few participants did express the desire to go back home mainly because they wanted to use the knowledge, skills, and attitudes acquired over the years in Norway to serve the people in their home countries. It is interesting that participants did experience the holistic nature of empowerment in Norway encompassing economic, social, and political activities including education and income generation projects, working all together. As this was not the norm in their home countries (Bhasin, 1985).

6.2.2 Changing ideals of femininities across transnational space:

Transnationalism recognizes the strong linkages the refugees and immigrants maintain with their homeland as they anchor themselves in a new host society (Appadurai, 1997). Thus, almost all participants did have a deep reflection on their lives currently and compared it to their former lives and those of other women in their home country. The result is consistent with the claim that refugee women are not only agents of action but also express self-reflectiveness (Bandura, 2006). They reflect on the new knowledge to create different understandings of gender relations as well as overturn old beliefs that structure powerful gender ideologies through their personal efficacy, the soundness of thoughts, actions, and pursuits (Medel-Anonuevo, 1995). During the interview, some participants ended their statements with the remark, I do not want to live like my mother. This is because the norms and traditions in their home countries are patriarchal in nature, usually giving men more chances than women, especially in making important decisions such as receiving education and work. Often, women are voiceless and had to depend on their partners for virtually everything.

Nevertheless, most participants confessed living in Norway for some years has introduced them to a concept known as ‘likestilling’, a Norwegian word meaning gender equality. It emphasized the idea that both men and women receive equal pay for equal work done. Also, both parents should combine professional work with having children. Lastly, there should be easy access to childcare and flexible work hours as these promote gender equality (10 Fakta Om Likestilling, n.d.). The awareness of the concept of ‘likestilling’ has provided them an opportunity to understand themselves and renew participants ability in making life-changing choices. Sometimes, these decisions go against the cultural and social expectations they were nurtured with from their home country. So, therefore, participants find a way of breaking away from patterns of behaviours that create dependence on family and society. Finally, some participants did state that the Norwegian culture did give them a voice, and the freedom to work and take decisions on their own accord. Other participants admitted not fully subscribing to the Norwegian way of life because they still identify with their culture and religion.

6.2.3 Parent-child relationship

As I discussed earlier in section 6.1.1, balancing family roles and work as one account led to a decrease in work participation by refugee women. The results strongly imply that participants who are active in work had a better chance of being a positive influence on their children compared to participants out of work. This is because they have the needed economic freedom to present the best of the two worlds that is the Norwegian space and the home country space. Children turn out to be secure and confident among their peers because they do not feel left behind. This is because participants ensured that they provide beyond the child’s basic needs. Nonetheless, this is not the reality for children whose mothers were out of work. The children will have to live an average lifestyle being given only the basics of life. Also, there is a high chance of creating a mindset that strengthens the old patriarchal belief that a women’s place is the home only. One participant also mentioned that the age of her child has restricted the kind of job she chose so she could be available for her child.

Again, both participants in employment and those out of employment did accept their gender roles, constraints, and responsibility in the home did project a level of limitation to their effectiveness in the job market. This is because household work does not have a neutral meaning but expresses gender relations and power dynamics within the households. Some participants admitted made additional time for this new work (Coltrane, 2000). The study also

highlighted a positive connection between gender attitudes and household behaviours, especially among participants actively involved in work. Partners of participants had a more egalitarian approach to performing household chores (Franco et al, 2004). Husbands sometimes took on household chores when their wives worked more. From the findings, this was after participants had many negotiations with their husbands and upon the husband's realization that they are in a different society and that it is important to help one another.

6.2.4 Social networks

Our findings highlight that participants have a high level of orientation about the Norwegian culture and society at large. This was mainly due to their participation in the Introduction programme upon their arrival in Norway.

These results represent the direct demonstration of cultururation which is the first dimension of social integration based on Hartmut Esser (2001). He posits that when refugees acquire essential knowledge and skills essentially linguistic skills in the way of learning the Norwegian culture and social livelihood. It enables refugees to act and interact appropriately and successfully in the host society.

All the participants expressed having connections with Norwegians in one way or the other. Be it a colleague, acquaintance, neighbour, or close friend. Participants who had closer relationships with Norwegians experienced a higher level of inclusion and stood a greater chance of receiving aid that could help improve their lives due to their broad social network. Although, some participants pointed out that culture and language as barriers preventing a closer relationship with Norwegians than what existed. Nevertheless, it is interesting that some women in employment express their dismay not interacting sufficiently with their friends with whom they share the same home country who were out of employment. This is because of factors such as not having enough money for entertainment like going out to watch a movie and eating at a restaurant. Again, aside from getting money, participants active in work often engage with the world outside. Thus, they found conversations with friends out of work difficult to understand and boring. This eventually leads to the weakening of the friendship bond between participants in and out of employment with time.

6.3 Limitations and Recommendations for further studies.

The first limitation worth mentioning is that due to the relatively small number of participants, it would be difficult to generalize the research findings above. The second limitation is that, although this research provides the needed data it can provide previous knowledge for qualitative researchers who want to delve into the work participation of refugees. In order to increase the level of generalization in studying this phenomenon a quantitative approach with a larger sample size of a particular ethnic group of refugees be it Syrians or Somalians would be highly recommended.

Again, in terms of future research, it would be useful to extend the current findings by examining the interpretation of social integration among persons with a weak connection to the labour market (persons who are neither in work, nor education and not registered as unemployed)

6.4 Recommendations

Insofar as the findings discussed and analysed above are meeting the research objective, some recommendations, based on the research findings, are made here in providing insights into how to ensure the continuous work participation of refugee women in Norway. The study, therefore, recommends that: (a) Refugee women who decide to continue work after a period of absence can be assisted through the introduction of a paid internship programme which would help ensure a smooth transition back to work.

(b) Organizations could approve a policy where a percentage of refugee women who prove themselves to be diligent in performing their duties are given full-time employment (100% position). This would help reduce the number of refugee women leaving the job market as they enjoy stable incomes and other work benefits.

(c) Based on the findings on personal empowerment experiences shared by refugee women, it would be relevant to include more refugees during the policy deliberations. This would provide policymakers with first-hand information on the actual challenges of the refugees on one hand. On another hand, it would provide refugees a sense of ownership in the integration process.

(d) In conclusion, refugee women are much more vulnerable to refugee men when it comes to integrating into host countries. This is as a result of nurturing children and performing motherly

roles. Eventually, these duties reduce the time to properly integrate into the host society. Therefore, there is the need to focus on enabling the refugee woman to overcome these challenges.

6.5 Implication of the thesis

Through the analysis and discussions of relevant data gathered from in-depth interviews as well as secondary sources, the study cannot fully establish that there is a decline in the work participation of refugee women in Norway. After considering the foregoing findings and recommendations presented, the findings seek to beg for the attention of stakeholders and policymakers who are working to integrate refugees into the Norwegian system to find viable solutions that would not only introduce refugees to work but ensure their continual participation in work.

Finally, after using the theory, concepts, and relevant literature to discuss the findings, as well as spelling out the limitations, recommendations, and implications, I round the whole thesis up with the conclusion chapter.

7 Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I explored the experiences of refugee women in the job market in Norway by precisely examining the accounts leading to a decline in the work participation of refugee women in Norway. In addition to that, I elaborated on the influence of economic freedom in personal empowerment, changing ideals of femininities across transnational spaces, relationships with children, and creating social networks.

To begin with, the research identified three main accounts leading to a decrease in work participation among refugee women which are childbearing and large family size, discrimination and sickness, and old age. One point worth mentioning is that there were contrasting views between participants in and out of employment on the issue of childbearing and large family size did lead to the decline in work participation. Participants engaged in work did assert that participants out of work were comfortable wearing the tag '*available mum*'. However, with further probing, I found that participants out of work had many children who were at a tender age compared to those of participants in employment. Another relevant point is that both participants in and out of employment confessed to having faced discrimination however participants still in employment had faced it with resilient and an agentic attitude. Nonetheless, it is important to note that refugees in Norway are heterogeneous in nature, therefore, the decline in work participation varies following the different ethnic groupings of refugees. While some ethnic groups experience more engagement in work, other ethnic groups experience less engagement in work participation.

Secondly, in the discussion of the influence of economic freedom on the different areas of the lives of refugee women mentioned above. The research highlights the increase in self-awareness among refugee women expressing economic freedom. Participants confessed to enjoying the freedom to express themselves and to effect the changes they wish to see and experience in their lives because they wield the financial freedom to do so. Again, participants claimed that having an enabling environment assisted in bringing out the best in them regardless of their gender, class, and status.

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Interview Guide (Appendix 1)

English Version

Part One

1. Age
 - a. 20-29
 - b. 30-39
 - c. 40-49
 - d. 50-59
2. Which country do you come from?
3. What is your level of education?
 - a. Primary
 - b. Secondary
 - c. Tertiary
 - d. Postgraduate
4. Did you work before coming here? If so, tell me about your job.
5. How long did it take before getting your first paid job in Norway?
6. How did you get the job? (for instance, were you recommended by someone or applied online).
7. What job do you do currently? Are you working full or part-time?
8. Can you describe a typical day at your workplace or home?
9. Can you describe any situation or unwritten rule in your workplace that made you feel uncomfortable or unwanted in your workplace?

Part Two

10. How do you understand the term Economic freedom?
11. How has economic freedom to work influenced the following areas of your life?
 - a. Personal life and your standard of living.
 - b. Changing ideals of femininities across transnational spaces.
 - c. Parent-child relationship.
 - d. Making Norwegian friends and acquaintances improves your social networks.
12. If there was the opportunity to return to your former life in your home countries where you performed tasks ascribed to females would you prefer that? If yes or no, why?

Norwegian Version (Appendix 1)

Part One

1. Alder
 - a. 20-29 b. 30-39 c. 40-49 d. 50-59
2. Hvilket land kommer du fra?
3. Hva er ditt utdanningsnivå?
 - a. Primær b. Sekundær c. Tertiær d. Uteksaminert
4. Jobbet du før du kom hit? I så fall, fortell meg om jobben din.
5. Hvor lang tid tok det før du fikk din første betalte jobb i Norge?
6. Hvordan fikk du jobben? For eksempel ble du anbefalt av noen eller søkte du på nettet?
7. Hvilken jobb gjør du? Jobber du heltid eller deltid?
8. Kan du beskrive en typisk dag enten på din arbeidsplass eller hjemme?
9. Kan du beskrive enhver situasjon eller uskrevne regler på arbeidsplassen din som har fått deg til å føle deg ukomfortabel eller uønsket på arbeidsplassen din?

Part Two

10. Hvordan forstår du ordet 'Økonomisk frihet'?
11. Hvordan har friheten til å jobbe påvirket følgende områder av livet ditt?
 - a. Personlig liv og din levestandard.
 - b. Endre idealer om feminisme og kjønnsrelasjoner på tvers av transnasjonale rom.
 - c. Foreldre-barn forhold.
 - d. Å få norske venner og bekjente forbedrer ditt sosiale nettverk.
12. Hvis du fikk muligheten til å dra tilbake til ditt tidligere liv i hjemlandet ditt hvor du utførte oppgaver som der er tilskrevet kvinner, ville du foretrekke det? Hvis ja eller nei hvorfor?

Interview Consent Form (Appendix 2)

Phone number:

Email:

Date:

About the project

The project seeks to explore the experiences of refugee women with families experience in the labour force in Norway and their sense of economic freedom in their personal empowerment, changing ideals of femininities across transnational space, relationship with children, and creation of social networks.

Consent:

- I confirm that my participation in this research project is voluntary.
- I have the right to refuse to answer any questions or call off the interview if you feel uncomfortable.
- I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in the reports using the information obtained during this interview and that my confidentiality as long as a participant in this study will remain insured.
- I have read and understood the explanation provided to me.

Signature.....

Date.....

Intervju Samtykkeskjema (Vedlegg 2)

Telefonnummer:

E-post:

Dato:

Om prosjektet

Prosjektet søker å utforske erfaringene til både flyktningkvinner og deres familier som delaktige i den Norske arbeidsstyrken, deres opplevelse av hvordan økonomisk frihet påvirker myndigheten de har over sin egen tilværelse, endrede idealer om hva femininitet er på tvers av transnasjonale arenaer, deres forhold til barn, og etablering av sosiale nettverk.

Samtykke:

- Jeg bekrefter at det er frivillig å delta i dette forskningsprosjektet.
- Jeg har rett til å nekte å svare på spørsmål, eller avlyse intervjuet hvis jeg føler meg ukomfortabel.
- Jeg forstår at forskeren ikke vil identifisere meg ved navn i rapportene på bakgrunn av informasjonen som er ervervet under dette intervjuet, og at opplysningene jeg har gitt sikres konfidensialitet så lenge en deltaker i denne studien.
- Jeg har lest og forstått forklaringen som er gitt meg.

Signature:

Date:

