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# **INTEGRATION, INCLUSION AND BELONGING THROUGH SPORTS: Migrant Women in Finland**

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## ABSTRACT

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Integration, Inclusion and Belonging through Sports: Migrant Women in Finland  
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The primary aim of this research study was to explore the importance of sports on the inclusion, integration, and belonging of migrant women in Finland. Additionally, the study also sought to identify the factors that could potentially enhance their participation and involvement in sports and physical activities.

The study was conducted using the qualitative research approach with a semi-structured online survey questionnaire in English containing a mix of open and closed-ended questions. A total of 20 responses were collected from the questionnaire.

Thematic analysis was used to evaluate the questionnaire data by identifying common themes, patterns, and underlying meanings in the participant responses. The data was also effectively presented and summarised through graphical representations and descriptive statistics.

The research results show that engaging in sports improved migrant women's physical health and mental well-being and enhanced their social connections, sense of belonging, inclusion, and integration into Finnish society.

This research study also discovered that migrant women face barriers in sports and physical activities in Finland which were based on three themes. The structural barriers included winter weather, limited financial resources, and distant sports facilities. The socio-cultural barriers such as cultural norms and values, discrimination and racism, and individual obstacles like family roles, language barrier, lack of experience, and lack of information about sports services and their advantages all impede migrant women from participating in physical activities.

In contrast to previous research findings, the study results in this research study reveal that sport has a positive impact on migrant women's inclusion, integration, and sense of belonging in society. Although the study highlights the barriers that migrant women encounter, it suggests that more research is needed on this topic.

Keywords: Migrant women, Inclusion, Sport, Integration, Belonging

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The number of immigrants coming to Finland has grown, and the population of new arrivals now comprises people from various migrant backgrounds in recent times. It is important that when organizing public services, the needs of the immigrant population are considered and that immigrants are offered activities and services that can help them to integrate into Finnish society. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2024)

This thesis topic is relevant because migrant women face numerous obstacles when settling and integrating into a new country, which affects their inclusion and integration process that this study focused on.

Recent studies indicate that migrant women experience dual challenges due to their intersectional identities as women and migrants. Research carried out in different EU states plainly indicates that engaging in sports differs according to ethnicity, religion, and gender. Females of ethnic minorities of migrant background are among the groups with the lowest rates of sports participation. According to the UK's Active People Survey (2012), 31% of white women are active in sports once a week while only 21% are active Asian women. (Active People Survey, 2012)

There are many multicultural organizations in Finland like Liikkukaa - Sports For All Ry, Monaliiku, and the Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation (FIMU) that aim to use sport as an integration and inclusion tool for migrant women. This thesis study investigated migrant women's experiences in their everyday lives and well-being through sports and how it can improve their inclusion and belonging in Finland.

I conducted my thesis in partnership with Liikkukaa—Sports For All Ry, a diverse organization that promotes unity and physical and mental well-being through sports and recreational activities.

## 2 RESEARCH ON MIGRANT WOMEN AND SPORTS

This chapter explains the literature review related to this thesis study. The main key concepts in this thesis study are sport, migrant women, inclusion, integration, and belonging. These concepts were used in this research study to find a clear in-depth explanation related to the thesis topic, for example, through various sources, online data searches, research studies, articles, and webpages.

Sport participation has been acknowledged for its capacity to improve the overall well-being, active participation, and social integration of migrants (Hatzigeorgiadis et al.,2013); for example, research has demonstrated that engaging in sports allows migrants to more social circles (Walseth,2006). This social contact is more important than the sports itself, especially for those whose social support has been eroded because of forced migration, as it enhances the possibility of forming new social friendships and social support systems (Cardone, 2019; Makarova, Herzog,2014). These, in return, create a sense of belonging and security in the new environment (Elling et al., 2001; Walseth, 2006).

Engaging in regular sports activities supports migrants in learning the local language, understanding cultural norms, and incorporating into the new society which is essential to migrants' integration (Abur,2016; Zacheus, 2010). Sports can act be a suitable platform for immigrants to actively participate in the local community through voluntary work (Spaaij, 2012). In addition, participation in sports by migrants contributes to shaping a positive narrative about the migrant communities (Elling et al.,2001; Makarova, Herzog, 2014; Stura,2019).

However, sport may also be part of the social-cultural and institutional system that can, to an extent, perpetuate the existing power imbalances between migrants and the host culture, thus hindering the ability of migrants to fully engage (Agergaard,2018; Spaaij et al., 2014). Several studies in various countries (Abur, 2016; Allen et al., 2010; Allender et al., 2006; Elmoose-Østerlund, van der Roest, 2017; Sawrikar, Muir, 2010; van Haaften, 2019; Waardenburg et al., 2018; Walseth, 2006; Walseth, Fasting, 2004; Zacheus, 2010) showed a

significant disparity in sport participation between migrants and local communities. These studies indicated that migrant women, especially from South-Eastern Europe, Africa, Southern America, and Asia, have a lower participation rate than migrant men.

Other recent reviews of literature have questioned the belief that taking part in sports automatically promotes the social inclusion of migrants. Agergaard (2018) highlighted the inclination of European sports policies to view integration through an assimilationist lens that tends to single out specific groups of immigrants and their descendants. The author also emphasized that sport may reinforce inequality and exclusion by requiring adherence to social and cultural norms and primarily serving the interests and needs of the dominant group playing sport (Cortis, 2009). Racism, sexism, and their intersection remain an apparent reality in contemporary sport (Cunningham, 2019; Foley et al., 2011), while competitive selection remains one of its significant traits.

Social inclusion and integration as a goal of sport in society are priorities for both the European Union and the Council of Europe, in partnership with sports NGOs. For the EU, integration is a dynamic two-way process in which all immigrants and residents are mutually accepted in the member states. It requires participation, not only of immigrants and their descendants, but also of every resident. It is within the framework of its action plans for the integration and inclusion of newcomer immigrants and descendants of immigrants for the period (2016-2020 then 2021-2027) that the EU is supporting more sports projects to promote the integration of migrants. Several initiatives have already been launched in Europe since the early 2000s, but they have multiplied considerably since 2015, with the massive arrival of populations fleeing the conflicts ravaging the Middle East. In September 2016, the European Commission published a study on how sports promote the integration of migrants in Europe, which identified good practices in the Union. The commission also supports projects and networks for the social inclusion of migrants through the European Structural and Investment Funds and the Erasmus + program. Thanks to the support of the European Union, several NGOs and associations have obtained funding from the Erasmus + program.

(Gasparini & Russo, 2021)

The European Union finances projects such as the European Sport Inclusion Network (SPIN), Social Inclusion and Volunteering in Sports Clubs in Europe (SIVSCE), Integration of Refugees Through Sports (IRTS), Football Including Refugees (FIRE or the Fairplay Project). (Gasparini & Russo, 2021)



### 3 KEY CONCEPTS

This chapter will discuss the key concepts: sport, migrant women, inclusion, integration, and belonging.

#### 3.1 Sport

Sport is traditionally presented as a vector of integration and citizenship for foreign populations in all immigrant countries (Gasparini, 2008, 2012, 2016; Porro, Martelli, 2018; Porro et al., 2020). Leisure sports activities enhance intercultural dialogue without necessarily mastering the host country's language; hence, they help overcome learning difficulties and offer opportunities for socialization.

According to the Council of Europe, sport can be defined as any form of physical activity that is either through casual or organized participation and aims at expressing or improving physical fitness and mental well-being, forming social connections, or achieving results in competitions at various levels. (ENGSO 2012, 8-9)

Sports and exercise are deeply engrained in Finnish culture, and the majority of people uphold an active lifestyle. According to a 2010 survey by the European Commission, Finland is one of the world's most active countries and has the highest level of physical activity. (Sahala & Koskela, 2011)

There are numerous motives why people engage in physical or sports activities. Some may have a competitive nature, while others want to test their limits or aim to be physically fit. In Finland, the primary reason why most Finns participate in physical activities is that it promotes health and well-being. Finland's national game, known as "Pesäpallo," was developed in the early 1900s and is similar to American baseball. Children in Finland start skiing and skating at an early age, and soccer is the number one sport among them. Other popular

sports activities include football (soccer), ice hockey, floorball, and various forms of gymnastics and Formula One. (Sahala & Koskela, 2011)

Taking part in sports and outdoor activities positively impacts the well-being of immigrants by elevating their self-confidence and positive self-esteem (Gibbs & Block, 2017). Also, it fosters their goal-setting skills, promotes feelings of accomplishment in new experiences, and fosters a sense of identity (Strang & Ager, 2010). The social interaction that occurs in leisure increases well-being, and as a result, the possibilities for social integration increase (Ruble & Shaw, 1991).

Policymakers are increasingly discussing the connection between sport and the integration of migrants. The discussions indicate that engaging in sports can result in positive outcomes (Amara et al., 2005; Bailey, 2005; Coakley & Donnelly, 2002; Coalter, 2007), can promote diversity (Omidvar & Richmond, 2003), and help reduce the stress of adapting to a new culture (Stack & Iwasaki, 2009; Walseth, 2006, 2008).

According to Doherty and Taylor (2007), immigrants view and value sports in a manner that aligns with that of policymakers. However, some researchers, such as Coalter (2010), suggest that it is unsafe to assume that sports can always lead to positive social results for participants. Due to its nature, sport has the potential to impact the integration of immigrants into their new societies. (Lee & Fubk, 2011; Stodolska & Yi, 2003).

However, Hatzigeorgiadis and colleagues (2013) commented that sport cannot directly integrate migrants, but it can provide a platform on which “integration can be cultivated” (Hatzigeorgiadis et al., 2013, p. 1)

### 3.2 Migrant women

According to the Finnish Act on Promoting Immigrant Integration (1386/2010), section 3 defines an immigrant as a person who has relocated to Finland and lives without a tourism permit or short-term residence. Those with the right to reside and are registered or given a residence card are also considered immigrants.

“The significance of sports in integration is highlighted in the Finnish integration program 2016-2019. The program includes a roadmap for initiatives, programs, co-ordinations, and obligations involved in promoting and facilitating integration, and recognition of the interests of immigrants in preparing and coordinating other public services and acts. It also involves fostering ethnic equality, healthy ethnic relations and helps to prevent discrimination ”(Oivo & Bruun, 2016).

The assertion that sport is particularly inclusive/integrative is strengthened by several complimentary themes, including individual self-realization, a social melting pot, health, and social- economic growth. The idea of sport as a social melting pot is reinforced by the notion that ‘local sports clubs represent a meeting place across generations and social divides’ (KD, 2011-2012: 13) is consolidated by highlighting its long history: ‘Sport has brought people with different ideological and ethnic backgrounds together for hundreds of years’ (KD, 1990-1992). In the first white paper, sports’ universal nature is seamlessly connected to essentialist ideas about belonging.

‘ ... sport... is concerned with fundamental questions about our human identity, affiliations, and the opportunities available to us in our surroundings. ... Sports’ intrinsic value is related to identity and belonging and must be understood with the broader context of social and cultural norms and values ’ (KD, 1991-1992: 11).

### 3.3 Inclusion

The European Union considers social inclusion as the process by which an individual fully participates and gets recognized, and accepted in society, by taking part in various activities that are available for the people in a community (Council of Europe Contemporary issues in youth policy)

A further definition by the Eurofound (the European Foundation for Improvement of Living and Working Conditions) explains social inclusion in the context of this territory as, “Social inclusion is at the heart of the European Social Model of the European values defined in the Lisbon Treaty. It is a key aspect of the European Pillar of Social Rights and is one of the primary goals of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals.

Social inclusion is “the process of improving the conditions of individuals and groups to take part in society” and “the process of improving the ability, opportunity, and dignity of people, disadvantaged based on their identity to take part in society” (World Bank, 2013, pp. 3-4).

“Social inclusion can also involve providing opportunities and resources for people at risk of poverty and social exclusion to fully participate in economic, social, political, and cultural activities and enjoy a standard of living consistent with their society. It ensures greater participation in decision-making processes that affect people’s lives and access to fundamental rights” (Commission of the European Communities, 2003, p 9).

Today, sports seem readily accessible to everyone; in theory, participation is perceived as a human right. However, many still need help to participate due to various challenges. The group someone belongs to can affect how they engage with sports and how much they can gain from its tangible and intangible advantages.

For example, historically, black athletes were excluded from competing in organized sports in places like apartheid South Africa and North America during the

era of segregation. At present, it is not possible for this form of discrimination to occur, but many young athletes who have professional sports careers still face numerous obstacles. This is particularly true for those who wish to pursue their careers in sports outside of their home countries. These athletes continue to report experiencing racial discrimination in both its 'hard' and 'soft' forms. (Social Inclusion of African migrant Athletes in Europe Toolkit)

Participation and inclusion mean everyone has the right to health, education, work, income, housing, and social relations. It means that all people should have the chance to engage and exert influence in matters that affect them and the development of the society. (Finnish Institute for health and wealth, THL)

Social inclusion fosters well-being, minimizes exclusion, and decreases inequality. Discrimination and prejudice at different levels of society keep immigrants from integrating into the community and hold back other linguistic and cultural minorities from being included and treated fairly in society. Equality refers to treating every individual with fairness and justice, without prejudice based on factors such as age, gender, family relationships, religion, or belief, origin, political or trade union activity, disability, sexual orientation, state of health, or other personal characteristics. Inclusion and equality are the foundation of a just sustainable society, and these rights are inherent in everyone (Finnish Institute for health and wealth, THL)

### 3.4 Integration

Integration, the act of being embraced as a member of society, is a multifaceted concept. It has three dimensions: legal-political, cultural-religious, and social-economic. As Entzinger (2000) highlighted, these dimensions are not just theoretical constructs but crucial factors that relate to the nation, the state, and the market. Understanding these factors is vital to comprehending immigration and integration processes. These dimensions are highlighted because they allow us to concentrate on the critical aspects of immigrants and their ties to the host

society rather than the dimensions mentioned earlier (acculturation, placement, interaction, and identification).

Three critical factors in assimilating immigrants into Western societies are economic integration, which focuses on employment and income opportunities; social integration, which involves a satisfying social life and connections in mainstream society; and cultural integration, which includes recognizing cultural diversity and interactions with host people and other ethnic groups (Achkasov & Rozanova, 2013).

Blommaert & Verschueren (1998, p. 111) describe integration as a semantically vague term and how “integration or not being integrated defines the limits of the migrant debate”. An interesting approach to the concept of integration is that a beneficial migration would require a successful integration process, which means that if the migrant wants to fully enjoy the benefits of the new country, the government should see the integration process as successful (Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998).

In current theory, integration is viewed as a two-way or multidimensional process in which the society that receives immigrants plays a key role (Garcés-Mascreñas & Penninx, 2016; Spencer & Charsley, 2021).

The integration process is perpetual, with a society undergoing constant change as its population becomes more diverse. Furthermore, immigrants gain knowledge and abilities that are necessary for their existence in society and their working life. For this to work, both immigrants and the receiving country need to demonstrate a strong commitment. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2024)

Good interethnic relations can promote immigrant integration and strengthen social cohesion. Integration can only be successful if everybody is committed to non-discrimination and immigrants are accepted as members of society. In Finland, the legislation on the promotion of Immigrant Integration, which came into force in 2011, instructs that government bodies must foster cooperation across

various sectors as a crucial component of the integration as part of the integration procedure. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment is accountable for promoting employment opportunities among immigrants, overseeing the integration legislation, and managing the integration of migrants in Finland. (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment of Finland, 2024)

Becoming part of Finnish society and feeling like a valued member of it is facilitated through the integration process. This involves possessing the necessary knowledge and skills to effectively manage one's life in Finland, having stable employment prospects, and feeling a sense of belonging in the country. The agency of immigrants and support for strengthening that agency are crucial for fostering integration. Dialogue is also important in this context. (Väestöliitto Integration, 2024)

### 3.5 Belonging

The topic of belonging is far from trivial. On a personal level, having a sense of belonging can give one's life meaning and a feeling of safety (Lambert et al., 2013); at the societal level, it contributes to social cohesion (Schiefer & Noll, 2017).

The concept of belonging addresses a person's identification and feelings of attachment to a community (Kannabiran et al., 2006; Simonsen, 2018). Belonging is an essential component of migrant integration.

According to Miller (2009), belonging is a feeling of ease with one's surroundings. In this study, the role of sports will be explored, and how it can help migrant women have a sense of belonging in Finland.

#### 4 AIM OF THE THESIS

This research study aimed to investigate how sports can improve the inclusion, integration, and sense of belonging of immigrant women in Finland and to identify policies that can promote their participation in sports activities.

This thesis topic was particularly important because sports and physical activities have the potential to act as a common platform for people from diverse backgrounds to come together and bond.

The main research questions the study aimed to address were.

1. How can sports enhance migrant women's everyday lives?
2. What obstacles hinder migrant women's participation in sports?



## 5 BACKGROUND AND RESEARCH PARTNER

There are several multicultural sports clubs and organizations in Finland, such as Liikkukaa Sports For All, Monaliiku Ry, the Finnish Multicultural Sports Federation (FIMU Ry), and others whose members come from diverse cultural backgrounds. To promote sports opportunities for immigrants and people of an immigrant background, it is important to understand the barriers that hinder their participation in sports and implement the best practices and policies to create an inclusive environment that supports the integration of immigrant women.

This thesis research was conducted in collaboration with Liikkukaa Sports For All, an umbrella organization for multicultural sports with 80 member organizations and clubs across Finland that serve about 15,000 people. The member organizations encompass both migrant sports initiatives and traditional sports clubs that focus on promoting the inclusion of immigrants while also including socially and culturally oriented organizations. (LIKKIKAA - Sports For All)

Liikkukaa Sports For All works towards promoting equality, participation in social activities, and mental and physical well-being through recreational activities. One of its projects, ERASMUS + Migrant Women in Sports, is focused on promoting women's equality in sports. This is why Liikkukaa Sports For All organization was chosen for this thesis, and this study may contribute to its ongoing work and future projects.

## 6 RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter provides information on the research methods used in this thesis study and how the data was collected and analyzed.

Schwardt (2007:195) defines research methodology as a concept of how an inquiry should proceed which involves analyzing assumptions, principles, and techniques used in a particular approach to inquiry. According to Schwardt (2007), Creswell & Tashakkori (2007), and Teddlie & Tashakkori (2007), methodologies determine and define the kinds of problems that are worth investigating; what constitutes a researchable problem; testable hypotheses; how to frame a problem in such a way that it can be investigated using particular designs and procedures; and how to select and develop appropriate means of collecting data.

### 6.1 Qualitative research

Questionnaires can be a common method for collecting data. They are a form of instrument that includes sets of questions that secure answers from respondents intended for a study. The data from a questionnaire cannot be acquired from a secondary source (Pandey & Pandey, 2015).

Sir Francis Galton introduced the use of a questionnaire for the first time. A questionnaire is utilized for different purposes, although it can be commonly used to gather statistical data. It can be designed to measure separate variables such as behaviors, preferences, and facts (Kabir, 2016). The survey questions for this research study were designed to ensure that participants could easily comprehend, interpret, and provide significant answers.

This study used the qualitative research method. Qualitative research gathers information on participants' experiences, perceptions, and behaviors. It focuses

on answering hows and whys instead of how many or how much. It seeks to understand the underlying reasons or explanation for a certain phenomenon.

The participant responses from the online survey questionnaire supported the research questions in this thesis study with answers needed to explore the lived participant experiences as indicated in the data I collected.

## 6.2 Data collection

To initiate the data collection process, Liikkukaa - Sports For All Ry signed the thesis agreement once the thesis proposal was approved. Subsequently, the data collection for this thesis study commenced.

Data was obtained using a qualitative collection method from Liikkukaa—Sports For All Ry and its multicultural member organizations. The primary target group was migrant women who responded to the interview questions using a semi-structured questionnaire that included open-ended and closed-ended questions written in English.

The survey questionnaire was created on the SurveyMonkey platform using the Liikkukaa - Sports For All Ry account. The questionnaire included a consent form at the beginning, allowing participants to give their consent.

The chairperson of Liikkukaa - Sports For All Ry took the initiative to distribute the questionnaire link and the thesis information to the board members and migrant women (the target group) through virtual and in-person meetings at the office and via email to Monaliiku, its partner multicultural organization.

Information was shared during both online and in-person meetings of the organization. No personal data was collected from the participants. Participants in his study answered the questionnaire anonymously, and 20 responses were received.

### 6.3 Data analysis

Data analysis is an approach through which one systematically applies techniques to draw conclusions from or evaluate the data. The process of data analysis entails gathering data in a way that enables a researcher to identify correlations between variables.

To analyze the collected data, I used thematic analysis to identify the recurring patterns. Thematic analysis is a method in qualitative data that entails searching across a data set to identify, analyze, and report repeated patterns (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Various authors have retained that because several qualitative methodologies use thematic analysis, it is a similar method that supports researchers in their analysis (Boyatzis, 1998; Holloway & Todres, 2003; Ryan & Bernard, 2000). Boyatzis (1998) defined thematic analysis as a translator for those who speak the dialect or language of quantitative and qualitative analysis, enabling researchers who prefer different research methodologies to communicate.

Thorne (2000) rightly points out that data analysis is one of the most intricate phases of qualitative research, often receiving minimal reflection in the literature discussion. Data analysis can be conducted systematically and conveyed to others (Malterud, 2001; Sandelowski, 1995).

Qualitative research frequently excludes a comprehensive description of how an analysis is carried out within published research studies (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Tuckett, 2005); nevertheless, many have urged that a researcher needs to be transparent about what he or she is doing, why she or he is doing it, and can include a clear explanation of analysis methods used. (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Malterud, 2001; Thorne, 2000).

When carrying out data analysis, a researcher becomes the tool for the analysis, making judgments about codes and themes, and the researcher decontextualizes and contextualizes the data (Starks & Trinidad, 2007).

The principles of thematic analysis methods, such as data coding, searching for themes, refining the themes, and reporting the findings, can be applied to other qualitative methodologies, such as discourse analysis (Flick, 2022). The final themes were created through a series of steps as outlined below.

### 1. Familiarizing myself with data

First, I needed to immerse myself in the data. This involved going through the data content to detect initial patterns and themes. Then, I chose quotes that vividly illustrated the data to represent different viewpoints, perceptions, and relevant patterns that corresponded to my thesis study aims. According to the six steps of the thematic analysis method of Braun and Clarke (2006), familiarizing yourself with the data is the first step.

### 2. Selection of keywords

I carefully examined the survey questionnaire data, identifying repetitive themes and patterns that I categorized as keywords: inclusion, integration, belonging, social connections, discrimination, safe spaces, language problems, etc. These keywords summarized the participants' views and experiences derived directly from the data.

### 3. Allocating codes

Attride-Stirling (2001) states that coding breaks down real data into smaller, more achievable pieces that can be grouped and analyzed for patterns and themes. This process enables researchers to identify important data elements relevant to their research questions, which can be used to develop a more comprehensive understanding of underlying concepts and ideas (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

I grouped the participants' words, brief descriptions, and phrases to create codes reflecting the main core meanings, patterns, and themes in the data collected. This process helped to transform participants' written texts into

theoretical forms, which enabled me to identify features relevant to the research questions in this thesis. The codes created were primarily arranged into the positive benefits of sport and the barriers.

#### 4. Developing the themes

Themes in thematic analysis refer to trends, patterns, and relationships between different codes. They provide insights into the research questions or phenomena being studied (Creswell, 2013). Themes are often utilized to create a conceptual framework or theoretical model that can interpret the links between the categories and the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006).

The data revealed themes like the positive effects migrant women experienced while engaging in sports and physical activities, such as enhancing their inclusion and integration, improving their health and mental well-being, fostering their social interactions and connections, and promoting their sense of community belonging.

The barriers identified were grouped into structural, socio-cultural, and individual factors. The graphics and the descriptive statistics were employed to analyze the collected data as well.

#### 5. Reporting the findings

Finally, I discussed the themes and patterns when presenting the findings. This included detailing the methodologies used for the data collection and thematic analysis in the results section of this research thesis.

The collected data was also analyzed using descriptive statistics and graphic visuals. The thematic analysis detailed migrant women's experiences in sports activities and revealed themes such as positive physical and mental health, social connections, inclusivity, integration, feelings of belonging, discrimination

and racism, cultural norms and values, limited information, language barrier, and family roles and responsibilities.

This data analysis resulted in an inductive approach to research theory that applies to all researchers. This approach involves gathering and examining data to create theories, concepts, and hypotheses derived from patterns, themes, and observations found in the data. The final five themes were derived from the combined codes, as shown in the table below.

<b>Keywords</b>	<b>Emerging themes</b>	<b>Final themes</b>
Inclusion, Integration, belonging	Inclusion, integration, belonging, equal participation, equal rights, valued diversity	Inclusion & integration
Maintaining physical fitness, positive confidence & positive feelings	Good physical and mental health, positive self-confidence & esteem	Improved physical health & mental well-being
Forming social bonds, Meeting other migrants, and developing of new relationships	Social networks & gatherings, sense of trust, shared interests, social support	Social interactions & connections
Established new connections, information & knowledge, sports associations	Creation of new communities, access to other sports opportunities, emotional connection, access to information and knowledge	Sense of community belonging
Weather conditions, Expensive gyms, costly exercise facilities	(Winter season), Insufficient financial resources	Structural barriers
Discrimination, bias, racism, safe spaces,	Discrimination & racism, cultural norms & values	Social-cultural barriers

prejudice, name calling, isolation, religion		
Childcare, household chores, lack of support networks, Insufficient knowledge & limited language skills	Family responsibilities, Lack of language skills, lack of knowledge on the available services	Individual barriers

*Table 1. Thematic analysis process used In this study*

#### 6.4 Limitations / Reliability

One challenge during data collection was determining the most appropriate language for the survey questionnaire. After consulting with the chairperson of Liikukkaa - Sports For All Ry, it was decided to use English for the survey, as most participants could understand it easily. However, the results could have differed if more participants had answered a Finnish or another immigrant language questionnaire. This may have resulted in different themes, patterns, or similarities.

Another limitation of this study is related to the questionnaire. Participants may have had difficulty differentiating between the concepts of belonging and integration. To minimize this limitation and improve the reliability of research studies in the future, concepts used in qualitative methods, such as questionnaires, should be defined and explained to participants so that they can fully understand the meanings and differences between them and accurately interpret them.



## 7 RESEARCH ETHICS

The online survey questionnaire form was designed in English, and the questions were structured so that only essential data was collected without harming the participants. The data was gathered anonymously and is currently stored on Liikkukaa's SurveyMonkey account. After the study is complete, the data will be erased properly.

A person involved in any research study has the right to receive clear and truthful information about the goals of the study, possible risks, and harm, as well as correct descriptions of the potential effects and benefits of the study. (TENK, 2019)

The study's survey questionnaire was well structured and formatted correctly, ensuring no double-barreled questions were included. On average, each participant spent 8 minutes answering the survey.

### 7.1 Research data ethics

Adherence to best practices in scientific research and ethical considerations are important for maintaining the credibility of scientific research and public trust in it. Ethical review encompasses the entire research process. Research ethics concerns can arise in relation to the topic, methods, conduct, or research data. These issues include ethical governance procedures, voluntary informed consent, safeguarding the privacy of participants, and the option to disengage from the study. Furthermore, they concern research permits granted and pending. (Research Council of Finland, Research ethics)

I contacted Liikkukaa-Sport For All ry and emailed my thesis topic idea to the chairperson, who responded positively and agreed to discuss it further. As a result, we scheduled a phone call and the chairperson expressed interest in reviewing my proposal when it is complete. So far, I have participated in several

board meetings with the organization where I had the opportunity to introduce myself as a social service degree student from Diaconia University of Applied Sciences working on my thesis study in collaboration with the organization.

The organization agreed to collaborate with me as my thesis topic relates to their work projects and activities focused on inclusion, integration and belonging for migrant women in Finland, such as the SpinWoman project, which is under the ERASMUS + Migrant Women in Sports program.

After sharing my thesis proposal with the organization's chairperson, the thesis agreement was signed between me, the work-life partner organization Liikkukaa - Sport For All ry with the approval of my university supervisor before I began collecting data. Liikkukaa-Sport For All ry, my work-life partner organization signed the thesis agreement and was responsible for my data collection process, and the participants voluntarily signed a consent form, so no research authorization or permit was needed for this thesis study. This thesis study is merely a component of my studies. It will only be published on the Theseus, which has open access for everyone to read, so no scientific publication is intended.

Following the approval of my research proposal by my university supervisor, I was authorized to commence the data collection process. I then formulated the survey questionnaire questions with the aid of the work-life partner chairperson. The Chairperson asked me to use the organization's SurveyMonkey account to create the survey questionnaire. I diligently reviewed and cross-checked the questionnaire multiple times with the chairperson to make any necessary corrections or edits. Afterward, the questionnaire was prepared for distribution. My work-life partner helped me organize the data collection process.

Before completing the online questionnaire, all participants provided their informed consent by signing a consent form, acknowledging that they were participating in a research study and that their participation was voluntary. The participants were also aware that they could exit the research at any point, and there was no gathering of personal from the participants in the consent form.

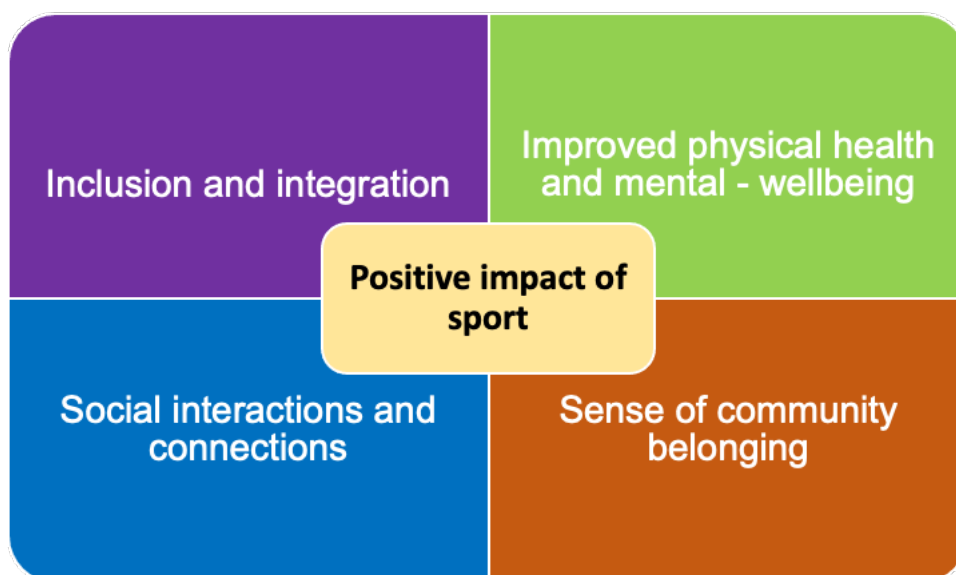
The identities of the research participants remain anonymous. The data retrieved from the online survey questionnaire will remain confidential on the Liikukaa-Sport For All ry SurveyMonkey account platform, accessible only by the organization's chairperson. After the thesis study is complete and the final thesis paper is accepted by the university supervisors, the collected data will be deleted.

## 8 RESULTS

The online survey questionnaire for migrant women living in Finland garnered 20 responses. The research findings indicated that participants had positive experiences engaging in sports and physical activities with sports clubs, associations, and multicultural organizations. The free-text responses to open-ended questions were noteworthy, as all questions received answers. The written responses ranged from 1 to 3 sentences and were estimated to be 1 to 2 pages.

### 8.1 The positive impact of sport

Based on the survey results from participants with an immigrant background, the data revealed that engaging in sports and physical activities had a significant positive effect, enhancing their inclusion and integration in Finland and thus contributing to a stronger sense of belonging as migrants. The codes used in the study results (R1, R2, R3, R4, etc) mean respondent 1, respondent 2, respondent 3, respondent 4.



*Figure 1. Showing positive experiences from the findings*

### 8.1.1 Inclusion and integration

This study demonstrates that sports and physical activity play a significant role in the inclusion and integration of migrant women into Finnish society. Participation in sports clubs, associations, and multicultural organizations promotes intercultural contacts and friendships between migrant women and locals, fostering a sense of inclusion and belonging.

*“We are social by nature and having a group of people to talk to and having physical activity can be a great start to support inclusion and belonging.”*  
(R1)

Sport has broad social recruitment and is one of society’s most important arenas for social inclusion (KD,2001-12:66, my italics). It has been suggested that sports can promote positive social integration (Kim et al., 2016) and have the potential to contribute to social and cultural capital development (Spaaij, 2012).

### 8.1.2 Improved physical health and mental well-being

The participants involved in this study stated that being involved in sports and physical activities positively impacted and sustained their physical health and mental well-being.

Participating in sports and physical activities can boost mental well-being by reducing symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress. Engaging in regular exercises can also prevent physical health problems associated with poor mental health such as fatigue.

Engaging in sports activities improved the participants’ emotional well-being and assisted them in dealing with difficulties such as isolation and inadequate support systems.

The various ways of “feeling better” through physical activity echoed Caldwell’s (2005) typology of the benefits of leisure activities, including physical activity such as active leisure.

Caldwell (2005) points out that engaging in leisure activities can help prevent stress and alleviate anxiety and depression. These activities can serve as a coping mechanism for women, providing them with mind, providing them with mind-enhancing and palliative opportunities that temporarily redirect their attention away from stressful situations. Suto (2013) found that migrant women seek leisure activities to relax and improve their well-being.

### 8.1.3 Social interactions and connections

Participants in this thesis study confirmed that engaging in sports activities with other migrants, acquaintances, and natives fostered the development of new social interactions and connections. Social bonds formed during physical activity and sports can extend beyond the games, leading to long-lasting friendships and networks.

Being involved in sports and physical activities can provide a means for migrant women to establish relationships with individuals beyond their immediate family cycles, as described by Caldwell (2005) who refers to this type of interaction as a leisure companionship. Many migrants have left their homeland and now reside in a new country, leaving behind their social support networks.

As a result, sporting experiences allow immigrants to form bonds with individuals with similar cultural backgrounds. People can overcome their challenges by sharing their loneliness experiences and attain a genuine sense of integration (Muller et al., 2008).

#### 8.1.4 Sense of community belonging

The results show that sport can support migrant women to establish new connections, friendships, and communities with other migrants and native residents. Spaaij (2012) found that sports participation in community clubs can play an important role in fostering a sense of community belonging. Some participants mentioned:

*“Sports is the only thing that brings communities together.” (R2)*

*“ Sports has no boundaries just like Music.” (R3)*

*“Sport is an important bridge that allows societies to come together.”  
(R4)*

Participation in sports and physical activities contributes to personal, social, and intellectual growth and promotes social inclusion and integration. Research conducted in the past has indicated that sports possess the ability to significantly incorporate immigrants into the host society (e.g., Alemu et al., 2021; Makarova & Herzog, 2014).

The participants mentioned that being active in sports and physical clubs, associations, and diverse organizations that specialize in diversity and sports can result in social interactions, various sports opportunities, and access to information and knowledge.

#### 8.2 Barriers

We live in an age of migration (De Haas et al., 2020). New arrivals in unfamiliar territories often struggle with adapting and blending into a welcoming society. Foreign and domestic migrants encounter similar challenges, such as language barriers, information gaps, and discrimination. Integration into the host country is crucial to improving the well-being of migrants and enhancing social solidarity.

Refugees and forced migrants often encounter obstacles when participating in sports and physical activities, particularly in organized and club-based sports. The literature demonstrates that obstacles operate at multiple levels: structural, sociocultural, interpersonal, and personal (Spaij, 2013; Baker-Lewton et al., 2016).

This study on migrant women’s involvement in sports and physical activities in Finland identified several obstacles that were categorized into three main themes.

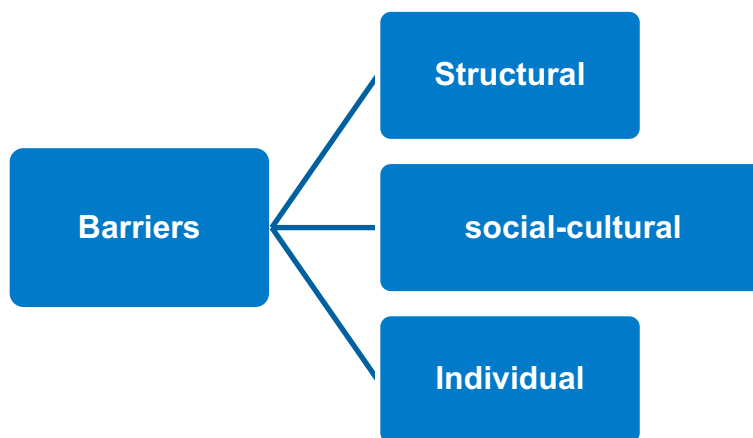


Figure 2. Barriers from the Study Findings

### 8.2.1 Structural barriers

Structural barriers can include economic, social, physical, and environmental factors that impede an individual’s participation in sports or physical activities. As noted in the study findings, weather conditions such as the winter season, were identified as a hindrance to migrant women’s involvement in sports and physical activities.

*“The weather, I am a runner, and in the winter, it is hard to keep motivated, I then use a treadmill.” (R5)*



Weather can pose an obstacle for other migrants and affect their participation in physical activities especially those from warm countries who now live in cold countries like Finland. Persson et al. (2014) and Curtin K.D. et al. (2018) pointed out that dark and cold weather conditions hindered immigrant women from walking outside, and feeling uneasy in dim, chilly areas or while exercising causes them to stay indoors.

Other structural barriers included insufficient financial resources to finance costly exercise facilities like gyms, membership fees, and sporting venues at far distances, as described below by respondents 6 and 7;

*“Financial difficulties and expensive gyms” (R6)*

*“Most sports venues are far away from where I live” (R7)*

### 8.2.2 Social-cultural barriers

Social-cultural barriers can be characterized as specific social and cultural practices, ideologies, and customs within a community or society that either motivate or impede physical activities. For example, the components of the Islamic faith practiced by Muslim women, such as their attire and the necessity for separate gender sports, have made it challenging for the women to participate in sports hence exclusion.

In this research study, discrimination and racism were identified as social-cultural barriers that affected participants' experiences in sports-related activities. Some of the participants mentioned how they encountered discrimination and racism related to the sports activities they participated in.

*“I wanted to continue playing basketball, which I did for about a week or two. After that, I was told I could not continue in the group but without any details and the message was directed to a family member who forwarded it to me”. (R8)*

*“Sports is a closed world for migrants.” (R9)*

*“Not giving migrant girls and women safe spaces.” (R10)*

*“Name calling, isolation, prejudice, and segregation” (R11)*

Discrimination and racism in sports or elsewhere can have long-term effects on an individual’s life as it can undermine their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of belonging. As Respondent 12 notes;

*“Racism and discrimination can interfere with a person’s self-confidence and sense of belonging” (R12)*

Racism is a universally prevalent issue, and it is an indisputable fact that it exists in all societies worldwide and it is a well-established fact that racism is made visible in both elite and leisure-time sports, not least through various types of microaggressions in the form of racist jokes and racial epithets (e.g., Scott, 2015; Spaaij, 2012). Racism that occurs daily is a factor that undermines integration, social connectedness, and trust in society.

Participation in sports can potentially promote integration and social inclusion, but it may also lead to instances of racial or religious prejudice. Baker-Lewton et al. (2017) and Abur (2018) discuss the impact of everyday racism in sports on the lives of South Sudanese Australians.

The study findings discovered that cultural norms and values serve as another obstacle to the involvement of migrant women in sports-related activities. Cultural influences and patriarchal ideology remain the main undermining influences as they play out in sports and society differently (Burnett, 2021b). A respondent noted;

*‘My experience is that there are religious or cultural reasons hindering migrant women from joining sports activities. E.g., Muslim girls have to wear scarfs, do not show their hair, etc. ’ R13*

### 8.2.3 Individual barriers

These obstacles can be shaped by the participants' individual beliefs, abilities, roles, social connections, and affiliations with family, friends, and the communities they belong to.

Family roles and responsibilities within families can influence the ability of migrant women to take part in sports and physical activities, especially if they are solely responsible for caring for their, as per Respondent 14.

*“Being active in sports is not a priority when you do not have a support network for example care for your kids if you have some.” (R14)*

Migrant women are constrained from being active in sports and physical exercise due to Familial obligations, children's responsibilities, and household chores. Exercise is not valued as highly in all cultures as it is in Finnish culture, and in many of the countries where immigrant women come from, women are primarily responsible for looking after their families and homes, leaving little time for sports (Zacheus, 2011). Respondents 15 and 16 suggest;

*“ Sports clubs and organizations should provide a possibility of caring for the kids, for example in some gyms they have” (R15)*

*“ Give mothers more free time from house obligations” (R16)*

Not having enough experience or knowledge of the available sports services and their advantages was considered an obstacle. The participants acknowledged that a lack of experience and knowledge contributed to their limited involvement in sports activities. Some of their answers support this view.

*“I have faced a lack of experience and knowledge. Some people might believe that a certain sport or dance belongs to only a specific group.” (R17)*

*“Lack of knowledge (why it is important to do sports).” (R18)*

This research results also revealed that the language barrier limits the involvement of migrant women in sports and physical activities. Insufficient language skills make it hard for migrants to participate in sports. Due to the difficulty of the Finnish language, migrants struggle to fully engage in sports activities and events, even when available.

*“If there are no proper Finnish skills, it is very difficult to fit in.” (R19)*

Wegnelius, C. J. et al. (2018) stated that immigrants face barriers to accessing information about physical activities, activity locations, and transportation due to language.

## 9 DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore the importance of sports on the integration, inclusion, and belonging of migrant women in Finland with the work-life partner Liikukaa Sports For All Ry. It focused on answering the main questions: How can sports enhance migrant women's everyday lives, and what obstacles hinder their participation in sports?

This research study found that participating in sports and physical activities helped migrant women develop social interactions and connections, improved their physical health and mental well-being, supported their inclusion and integration into Finnish society, and lastly enabled them to have a sense of belonging.

One important determinant for enabling the inclusion and participation of migrants is leisure, which, in the words of Stodolska (2015), plays a decisive role in the life of ethnocultural minority groups. It offers several significant benefits, such as the establishment of intercultural and intergroup contacts, the development of opportunities for learning and cultural exchange, the strengthening of ties with the local community, the preservation of their own culture, and the benefits of physical activity for physical, mental, and social well-being (González-López et al., 2015).

Although participation in sports clubs is expected to contribute to belonging (Burrmann et al., 2017; Spaaij, 2015; Walseth, 2006), the findings in this study indicate that participants and individuals of migrant background do not get the same opportunities to benefit from sports. Present findings support the theoretical assumption that belonging is not an individual choice alone but depends also on being granted the right to belong. Belonging requires the desire for participation on the part of the minority and the acceptance of participation on the part of the majority (Ward et al., 2001; Wood & Waite, 2011; Yuval-Davis, 2006).

The study results also highlight that migrant women are less active in sports-related activities and those who are active encounter major barriers which were based on three themes; structural, social-cultural, and individual factors. Qualitative studies show that sport can “expose participants to social exclusion, racism, and cultural resistance” (Spaaij, 2015, p. 304) and that refugees, black athletes, and minority ethnic groups may experience discrimination, microaggressions, othering, or assimilation pressure in sports clubs (Burdsey, 2011; Engh et al., 2017; Massao & Fasting, 2014; Spaaij, 2012).

Sports can also act as an instrument to advance inclusion, integration, and belonging beyond participation in sports clubs or physical activities. Therefore, as shown in the literature (Horolets, 2012), it is very important to identify the various barriers that migrants, especially women, have in accessing sports and leisure activities and implement the necessary measures to overcome them.

The survey data revealed that migrant women were contented and optimistic about sports and other forms of physical activity. However, this study’s results only apply to migrant women who responded to the survey questionnaire and may not represent the experiences of other migrant women in Finland.

## 10 CONCLUSION

This chapter outlines the study's summary, professional development, and recommendations for the work-life organization, other civil organizations, sports clubs, associations, and multicultural organizations.

### 10.1 Summary of the study

Physical activity benefits the body and mind, helps eliminate biases, and facilitates social interactions, language acquisition, and understanding of societal norms. Since exercise is a universal language, it is often considered easier to engage in than other formal situations (Lagerspetz, 2019). According to a survey conducted by the Finnish National Institute for Health and Welfare “Promoting integration and considering the well-being and health issues in integration processes can lead to improved quality of life for individuals with foreign backgrounds”. (THL, 2020)

Many multicultural organizations in Finland are working to increase the involvement of multicultural women in sports-related initiatives. For example, Liikkukaa Sports For All aims to promote equality, participation in social activities, and mental and physical well-being through recreational activities. Another organization, Monaliiku, uses sports for health, equality, and social inclusion by creating a safe environment for immigrant women to exercise and engage in sports.

The study on Integration, Inclusion, and Belonging through Sports: Migrant Women in Finland reveals that getting involved in sports and physical activities had positive effects on immigrant women. Through these activities, they found a sense of belonging and formed new communities of socialization. They also improved their fitness, physical well-being, and mental health and felt more included and integrated into Finnish society.

It is important for migrant women to actively participate in sports as it is a powerful tool that promotes health, social inclusion, belonging, and integration. This is the only activity that can successfully engage people across diverse social and cultural divides. Sport integrates, inspires, and brings pleasure while contributing to several positive outcomes both at individual and societal levels, including health, and social and economic benefits. (KD,1991-92: 10).

However, more strategies should be implemented that primarily target increasing financing and support to motivate migrant women to engage more in sports and physical activities, as the study indicates that migrant women are inactive.

Sporting events for inclusion, integration, and belonging can be successful in bringing people together. The research results show that sports play a vital role in making communities come together; but for this to work, specified guidelines should be adopted to ensure success. For instance, sports events and clubs should be open to everyone, and the events or clubs should offer more than just sports, such as sports club fairs, workshops, seminars, concerts, games, or a job. (Jondis Schwartzkopff, 2022).

The integration process requires mutual respect, curiosity, and time. Civil societies should become more involved in achieving and implementing policy goals. Policymakers should have realistic expectations of what civil society organizations can achieve.

To achieve the integration and inclusion of migrants, sporting associations, clubs, and multicultural organizations need to have a common understanding of the terms 'integration' and 'Inclusion'. Additionally, shared policies should be established to work towards these goals.

To increase the response rate of my English questionnaire survey targeting immigrant women, it can be formulated into Finnish or other migrant languages and distributed through appropriate social media channels. However, ethical guidelines are essential when collecting study participants' data.



## 10.2 Professional development

Conducting research for my thesis study on the role of sports in the integration, inclusion, and belonging of migrant women in Finland has provided me with valuable insights into research studies. I have gained knowledge on the impact of sports, the barriers that hinder migrant women from engaging in sports, and measures that can be taken to support their inclusion.

I have always enjoyed being active in sports and, as a table tennis player, I have gained some benefits like keeping fit and making new friends. This inspired me to choose my topic “Inclusion, Integration and Belonging through Sports: Migrant Women in Finland” for my research study.

As an immigrant, I was interested in exploring the potential of sports for migrant women to integrate, be included, and have a sense of belonging in Finnish society. I aimed to understand the benefits they could gain from being physically active and any obstacles they might encounter.

This thesis study provided me with experience in writing a research paper, including understanding the process of developing an idea, writing the proposal, and completing the manuscript. I have also gained knowledge of qualitative research methods and thematic analysis. Furthermore, I became knowledgeable about research ethics. This experience was enlightening.

Studying Social Services at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (DIAK) has provided me with a supportive and diverse community that included the staff from the study office, teachers, the study counsellors, and fellow students. My education at DIAK equipped me with the necessary professional skills and knowledge to excel in my future career in the social service field.

This research study and the studies conducted at DIAK both have opened up new career paths of interest for me. As a result, I am interested in pursuing a career path that focuses on working with women, children, or the elderly and

striving to serve the people and the society at large. I aim to utilize the expertise and insights I have gained to work with people from diverse backgrounds.

During my studies, I acquired essential skills and knowledge relevant to my future career in the social service field. These include ethical competencies in the social field, the ability to work with clients and service users in the social service system, critical and inclusive social skills, community work, project management and entrepreneurship skills, and lastly, the skills in research-based development and innovation competence. I obtained these skills through the Bachelor of Social Services program under the Universities of Applied Sciences offered by DIAK. (Diakonia-ammattikorkeakoulu, Competence requirements: BA of Social Services)

Social work as defined by the International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), is both a practice-based profession and an academic discipline. Its primary goals are to foster social change, improve unity within communities, empower and liberate individuals, and advocate for human rights, social justice, and collective responsibility. The IFSW stresses the importance of valuing diversity in all its forms.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) has developed a code of ethics that guides social workers in honoring their core values and ensuring that their decisions and practices align with professional standards. The NASW code of ethics provides social workers with guidance on safeguarding their clients and their interests, as well as protecting the public and the profession at large. It is also a vital aspect of the systems put in place to guarantee responsibility.

The Social Work Dictionary (2014) does not define professional judgment but defines professional as *“An individual who meets the requirements for membership in a specific profession and uses its practices, knowledge, and skills to provide services...and, in doing so, always adheres to its values and codes of ethics”* (P. 338). The dictionary definition of judgment is the process of forming an opinion by discerning (The Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 1997) therefore, professional judgment in social work practices becomes a deliberate process

within a professional context guided by specific knowledge and skills. (Practice Matters, February 2015).

Finally, my academic studies have led to my personal growth, enhanced soft skills, and a sense of accomplishment that has made me feel empowered.

### 10.3 Recommendations

Liikkukaa-Sport For All ry organized a workshop seminar titled “Monitora - Monitoring Racism in Sports” on January 24, 2024, at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences. The seminar featured expert presentations on the effects of racism on sports participation, participant presentations, a workshop and its results, panel discussions, evaluation, and feedback. (Liikkuka - Sports For All, Monitora - Monitoring racism in sports)

I was amazed by the seminar results as I acquired more information on the forms of discrimination in sports, the significance of tackling racism in sports, and ways to monitor and report racism using real-life examples demonstrated in the video presentations. Moreover, I had the opportunity to discuss my thesis study and its importance.

Monitora is a European project operating in Italy, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, and Hungary. It is co-funded by the European Union's Erasmus + Programme. The project's main objective is to strengthen the professional skills and capabilities of CSOs, grassroots sports associations, and national and local institutions to monitor, document, and report instances of discrimination and racism in grassroots sports in four European countries. (Progetti Monitora - Monitoring Racism)

The working life partner Liikkukaa-Sport For All ry can utilize the findings from my thesis to encourage more migrant women to participate in sports as a means of integration, inclusion and belonging as sports play an important role in the integration process.

The results from my thesis can also be utilized by the work-life partner in their projects or research about migrants and sports inclusion, specifically addressing the challenges that hinder not only migrant women but all migrants. To enhance the engagement of migrant women in the organization's events, seminars, projects, sports, and leisure activities, the work-life partner should strive to identify and establish more effective channels of communication that will enable them to reach out to a larger number of migrant women.

This study recommends the creation and maintenance of organized sports, outside sporting events, and recreational activities for migrant women in Finland. These programs should be culturally, and socially appropriate, and additional measures should be taken to enhance migrant women's adherence to physical activity programs. Safe spaces should be provided at sports and physical activity facilities for migrant women.

Migrant women are encouraged to participate in Finnish language courses, which can improve their communication abilities and promote social integration, and inclusion. Information about sports activities should also be available in different languages to ensure easy access.

Hiring female migrant trainers or coaches can encourage the inclusion of migrant women in sports. Motivated migrant women should be inspired to take on roles and responsibilities in sports clubs as trainers, instructors, referees, coaches, and assistants to support their participation in sports.

Programs offering qualifications should be explored as sports have the potential to contribute to integration beyond just engaging in sports teams. Refugees and migrants interested in sports can benefit from qualification programs where they can collaborate with employers of sports associations to gain skills as trainers, referees, or even in areas not directly related to sports.

Sports clubs and multi-cultural sports associations should offer childcare and support networks to enable migrant women to engage in sports activities.

For example, the Monaliiku Ry organization can be contacted since they organize various women's sports events.

The research results show that sport significantly affects the integration, social inclusion, and belonging of migrant women in Finland. However, further research is needed to validate these results, as female migrants regularly encounter multiple barriers preventing them from participating in sports and physical activities.

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## APPENDIX 1. English Questionnaire

### Survey questions

1. Are you active in any sports?
2. How often do you play sports?
3. What kind of sports do you participate in?
4. What makes you want to participate in sports?
5. How would you describe migrant women's situation concerning being active in sports?
6. What concrete challenges can hinder migrant women's participation in sports in Finland? What impact does sports play in integrating migrant women?
7. In your opinion, how can sports support the inclusion and belonging of migrant women in Finland?
8. How can their inclusion in sports be improved?
9. What challenges have you faced that may have prevented you from participating in sports?
10. What benefits could an organization specialized in diversity in sport offer in your opinion?
11. Do you have suggestions or something more to include?

## APPENDIX 2. Consent form

### Thesis Data Collection

#### Consent Form

Permission from research participant for this research study.

I have been told about the purpose of the aforementioned assignment and that the written material will be used in Diak's research and development work.

I am aware that participation is voluntary.  
I am also aware that my identity will remain unknown.  
By submitting this form, I understand that:

1. I consent to this thesis research study

Yes, I consent

2. Enter date

Date / Time

Date