

**SAVONIA**

University of Applied Sciences

THESIS – BACHELOR'S DEGREE PROGRAMME  
SOCIAL SCIENCES, BUSINESS AND ADMINISTRATION

# KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL INTEGRATION IN FINLAND AS A FOREIGNER

International talents path to successfully settle in Finland.

AUTHOR/S Roham Malekzadehbagheri

Field of Study Social Sciences, Business and Administration	
Degree Programme Degree Programme in Business and Administration	
Author(s) Roham Malekzadehbagheri	
Title of Thesis key elements of successfully integrate in Finland as a foreigner	
Date 11.05.2023	Pages/Number of appendices 30
Client Organisation /Partners	
<p><b>Abstract</b></p> <p>Immigration and integration are a global challenge, there are pros and cons for every nation to open its doors and as soon as the doors are open, the nation is obligated to face the consequences. If the immigrants do not get integrated well in the host country, there are severe consequences for both sides to be faced. Therefore, it is absolutely a two-way route. There are conservative members of the society who are not the big fan of immigrants and there are also those immigrants who keep on playing the victim role in the host country and as they get empathy from locals, their voice act as discouragement for other immigrants.</p> <p>The objective of this thesis is to explore the obstacles and challenges of immigrants and then by considering the unsatisfied immigrants claims, explore the path of satisfied and successfully integrated immigrants to reach out to key elements of successfully integrate in Finland as a foreigner.</p> <p>The author had conducted a qualitative research by interviewing a number of immigrants in Finland who are satisfied and had successfully fit in into the host country and its culture. The collecting of data is based on their challenges, their way of overcoming the challenges, the effect of other narratives or stereotypes on their mindsets, and at last, to understand how has the situation changed over time in a way of has it gotten better or worse?</p> <p>The key findings of this thesis are concluded into 3 main key elements, 1) understanding culture, 2) acquiring social networks 3) learning the local language. If an immigrant focusses on these three aspects, there would be no real barrier in integration as these three elements bring with it self-esteem and self-confidence for the individuals on daily basis. Their chance of landing employment opportunities rises significantly as they are able to pursue in both formal and informal methods of getting hired in Finland. In addition, it is important that immigrants close their ears to stereotypes provided by other immigrants about how a Finn is or how the environment is, and only engage with the society through different events, internships, volunteer jobs, webinars or seminars, and also joining communities rather than their own international community.</p> <p>Another worth to mention findings of this thesis or more of a suggestion was for the other side of this process, which is Finnish government, that it would be more beneficial to pilot an idea based on the finding of this thesis, since if only they would shift their focus on cultural training rather than language training, the integration process would be boosted and there would be more of commitment from immigrants as they would start learning the cultural values, norms and beliefs. Hence there would be less of culture shock and immigrants has a greater chance of fitting in.</p>	
<p><b>Keywords</b> Immigration, Integration, Stereotype, Culture, Employment, Finland</p>	

## CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION .....	5
2	IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION .....	7
2.1	Obstacles or challenges faced by immigrants .....	7
2.2	Host country's cultural values and its impact on immigrants .....	8
2.3	Immigrants in Finland .....	9
2.4	Integration in Finland .....	11
3	RESEARCH ON SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATED IMMIGRANTS IN FINLAND .....	13
3.1	Research method .....	13
3.2	Sampling .....	13
3.3	Data collection .....	14
3.4	Data analysis .....	15
4	RESULTS OF RESEARCH .....	16
4.1	Challenges .....	16
4.2	Social networks .....	18
4.3	Language proficiency .....	20
4.4	Cultural understanding .....	20
5	CONCLUSION .....	23
5.1	The key to successful integration .....	23
5.2	The role of personal narratives on immigrants .....	24
5.3	The impact of learning the culture .....	25
5.4	Summary .....	25
6	DISCUSSION .....	27
	REFERENCES .....	30



## 1 INTRODUCTION

The goal of this thesis is to learn more about the difficulties faced by immigrants as they try to become a part of everyday life in Finland. The author's research allowed him to see the startling ways in which immigrant communities build barriers to entry for themselves beside the existing barriers that are already out there for them. This has inspired the author to seek out new ways to help other immigrants succeed in the face of adversity. The author's goal in delving into the fundamentals of effective integration is to give helpful guidance and direction to immigrants who may be having trouble adjusting to life in a new nation. The author shows great care for accuracy and has a deep comprehension of the difficulties faced by immigrants in Finland.

The author of this thesis is himself an immigrant, therefore he is intimately aware with the challenges and obstacles that are intrinsic to the immigration process. The author has experienced and triumphed over a significant number of the challenges that immigrants are up against, such as mental and cultural issues. The author was motivated to break through and join the Finnish labour market despite the fact that many previous immigrants had discouraged him regarding the state of work opportunities in Finland. This personal experience motivated the author to research the topic of immigration and delve more into the lives of other immigrants who were in similar circumstances. The purpose of this article is to educate readers on the challenges and triumphs associated with the immigrant experience, as well as how society might more effectively assist immigrants and help them assimilate into their new countries of residency.

Therefore, the aim for conclusions of this thesis is to have significant benefits for immigrants trying to integrate into Finnish society. These advantages are anticipated to have a positive impact on Finland. The purpose of this article is to provide an alternative viewpoint and raise awareness about the relevance of immigration by illuminating the covert and more significant challenges that immigrants face. The experiences of past immigrants will not only serve as a source of motivation for those seeking to immigrate themselves, but they will also teach them the strategies necessary to surmount obstacles and achieve success while taking into consideration Finnish culture and expertise. If immigrants are provided with the direction and advice necessary to navigate the challenges of integrating into their new nation of residence, they will be armed with the knowledge and comprehension that is essential to overcoming those challenges and achieving success in their new country of origin. The results of the article give insights and suggestions that have the potential to enhance the experience of immigration and to assist immigrants in Finland in fulfilling their full potential. These insights and recommendations are presented below.

For the purpose of this thesis, several different literary and theoretical fields will be used in order to investigate the experiences of immigrants in Finland. The studies are according to the fields of economics, behavioural science, and cultural studies in order to get a holistic understanding of the challenges and opportunities faced by immigrants in Finland and also to make progress toward determining the essential qualities that underpin successful integration in Finland for immigrants. Another aim to pursue would be to provide a comprehensive understanding of the experience of immigrants in Finland and to provide ideas for both individuals and society by drawing on a broad range of

different works of literature. The following are the two primary research concerns that will be addressed in this thesis:

1- What are the most major challenges that immigrants face while trying to integrate into Finnish society, and how do these challenges impact the experiences that immigrants have? Which lead us to find the solutions for the mentioned challenges.

2- In what ways do the personal narratives of immigrants have an effect on the integration processes that they go through, and what part do these narratives play in the immigrants' chances of being successful in Finland?

Since it is qualitative, this thesis will focus on gathering material that is specific and descriptive describing the experiences of immigrants in Finland. Interviews and observations will both play a part in accomplishing this goal. While interviews will enable the collection of personal narratives and insights from immigrants, observations will give a more holistic perspective of the challenges and opportunities immigrants experience on a daily basis. Interviews will allow for the collection of personal narratives and insights. Using the methods discussed above, this thesis makes an attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of the experience of immigrants in Finland.

## 2 IMMIGRATION AND INTEGRATION

There is no denying the wide-ranging social, economic, cultural, and geographical effects of migration on urban areas (Eraydin, Tasan-kok, Vranken 2010). According to Bueno, Prieto-Rosas, (2019), in scrutinizing the migratory phenomenon, the **migration** theories endeavour to discern the impetus and rationale that drive individuals and households to relocate themselves from one place to another, be it within the same country or beyond its borders. Moreover, these theories aspire to unravel the underlying factors that account for the sustenance of such migratory movements over protracted periods.

The naming of immigrants, which serves to differentiate one group of immigrants from another, is an essential component in the process of formulating policy relating to immigration and integration. Their migratory reasons (such as for job, political asylum, or family reunification), types of homelands (such as Western vs non-Western), genders, and ethnicities are all different, as are the features that differentiate them from one another. (Mügge & Van der Haar. 2016)

According to Mügge & Van der Haar (2016), "**integration** can be defined as how newcomers, such as immigrants, fit into the society in which they settle and find their place there." but if we want to define who an immigrant is, we can refer to them as People who move to a new place and make a permanent home there have always had a tendency, from the onset of civilization, to develop affiliations with those who share a hometown, region, or country of birth. As a consequence of the members being able to gather together in order to advocate their interests towards the state and society, it has been characterized as having a direct beneficial influence on people's integration into society when they participate in such organizations, as well as in civil society organizations in general. This is one of the reasons why participation in such organizations has been described as having a direct positive impact on individuals' integration. (Jønsson, Onasch, Pellander & Wickström. 2013.)

### 2.1 Obstacles or challenges faced by immigrants

According to Nshom, Sadaf & Khalimzoda (2022), there are four main themes identified as 1) a barrier of language, 2) discrimination in work prospects, 3) xenophobia and inequality, and 4) less possibilities for integration. In the same study, the paper provided quotation from earlier studies as "Although while migrants make important contributions to economic prosperity, many people have the misconception that they are a burden on the society that they are living in" (Turner, 2007, as cited in Nshom et al, 2022). Since new migrants are often economically disadvantaged and subjected to abuse, members of underrepresented populations in the society in which they settle are often seen as the primary source of the problem (Turner, 2013, as cited in Nshom et al 2022).

Consequently, Alho (2020) brings on the similar findings on her article according to other previous studies as: "Notwithstanding the equal spirit of the Nordics, comparable results have been observed in the other Nordic nations (Birkelund et al. 2017, as cited in Alho, 2020), suggesting prejudice or a lack of trust among the majority population towards ethnic/national minorities." That once again

brings back the idea of xenophobia to the table. The topic is so sensitive in different places in the world that even according to Siivonen (2015), it is seen to be xenophobic to challenge the existing level of immigration in Sweden considering the mainstream media and the largest political parties both favour the current status quo with respect to immigration.

According to Lambert & Chasteen, (1997), as cited in Nshom, et al. (2022), **conservative members** of the host society usually have unfavourable views toward immigrants. Nshom, et.al (2022) also suggests that people who relocate to a new country often have high hopes of integrating into local culture. Lack of socialization chances may affect their social adjustment and **assimilation**. According to Ferlatte Kuisma (2017) assimilation is the process through which a person becomes indistinguishable from a native resident.

Another observation suggests that immigrants having difficult times to enter the labour market in Norway for two particular reasons which are 1) their poor knowledge of law and regulations of the host country, 2) their weak ties to effective network of connections (Alho 2020).

## 2.2 Host country's cultural values and its impact on immigrants

According to Worthy, Lavigne, and Romero (2020), people's interactions with one another ultimately result in the development of **culture**. People collaborate with one another and teach their skills and information to other members of their networks. Both the manner in which people communicate and the substance of what they share contribute to the formation of culture. It is possible to acquire behaviours via observation or by being taught them by other members of a social group (for example, caretakers or siblings) or by social institutions (for example, schools or places of worship). This kind of learning is referred to as **social learning**.

According to Boyd and Richardson (2005), the significance of social learning among humans lies in the fact that it enables us to circumvent the time- and resource-intensive process of trial and error while also boosting the effectiveness of individual education. According to Worthy, et al (2020), attending events, emulating the actions of others, acquiring knowledge from other people, and collecting information for later use and solving issues are fundamental components of **imitative learning**. These components are also necessary for cultural learning and cumulative culture.

A **stereotype** is a fixed opinion or set of assumptions about a group's members that does not take into account their particular qualities. Negative or positive stereotypes are applied universally to all members of a group when they are oversimplified (Worthy, et al 2020). The idea of stereotyping is linked with cultural clichés such as us versus them analogies. Cultural stereotypes often place "the other" at a lower value than "us" and our culture, whose habits and ethical standards are seen by "us" as "normal," "natural," and "right." (Lehtonen 2005). The same study refers to earlier studies by stating that, "as many or perhaps most members of a group do not have the same experiences or have been exposed to the same information about the target group, the widely held belief that



stereotypes are founded on shared direct or indirect encounters with the outgroup, cannot explain everything.” (Klein et al. 2003, as cited in Lehtonen 2005).

“It is more straightforward to pinpoint stereotype-sustaining behaviours than it is to trace their origins. Everyday conversation, cultural jokes, idioms, and conceits, the phrasing of news items in newspapers, cartoons, films, and TV advertising; nearly all acts of communication might involve transparent or embedded cultural stereotypes that contribute to their maintenance and transmission.” (Pollick 1999 as cited in Lehtonen 2005.)

The situation can work vice versa, as much as it can affect immigrants’ perspective of host culture, the threat still exists in reverse as well. According to Appel, Weber, & Kronberger (2015), when **stereotype threat** research is applied to the topic of immigration, one key challenge that is presented is the fact that many **immigrant groups**, but not all immigrant groups, are confronted with negative success stereotypes. The same study suggests examples such as, in many cases, even more favourable expectations are held for Asian immigrants (Shih et al., 1999; Cheryan and Bodenhausen, 2000; Shih et al., 2002 as cited in Appel et al. 2015).

Change is inevitable when people encounter other cultures since the environments in which they live are so drastically different from those in which they grew up. (Sulyman 2014). But it is also worth to refer to a cultural theory as **Ethnocentrism** that is the bias toward seeing things only through the lens of one's own culture. The theory that one's own racial, ethnic, or cultural group is the most significant or that certain features of that group's culture are better compared to other groups is an element of ethnocentrism. When people are ethnocentric, they often make false assumptions about the attitude of others based on their own cultural norms, values, and beliefs. (Worthy, et al. 2020.)

It is necessary to overcome certain cultural obstacles. It might be difficult for people of diverse cultural backgrounds to work together effectively. Different cultures bring with them different perspectives. Perhaps some are reserved, while others are more extroverted. Immigrants are frequently hesitant to make connections with locals because of cultural differences. (Hillgren, Peltola, Yilmaz, Jinia, & Koivula, 2021. 11-19)

### 2.3 Immigrants in Finland

Immigration is a relatively young phenomena in Finland (Koskela, 2014). According to Statistics Finland (2021), the number of immigrants residing in Finland has gradually increased over the last few years. Yet, despite the Finnish government's attempts to encourage integration and social participation, immigrants in Finland continue to confront several obstacles that impede their integration and success in the host community just like an immigrant in any other country. For instance, the disadvantaged situation of immigrants has been recorded not only with respect to career progression, employment prestige, durations of employment and unemployment, but additionally regarding earnings levels and continuous or short-term employment contracts (Andriessen et al., 2012; Brekke and Mastekaasa, 2008; Uhlendorff and Zimmermann, 2014 as cited by Ahmad, 2022).

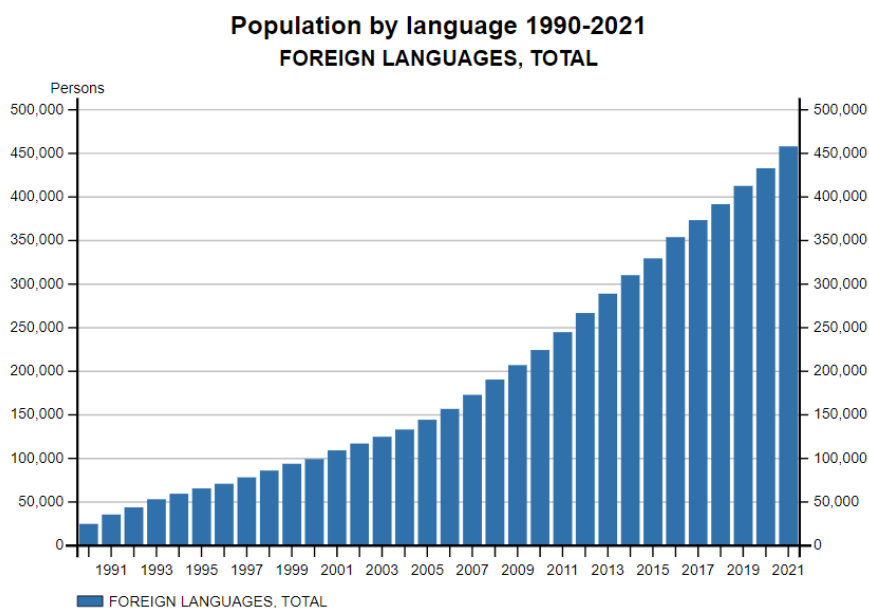


Figure 1 - Population by language 1990-2021 – Foreign language speakers in Finland (Statistic Finland 2021, CC BY-NC)

According to Nshom, et al (2022), they feel degraded in comparison to the Finns. Discriminatory reactions sum up the pain of being seen as inferior because of a lack of skills or schooling. Being treated like a second-class citizen by the government, as one responder put it: "It is no secret, and I have personally been stigmatized while applying for jobs or renting an apartment." But it is also worth to consider that according to Lehtonen 2005, there may be a self-perpetuating cycle between negative cultural stereotypes and xenophobia: hostility against outsiders gives rise to negative stereotyped attributions, which further justify and amplify hostility towards the target culture. Unconsciously applying the actions of one person in a group to all members of that group is one cause of stereotype generalization. If a Finn only ever interacts with one Bulgarian, he or she could generalize all Bulgarians as being just like that one. (Lehtonen 2005.) According to Hilton & Hippel (1996:250) cited by Lehtonen 2005, one isolated incident or interaction might lead to a generalization about a whole country and its people. Even if such a memory is long gone, it may still have a significant impact on how future interactions with people of that culture are viewed. According to Sherrif (2018), actual instances for prejudice can occur at some points, but as a result of her research based on the data obtained the majority of the problems immigrant workers encountered were associated with insufficient Finnish language skills, a lack of the relevant work experience, low motivation, cultural differences, and a lack of self-confidence. Misunderstandings at work could also cause a serious problem at times. During the conversation during her research phase that took place in the focus group, one of the members openly stated that he had misunderstood something at work.

On the other hand, another pain-neck for many immigrants is the challenge of finding employment in their new environment. According to Nshom et al. (2022), the percentage of unemployed immigrants is rather high. By the middle of 2019, there were 124,396 immigrants in Finland who were of working age and participated in the workforce throughout the nation. Among those immigrants,

23.7% (29,504) were jobless, while the overall unemployment rate for the Finnish economy was 6.2%. To mention just a few reasons that results in failure to land jobs as the researchers argued based on earlier studies, the **insufficient language proficiency, the unavailability of social networks**, and the Finnish **companies underestimate foreign job experience** are some of the obstacles that prevent immigrants from being recruited into the labour market (Heilbrunn, Kushnir, & Zeltzer-Zubida, 2010). According to Alho (2020) the methods used during the job search may be broken down into two distinct groups: 1) **The conventional methods (Formal)**, which is formally applying to a publicly publicized job opening. 2) **Unofficial methods (Informal)**, such as depending on one's social relationships. Unofficial methods or also known as informal way to get jobs, relies on **social ties**. To follow up the mentioned methods for landing a job it is worth to mention the results according to the report provided by the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment (2017) which reveals that, despite Finland's well-established structure of public and commercial recruitment agencies, companies most commonly use informal techniques of recruiting. In 2017, just 27% of respondents to a study meant to be representative of the Finnish population said they had found their current job via an open call (SITRA 2017 as cited by Alho 2020). This pre-industrial practice of informality in hiring has lasted into the contemporary era. Companies value 'word of mouth' recruiting because they feel it helps them save time and find qualified candidates via informal networks. Finding out about the 'hidden' job market expands a job seeker's pool of possible employment options. For the purposes of this article, "secret job market" refers to the market for employment that has not been openly publicized. (Granovetter 1995, cited by Alho 2020.)

It is worth to note that, the dissemination of knowledge about publicly declared positions may be facilitated by weak relationships; normally, a job seeker does not have complete information about every openly listed opportunity that s/he may fill (Granovetter 1995, as cited by Alho 2020).

It is also worth to mention, on the employment market in Finland, an immigrant jobseeker who has only just arrived in the country and a Finnish job seeker are not on same footing. The average job seeker in Finland has a better education, and they also have the benefit of being familiar with the culture as well as the key conventions and regulations that are involved in the working life. If an immigrant and a native Finn are equally qualified in terms of their job experience and talents, a hiring manager will almost certainly choose to hire the native Finn. The author does not suggest that racism or a fear of dealing with immigrants is always to blame in these situations. Because the organization is already familiar with the work ethic of the Finnish employee and understands what kind of performance to anticipate from them, choosing a native is often the route of least resistance and complexity. They were not able to promise the same from the immigrant since the immigrant's history is not entirely clear, and there is also the likelihood that there will be significant cultural differences related to the immigrant's place of origin. (Siivonen, 2015)

## 2.4 Integration in Finland

According to Kunwar (2020), integration services in Finland are structured around three primary processes, which are the performing of an initial assessment, the setting up of an integration plan, and the implementation of integration training. Evaluation of the immigrant's prior education, training, and job experience are some of the components of the procedure that are taken into

consideration. In most cases, a strategy for integration for the newly arrived immigrant is drafted once the preliminary evaluation has been completed. This integration plan is a mutual agreement on integration training that includes, among other things, language courses, training to enhance ability in the labour market, and further education to improve newcomers' social, cultural, and life management abilities in Finnish society.

According to the findings, the variations in the levels of language integration achieved by immigrants may be attributed to several different contributing variables. Those who have lived in Finland for a longer period, are naturalized Finnish citizens, are of a more advanced age, immigrated for reasons related to family, and speak Finnish fluently are more linguistically integrated into Finnish culture. (Kunwar, 2020)

According to Bakar (2020), the purpose of Finland's integration policy is to provide newcomers all the information and guidance they need to settle in successfully. Those advancements, however, have been sabotaged by inclusion and financial conditions. Because of the country's current economic situation, the reform program has been impacted by a wave of newcomers.

### 3 RESEARCH ON SUCCESSFULLY INTEGRATED IMMIGRANTS IN FINLAND

Considering the situation in Finland and previous studies as provided in the last section, the participants in those studies were mainly unsatisfied immigrants in Finland, but in order to get a better and bigger picture on the situation and find out what are the key elements to successfully integrate in Finland, it is absolutely necessary to study those who have successfully integrated and are satisfied of their immigration journey, and also find the key elements that led them to this stage.

#### 3.1 Research method

This research, which takes a qualitative approach, investigates the characteristics that are most crucial for immigrants in Finland to feel as if they belong and are at home in their new country. Because of the need of this study to conduct an in-depth assessment of the experiences and perspectives of immigrants, qualitative research is the technique of choice. The research is based on the theoretical framework of social integration, which lays a focus on the roles that one's social network, one's command of one's language, and one's familiarity with one's host culture have in the effectiveness of integration attempts. The research is informed by the theoretical framework of social integration.

The research was carried out with the intention of answering relevant questions for those who are now residing in Finland or who are making plans to migrate to the nation in the not-too-distant future, so that they may be aware of the most significant particulars for a smooth transition. The author's goal was to learn from successful immigrants in Finland by conducting in-depth interviews with them in order to identify the most pressing problems immigrants face and to provide solutions to those problems with the help of the interviewees who have already overcome those problems successfully, are living in Finland, and are satisfied with their lives in that nation. There were a number of people who were interviewed throughout the process; there are ten primary individuals who were all asked the same questions. However, during the process of conducting this research, the author attempted to get the angle from a variety of different perspectives and included asking questions of locals and some officials, which will later be brought on as comments on situations when the results of the research are presented.

#### 3.2 Sampling

Interviews with the participants were conducted using purposive sampling for this research. Participants had to meet the inclusion requirements, which stated that they had to be immigrants who had been living in Finland for at least two years and had reached a certain degree of social integration in order to take part. Interviews were conducted with all ten participants in the research, five of whom were female and five of whom were male. Participants varied in age from 25 to 55 years old and came from a wide variety of racial, ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds.

Table 1- Participants' information

Participant's No.	Gender	Basis of stay	Years of stay	Immigrated from Outside or inside of EU
P1	Woman	Family ties	8	Outside
P2	Man	Student(first), Work (after finishing studies)	8	Outside
P3	Woman	Studies(first), working (after finishing studies)	11	Outside
P4	Man	Family ties	5	Outside
P5	Man	Family ties	6	Inside
P6	Woman	Work	15	Inside
P7	Woman	Student(first), working (after finishing studies)	14	Outside
P8	Man	Studying (first), work (after finishing studies)	+20	inside
P9	Woman	Student	4	Outside
P10	Man	Student (first), work (after finishing studies)	+20	outside

### 3.3 Data collection

the author gives an in-depth overview of the technique used to gather data for the research in this section. The approach that was used was known as the semi-structured interview. This is a qualitative research method that enables the interviewer to dive deeply into the experiences and points of view of the participants by asking follow-up questions and open-ended inquiries. The participants were questioned about their past experiences with social integration, and they were asked to elaborate on the difficulties they had to overcome and the elements that led to their overall success.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that all of the interviews were done in English, despite the fact that this language was not the participant's native language. This complication has to be taken into account since it has the potential to have an effect on the data-gathering process.

As was previously said, the major goal of the author was to get an understanding of the many viewpoints and frames of mind surrounding the integration journey of immigrants in Finland and to record the narratives of each participant. This underlines the authors' interest in examining the subjective experiences of the participants and acquiring a more comprehensive knowledge of the complex social, cultural, and psychological aspects impacting the integration process for immigrants in Finland. The author is interested in studying the subjective experiences of the participants and gaining a deeper understanding of these elements. The participants' experiences and viewpoints were discussed in a more open and honest manner as a result of the off-the-record interviews, which played an important part in this research by offering a more laid-back and casual setting in which to conduct the interviews.

Overall, the use of semi-structured and off-the-record interviews allowed the author to collect a plethora of rich and comprehensive data that could be analysed to give useful insights into the experiences of immigrants in Finland. This was made possible by the authors' decision to apply these interview methods.

### 3.4 Data analysis

The questions that were asked from the interviewees were as:

- 1) What was the most challenging experience for you as an immigrant in Finland?
- 2) How did you overcome the challenge?
- 3) How stereotypes affected your journey?
- 4) How the situation was back then when you first immigrated comparing to nowadays for immigrants?

While the author was interviewing them, they were asked about the most significant challenges they had experienced, how they had overcome those challenges, how stereotypical views of immigrants had influenced them, and how the situation for immigrants in Finland had improved in comparison to when they first arrived in the country.

Since the vast majority of previous studies had been based on unhappy or failed immigrants, one of the primary challenges that the author of the thesis faced was to interview immigrants who had been successful in their new countries and learn about their experiences. As a result, most participants who were interviewed may be categorized as successful on the basis of their position and the degree to which they are content with their level of integration in the nation.

There are several primary focus areas that the author is excited to decode from the interviewees' responses, such as the influence of **social networks**, the influence of **language proficiency**, the influence of local **cultural understandings**, and the influence of other immigrants' narratives on other immigrants. The author is looking forward to decoding the interviewees' responses.

## 4 RESULTS OF RESEARCH

Throughout the interviews, one of the bold findings according to respondents were the positive change of situation for immigrants. Consequently, the increase in support for immigrants was the main mentioned point. For instance, P10 had been living in Finland for more than 2 decades in Finland, and he stated that “around 20 years ago, I had sent over 200 applications for landing an internship, but I had failed to gain the desired internship. But currently, I am observing that my students at university have the option to choose among 2 or 3 different internship opportunities according to their career development desire.” The fact that opportunities has grown for immigrants with consideration of number of immigrants also rose dramatically from 20 years ago, it supports the assumption, that recent immigrants might experience a much easier path for their integration process in comparison with those who had arrived in the country several years before them.

P7 discussed the same experience as she mentioned that “14 years ago there were not similar projects for integration of immigrants, or such supports as they exist nowadays, therefore, we had to start from the bottom, but at the moment, situation for the students who move to Finland is better in a way that they already have several places to rely on to seek help if needed.” During the interviews, the author had the opportunity to also get some words from governmental officials who mentioned the legislations in the governmental level are all in favour of immigrants, such as the recent immigration law which resulted in the increase of working hours for international students and also the time of resident permit application processing time have reduced.

There was another interesting finding which author realised throughout the interviews; the challenges for successful immigrants and unsuccessful (unsatisfied) immigrants are quite the same, since the interviewees also mentioned the same struggles that had been mentioned in earlier studies from unsatisfied immigrants, but what differs the two groups’ outcome lay in the approach toward the challenge and their word choice for describing them. Or in better words, a different choice of attitude and mindset distinguished them, which led them to fit in successfully in their new environment.

### 4.1 Challenges

Nearly all the interviewees mentioned the **Finnish language**, the **lack of social networks** as well as **lack of cultural understanding** as the main barriers. P1 very well addressed the issue by bringing up an interesting question as “Those who are students, they have the opportunity, but those who come as a spouse, how can they really make friends with Finns in Finland?” P1 intended to raise awareness about this challenge that relates to the fact that, different groups of immigrants face different challenges. For instance, international students are already part of a community, but those with family ties lack the same community membership and that results in failure of building effective network of friends or connections.

Since another main challenge is regarding lack of cultural understanding, one of the disadvantages for immigrants are the negative impact of stereotypes on their integration journey. When asking



about the stereotypes, P2 brought up a valid point which his initial mindset about the Finnish culture and environment was formed based on the narrative of other immigrants that he met in Finland. He discussed the matter as "at first it was like if you cannot speak Finnish, you are finished. That was the mindset we had. Of course, it was very difficult because some of the jobs required fluency in Finnish, so we thought without having that kind of ability to speak Finnish, the chances of landing jobs are equal to zero." As it is illustrated, the uncertainties for those who had integrated well in the early days are quite similar with any other immigrant.

The challenges for immigrants in Finland are mostly caused by lack of knowledge, it can be either the cultural knowledge, or systematic knowledge of the host country, as P3 shared one of her challenges were due to lack of understanding of how the system works "as a foreigner, when you enter the Finnish work culture, there are so many things that you are just not aware of and that you have to learn just along the way. And, for example, I did not know that there was such a huge difference between working in public organisations and working in private organisations".

As one of the interviewees mentioned "the elements that resembles the feeling of trust for the employer whose about to decide whether to hire you or not, can be defined as who had recommended you, or if you had previous employers in Finland whom he/she can be referred to. Hence, the employer is able to have an assurance of how you are in a workplace, and etc. because, as a foreigner, you do not share the same cultural values, therefore, it is a concern for the employer that who am I hiring? Can I trust that he will get the job done?" regarding this statement, the author also obtained the similar experiences from the most majority of the participants, that after completing either a blue-collar job, or an internship in Finland, they were able to mention at least one previous Finnish employer in their CVs which may resulted in improving their chances, since they were able to include them as references. It is assumed that "trust" plays a major role in Finnish working culture and is at the core of Finnish cultural value, therefore the hiring employer seeks to identify a reliable source among the applicant's previous experiences to be able to satisfy this specific cultural value.

To explore furthermore on the topic of challenges, there is a confusion on how to find this network of connection when we do not speak the native language, therefore, it is no surprise that, finding the network of people and learning the language, were among the top mentioned challenges. But interesting responds toward these challenges from the interviewees was truly surprising for the author. For instance, P5 mentioned in the interview: "the process started in the class when we were learning the basics of the language. But as we were learning, most of the classmates realised that when you go to the street to speak with people, you hear a totally different language in comparison with what we are learning. So, we started to develop our language through our discussions, through people you do not know or through our neighbours, when we ask them to speak Finnish with us, so, they even tried to listen to us and correct our speech. And then by the time you get used to use words that you have studied. And in the work, it was difficult in the beginning because in each job there are some terms related to the job you have to always remember in Finnish in every occupation. like different fields and different jobs has had its own vocabulary and terms. So, in the beginning it is difficult to learn but by the time when we get used to the vocabulary, and learn the work culture, it became naturally and fluently." It was fascinating to the author to hear about the fact

that he was able to make connections with his Finnish neighbour and even practice with them. If P5 wanted to rely on stereotypes, he would definitely have the assumption that Finns hate their neighbours, and it is impossible to make any kind of relationship with them.

Speaking of the effect of stereotypes, another point to raise would be the author's observation on the social media and the posts from immigrants in Finland, the one issue out there is regarding the stereotypes that are being shared. Significant amount of such sharing regarding their negative experiences has led to discouragements for other immigrants, and P6 had an amazing story which can be relevant to this topic. A woman who had not much of Finnish fluency but was keen on to work in Finland as an English teacher, she applied from her own country to different schools and fought hard to get a job at one school in Finland. She finally landed the job and put it this way as the reason of fighting hard as "well, just simply because I thought that, yeah, that's possible." It is worth to mention, P6 was able to do such process around 15 years ago when the current technologies and tools were not available, the Finnish society was not as welcoming as today, but the author assumes that her mindset as she described in her words, opened the doors for them. Unfortunately, the current situation suggests that there is a bigger challenge for the immigrants and that is "toxic negativity" among international community members which is, the negative narratives caused by generalisation, and they mostly are relying and building on top of the stereotypes.

The mentioned challenges will be explored furthermore in the next sub-chapters in more depth, and among them, the impact of personal narratives or as what the author tends to call it "toxic negativity", is quite bold.

## 4.2 Social networks

Regarding this obstacle, the interviewees each pursued a path that was relatively distinct from one another, but their "mindset" remained quite similar across the road through their integration path or process. They were not searching for justifications to blame either the members of the society or the government for their failures. They refused to seek excuses to explain the reason of their own failures. Instead, they accepted their vulnerabilities and then built upon them. In accordance with what P7 states, "there are a few things that I learned about myself at a very early stage, one of which was coming to terms with your lacking. Language was undoubtedly one of the things that I lacked; this was obviously missing in me. And moreover, the awareness of cultural practices. Because there was a significant gap between them. Therefore, I am getting a better understanding of it and how the work culture operates here. Being a part of the system was the only way for me to acquire that knowledge. Therefore, the only way to enter the system is to get an employment. I had to force myself into the labour market and make sure that I always remain there. People that I met 14 years ago still remember me now. They are still in touch with me. It did not matter if it was paid or unpaid internship, since it was helpful for me and allowed me to enter the system."

Internships are like doors that open up to opportunities to learn about the culture of the workplace in a new environment, meeting new people, and building professional networks. P7's story suggests that she worked hard during her studies, in a variety of internships, and even doing blue-collar jobs. As a result, after she finished her studies, she was already known, had access to a wide variety of

network of connections who were aware of her qualities and consequently, she was able to increase her chances of landing proper jobs in both formal and informal methods of getting employment. The author compared her activities with other international students, and it was shocking that it seems there is a mindset held by the vast majority of students which, they shall first study, obtain their respective degrees and then pursue working opportunities right after their graduation. This simple example is the proof of claiming that both groups possess similar challenges in the begging, but their attitude and actions are different, which are predictors of being successful or unsuccessful.

Networking played a significant role in P9's journey, as seen by her statement that "I had Finnish co-workers, then they turned into friends. Even I was given a recommendation for another employment by one of my colleagues in Finland. You may not think so, but I would say that it was one of the most significant moments for me when I realized that they like me, they trust me, and they even support me. I would say that it was one of the most meaningful moments for me when I realized such thing." The impact of social networking on immigrants' paths to successfully integrate is quite eye opening for the author that how can one element change the direction of one's integration journey and affect how the immigrants feel.

P1 shared some helpful insights on her own strategy for overcoming this barrier, including the following: "my top three is that you become a volunteer immediately, because when you volunteer, you come in from all different nationalities, locals, and internationals alike. The second thing is that you find something like, in school also, where you can become, you build yourself communities in the school or in the Facebook communities; this, once again, enables you to get your interests out there, and then to really write about it on LinkedIn, on Facebook, Instagram; this is known as storytelling. People will also discover you there, and they will be able to take note of you." The author came to the realization that if unpaid internships are the most effective form of integration for foreign students, then volunteering must be the most effective form of integration for all types of immigrants. As a matter of fact, P9 was able to get a recommendation for her present employment via the network of connection that was built while working as a volunteer for an organization. In addition, we need to take into consideration the fact that she was working for free as a volunteer even though she was a Phd student at that time, since, it is generally believed that, students of Phd do not believe in any unpaid work due to their high education, but P9 was willing to work as a volunteer, as she understood the importance of making social networking.

P2 also shared his path of how networking works in Finland as "You start from career events organized by your school - or even events organized by the industry and then events specifically organized by companies of your interests. Involve yourself, go there, try to involve yourself in that. Try to kind of make friends, ask questions and so on, and get visibility. Then try to involve yourself in sports and activities or volunteering activities because through these events there might be people, who are already working in companies or occupying good positions. So, the moment you are there, you can use that to build a relationship with them. And you must know that networking is not about I want a job. It should not be the case. The mindset in networking is that you must create a psychological concept in that you create a value for someone. Then the person will feel he owes you something in the future. So do not go with the mindset that I need a job. No, networking can take you

seven months to build a relationship with someone. you go there, try to be kind, help and so on. They see your character, or I mean those soft skills are the game changers. It is not about your technicality or technical skills. But the soft skills matter to employers now more than ever - because an employer can train you for the hard skills, but your soft skills is only dependent upon you. So do not go asking for a job, try to be kind, involve yourself in voluntary activities and all of that. I mean courses that has some benefits and at the end I believe you meet the right people and then doors will open." To observe an immigrant with such mindset, whom had integrated well in the country after residing for almost a decade, has valuable insights to offer while describing how he sees net-working and how it should be seen.

#### 4.3 Language proficiency

The Language journey of the interviewees were mostly through the governmental integration processes that provided them the Finnish language courses, and after acquiring the basic level, it was only a matter of time and how much they were willing to put themselves into situations until they speak the local language fluently. The author could not recognize the language to be the bold barrier for these participants as it is for other immigrants, because their experiences were different, as an example P2 mentioned that: "we thought without having that kind of ability to speak Finnish to some appreciable extent you would not be considered in the labour market. But I realized that it was not only the case. You just need to find the right employer who will maybe consider someone, who will then consider you as an international to hire you and then looking at, I mean getting close to the people who are already in the roles that you want to get to. And I mean getting more information from them will at least help you to update your skill set to be able to make yourself available." And also, P4 mentioned his experience as: "Maybe sometimes the fear or the lack of knowledge makes you stay in the same place and not just looking for an opportunity. So much self-doubt that people have. And they are normal because you face these kinds of challenges many times. But that does not mean that you will find the same challenges everywhere. One of the things I usually say is, maybe some of the best jobs I have got in Finland, I had spoken my own language in those jobs. I do not even need Finnish for those, and maybe in the beginning I thought oh no, that would be impossible, to have any kind of a job in my own language."

P4 had been in Finnish classes, had the knowledge of Finnish language already but also was able to find jobs in his own native language and sometimes build bridge between his own nation to Finland due to the jobs he had. The bottom line of the author's observation is that language is a barrier for many immigrants but apparently, it is not the main barrier and the most majority of barriers comes from cultural understanding.

#### 4.4 Cultural understanding

Cultural understanding is the ultimate key for a successful integration in Finland, once a person gets to learn the cultural values, norms and the reasons behind how Finns behave, they will suffer less and will be able to get integrated more smoothly. It can be both working culture and/or culture in general.

P8 described the culture of his workplace as follows: "When we talk about my home country, we talk about a lot of discussing and agreeing in beforehand, that everybody is sort of say, on the same train, before we start to do anything. This shows how important it is to have a cultural understanding not only for integration but also for being able to function effectively in the workplace." It is obvious for the author that if an employer is not going to micromanage his or her employee, there must be a high level of confidence on that individual's skills, abilities, and opportunities. As was mentioned earlier in this section, trust was a big part of cultural value, and when we examine the working culture, we can clearly find the reason of why trust is so much valued. P3 had a similar experience in Finland, and she shared her insight by saying, "in Finland, you work very independently, and that you are almost encouraged to be super independent with the work that you do. No fingers in the sense of micromanaging, but they will ask for results. Therefore, the employer places their faith in the worker and declares, that this is the result I want. Make it happen. And if you have ideas for how things might be improved, new things that could be done, new initiatives, or how the business could expand, let us know." This sharing of P3 proves that a foreigner must have the understanding of such cultural value, since this trait is not communicated verbally, since the Finnish employee is aware of the fact that he/she is expected to create their own tasks. In this retrospect, an immigrant without this specific cultural value, most probably fail to meet the expected requirements due to lack of either communication regarding values or lack of immigrants' cultural knowledge. This simple example, is a most likely scenario to happen as observed during the researching by the author, and the negative experiences from such scenarios from both sides leads to lack of trust from Finns, and negative experiences to be narrated from the immigrants.

One of the participants mentioned his observations on "toxic negativity" among international talents during the integration courses which was mostly based on stereotypes, and that type of discussions were impacting other immigrants quite negatively as it was an absolute discouragement for immigrants that led them to close the doors of opportunities to themselves, before they even arrive. The discouragement caused the most majority of that class members to lose the motivation to learn and get integrated. The stereotypes about Finns that generalize them is actually quite broad, as P1 mentioned in the interview: "we still have the stereotypes, what a Finn should look like in 2022 or, you know, whatever, we are still having the same conversation, what is the Finnishness, how can we meet with Finland more on a way that we can also find our sense of belonging." As the problem P1 had been that the Finns would not switch to English at workplace even though her Finnish skills were not yet fluent, but the stereotype suggested that Finns switch to English immediately as soon as they realize one's Finnish language is not fluent.

Another stereotype as mentioned earlier that P5 could make friends with his neighbours in Finland and ignored what stereotypes suggested about how Finns feel about their neighbours. He said as follow "I have made friends with my neighbours. This is a stereotype, not a truth. You can make friends even with your neighbours. We cannot journalise everything from all the people so everyone should tell their own story. And yeah, I have made good friends with my neighbours and now at the moment even with my colleagues at work. We are like kind of friends. You are already speaking Finnish even though, the official language in my work is Finnish, because none of them speak English, so most of the time we speak Finnish. That is how we do our daily tasks at work. No English at all at

work.” Just like the P5 who made the networks due to not relying on stereotypes or shared negative experiences. Surprisingly the P9 also had the similar mindset, as I asked her about stereotype regarding making Finnish friends and how hard it might be, and the reply was as” Well, I think the way that you think, is what is going to happen to you. From the first days, I tried not to think in a negative way. So, I went outside, and I was telling myself that I need Finnish friends. Now, I can say that one of my closest friends here is Finnish now. And then, of course, the similar thing happened at work.”

The common mindset that is being observed here is that it seems like as if the participants closed their eyes to cultural generalization and decided to change the narratives by themselves, trying to get into the Finnish circles and learn the cultural values from Finns themselves instead of relying what others suggest about the situation in Finland. During the interviews I did not hear any words regarding xenophobia from the participants which seemed quite odd considering the previous studies that majority of other immigrants used the term as the reason of their unsuccessful or negative experience, that when added with the need of language fluency, then it would be the big barrier according to them that the author will discuss furthermore in the conclusion. In addition, the importance of networking lies in Finnish culture.

Cultural understanding has a significant role in the process of integration for immigrants, since culture shock is a psychological consequence of not knowing the culture, and then what is normal to one culture is undermining on daily basis, without fully being aware of why things that are normal in one culture, is considered unnormal in the new place where they immigrated to. The author came to such conclusion when hearing surprising story from P3 as during the interview she mentioned that she had never face culture shock in Finland, hence the author was curious for the reason, therefore she answered as “I would say that I did not face any culture shock, but it is because I was expecting the culture shock. I think that one of the biggest differences for me was that I came here as an exchange student. And so, the first thing that we had after arriving to Finland was a long week of preparation camp where we had Finnish people who were exchange student abroad, and they basically prepared us for our life here in Finland.” Being prepared for what is norm, how is it to live in this country and then being able to know how the system works helps a lot and can avoid the spread of “toxic negativity” among internationals since they are aware of what is ahead and what works for them and what does not. It is also quite eye opening that every single of interviewee was feeling satisfied since they knew the culture and they could have adopt naturally.

## 5 CONCLUSION

As the aim of the research was to find the major challenges that immigrants face and in what ways do the personal narratives of immigrants have an effect on the integration processes that they experience, the findings of this thesis was able to observe that, the challenges were no different from those that were mentioned in earlier studies except for “the discrimination toward immigrants” since the author failed to find any evidence of racism to be a major a barrier for the participants of this thesis research and as a matter of fact, it was not boldly mentioned by the interviewees, but other barriers were clearly mentioned with stating their way of overcoming them. According to Lehtonen (2005), “xenophobia and negative cultural stereotypes can build on one another and give lead to an endless cycle. Xenophobia gives birth to negative stereotypical beliefs, which, in turn, legitimize and increase unfavourable attitudes toward the cultural groups that are being stereotyped.” Even though these negative narratives exist among internationals, those who get integrated successfully can close their ears to these generalised and simplified narratives and instead focus on finding solutions for the most important elements that can act as barrier if an immigrant avoid taking the right actions.

In the following, the key findings resulted from this thesis will be concluded.

### 5.1 The key to successful integration

Acquiring 1) **Social networks**, 2) **learning the local language**, and 3) **developing a satisfactory knowledge of the cultural norms and expectations of Finnish society** are the three most significant aspects of effectively integrating in Finland.

The individuals who took part in this study did not remain isolated within their respective international communities but rather made an effort to integrate themselves into different social communities in Finland. According to earlier research by Hillgren et al. (2021), Immigrants have several challenges while building networks, including linguistic obstacles; Language learning takes time; When immigrants cannot speak the same language to build a network, social engagement and accessibility may be limited. But these individuals who participated in this research did so in a variety of ways, including engaging in volunteer work or internships, utilizing social media tools and platforms, or even attempting to form friendships with members of their immediate community, place of employment, or educational institution. They were able to increase their prospects by leaving the state of comfort zone they were in, which resulted in being recommended for career opportunities or learning the culture and the language to a greater level.

This is important to point out that through this thesis, the author is confident that the cultural knowledge is the most important element, and then acquiring the network of connections from Finnish and international communities, and the language proficiency, which is always shown as the bold-est barrier, is actually the least of concern for integration.

## 5.2 The role of personal narratives on immigrants

During the interviews, P2 shared his viewpoint on how networking should be done in Finland based on his experience, and it has worked very well for him, as it is in the result section. He even said that from the time you start networking up until an opportunity is created for you, it might take approximately seven months, but it will work eventually. It is important to point out that when an international student stays in his or her international community, only focuses on his or her studies, and tends to start looking for job just after graduation, it is crystal clear that they did not do the groundwork during the time that they were students, and unfortunately, there are less chances to land the job opportunity right away. This is something that should be pointed out because it is important.

What happens next is that these negative narratives act as discouragement for other immigrants. The previous studies somehow ignored the facts that were mentioned earlier in previous chapters of this thesis from the report by the Ministry of Employment and economic affairs (2017), that the majority of jobs are hidden (approximately 80% of the jobs), and the understanding of the culture holds up the importance of networking due to the previously mentioned reason which is "trust," and these are all facts that support the formal method of acquiring employment is not sufficient. Moreover, these facts all support the fact that the informal method of acquiring employment is not sufficient. In the earlier studies, the author had conducted his research based on a number of hypotheses; one of the hypotheses that was relevant to this paper was as follows: "Second-generation immigrants are confronted with significant unfair obstacles when applying for open employment, even though they are just as competent as the average local applicant." (Ahmad 2020) In the very same introduction of the hypothesis, it was stated that "there is a very substantial correlation between a candidate's name and the likelihood of hearing back from a hiring manager"; Therefore, this kind of research brings up the conclusions that results in generalizing for the existence of xenophobia in the country by not including other factors that are applicable to the same issue. The outcome of this thesis implies that the difference between those who successfully integrated and those who did not is the influence of discouragement of such stereotypes on their attitude, which in turn altered their motivations. Those who succeeded in integrating were able to see themselves as part of the larger community, while those who did not did not have this opportunity. It is worth to mention that as already provided in the first chapter of this thesis, Immigrants in most cases faces discrimination from conservative members of the society, hence, it is important to remember that not the whole society is a member of the conservatives, but it is indeed generalized through personal narratives. Also, it is worth to mention that people have a tendency to have mixed emotions about their co-workers when they do not comprehend the language and culture of their place of employment. (Sherrif, 2018) This mixed emotions might results in narrating a wrong conclusion based on how one feels, which in many cases, are not necessary the truth as it was observed in the findings that, P9 did not even thought how her colleagues see her, and she was not expecting to be recommended by them to other employers, but it happened.



### 5.3 The impact of learning the culture

Cultural knowledge is crucial in many different ways, including not only learning the significance of networking but also being able to feel like you belong in the society that you happen to be in as well as being able to integrate into it. Effective networking requires two-way communication in which each party gains insight into the perspective of one another cultural beliefs and norms (Hillgren, et al. 2021). Also, according to the findings of this thesis study, the participants said that the expectations of immigrants are entirely centred based on their own culture. P7 stated that she had a feeling of lacking since going from one culture to another, and she began to learn and adapt to the host's culture. It is suggested that Finns are reserved by surface, whereas in other cultures it may be normal to have a conversation with a stranger while commuting to work by public transport. However, in Finland, it is not that common to start a conversation in the same situation; as a result, one's perception of "feeling unwelcomed" may be the result of their own cultural beliefs and norms in comparison with the local culture of where they are. Throughout the course of reading prior research, the author was curious about whether or not the activities that individuals who were dissatisfied engaged in during their years of residence in Finland were also explored? Since this is the most significant consideration to take into account, one must ask whether or not they attempted to create effective networks? whether or not they really understood the culture? or whether or not they remained inside their own foreign communities by maintaining excuses such as "it is impossible to enter Finnish circles" and so on? And this is precisely the reason why the author attempted to not only discover the hurdles that the immigrants who successfully integrated into Finnish society faced, but also understand how these individuals overcame the challenges they faced.

### 5.4 Summary

In order to draw a conclusion from the findings of this thesis, it is essential to highlight the observations that the participants were able to accept that they are the ones who immigrated to a new place, and that it is their journey and responsibility to find the right path rather than solely relying on the Finnish government or Finnish society to assist them, accept, and/or appreciate them. This was the case even though the participants' paths were very different from one another, but they all possessed a similar mindset. The path to integration is, of course, a two-way street; however, the focus of unsatisfied immigrants is primarily on conservative members of Finnish society and how they behave toward immigrants. In most cases, we are observing that the rest of the Finnish society members who embrace the immigrants are ignored in the conclusions and narratives of these unsatisfied immigrants. Another discovery was made despite their worldview, and that was the extent to which they understood the culture and values of Finland. The key to effectively integrating in Finland is to understand the cultural values both in general and in workplaces, and the author also discovered that cultural values range from one region to another in Finland. The key to successfully integrating in Finland is to learn the cultural values both in general and in workplaces. Due to the fact that the participants came from all parts of Finland, they were exposed to and had personal experience with a variety of different kinds of behaviours in the same setting. In the region of North Savo, for instance, Finns tend to get right to the point when they begin work meetings and to steer clear of small chat, but in Lapland, they are more likely to begin with a cup of coffee and some light conversation before getting down to business. Therefore, generalizations about Finnish culture tend

to be oversimplified, and such narratives and generalizations have a significant influence in determining how motivated immigrants are to pursue their goals, and in most instances, they have a negative impact on how they think. The results of this research showed that Finland is rapidly improving in integrating international talents in Finland by providing numerous projects and programs for this regard as well as many governmental legislations in favor of immigrants in Finland.

## 6 DISCUSSION

Due to a lack of time and in order to be able to manage the thesis writing, the thesis had a restriction in the sense that there were not enough participants present to be able to explore their travels and analyse their responses to the typical obstacles that immigrants face in Finland. This was a limitation of the thesis.

The study proves to be beneficial when analysing and differentiating the relationship between actual hurdles and stereotyped barriers for a successful integration in Finland as an immigrant. Immigrants may utilize the research to learn why and how certain immigrants are more successful in contrast to others, as well as what the most important factors are that they should take into mind for each challenge that they come across.

The author tried to approach this research from the point of view of satisfied immigrants. He also took into consideration the findings of earlier studies, which showed that immigrants who participated in those studies were most often among the underachieved or unsatisfied immigrants in Finland. The author held the belief that immigrants in Finland keep asking the government and Finnish society to take care of them, but that there must be something missing from the immigrants' sides as well.

As a result, we would have the ability to observe both sides of the coin and also comprehend the route that the immigrants who were happy with their integration process had selected. The author suggests that future research should focus on dissatisfied immigrants once again but should also investigate the pathways they took and the strategies they used to overcome the obstacles they encountered along the way. After that, it would be feasible to conduct an accurate comparison between the routes taken by immigrants who have successfully integrated into Finnish society and those who have not been successful in doing so in Finland.

Throughout the thesis, the focus was on the international talents lacking and how would they be able to integrate better and smoother by taking the successful integrated immigrants' paths into consideration and trying to fit in easier in Finland. But as mentioned several times throughout this thesis, this is a two-way route and Finnish government has a significant role in this process. As observed throughout the research for integration process of immigrants, there are language courses that is supported by government, but there is something wrong with the system of integration in Finland, which is the fact that, it is "language oriented" but integration is not through language acquisition, but through cultural acquisition since all of the interviewees were benefiting from the fact that they could learn the culture and were able to fit in, as not all of them were fluent in Finnish but their Finnish was either satisfying or even in basic levels that would only be able to work with their language knowledge, but what made them stand out was their cultural understanding as well as their full knowledge of how the system works in Finland. There is a question that can be raised here, would Finnish employers prefer "language proficiency" or "cultural fluency"?

Therefore, one suggestion would be for the governments to shift the focus from language to cultural acquisition where the immigrants would understand the reason behind Finnish beliefs, norms, know-how and the Finnish system, work-cultures, and customs and then beside it all, the language can be

learned little by little. This is a potential pilot idea to be taken into consideration for Immigrants integration processes and clearing the confusion for newcomers. To support such suggestion the author would like to refer to Lindström (2016) findings cited by Bakar (2020) as, through utilizing their skills, immigrants can "reinforce two-way integration process" through volunteer work. When immigrants and natives work together on initiatives for mutual benefit, both groups benefit from the exchange of concepts and talents. But consider this process of a complete integration course rather than a volunteer work for an immigrant where they would be able to learn the culture, belief, norms and also the language.

Throughout the whole of the study procedure, the researcher adhered to ethical rules, making certain that the participants' rights were honoured and that their privacy was safeguarded. Before beginning the interviews informed permission was sought from each of the participants in the study. It was made clear to the participants that they might quit the research project at any moment without incurring any penalties. The identity of the participants was concealed, and anonymous identities were given to each of them so that they could maintain their anonymity. The research did not contain any inquiries or discussions that would have resulted in psychological distress for the participants in the study.

In order to guarantee the data acquired were accurate and trustworthy, the researcher used a number of different methods. To begin, a predetermined list of questions was used to guide the conversation throughout the semi-structured interviews. The questions were examined in a test situation to confirm that they were easy to understand and that they produced the answers that were desired. In the second step of the process, the researcher took extensive notes during each interview. These notes were then transcribed and checked to ensure that they were accurate. In conclusion, the researcher carried out an exhaustive coding and analysis procedure to guarantee the reliability of the data. The coding procedure was validated by the employment of two separate coders, and any disagreements were settled via discussion up until a decision was made that was accepted by all parties.

In conclusion, the fact that this research considered ethical concerns and used techniques to achieve dependability helped to ensure that the data obtained was dependable and accurate. Throughout the whole of the study procedure, the researcher adhered to ethical rules, making certain that the participants' rights were honoured and that their privacy was safeguarded. By adopting a uniform set of questions, taking careful notes, and applying a rigorous coding and analysis procedure, the dependability of the data that was obtained was assured.

This is crucial to note that, due to the author's employment over the past two years has been relevant to the subject of immigrant integration in Finland, one of the most challenging issues was to keep the personal observations and views to one side and only reflect on what has been shared from the interviewees in comparison with earlier studies regarding the difficulties faced by immigrants. During the process of writing the thesis, the author also had a difficult time maintaining an appropriate equilibrium between the time he spent processing his own views and researching for the literature review. As a result, the thesis supervisor played a vital role by supplying helpful direction

in such a manner that each section of the thesis would be critical to a framework that would enable the thesis to have a substantial flow. These goals were accomplished by offering significant counsel.

## REFERENCES

- Ahmad, Akhlaq. 2020. "Do Equal Qualifications Yield Equal Rewards for Immigrants in the Labour Market?" *Work, Employment and Society* 34 (5). SAGE Publications: 826–843. doi:10.1177/0950017020919670. Accessed 3.6.2020
- Alho, Rolle (2020) "'You Need to Know Someone Who Knows Someone": International Students' Job Search Experiences', *Nordic Journal of Working Life Studies* [Preprint]. Available at: <https://doi.org/10.18291/njwls.v10i2.120817>.
- Appel Markus, Weber Silvana, & Kronberger Nicole. 2015. The influence of stereotype threat on immigrants: review and meta-analysis. *Frontiers in psychology*, 6, 900. Doi: <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2015.00900>
- Areen A. Sulyman. 2014. Theories of Identity Formation among Immigrants: Examples from People with an Iraqi Kurdish Background in Sweden. Master thesis. Department of Culture and Communication. Linköping University. Faculty of Arts and Sciences. DiVA, id: diva2:754785. Accessed 14.10.2014
- Bakar Bakar. 2020. The impact of volunteering on migrants integration in Finland. Bachelor Thesis. Degree Programme in Social Services. Laurea University of Applied Sciences. Doi: <http://www.theseus.fi/handle/10024/354297>.
- Boyd, Robert & Richerson, Peter J., (2005). *Not by genes alone: How culture transformed human evolution*. University of Chicago Press. Chicago, IL, US
- Bueno, Xiana and Prieto-Rosas, Victoria. 2019 'Migration Theories', in D. Gu and M.E. Dupre (eds) *Encyclopedia of Gerontology and Population Aging*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, pp. 1–9.
- Eraydin Ayda, Tasan-kok Tuna & Vranken Jan. 2010 Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Middle East Technical University, Ankara, Turkey
- Ferlatte Kuisma, R. (2017) *Successful adaptation of immigrants to Finland: can cultural fusion work?* Master's Thesis. Master's Degree Programme in Intercultural Communication. Department of Language and Communication Studies. Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences. University of Jyväskylä. Available at: <https://jyx.jyu.fi/handle/123456789/56557?show=full>. Accessed: 12.05.2023
- Heilbrunn Sibylle, Kushnirovich Nonna, & Zeltzer-Zubida Aviva. 2010. Barriers to immigrants' integration into the labor market: Modes and coping. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 34, 244–252. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijintrel.2010.02.008>
- Hillgren Essi, Peltola Janna, Yilmaz Fatih, Jinia Nasrin Jahan & Koivula Ulla-Maija. 2021 *Networking to Work: Introduction to The New Models for Integrating Immigrants in Belgium and Finland*. Horizon Insights, 2021-2, Brussels, 11-19. DOI : 10.31175/hi.2021.02
- Holzer Harry J. .1987. Informal Job Search and Black Youth Unemployment. *The American Economic Review*, vol. 77, no. 3, 446–52. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1804107>. Accessed 12 May 2023.

- Jønsson Heidi Vad, Onasch Elizabeth, Pellander Saara, and Mats Wickström. 2013. Migrations and welfare states Policies, discourses and institutions. NORDIC CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE NORDWEL Helsinki. <http://hdl.handle.net/10138/42138>. Accessed 2013
- Koskela Kaisu. 2014. Integration policies – Finland country report, Migration Policy Centre, INTER-ACT Research Report, Country Reports, Retrieved from Cadmus, European University Institute Research Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/1814/33215>
- Kunwar, Jagat. 2020. Assessing the level of immigrant integration in Finland. In Przytuła S. & Sułkowski Ł. (eds.) *Integration of Migrants into the Labour Market in Europe: National, Organizational and Individual Perspectives* Vol. 25, 197 – 215. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1877-63612020000025012>. Accessed 26.11.2020.
- Lehtonen Jaakko 2005. Stereotypes and Collective identification. Petkova Diana & Lehtonen Jaakko (eds.) *Cultural identity in an intercultural context*. University of Jyväskylä. Publication of the department of communication. 61-85. [https://mycourses.aalto.fi/pluginfile.php/1189303/mod\\_resource/content/1/Stereotypes-20and-20collective-20identification.pdf](https://mycourses.aalto.fi/pluginfile.php/1189303/mod_resource/content/1/Stereotypes-20and-20collective-20identification.pdf)
- Leonard Madeleine, 2004. *Bonding and Bridging Social Capital: Reflections from Belfast*. London, Thousand Oaks, Queens University, Belfast. DOI:10.1177/0038038504047176. accessed 12.2004.
- Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland (2017). *Työvoiman hankinta toimipaikoissa vuonna 2017 (Recruitment of labor at workplaces in the year 2017)*. <http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/handle/10024/160882>
- Mügge Liza and Van der Haar Marleen. 2016. Who Is an Immigrant and Who Requires Integration? Categorizing in European Policies. Garcés-Masareñas, R. Penninx (eds.). *Integration Processes and Policies in Europe*, Universitat Pompeu Fabra (UPF). Barcelona
- Nshom, Elvis, Shomaila Sadaf, and Ilkhom Khalimzoda. 2022. Perceived Challenges Living and Integrating into Finnish Society: A Study Among Immigrants in Finland". *Journal of Intercultural Communication* 22 (3):31-42. <https://doi.org/10.36923/jicc.v22i3.82>.
- Sherrif Ansu. 2018. Experience of immigrant workers in Finnish labor market. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. Thesis. from [https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/152466/Sherrif\\_Ansu\\_2018..pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/152466/Sherrif_Ansu_2018..pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y). Accessed from. May 8, 2018
- Siivonen Heini. 2015. *Immigration to Finland Solution to the labour problem?* Bachelor degree thesis. Degree Program in International Business and Logistics. Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences. Accessed 08.11.2015.
- Statistic Finland 2021. Figure 1. stats. Date unknown. Location: [https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa/vieraskieliset\\_en.html](https://www.stat.fi/tup/maahanmuutto/maahanmuuttajat-vaestossa/vieraskieliset_en.html).
- Worthy Lisa D., Lavigne Trisha, and Romero Fernando. 2020. *Culture and Psychology: How People Shape and are Shaped by Culture*. Glendale Community College, Phoenix, AZ.