

Sense of coherence among Syrians with refugee background, and its
impact on their perceived employment opportunities in Norway

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Foreword

During my initial years of University studies, both in intercultural understanding and in comparative politics, I had the opportunity to travel and meet people with different everyday lives, norms and cultures. Through conversations (often qualitative studies), I became increasingly interested in how similar, yet different these people were. Through part-time jobs and volunteer work, I gained a better understanding of the refugee situation in Norway. Working alongside three very inspiring Syrians with refugee background in a cruise ship job (all were highly educated), I saw the potential for further development in the Norwegian integration politics and was intrigued to investigate the field further.

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I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, professor Marguerite Daniel – you always encourage critical discussion, deeper dives into the theoretical works of Antonovsky himself, and not least, I always feel motivated and encouraged when leaving our meetings. I have been very lucky to have you as my supervisor.

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ABSTRACT

The sudden influx of refugees to Europe in 2015 challenged the integration policies and practices in Norway, as the systems became congested. With this, Norway received a relatively new group of refugees to its country, Syrians. Numerous private organizations, as well as state run institutions, contributed to the settlement and integration process of the newcomers. 6 years has passed since what has later been referred to as the “refugee crisis”, the Syrians, who at the time had status as refugees, have now received their resident permits and are well on their way to being integrated into the Norwegian society. There is not much qualitative research on the experiences of this specific group of refugees in Norway on integration, particularly in relation to the labor market.

This study therefore aimed at this – exploring how the former Syrian refugees experience the labor market in Norway. Eight Syrians, who are now settled around in Norway, were selected as participants in the study. The research was conducted through narrative interviews – giving the participants the opportunity to tell their story and life experiences in the way that makes sense to them, emphasizing what they themselves considered to be important. The aim of the study was further to explore how the concept “Sense of Coherence” (SOC), created and developed by Aaron Antonovsky, would influence the individual participants experiences with the labor market. This was done through evaluating each participants SOC, based on their sense of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. The analysis drew on how they told and experienced their life in Syria, on the journey and in Norway.

The findings of the study affirm existing knowledge that an individual’s SOC will affect to what degree they see resources available to them, whether they understand the situation that they are in, and if they see meaning in their life and find motivation in this. Based on the data collected, there appears to be a connection between having a high SOC and having positive experiences with approaching and adapting to the labor market in Norway, however, this research does not prove the opposite – that having a low SOC will result in negative experiences with the labor market.

Keywords: *Refugees, Syrians, labor market, employment, resources, well-being, Norway, integration, participation, Sense of Coherence, SOC, Salutogenesis*

LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BCCI	Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry
GRR	General Resistance Resource
IMDi	The Directorate of Integration and Diversity
NAV	The Norwegian Labor and Welfare Administration
NOAS	Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers
NOKUT	The Norwegian Agency for Quality Assurance in Education
NRK	The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation
NSD	Norwegian Centre for Research Data
NTNU	The Norwegian University of Science and Technology
OsloMet	Oslo Metropolitan University
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SMH	Salutogenic Model of Health
SOC	Sense of coherence
SRR	Specific resistance resource
SSB	Statistics Norway
UDI	The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration
UNESCO	The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
WHO	The World Health Organization

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

As the devastating and ongoing war in Syria reached new heights in 2015, Norway received a new group of refugees, many of whom held high expectations to participate in the labor market. In 2018, there were 27 400 Syrians in Norway. Research and statistics clearly show tendencies of higher unemployment rates among immigrants in Norway than the general population, this is also true for people with refugee backgrounds from Syria (Olsen, 2018; Olsen & Bye, 2020). 67% of Syrian refugees had primary education as their highest completed education at arrival, 2% had no education. Around 25% of Syrians in Norway have tertiary education (only about 6% at arrival), which is lower than the general population (where the number is at 33%) (Dzamarjia, 2018).

Refugees in Norway are over-represented in statistics on unemployment, compared to their fellow residents. In the last quarter of 2018, 49,1% of refugees between 15-66 were registered as unemployed. The percentage of unemployed within the same age group for the rest of the population is at 27,5% (Olsen & Bye, 2020). It is important to note that Syrian refugees have not stayed in the country for more than maximum six years, giving them less time to have integrated and gained experience in the labor market, than other refugees.

1.2. Context

The history of Syria is complex on its own, but even more so as it has played an active role with the surrounding countries in the Middle East. Syria is a crossing where multiple big ethnical and religious groups meet. In similarity with other Middle Eastern regions, ethnicity and demographic composition is often the epicenter of conflict and is often not looked into or can even be kept as military secrets (Hellestveit, 2017). Bashar al-Assad, the current president in Syria, was inaugurated in office on the 10th of July 2000, one month after his father, Hafez al-Assad, the former president of Syria, passed from a heart attack (River, 2018, p. 388). Bashar was elected in what is described as a fraudulent election, where he won 97% of the votes (Zisser, 2007). The al-Assad family is part of the Alawite sect, a religious minority in Syria. The Alawites were long oppressed by the majority Sunni population in the country. After the Ottoman empire fell, the French were given temporary control in 1921 (through the Sykes-

Picot agreement). At this point the Alawites started making social progress. The Alawite sect, technically within the Shiite branch of Islam, are known for secrecy – only chosen leaders truly knew and understood the theology, in order to protect the sect from persecution from other Muslims (Faksh, 1984). Under the French, a special military unit was created called *Troupes Spéciales*. The Sunnis were deliberately kept out and limited from these troupes, while the minorities in the country (Alawites, Kurds, Druze e.g.) were welcomed (River, 2018). The reason the French suppressed the Sunni population was partly because of its ties with Arab nationalist movements, which was a threat to the mandate. But also, because it was a clear majority in the country, and the Sunnis had held important and strategic positions under the Ottoman empire. By including the minorities of the country that had been restrained from participation politically and looked down on socially, the French gained loyal supporters (Fildis, 2011). One could argue that the French used the method of divide and rule. The Alawites would soon dominate the Syrian military, and ultimately other public sectors as well (River, 2018).

Syria is rated as “not free” and an “authoritarian regime” by Freedom House (2020). Freedom House is a non-partisan, U.S.-based non-governmental organization, founded in 1941, which supports and defends democracy, and rates countries on political rights and civil liberties, including the electoral process, political pluralism and participation, functioning of government, freedom of expression and belief, associational and organizational rights, rule of law and personal autonomy and individual rights.

For many refugees making their way from Syria to Europe, the journey involves crossing the Mediterranean, most often in overcrowded rubber boats. The journey has become known worldwide as extremely dangerous. Statistics Norway report that approximately 1 million refugees/asylum seekers came to Europe in 2015 and thousands drowned in crossing the Mediterranean (Østby, 2016). Immigration control in Europe is politically constructed through the Dublin Regulation – an agreement between the EU countries, Iceland, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Norway. According to the Dublin Regulation, an asylum seeker can only have their asylum application considered in one of the member countries. The country responsible for considering the application for protection, is the first Dublin country the asylum seekers are registered in (UDI, 2021b). The fingerprints of the asylum seeker will be registered in the country of registration. The Regulation has been critiqued for failing to distribute refugees equally among the countries (by design of the agreement, a majority of the refugees

end up in Southern Europe), but also for contributing to irregular migration across the continent. The regulation was not meant for times of mass influx of refugees, as seen during the “refugee crisis” (Armstrong, 2020). Irregular migration is: “*movement of persons that take place outside the laws, regulations, or international agreements governing the entry into or exit from the State of origin, transit or destination*” (IOM, 2021). During the refugee crisis and the high influx of refugees to Europe, countries closed their borders and had very strict regulations in the times where they were open.

Upon arrival in Norway, asylum seekers are sent to an arrival center which conducts a coordinated registration with the police and UDIs asylum seeker arrival system, obligatory health check and information from NOAS (Norwegian Organization for Asylum Seekers) on the process ahead. The asylum seekers are then placed in transit reception centers where they stay until their first interview with UDI is completed. Unaccompanied minors are sent to separate transit reception centers. Unaccompanied minors are then sent to care centers, while other asylum seekers are moved to ordinary asylum reception centers where they stay until their application is processed. Depending on the result, they are either moved to the municipality in which they will reside or returned to their home county. (UDI, 2021e)

The Norwegian governments goal for integration is that all those who live in Norway are able to utilize their resources and contribute to the community. Areas that are specifically highlighted are “work and the labor market”, “education”, “living conditions” and “participation in the community life” (Regjeringen, 2015).

In Norway, the former Immigration Act (Act relating to the admission of foreign nationals into the realm and their stay here) of May 15th, 2008, was repealed with a re-enactment on January 1st, 2021 – the Integration Law. The Immigration Act was in force during the period of the refugee crisis and the time where the participants of the current study arrived in Norway. The Integration Law, on the other hand, is vital because of its impact on future integration in Norway, an important factor that has been taken into considerations as the recommendations of this thesis were constructed. The latter is presented by IMDi as the most important change in Norwegian integration politics in 20 years, focusing on early integration and introduction to the labor market. Key values that have formed the new Law, include equal opportunities regardless of place of settlement, the introduction program will be customized to the individuals, in addition to an increase in people who complete formal training during the

program. The responsibility of competence mapping, teaching the Norwegian language and social studies in the asylum reception centers, lies with the host municipality. The municipalities can also choose to provide integration promotional measures. Once the individual is settled, it is the municipality of settlement that acquire the responsibility of further integration (this is the step where persons who come on the basis of family reunification enter). New in the Integration Law, is that the competence mapping completed in the host municipality, forms the foundation in the career guidance, which the county municipality is responsible for. This is an important factor, as the participant and the municipality, together, will create an integration plan bound by contract. The length and level of educational background and previous experience, as well as the individual needs will be evaluated, the integration end-goals will be agreed upon, in total determining the length of the introduction program. This can vary from 6 months to 4 years, as demonstrated in Figure 1: Length of introduction program. (IMDi, 2021)



FIGURE 1: LENGTH OF INTRODUCTION PROGRAM (THE INTEGRATION LAW)
Illustration is retrieved from video on IMDi (2021), and edited to English.

In 2019, Norway announced 20 commitments on the UNs Global Compact on Refugees (Regjeringen, 2019). Among these are supporting UNESCOs global qualifications passport for refugees and vulnerable migrants (administered by NOKUT), strengthening integration efforts by investing in formal education, skills and qualifications, aiming at increasing participation in the labor market, provide funding for research and analysis in the field, reducing the fee for family reunification, possibility of temporary working permit for asylum seekers (after their interviews, if there is no doubt about their identity) and mental health and psychosocial support in humanitarian responses. (Regjeringen, 2019)

These commitments, alongside the former Immigration Act, and particularly the newly implemented Integration Law, aspire towards the same intentions as several of the Sustainable Development goals (SDGs), also adopted by Norway, as one of the UN members states, in 2015. SDGs that are of particular relevance to integration of refugees in Norway, include SDG 3 – good health and well-being, 4 – quality education, 5 – gender equality, 8 – decent work and economic growth, 10 – reduced inequalities, 16 – peace, justice and strong institutions and 17 – partnerships for the goals (see Appendix 10 for more detailed description) (United Nations). Special attention will not be appointed to each of these goals, however, SDG number 4 and 16 will be further discussed in relation to the findings.

The data in this research project were collected in the spring of 2020, while Norway's commitment to the UNs Global Compact on Refugees was in 2019 and the SDGs are from 2015. Therefore, the aim of these commitments should be reflected in the integration process, especially in the new Integration Law.

Three of the core components to health promotion are equity, participation and empowerment. The Ottawa Charter states:

“Health promotion supports personal and social development through providing information, education for health and enhancing life skills. By so doing, it increases the options available to people to exercise more control over their own health and over their environments, and to make choices conducive to health” (World Health Organization, 1986, p. 3).

These values are also central in the theory of Salutogenesis. The connection is explained well by Eriksson and Lindström (2008, p. 194): *“The Salutogenic view implies strengthening people's health potential making good health a tool for a productive and enjoyable life”*.

1.3. Problem statement

Understanding the experiences of former refugees wishing to enter the labor market is essential, not only regarding the well-being of the newcomers themselves, but also considering the resources that they are to the society, which are currently not being fully exploited.

The World Health Organization (1948, p. 100) defines health as *“... a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”*.

This definition, however, is problematic in relation to the Salutogenic Model of Health (SMH) in the sense that it views health on a continuum (see Chapter 2: Theoretical framework), indicating that one cannot reach a *complete state* of health. However, the inclusion of physical, mental and social well-being, and not merely the absence of disease, is essential. In relation to this research project, applying the SMH, implies that increasing health does not necessarily come from looking at the job application process as a discrete and single event – the problem cannot be solved if the context is not considered. It is essential, in this view, to consider how other defining moments, and aspects of life, build and equip the individual to react to this tension – entering the Norwegian labor market. The now repealed Introduction Act, did not fully take into consideration that refugees with similar backgrounds could respond differently in the meeting with a new system. This is the Act which was present at the time the participants of the study arrived in Norway. According to the SMH, how an individual chose to respond to a stressor, depends on how whether they feel that they understand what the situation demands of them, if they feel that they have the resources available to cope, and if they have motivation (this will be returned to with further explanation in Chapter 2: Theoretical framework).

Antonovsky (1996) highlighted that it is the social institutions that should contribute to facilitating and encouraging individuals to partake in low-risk behavior. As health promotion aims at achieving equity in health and equal opportunities for all, it is important to use the results of the study as a foundation for change, encouraging and developing the social institutions in Norway to better contribute to positive and empowering behavior.

1.4. Definitions of words used

Asylum seeker	<i>“A person is called an asylum seeker if he or she has applied for protection (asylum) in Norway and the application has not yet been finally decided” (UDI, 2021a).</i>
Family reunification	<i>“... refers to those who already have family members in Norway and wish to be reunited in Norway” (UDI, 2021c).</i>
Former refugee	Will be used in this report to refer to those with refugee background that has been granted residence permit.
Health promotion	<i>“... the process of enabling people to increase control over, and to improve their health...” (World Health Organization, 1986).</i>

Norwegian B1+	Refers to the language level described by the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages. The levels range from A1, A2, B1, B2, C1, C2, where A1 presents the lowest level, and C2 is the highest. (Council Of Europe)
Refugee	“...is a person who meets the requirements for being granted protection (asylum) in Norway.” (UDI, 2021d)
Waiting period	In this report, <i>the waiting period</i> , is referred to as the time between arrival in Norway and when the application for asylum is assessed. It is also referred to as <i>liminal phase</i> , when referring to the time as constructed or experienced by the asylum seeker themselves.

1.5. Thesis outline

Following this introduction chapter, is Chapter 2: Theoretical framework – introducing the theory that has guided the research. Subsequently, Chapter 3: Literature review, informs on existing literature in the field, as well as the process of how this was retrieved. Chapter 4: research questions, presents the main research question, in addition to the three sub-questions. Chapter 5: Methodology, introduces the research design, ethical considerations, trustworthiness and framework for analysis. Following this, Chapter 6: Findings, presents the findings made through interviews, predominantly by the key informants, however, information from the triangulation interviews add to contextualization. Chapter 7: Discussion, provides a discussion based on the findings and existing literature, within the structure of the theoretical framework and guided by the research questions presented in Chapter 4. Discussion will also consider limitations of the study. Chapter 8: Conclusion, will summarize the key findings, as well as provide recommendations for policy changes and further studies.

Chapter 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This chapter will present the theoretical framework of choice – sense of coherence. To begin with, the Salutogenic view of health will be presented. Further, the ontological view of the man behind the theory will be presented, which concomitantly will provide the context in which SOC is placed, as well as its relevance to this current research project. Thereafter, a definition of SOC will be presented, before the three main components of the theory is defined and explained – *comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness*, followed by a table that will help evaluate the participants’ level of SOC. Finally, a concluding summary is made regarding the relevance of the theory, and how it was applied in this research project.

2.1. Salutogenesis

The concept of Salutogenesis was created and developed by Aaron Antonovsky as a means of looking away from the pathogenic view of health that had been dominating western medical thinking. The latter assumes that an individual can be attacked by disease acutely, fatally or chronically. It looks to curative medicine and disease preventive efforts to promote health (Antonovsky, 1996). Salutogenesis – *the origin of health* (Antonovsky, 1979), assumes that all human beings face constant stressors, which again can result in dis-ease or health-ease. Figure 2: The health-ease – dis-ease continuum, illustrates this process, which views health on a continuum, rather as a dichotomous variable (health and disease), as commonly done in a pathogenic view of health.

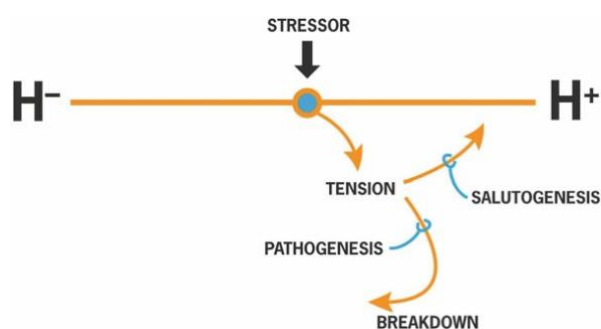


FIGURE 2: THE HEALTH-EASE – DIS-EASE CONTINUUM
(Eriksson, 2017, p. 93)

All human beings find themselves somewhere on this scale, at all times, depending on how they deal with stressors that arise. There is no clear boundary as to when stimulus is defined as

a stressor and when it is defined as routine stimulus (which can easily be responded to, often automatically). Antonovsky (1979) states that when a stressor is experienced, it is a demand by the external or internal environment, in which the individual cannot respond to immediately, leading to tension. A stressor is not necessarily negatively loaded (for instance a desired promotion), it is how one responds to the tension of the stressor, that evaluates the outcome – movement towards dis-ease (H-), denial (not responding to the stressor) or movement towards health-ease (H+) (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 130).

2.2. Ontological viewpoint

Antonovskys’ ontological viewpoint is fundamental to the Salutogenic way of approaching health. He saw the individual in connection and involvement with his or her environment. This is well represented through what he called “the six Cs”.

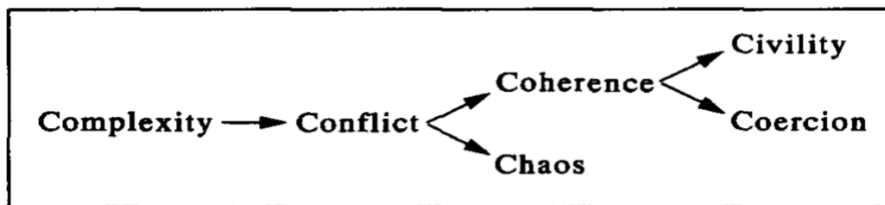


FIGURE 3: THE SIX CS
(Antonovsky, 1993, p. 969)

Complexity represents all systems that we as humans interact with – cultural codes, government structures, integration laws and acts, relationships, and so on. The more complex the system is, Antonovsky (1993) argued, the more room for conflict there is. However, increased complexity creates room for decision making, flexibility or system definition. When an individual faces conflict, there are two possible outcomes – coherence or chaos. Chaos in the face of conflict, is when input (from external and internal sources) is perceived as noise, structure is absent, and life is meaningless. It is the second option for coping that serves as the theoretical framework for this research – coherence. A strong sense of coherence (SOC), Antonovsky says, leads to either civility or coercion. The initial, of course, is favored, as the second, although perhaps bringing health and survival to the powerful, tends to bring destruction to the health of those under their power (Antonovsky, 1993, pp. 970-973). Civility as a basis for a strong SOC involves respectful commitment and loyalty to self and others, and lastly, in great contrast to coercion, civility deprecates oppression and deprivation.

Antonovsky defined the *sense of coherence* as:

“... a global orientation that expresses the extent to which one has a pervasive, enduring though dynamic feeling of confidence that (1) the stimuli deriving from one’s internal and external environments in the course of living are structured, predictable, and explicable; (2) the resources are available to one to meet the demands posed by these stimuli; and (3) these demands are challenges, worthy of investment and engagement” (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 19).

The six Cs contribute to this research mainly as background and context to SOC, which is the main focus. I did consider this valuable to include due to the situation that the refugees find themselves in; They come from an extremely complex system of government structure, which is inherently unfair and unequal – it is based on coercion. The participants also experienced complex systems on the journey to Norway (where survival and health were number one priorities), and new and challenging complex systems of integration and culture in Norway. How the participants of the study act in confrontation with the conflicts arising within these complex systems, the stressors, will determine the strength of their SOC – whether they lean towards coherence or chaos in meeting with these demands.

2.3. Sense of Coherence

Antonovsky (1996) labeled the three components presented in the definition *comprehensibility*, *manageability* and *meaningfulness*:

I. Comprehensibility

“... the extent to which one perceives the stimuli that confront one, deriving from the internal and external environments, as making cognitive sense, as information that is ordered, consistent, structured, and clear, rather than as noise – chaotic, disordered, random and accidental, inexplicable” (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 17).

This is the component relating to the individual’s cognitive process. A person with a high sense of comprehensibility will feel that the experiences and information provided makes sense, that it is consistent. This is in opposition to a person, who in conflict will experience chaos. The participants in the current study were asked to elaborate on their situation in Syria, on the journey and in Norway – all three stages challenge the comprehensibility component in different ways.

II. Manageability

“... *the extent to which one perceives that resources are at one’s disposal which are adequate to meet the demands posed by the stimuli that bombard one*” (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 17). This component relates to the behavioral choices made by the individual. These resources can be provided by the person herself, family, a higher power, the environment, and so on. Antonovsky (1987, p. 18) also argued that a person with a high sense of manageability “... *will not feel victimized by events or feel that life treats one unfairly*”. Underload in stimulation can lead to pathogenic consequences in the way that the central nervous system requires stimuli to function properly. Therefore, if one is in a shielded environment, or one that does not provide enough stimuli (in terms of routine and stressors), this can in turn be inherently stressful (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 87). Underload can result in demotivation. An overload, demands that are too high for the individual to handle, will result in insecurity. Good load balance, however, exists when an individual is able to meet present demands (Antonovsky, 1987; Sloopjes, Keuzenkamp, & Saharso, 2017) A person with a high sense of manageability see resources as available in the face of stressors and conflict. We differentiate between two types of resistance resources: generalized and specific (these terms and their implications will be returned to and explained further shortly). In the current study, generalized resistance resources included money, family, social network, and so on. Specific resistance resources that were relevant was for example language courses, the introduction program, the Facebook groups that help refugees navigate and avoid border control and police. Human smugglers present a paradox, as they can be viewed as an SRR, since they are a resource used to cope with a stressor (border police), however, they are also a stressor.

III. Meaningfulness

“... *the extent to which one feels that life makes sense emotionally, that at least some of the problems and demands posed by living are worth investing energy in, are worthy of commitment and engagement, are challenges that are “welcome” rather than burdens that one would much rather do without.*” (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 18)

This component brings the motivational element to the table (Antonovsky, 1996). This is component is especially fueled through participation in socially valued decisions (Antonovsky, 1996, p. 15). Antonovsky (1987, pp. 20, 93) gives the example of housewife, who would likely

score high on comprehensibility and manageability, however, her meaningfulness component would be low, because her role is not socially valued.

A person’s SOC is shaped by three types of life experiences: load balance, consistency and participation in socially valued decisions (Antonovsky, 1996, p. 15). If these experiences are repeated in life, this will contribute to developing a high SOC (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 19). A person with a high sense of coherence will feel that the stimuli and information that derives from their environment is consistent – they understand the challenges that meet them. Further, they find that they have the resources available to cope with these challenges. They also feel that what they do is meaningful, they are motivated. Antonovsky (1987, p. 92) explains the opposite:

“When others decide everything for us –when they set the task, formulate the rules, and manage the outcome – and we have no say in the matter, we are reduced to being objects. As world thus experienced as being indifferent to what we do comes to be seen as a world devoid of meaning”.

The strength of these three components will therefore determine strength of an individuals’ SOC. The movement on the health-ease – dis-ease continuum can also be predicted based on the strength of the components (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 71), as shown in Table 1: Dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components.

Type	Component			Prediction of impact on SOC
	Comprehensibility	Manageability	Meaningfulness	
1	High	High	High	Stable
2	Low	High	High	Rare
3	High	Low	High	Pressure to move up
4	Low	Low	High	Pressure to move down
5	High	High	Low	Pressure to move down
6	High	Low	Low	Pressure to move down
7	Low	High	Low	Rare
8	Low	Low	Low	Stable

TABLE 1: DYNAMIC INTERRELATEDNESS OF THE SOC COMPONENTS
(Antonovsky, 1987, p. 20)

How stable an individual’s SOC is throughout the lifespan has been debated. Although argued that a person’s SOC will develop until around the age of 30, and then stabilize, Antonovsky (1987, pp. 119-123) points out that the variation in the development of the SOC after adulthood

is largely dependent on the level of SOC at entry in to this phase in life – resulting in an increased disparity between those with a high and low SOC. *“The “loser” continues to lose, and life becomes more and more chaotic, unmanageable and meaningless”* (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 123). Further, he states that *“...it is [not] rigidly fixed and only changes gradually in response to major changes in patterns of life experiences. There are also temporary changes, fluctuations around a mean”* (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 124). Eriksson and Lindström (2005) argues that, based on empirical results, there is not sufficient evidence supporting the claim that SOC stabilizes at the age of 30, it appears, however, that it keeps developing.

Resistance resources, as mentioned under manageability, can take two forms: generalized and specific. In the development of a person’s SOC, general resistance resources (GRRs) are fundamental to the outcome (Mittelmark, 2017). GRRs *“... refer to the phenomena that provide one with sets of life experiences characterized by consistency, participation in shaping outcomes and an underload – overload balance”* (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 19). Examples of GRRs include money, knowledge and intelligence, social support, coping strategies and religion (Idan, Eriksson, & Al-Yagon, 2017, p. 57). Antonovsky additionally introduced general resistance deficits (GRDs), identifying that the absence of a GRR could itself become a stressor (Vinje, Langeland, & Bull, 2017). Specific resistance resources (SRRs) *“...are many and often useful in particular situations of tension... ..often matters of chance or luck, as well as being helpful only in particular situations”* (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 99). An example of an SRR can be a particular kind of medicine developed to cure a specific disease. Antonovsky (1979, p. 99) said that *“GRRs determine the extent to which specific resistance resources are available to us”*. Resistance resources must not be mistaken for merely being a contributing factor to the manageability component to SOC – having resistance resources will also facilitate for a stronger SOC, which again will turn these resistance resources into GRRs, which will add pressure to move up on the health-ease – dis-ease continuum (Mittelmark, Bull, Daniel, & Urke, 2017). The approach Antonovsky suggests to resistance resources also underlines the fundamental differences between the pathogenic approach to health, versus the Salutogenic approach. Whilst the pathogenic approach would predominantly focus on SRRs, as they are specialized to cure or prevent one particular disease. The Salutogenic approach, however, seeks to increase health in all aspects of life, thereby increasing the relevance of GRRs as well. (Antonovsky, 1979, p. 99)

2.4. In relation to the study

There are many studies using SOC in relation to exploring the field of refugees and integration (Borwick, Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans, & Shakespeare-Finch, 2013; Braun-Lewensohn & Mayer, 2020; Hirsch, Braun-Lewensohn, & Lazar, 2015; Slootjes et al., 2017; Slootjes, Keuzenkamp, & Saharso, 2018; Sveaass, 2005). The six Cs indicate the importance and relevance of SOC as it goes back to the complex systems that are the origins of all stressors experienced, as well as connecting it to how the individual will handle these. Exploring the individual's SOC further provides us with insight into understanding the influential factors that separate those with a high SOC and those with a low SOC in relation to health, well-being, and as an end result – integration into the Norwegian labor market. This will provide indicators as to how to improve the complex systems to customize and facilitate for all, thus creating equity in integration and the labor market.

The theory contributed to shaping multiple aspects of the study. The research question aims to explore if there is a connection between the individual's SOC and their experience with the labor market, the sub-questions supplement to a more in-depth understanding of how the participants develop over time, in mindset, how they cope with situations and in the motivations behind their actions. The interview guide sought to get answers that were not influenced or shaped in the way that the participants might have wanted to “look better” and answer what is politically correct, while still revealing how the individual's response derive from their SOC. The questions were therefore carefully formulated, while their main objective was to create the foundation to explore the comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness of the participants. In the data coding and analyzation process, the three components of SOC further served as the frame, or global themes, which structured the analysis, this will be returned to in 5.5: Framework for data analysis. This coding framework was thereafter used in the presentation of the findings, as it revealed and introduced the data relevant to the theoretical framework in a systematical order.

Chapter 3: LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to give a concise overview of what research exists in the field. First, the search process used to collect literature will be described. Relevant literature will then be presented, but equally important, gaps in the existing literature will be pointed out. In closing, a general reflection will be made, touching on how the results from this literature search have contributed greatly to the formation of this research paper as provider of valuable context, similar studies that can be used for comparison, and not least, pointers as to where the gaps in research are, which had a direct impact on the research questions and methods used.

The initial literature review I completed before the interviews with the participants mainly focused on research related to forced migration, integration of refugees in a new country, specifically relating to the employment opportunities and labor market, as well as health and well-being in these stages. This search thereby gave a good overview of what already existed and where there were gaps in the field relating to the integration of refugees settling in new countries; however, it was still broad. After the interviews and the process of analysis was completed, new areas that I had not previously considered relevant to explore for literature, were exposed. This latter search included literature on specific themes and phenomena that emerged from the results, however, still within the same categories as the initial search. The main literature included in this review can be found in Appendix 2, organized by theme.

3.2. Search process

Throughout the search for relevant literature, the databased used were Oria, Idunn and Google Scholar. Oria is the digital university library at the University of Bergen. Idunn, which is the Scandinavian University Press' publishing platform for books and articles, gave access to literature done on the field in the Scandinavian countries, thereby mostly in Scandinavian languages. I also became a member of the STARS-community, an online space for researchers and people who share an interest for the works of Aaron Antonovsky. This gave me access to books published by him, that were otherwise hard to acquire. In addition to this, I looked up articles that were referenced in the literature that resulted from my searches.

The search words applied, were: (The same terms were also searched for in Norwegian)

- I. Sense of Coherence and migration: “Sense of Coherence” OR “SOC” OR “Salutogenesis” OR “SoC” OR “Salutogenic” AND “migrant*” OR “immigrant*” OR “refugee*” OR “forced immigration” OR “migration” OR “immigration”.
- II. General resistance resources and migration: “General resistance resources” OR “GRRs” AND “migrant*” OR “immigrant*” OR “refugee*” OR “forced immigration” OR “migration” OR “immigration”.
- III. Integration and Sense of Coherence: “Integrate*” OR “Integration” OR “acculturate*” OR “Acculturation” OR “Assimilation” AND “Sense of Coherence” OR “SOC” OR “Salutogenesis” OR “SoC” OR “Salutogenic”.
- IV. Refugees and the labor market: “immigrant*” OR “refugee*” OR “forced immigration” OR “immigration” AND “Labor market” OR “Job*” OR “Work*” OR “Career”
- V. Refugees and mental health: “refugee*” OR “forced migrant*” AND “mental health” OR “well-being” OR “trauma*”
- VI. Refugees and the journey: “refugee*” OR “forced migrant*” OR “asylum seeker*” AND “Europe” AND “journey” OR “Dublin regulation*” OR “flight” OR “closed border*”.

My selection was limited to the literature I was able to extract online, any books and literature that was only available at the physical University library was excluded due to COVID-19 and restrictions set in place to limit spreading of the virus. Most of the literature that I found to be relevant, that I could not access online, were books from early 2000s and older. I did not pay to gain access to any articles online. The search has therefore been limited to literature that is open and free to anyone to use, and literature that is published in Journals and databases that the University subscribes to, and therefore is free to its students.

3.3. Existing literature in the field

3.3.1. Forced migration

Trauma

Research done on the effects of the refugees’ experiences on their journey, are numerous. Some literature is based on well-known theories and concepts established in the field of psychology (Sveaass, 2005), others on the experiences of the refugees themselves. A reoccurring similarity is the focus on “mental disorders” and “traumatization” (Eshel & Kimhi, 2016a; Lavik, Hauff,

Skrondal, & Solberg, 1996; Vaage et al., 2010). The challenges and stressors experienced by refugees are thus well documented (Fazel, Wheeler, & Danesh, 2005; Sundquist, Bayard-Burfield, Johansson, & Johansson, 2000; Varvin, 2014). Traumatization can result, among other things, from exposure to war, kidnappings, political oppression (Sagy-Schwartz, 2008). Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) report that while much research is done on the negative health effects of trauma, there are positive sides too (Eshel & Kimhi, 2016b; Wehrle, Klehe, Kira, & Zikic, 2017). The participants in the study by Tedeschi and Calhoun (1996) report positive benefits in particularly three areas: self-perception, interpersonal relationships and philosophy in life. Positive benefits that emerge from the process are harder to acquire research on.

It is important to not only look at the end result and whether the refugees were integrated successfully, but acknowledge the importance of the process along the way. Varvin (2014) concludes that what happens after the traumatization (caused by fleeing and being a refugee), is the most important contributor to how refugees learn to adapt, hence giving the receiving country an important role in providing sufficient support and help. These results are similar to those of Sveaass (2005), who goes on to give recommendations on how to promote the refugees' health. Among these are a focus on interdisciplinary cooperation, preventive factors to psychological stressors and support in rebuilding networks.

Decision making

Being able to participate in important, socially valued decisions in one's own life, is argued by Antonovsky (1996) to be central in the formation of the meaningfulness of SOC. Similar results were found by Sloopjes et al. (2017) and Sveaass (2005). In relation to forced migration, Borwick et al. (2013) found that decision making and a sense of agency is especially important to individuals who have lived under oppression. A subject that seemed relevant to the study, but seemed to have received little attention, is the decision to flee; refugees know of the dangers on the journey but are willing to risk their lives to reach the goals of settling in a new country (Borwick et al., 2013; Ozaltin, Shakir, & Loizides, 2020). Information on the situation needed to plan and navigate the journey, is often collected from social media and online news, on the cell-phones (Wall, Otis Campbell, & Janbek, 2015). Research done on the flight itself appears to be very limited as well, especially on refugees from the Middle East going to Norway.

3.3.2. Labor market

Participation

Exploring labor market participation between refugees and locals indicate that there are differences in this field. These are uncovered, well explored and documented, both locally (Olsen & Bye, 2020), but also internationally (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2018). Much of the existing research in this field is quantitative. Aalandslid (2009) explores the different policies for immigration and integration in relation to the work market in Canada and Norway, as the Canadian model has received much praise for being more successful (Zikic, Bonache, & Cerdin, 2010). It is important to highlight that the paper by Aalandslid (2009) looks at all immigrants, not exclusively refugees, and therefore includes economic/labor migrants. An important observation by Aalandslid (2009) is the refugees' language skill level prior to arrival. In Canada, most refugees know one of the two official languages, English or French. It is not common, however, for refugees in Norway to master the Norwegian language upon arrival. Language is also highlighted by Newman, Bimrose, Nielsen, and Zacher (2018) and Bevelander (2016) to be essential for refugees. The latter also emphasizes the importance of knowledge and understanding of the local labor market, to successfully get a job.

Participation and experiences based on education-level is highly relevant in this context. As uncovered in the Introduction chapter, under background, there approximately 25% of Syrians in Norway have tertiary education (Dzamarjia, 2018). Qualified immigrants' subjective experiences of the objective barriers in the labor market is explored by Zikic et al. (2010). They find that the following major themes emerge; managing motivation and identity, developing new credentials and local knowledge, building a new social network and evaluating career success. They also suggest three types of qualified immigrants: the adaptive, the embracing and the resisting. The objective aspect of the labor market is also reflected in Bourdieu (1986), in form of career capital and social status. The subjective aspect consist of the qualified immigrants own thoughts on career (Zikic et al., 2010) – meaning and purpose, vocational identity and so on. Refugees subjective attitudes towards work and labor is a field which has been much explored (Baranik, Hurst, & Eby, 2018; Kosine, Steger, & Duncan, 2008; Wehrle et al., 2017; Wood et al., 2019). Wehrle et al. (2017) and Afdal (2004) stand particularly out from the others, as their research is based on the experience of the refugees themselves, a perspective that appears to be under-represented in existing literature. Afdal (2004) investigates

qualified refugees in the meeting with the Norwegian labor market, highlighting difficulties in the application process for getting previous education approved, access to necessary information, as well as the importance of the feeling of mastery and being a resource. Baranik et al. (2018) particularly explore vocational stressors that are common among refugees.

Unemployment

Unemployment among immigrants in Norway is higher than among native Norwegians (Olsen & Bye, 2020). In Sweden, it is found that a higher percentage refugees are unemployed than immigrants in general, especially refugees from Muslim countries. Lundborg (2013) suggests two possible reasons for this trend; this group is less equipped to enter the Swedish labor market, and discrimination on the basis of ethnical or cultural background. Similar results in terms of discrimination on the basis of cultural background are presented by Knappert, Kornau, and Figengül (2018) on Syrian refugees settled in Turkey. Negative effects of unemployment have also been explored (Rantakeisu, Starrin, & Hagquist, 1999). Strümpfer and Mionzi (2001) explores the relationship between a person's SOC and work. van Dijk (2021) reports that in the Netherlands, higher skilled refugees have more hardship with being employed in relevant jobs, than those of lower education and with less experience. She additionally points out that, among highly skilled refugees, the professional identity is strong, and thereby work in a lower position can contribute to a feeling of losing status. This is also emphasized by Eggenhofer-Rehart et al. (2018).

Resources

There is a gap in literature on which resources and tools that are available and effective for refugees to take use of in finding work and on dealing with unemployment. Newman, Bimrose, et al. (2018), encouraged further study in this area, which led to several publications on the matter. Resources that are reoccurring in the relevant literature entails trust in a higher power, financial stability, high career adaptability, good health, motivation, social capital (Borwick et al., 2013; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2015; Gericke, Burmeister, Löwe, Deller, & Pundt, 2017; Newman, Bimrose, et al., 2018; Sloopjes et al., 2018; Wilson & Mittelmark, 2013; Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008). Using the theory of SOC, Sloopjes et al. (2018) find that migrant women, who statistically have higher unemployment rates in Europe, can change their course by focusing on the meaning and purpose of adversity.

Whether the resources are perceived as available and can be used in a new context, is a dilemma addressed in the SMH, but also in other theories. The capabilities approach, often used to evaluate inequality between individuals or groups, are composed by functioning and capabilities (Robeyns, 2006, p. 351). van Dijk (2021, p. 3) addresses this and states that inequalities in the functioning “... *arise because capabilities depend on available (material and immaterial) resources, access to these resources and the ability to turn these resources into capabilities*”. Further she points to conversion factors. This approach has similarities to the SMH and GRRs in manageability the manageability component. Slootjes et al. (2017, p. 575) found that a strong SOC helped immigrant women with transferability and quick development of host-country specific resources.

Previously, attempts have been made providing measures and programs available in order to decrease unemployment among refugees. Abkhezr, McMahon, Glasheen, and Campbell (2018) explored an approach for career counseling in the host community, where the future career plans for the individual refugees were based on narrative interviews of their previous experience. Their model does, however, seem to require a lot of resources. A similar project was recently introduced as a cooperation between NTNU and the municipality of Trondheim in Norway, aiming to match refugees with mentors in the same field, with the goal of acquiring relevant work or internships. This project is dependent on mentors to volunteer their time and knowledge. The program leaders report that it is time consuming to make the right match the mentors and refugees, and therefore they have certain requirements that have to be fulfilled for a refugee to be eligible, among which, motivation is considered be the most crucial (Øverland & Selstad, 2020). As stated under Unemployment, refugees tend to experience downward mobility. van Dijk (2021, p. 3) therefore argues, that the success of programs in place, should not be measured by whether or not the participant gets a job, but rather “... *in improving a person’s capabilities*”, because “*refugees can compensate for this initial decline in position if they learn how to convert their expertise into a new context and if they acquire new skills and knowledge*”.

3.3.3. Acculturation & adaptation

Acculturation & stress

Acculturation is in many ways a fundamental topic to this research, as its many phases have great impact on how refugees (and the members of the receiving community) adapt in the meeting with each other. This is a phenomenon which has received much attention over the years, and I would like to present a definition from as early as 1936, as to what acculturation is:

“Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups.”

(Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936, p. 149)

More recent work on acculturation is also obtainable, much of which specify that assimilation, separation and integration, all highly relevant to this study, are phases of acculturation (Berry, 1997; Berry, Kim, Minde, & Mok, 1987; Riedel, Wiesmann, & Hannich, 2011; Sam & Berry, 2010). Sam and Berry (2010) point to how the acculturation strategy applied is decisive to how a person adapts, and further point to that integration as a choice is believed to be connected with successful psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Acculturative stress arises when individuals acculturating, experience a reduction in health status (Berry et al., 1987). This stress occurs when individuals meet new cultural norms, language, and perhaps also meet discriminating behavior from the host community (Abu-Kaf & Khalaf, 2020; Berry et al., 1987). Abu-Kaf and Khalaf (2020) examines the connection between acculturative stress and sense of coherence in their quantitative study.

The waiting period that the refugees experience between arrival in their destination country until they receive their residence permit, is a topic that has received much attention. What the waiting period implies is dependent on the receiving country's immigration laws and policies. Thereby, research from other countries on this issue, does not necessarily transfer directly to “fit” with the Norwegian model of integration and the experiences of the refugees here. Research on the waiting period, from the perspective of the refugees themselves, in Norway, is very limited. However, having the different immigration policies in mind, research on the waiting period is available. Ghorashi, de Boer, and ten Holder (2017) compares this stage, which they refer to as *on the threshold*, to the concept of *liminality*, by Turner and Abrahams

(1995). A short and very concise presentation of the concept is given by Turner (1992, pp. 49-50):

“A limen is a threshold... ...Let us refer to the state and process of mid-transition as “liminality” and consider a few of its very odd properties. Those undergoing it – call them “luminaries” – are betwixt and between established states of politico-jural structure. They evade ordinary cognitive classification, too, for they are not this or that, here or there, one thing or the other... ...They may be said to be in a process of being ground down into a sort of homogenous social matter, in which possibilities of differentiation may still be glimpsed, then later positively refashioned into specific shapes compatible with their new post-liminal duties and rights as incumbents of a new status and state.”

Ghorashi et al. (2017) argue that transforming places as asylum seeker centers, and other sources of agency, into places which can provide existential meaning, will have great impact on the short-term well-being of the refugees. Their findings are based entirely on refugees’ (from the Middle East region) experiences in the Netherlands. Another study referring to the concept of liminality is a narrative study done on Syrian refugees in Texas, USA. Mzayek (2019) argues that it is salient to view the well-being of refugees as multi-dimensional, as the time spent in a liminal phase contributes to change in their self-understanding.

Coping strategies & resources

Research on the coping strategies that are used in the phase of acculturation and adaptation in the new community is substantial. As stated previously, participation in the labor market is an effective strategy for integration. The resources used to enter the labor market specifically has also been considered. This paragraph will present coping strategies and resources that have been found to be essential over-all to integration. Information as a resource is highlighted by Lloyd, Pilerot, and Hultgren (2017) to be essential for successful adaptation and settlement. Through interviews with refugees from Burma to Australia, Borwick et al. (2013) found that especially four resources were mentioned repeatedly – interpersonal relationships, existential values, sense of future and agency, and spirituality. Other studies have found similar results (Slootjes et al., 2017; Tingvold, Middelthon, Allen, & Hauff, 2012), which of many are the same as the resources applied in coping with the labor market (Slootjes et al., 2018). Home attachment (Hirsch et al., 2015; Varvin, 2014) and time as resources have also been uncovered.

Slootjes et al. (2017) explore the connection between a strong SOC and integration with refugees in the Netherlands. Immigration and integration appear to threaten the three components of SOC of the refugees. They discovered that GRRs like social support could help neutralize this threat, and that pre-migration expectations played an important role.

Research has been done on the place of education and work as a direct or indirect resource to integration. Hauff and Vaglum (1997) emphasize the importance of a close confidant upon arrival to Norway. The importance of a close confidant is also brought up by Pastoor (2015), but in the context of students (specifically unaccompanied young refugees) and the pivotal role that the teaching staff at schools have. Participation in the Norwegian labor market, as we have seen, is also crucial for integration into the society (Newman, Bimrose, et al., 2018). This is supported by Wood et al. (2019), who found that it is the feeling of belonging and self-realization, in addition to having paid work, that connects participation in the labor market and integration so closely. Bucken-Knapp, Fasih, and Spehar (2019) has explored the perceived challenges among refugees in Sweden, attempting to enter the labor market. They have found that the validation process for previous academic achievements, as well as language courses, are common barriers to integration in to work life. However, they found that within the group of refugees included in their qualitative research, the extent to which the refugees found these barriers to be problematic, varied in accordance with their education levels.

Health

Poor acculturation and a weak SOC is believed to be risk factors and having a negative effect on mental health (Sundquist et al., 2000). Riedel et al. (2011) points to existing research, claiming there is not sufficient evidence of the impact a person's SOC has on the choice of acculturation process and psychological adaptation. They suggest a framework of acculturation and Salutogenesis to better evaluate this plausible connection. Haj-Younes et al. (2020) covered a gap in research when exploring how the different phases of the migration process affected health and quality of life among Syrian refugees in Norway. They found that the self-reported health was stable through all stages of the journey and settlement, while the quality of life appeared to increase with time, as the participants gained knowledge on the new systems and understood the dynamics of migration. While Haj-Younes et al. (2020) covered this topic using quantitative methods, there does not seem to be much research exploring this through the experiences of the refugees using a qualitative approach.

3.4. Conclusion

Existing research and literature on the field gives a valuable, and frequently updated, overview of the statistics on forced migration and integration (particularly in the labor market). This provides numbers on the situation and thereby presents a summary of major patterns. Particularly interesting in this case, is the number of unemployed former refugees, as well as the levels of education, nevertheless, quantitative studies do not explain the reason behind the numbers. Qualitative research on the field is also conducted, however, the point of representation is often the one of the receiving countries, not the refugees themselves. There is also, as mentioned, the issue of variation in integration policies in the different countries, which can have an effect on the applicability across borders. Recent research in Norway, on refugees own experiences with the labor market, stand out as an area that would benefit from further studies. It appears, through the literature search, as though there has been a shift the later years, from focusing on the negative sides and effects of receiving refugees in the early 2000s, to now, perhaps along with an increased number of studies done on the experiences of the refugees themselves, to more positive and salutary factors. Studies using Salutogenesis and the SOC model, distinctly stands out as studies on the positive factors, however, there are few studies done in Norway on refugees and the labor market, using this model.

Chapter 4: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

One overall research question and three sub-questions were formulated to guide this research. The research questions are based on the gaps in literature identified in Chapter 3: Literature review– SOC and refugees in Norway. Because Syrians are a relatively new group of refugees to Norway, research on their experience with entering the labor market is also limited.

Overall research question	How does former Syrian refugees' Sense of Coherence impact perceived opportunities for employment in Norway?
Sub-question 1	What challenges and stressors have been experienced in the country of origin, on the journey to Norway, and here in Norway?
Sub-question 2	What strategies and resources helped deal with the stressors?
Sub-question 3	How are opportunities for employment in Norway perceived?

Chapter 5: METHODOLOGY

5.1. Introduction

In this chapter, a detailed description will be given of the methodological aspects of the research project. First, I will present the research design, including how I as the researcher view the world and how one can obtain knowledge, the study area of the project, as well as an introduction of my participants and the recruitment strategy. The choice of methods of data collection will hereby be discussed and justified, before we move on to the data management. Ethical considerations and the trustworthiness of the project will then be reviewed before a detailed description of the data analysis process, as well as a presentation of the thematic network used, will be given.

5.2. Research design

5.2.1. Philosophical assumptions

It is essential to acknowledge what epistemological view I as the researcher hold. I lean towards a constructive interpretivist view on how the world is structured. My ontological viewpoint is that the world does not necessarily exist as we see it (like the positivist approach would suggest). I believe that every person has a view of the world that is built up through their experiences, constructed meanings and interpretations. Therefore, I do not expect that I can ever fully understand my participants and learn the knowledge that they share with me. Ideally, participants would be researched in their natural habitat. Considering my group of participants are refugees, they are no longer in their original natural habitat. I did, however, want to understand where their thoughts and actions originated from, and to the extent that I could, see the world they recounted for me, through their eyes (Neuman, 2011).

5.2.2. Study area

The initial search for participants was limited to the Bergen area, as the preferred style of interviewing was face-to-face interviews, and this is where I am located. Even so, the first two interviews were with participants from Oslo and Trondheim – resulting in Skype interviews. With the corona crisis affecting and limiting social contact, moving forward with face-to-face interviews seemed irresponsible with the restrictions set in place by the government. In agreement with my supervisor, the remaining interviews were completed over Skype. This

decision opened up for participants from all over Norway to be equally accessible, not only those located in Bergen.

5.2.3. Participants

Gatekeepers & recruitment strategy

Through my old part time job, I had the pleasure of working alongside several Syrian refugees. One of them was happy to help out when I told him about my project. He thought the best way of recruiting participants was to write a post in a closed Facebook group for Syrian students in Norway – “الطلبة السوريين في النرويج – Syrisk studentforening Norge”.

When informing about my project through Facebook, I stressed that everybody, including those who just wanted more information, was encouraged to contact me. I used purposive sampling because I informed about the criteria for participation (these criteria will be introduced shortly). Further, self-selection was used, as those who saw the post and felt they met the criteria, connected with me. When selecting participants among the people who contacted me, I took the first ones who had contacted me and matched the criteria. To keep the threshold low for making contact, I urged anybody who had any questions or just wanted more information to make contact. Letting the participants make the first contact ensured that they were willing and comfortable moving forward. Before the interviews, the project description and consent form were sent to the participants to read through.

Purposive sampling was also used in recruitment of key informants for triangulation. Internet searches, as well as suggestions from my thesis supervisor, revealed relevant programs specifically aimed at helping and leading refugees and immigrants in the integration process, particularly in regard to education and the labor market. None of the institutions and programs that were included were mentioned specifically by the main participants, they were included merely for a deeper understanding. However, two different local branches or programs of an institution mentioned by a participant were included – NAV and NTNU. See Table 3: Presentation of key informants for an overview, and Appendix 8 for further information on the institutions and programs.

Presentation of main participants

Eight participants were included in the research. Originally the aim was to recruit two men and two women who were employed, as well as two men and two women who were not employed. This proved to be difficult, leaving me with one employed, two part-time working, and one unemployed male, as well as three employed and one unemployed female participant. Initially, I set four criteria for participation:

- I. All participants must be over 18 years of age.
- II. All participants must have completed the introduction course.
- III. All participants must have been in Norway for at least 4 years.
- IV. All participants must be able to communicate in English or Norwegian.

I did, however, have to compromise on some of these criteria as well.

Participant pseudonym	Employment status	Age	Sex	Length of time in Norway
Farid	Employed	35	M	5 years
Hassan	Part-time job	25	M	4 years
Jamal	Unemployed	40	M	4 years
Karam	Part-time job	21	M	4 years
Fatima	Unemployed	22	F	5 years
Iman	Employed	25	F	3 years
Rima	Employed	40	F	5 years
Yara	Employed	36	F	4 years

TABLE 2: PRESENTATION OF MAIN PARTICIPANTS

Institution	Informants position	Support program
BCCI	Business policy advisor	From Refugee to Resource & Bergen Opportunity
NTNU	Deputy director for education, department of information technology and electronics	Supplementary Education in Science and Technology for Refugees
Oslo Met	Senior advisor, section for career, internationalization and student life	Supplementary Education in teaching, nursing, engineering and technology
Årstad High School	Department manager, introduction courses	Combination-class & introduction class
NAV	Department manager Nor-A	Nor-A

TABLE 3: PRESENTATION OF KEY INFORMANTS

5.2.4. Research design

With the goal of uncovering and understanding Syrian refugees' own thoughts and experiences on the perceived employment opportunities in Norway, gaining insight in the stressors they have experienced in life and learning how they have exploited available resources, a qualitative research design was a clear choice. This allowed me to have few participants and in-depth interviews. Individual interviews were also preferred because of the sensitive topics that would be visited. There would be no gain in multiple participants discussing their experiences, as I wished to understand how the experiences were lived and understood by the individuals. The intention of the study is thus to uncover the individual stories and their contexts, not the norms of a larger population. This is why I chose to use a narrative research design.

As a method, narrative research “...begins with the experiences as expressed in lived and told stories by individuals” Creswell (2007). In this research project, data provided by the main participants were solely collected through told stories. The participants were encouraged to tell their stories through semi-structured, narrative biographical interviews, in a chronological ordering. The interview guide (see Appendix 5) had three focus periods: the time in Syria, the journey to Norway and the time in Norway. These periods are based on the three sub-questions to the research question (mentioning stressors and resources in each of these times). By using an interview guide, I opened up for the participant to talk about whatever they had on their heart relating to the topic, limiting the chances of me as the researcher to inadvertently limit or affect this by asking leading questions. I opened the interviews by simply asking the participants to tell me about the time when they lived in Syria. When themes were brought up that I was particularly interested in, they were asked to elaborate. I also revisited stories actively throughout the interviews. The interview guide served as a checklist to make sure that all the relevant key points were visited.

Email interviews were conducted with the key informants. See Appendix 6 for initial emails that were sent out and Appendix 7 for the interview questions. The choice of email as the communication platform was used to increase the likelihood of more informants replying, as they would be able to reply at the time that best suited them. All institutions that were reached out to, except one, replied and graciously offered their time in order to share their knowledge and experiences. An introduction is given to each of the institutions and programs included in the triangulation, in Appendix 8.

5.2.5. Data management

The recordings of the Skype interviews were automatically saved on my password protected computer. The interviews were transcribed in Microsoft Word shortly after they had taken place, and the video files were deleted. The transcripts were numbered and later labeled with the participants pseudonym. All information that could reveal the identity was edited and anonymized (e.g., name of workplace, school, etcetera).

5.3. Ethical considerations

Throughout the entire research process, I continuously considered and ensured that the research was ethically conducted. I ensured that the participants were anonymized during the process as well as in the finished product. All files were numbered until the process of transcribing was done; at this time, they were given pseudonyms. The interviews were recorded with the Skype function, the recordings are automatically shared with both the host and participant in the videocall. This was all cleared and agreed to by the participants in advance of the interview. This deviated from my original plan of recording the interviews with an audio recorder. On a test run (with my husband), I tried recording the sound from the computer with a recorder and concluded that the sound quality was not sufficient. Recording through Skype also made it possible for me to wear a headset, which could work as extra security and confirmation to the participants that I was the only one that could hear them. After transcriptions were completed the recordings were deleted. I have been committed to retell as accurately as possible what the participants has shared with me, to make sure that it is their views I am presenting, and not my own.

All participants received an information through Facebook messenger (see Appendix 4) as well as the consent form (see Appendix 3) once they had agreed to participate. They were asked to read through and contact me if they had any questions or wanted further information. When this was done, we scheduled a time for the interview, where the information was then again reviewed orally before the interviewed started. Information included the aim of the study, why they are selected as participants, that they would be anonymized, the right to withdraw at any time during the interview (including the withdrawal of any information already given), as well as the right to skip any questions they did not wish to answer. They were also informed that all information they provided was confidential. All participants orally agreed to the consent form

(Green, 2014). Compensation for the participants was never considered a viable alternative; it was never mentioned by any of the participants and the opportunity for compensation is limited as the interviews were conducted over Skype. The majority of the participants emphasized how happy they were to be able to help out and were also thankful that they could share their story.

Key informants that contributed to the project through email interviews for triangulation were informed that they would not be anonymized, as their position would be valuable to the project, and the answers they provided would be on behalf of the institution they represent. This was agreed to over email (see Appendix 6 for initial emails sent out). One informant (from BCCI) preferred to do the interview by a phone call. Since I was not able to audio record this, I took extensive notes of the conversation, and made an agreement that I would send all information I intended to use in the thesis, for him to read over and quality check.

The project proposal and interview guide (see Appendix 5) were sent to NSD (Norsk Senter for Forskningsdata) and approved before the research process was started. After the approval from NSD was received (see Appendix 1), I immediately started the data collection and process of transcribing. At this time the University of Bergen set up a new system for secure processing of sensitive personal data in research, SAFE. As I had already received the NSD approval for the project, as well as transcribed and anonymized my data at this time, using SAFE to store the sensitive data did not seem relevant.

5.4. Trustworthiness

5.4.1. Quality of research

Assessing the quality of qualitative research can be challenging and the techniques are debated. One recognized approach is that of Guba's construct, which elaborates on four criteria; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Shenton, 2004). Yilmaz (2013, p. 319) argues that because qualitative research is based on different ontological, epistemological and theoretical viewpoints than that of quantitative studies, different terms and jargon should be used. She further proposes several concepts that she argues are more in line with qualitative studies, fundamentally very similar to those of Guba. In this section I intend to use guidelines from both Shenton (2004) and Yilmaz (2013) in order to ensure quality in all areas of the study.

Credibility – whether or not the findings of the study reflect reality, is ensured through using well established research methods, which are presented using thick description. Narrative

research is a widely accepted and used method for qualitative data collection. Triangulation interview with key informants also ensures credibility, as it provides context and thereby provides the reader with valuable and different insight to aspects on the stories told by the participants. At times during the interview when something was unclear, I made sure to have the participant elaborate on the matter, and thereby confirm or refute my understanding of their statement, ensuring authenticity in the research.

As regards transferability, I will argue that there is a great chance that the findings of this research project can be transferred to other situations. Although there were only eight participants, there were distinct similarities that could be drawn between them, but also to existing research in the field. The findings of the project cannot be used for generalization; however, it is argued that as each case is unique but still is part of a broader group, hence transferability should not be rejected. Quality in transferability is ensured through providing thick description of the process of data collection and analysis, as well as drawing lines and situating the findings to existing similar studies.

Dependability – whether the study can be repeated by a different researcher, is a challenging notion to confirm in qualitative studies where the researcher takes such an active role in the data collection. However, by addressing the philosophical viewpoints I as the researcher have, as well as elaborating on my role as the researcher (5.4.2), using an interview guide, providing an in-depth description of the process and methods used in the research, as well as co-coding, this is sufficient, according to the criteria set by Shenton (2004) and Yilmaz (2013).

Lastly, confirmability. To ensure that it is the views of the participants that are presented in the research, and that these are not affected by the views and biases of the researcher, the interview guide was discussed in detail with the project supervisor. During the interviews, additional probing questions were formulated in an open manner, to allow the participants to navigate in the wished direction. I, as the researcher, have also elaborated on my own predispositions for the reader. For transparency in the process of analysis, the thematic network is presented to the reader (Shenton, 2004).

5.4.2. Role of the researcher

A characteristic of a qualitative researcher is how close they are to the participants of the study. This makes it impossible to avoid any influence of personal bias on the process, making it essential to reflect on the role of the researcher in the study, so that the reader can assess the possibility of these factors influencing the interpretations and analysis. My epistemological viewpoints have already been clarified. I would also like to elaborate on my preconceived notions on the topic of the thesis. For years, I worked part time in the cruise business with a Syrian dentist who had to do years of his education over to get it approved in Norway. At the same time my grandfather was admitted to the hospital where he was surrounded by Syrian health care workers and nurses. Through conversations with them, we found that they were originally educated doctors in Syria, some with many years of experience. My impression of the Syrian refugees in Norway was that they were well educated, motivated to work, but were limited in Norway to use their capacities and contribute as a resource to the society.

During recruitment of the participants for the research, I used my personal Facebook profile when making contact through the post on the Facebook group (see Gatekeepers & recruitment strategy). I did not become “Facebook friends” with any participants, I also have a closed profile, so the information available to the public is very limited. I made an effort building rapport with my participants when they first made contact over Facebook messenger. If they mentioned kids, I would mention that I also have a son. When conducting the interviews, I also greeted the participants in Arabic, which seemed to ease the mood and show that I as the researcher was genuinely interested.

Since the interviews were conducted over Skype a lot of the concerns which I had previous to the data collection were no longer valid, e.g., where to conduct the interviews that felt safe for both me and the participants, comfortable enough for them to open up to me, and so on. My conception of videocalls with people that are in their homes is that it feels more personal than interviews in a meeting room. You are in a way brought into their living room and their homes. I do hope that my participants felt the same way with me, allowing us to connect on a more personal level, rather than a power imbalance with me as the researcher and them as the participant. Most of my participants were either educated on the same or at a higher level than myself, while the younger participants had not yet completed their education. Some of the participants seemed relieved to have someone to talk to and share their story, as they did not

have many friends to talk to here in Norway. Before conducting the first interview, I was nervous about how the setting of the interview would feel, worrying that it could become awkward and impersonal sharing with a stranger over web camera. I will claim that the complete opposite happened. The way I, as the researcher, experienced the interviews and the participants was very informal and relaxed once we got started. I believe that the participants felt they had room to share and that they were heard. Several participants also had emotional reactions during the interviews, which I am happy they felt like they had the space and were comfortable enough to do.

5.5. Framework for data analysis

In order to properly review and analyze the data from the interviews completed, a method facilitating for an organized overview, aiming for a deeper understanding of the individual's stories and their connections to each other was imperative. Attride-Stirling (2001) provides this – the Thematic Network Analysis: “*Web-like illustrations (networks) that summarize the main themes constituting a piece of text*”. Creating a network like this, deriving the themes directly from the participants statements in the transcriptions of the interviews, provided the opportunity to analyze the results in a methodical manner. This was done using NVivo 12, a software used to manage large quantities of qualitative data.

In her article, Attride-Stirling (2001, p. 391) presents a step-by-step guide as to how one should build a Thematic Network. The network should include three levels of themes: Basic themes, organizing themes and global themes. The first step of the approach is to design a coding framework. Using an inductive approach, I worked with three of the interviews when forming the codes in NVivo. This process was completed with attention to detail, and great effort was put into to generating codes that underlined important themes in the data, and also would be transferrable to the other interviews. Once this one done, the attention was directed towards the next step, identifying themes, as well as step three, constructing the networks. As I worked creating the basic and organizing themes, the choice of three global themes that are directly linked with the theoretical framework for the study, Sense of Coherence, became evident. In this way, I was able to connect the codes generated directly from the data, through the different themes in the network, to the theoretical framework. To ensure that the networks were sustainable, I verified the codes with the basic themes, the basic themes with the organizing themes, and lastly, the organizing themes with the global themes, to ensure there was a connection and that the context was not being lost. Necessary adjustments were made as the

next five interviews were coded in the framework. Step 4 and 5 involves exploring, describing and summarizing the network, this is done in Chapter 6: Findings. The thematic network is presented below, in

Table 4: Thematic network.

Global theme	Organizing theme	Basic theme
Comprehensibility	Expectations versus reality	Norway as a good destination Opportunities for work Processing time Social life
	Reflections	In Syria On journey In Norway
Manageability	Stressors	Life in Syria On the journey Integration & life in Norway
	Resources	Family Money Network Social support Time Language Work experience Available technology
Meaningfulness	Goals	Education & employment Freedom
	Participation in shaping outcomes	If & how to flee Integration Self-created opportunities

TABLE 4: THEMATIC NETWORK

Chapter 6: FINDINGS

As presented in 5.5 Framework for data analysis, the steps introduced by Attride-Stirling (2001) on creating a thematic network were used for structuring a rigorous analysis of the collected data. The results of the process of working through the data systematically, numerous times, was three global themes: Comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. These three global themes are directly related to the theory of Salutogenesis, as the three components of Sense of Coherence, and will also serve as the frame for the presentation of finding in this chapter.

6.1. Comprehensibility

Comprehensibility addresses whether a person believes that a challenge is understood. I chose to include two organizing themes here: Expectations versus reality, and reflections. Prior to the interviews I wished to explore this by looking at the expectations that were held before fleeing, as well as the reality that was met. The interview guide (see Appendix 5) mentions expectations, in all three focus periods. I did, however, find that expectations form as they go; for example, new expectations about Norway were made in Norway. Through the process of coding the data, I discovered that there easily would arise a blurred line between the reality that is met in contrast or as a validation of the expectations, and the general reality that the participants find themselves in. I chose to explicitly mention realities that were directly linked to the expectations presented in the interview, in this section, as I felt this would leave more room for discussion and comparison. Reflections, the second organizing theme, refers to the general thoughts and the view the participants make of their surroundings, perhaps in some ways a strategy of coping and making sense of the world and reality they live in. This is divided up in to the three focus periods used in the interview guide: In Syria, on journey and in Norway.

6.1.1. Expectation versus reality

The choice of destination was a central and reoccurring theme during six of the eight interviews. Expectations were formed both before departure from Syria, but also on the way to the destination country. Three of the participants expected safety and opportunities in neighboring countries of Syria and spent time there before they continued their journey to Norway. Rima had lived many years in Lebanon, since before the war broke out in Syria, but was told that it was not safe there anymore. Farid and Jamal expected job opportunities in Iraq and Turkey, but as Jamal points out; *“I could not any more manage the financial situation*

there, so, I need to come here [Norway] to work and to support my family". Within this quote from Jamal, he presented his expectations to his plan B, Norway. The reality that met him was not quite as expected. He stated in his interview that he and his wife had very high expectations, and that life in Norway was much different from these expectations. Jamal seemed to be the only participant that was overwhelmed with the feeling of disappointment caused by his expectations not being met. Jamal put part of the fault for his incorrectly formed image of Europe on the media. Farid on the other hand mentioned how he received information through media, both on negative and positive aspects when choosing his destination country. He had picked up on news stories portraying how a lot of Norwegians were negative to large streams of refugees, but he also saw positive aspects, like how refugees were helped in Norway. Yara, who had a one-year-old boy at the time when she fled, chose Norway because of the focus on family values and respect for children. Today her son and herself are very happy with the choice of country.

Iman was positively surprised by Norway, she said: *"Really, when I came here, I thought that it is actually much better, prettier, and I will be very nice and change my whole life"*. Iman was the only one of the participants that came to Norway through family reunion. Her husband was already settled with a job, and had a house waiting for her. The other participants were all asylum seekers upon entry to Norway, and had to apply for refuge, before they got their residence permit. This process has been mentioned by all the other seven participants as a really stressful time, stretching out far longer than had been expected, with very limited opportunities to start a new life. Hassan emphasizes this, and said:

"There were a lot of people. I thought there would be few, and that we would get much attention, and that we would get residence permit right away. But it was not as expected, we had to wait for a long period of time."

Hassan also said that he formed his expectations on the basis of information from a friend who got his residence permit after only three months, and that the reason it took so long for himself must have been because of the shift in government when he arrived. Jamal shared his disappointment.

"... we expected to come here and in a short time we get a job, integrated in the social life, in the labor market. But it wasn't easy like that. I don't mean that it should be like honey and milk, maybe it takes time, but we were not ready for this, because we had different image in our mind."

After Jamal received his residence permit, he expresses that he is very disappointed that, in spite of his background with work experience and certificates, he is still not in the labor market. Farid also had difficulties with getting into the Norwegian labor market with his educational and work background from Syria. He had worked several years in international oil companies in Syria and expected his experience to be of value in Norway. He did, however, arrive at a time where the oil industry was declining and there were considerably fewer jobs. Farid acknowledged this, and quickly decided to reeducate himself. He had already made a plan to study at NTNU if he did not get a job. Challenges getting a job with education from Syria, mentioned as a stressor under 6.2: Manageability, was also mentioned by many of the participants as unexpected.

6.1.2. Reflections

Iman, who is a Kurdish woman, reflected, in her interview, on how Kurds were treated poorly by the regime. She has witnessed oppression and ethnical discrimination; *“We are not doing well, we are Kurdish, it was very bad for us. You know, some Kurds don’t have an ID, you are not an existing person in this world”*. She went on to explain how Kurds can study in the University, but will not receive a diploma at the end, because they do not exist. Jamal mentioned in his interview that the regime helped with financial aid and support to the groups of society that were their supporters. Those who did not support the regime, did not enjoy financial support and freedom.

The two youngest participants both shared their experiences and how they perceived the situation once the war was noticeable in their daily life. As Karam explained, he was not prepared for it to suddenly be so close, he confused the gun sounds outside his window with his XBOX game. Fatima seemed to share this disbelief in war. She was extremely frightened, and very surprised when she witnessed a kidnapping outside her house. She did not understand what was happening and ran to her dad. Karam and Fatima share that they did not realize the reality of the situation, until it was right in front of them. What happened on TV and the news seemed distant to them, and they depended on their parents for information and support.

Only Farid made distinct reflections about the situation on the journey. He challenged the common perception that human smugglers were the best way, or only way, to travel through Europe unnoticed:

“At the time it was expensive [traveling through Europe with human smugglers], but for me it was not that expensive. I decided that, OK, I can do these things. There were so many pages on Facebook where they talk about how hard the trip is and that you need these smugglers to help people, because it is too hard. But I had a notion that all these pages are run by the smugglers themselves. They make it harder for people, so that the people will have to do it [travel] through smugglers”.

In Norway, reflections made by the participants were concentrated around two main themes; meaningless rules, and why integration was so successful. Jamal, Karam, Fatima and Iman all mentioned rules and laws in Norway, that to them, seemed absolutely pointless. Karam and Fatima, who took the same route to Norway via Russia, both mentioned that they had to cross the border on a bicycle. They could not walk or drive by car.

Jamal was surprised by how bureaucratic the system in Norway was:

“The official procedures were a little surprising to us, because for us we thought it was very bureaucratic, you understand me. Bureaucracy. Some bureaucracy. And they spend a lot of money, they spend, the government I mean, for our moving from one camp to another, and for us to doing this and that, and one stuff. I thought they spent a lot of money on refugees, they could spend less than that money or otherwise they could spend the same amount of money at doing better job.”

Jamal emphasized that he felt very welcome, and that his wife and him were taken good care of, however, he did not understand the point of the bureaucratic procedures, and why they spent all the money moving them around. Iman expressed concern about following the Norwegian laws and rules, because there are so many and it is hard for refugees, she says, to keep track of them:

“We like your country, and we do not want to fail here, they [the officials, specifically referring to the child protective services] recognize that many refugees don't want to do anything illegal... ...They must respect that they are nice human beings with us, and we have to respect the rules, we have to respect too, but for them [Norwegians] religion specifically, I think they have to think a little bit about that”

6.2. Manageability

Manageability is whether one believes that the resources to cope are available. The first organizing theme under manageability is stressors. Stressors were included here because they are the situations that require a person to respond and that challenges the individual's manageability. A lot of the stressors that were mentioned by the participants were directly followed by how they managed to find a solution, or way to deal with the stressor. Other times, this was left open, and I used probing questions in the interviews to get more detail on how the participants managed. At times, stressors were met by participants that they did not find a way to deal with. The participants also mentioned resources that were available to them and that they used, sometimes explicitly, other times it seemed unknowingly. At times, resources were mentioned by the participants that they seemingly did not acknowledge or consider to be a resource. I decided to group all the resources together as the second organizing theme, separating them by type in basic themes. How the stressors were dealt with by the participants, and available resources will be discussed further in Chapter 7: Discussion.

6.2.1. Stressors

The stressors mentioned by the participants could predominantly be sectioned in to the three focus periods that were also used during the interviews: In Syria, on the journey and in Norway. Some stressors, however, might range over a longer period of time. When this is the case, it will be mentioned explicitly.

Life in Syria

Challenges that were met during the participants life's in Syria ranged from cultural expectations to missiles and bombs. Some of the stressors were mentioned by participants as being direct causes to why they decided to seek refuge abroad. When this is the case, it will be mentioned explicitly. Fatima mentioned how she always wished to get an education within English, but her parents told her that in Syria she would not get a job with that education, she would be sitting at home. Her family wanted her to be a doctor, pharmacist or a lawyer.

Deprivation of liberty by the regime was mentioned by Jamal, Fatima, Iman and Yara. Jamal told a story of how he as a 15-year-old boy was accused of being a spy for a foreign country, because he talked to tourists. He was at the time threatened by the military who told him they

would take him in and torture him. At this time, he realized how bad the situation was in Syria. His friends had started smuggling books about liberty and democracy from Lebanon that were illegal in Syria. He read the books and hid them. At times he also downloaded books from the internet which he often had to delete before finishing them, in fear of being arrested by the military:

“it was like hell that you cannot even read a book in that time... ..Sometimes the intelligence police break into houses, open your laptop and they search for what is there, and if they find some kind of these books which are prohibited in Syria, this is very easy to just to throw you in prison and you get torture. It was very bad days, even before the revolution. I realized that even by reading a book it could cost you your life”.

Jamal seemed to have been the most politically active among the participants. However, Fatima, Iman and Yara all experienced how life was limited because it was not safe to leave the house and walk on the streets. Iman exemplified:

“After the war it was very hard to live, study and travel for example. There were very few things, you could not go shopping, if you went shopping you could not know if you would return or not. Many people lost their lives because they went shopping and suddenly a bomb hit so they died, really”.

Fatima’s first brutal meeting with the war, was when she witnessed a kidnapping right outside of her house. Karam had seen the war on the TV, but it was not before mid-summer 2012 he experienced it close-up:

“I was playing Call of Duty on my Xbox, with high sound. And when I turned off the Xbox the voices of the guns didn’t stop, I thought it was fireworks at first. I never thought it was gunfire. But it turns out, after I heard helicopters, I knew it was gunfire. The whole building was shaking, you can hear the helicopter above you. I had to move out of my house”.

Karams’ house was later destroyed by a land rocket. Karam was not the only participant that had to move out of his house. Jamal tells how he moved to 6 different cities in Syria with his family (his immediate family, before he got married).

For Hassan, it was the threat of the bombs in Aleppo (where he attended University) after the city was divided in two by the rebels and the regime, that made him now decide it to be too dangerous to stay, and that he had to flee. Yara also experienced being caught between two

sides in the war. The hospital she worked at in Damascus was right in-between Al-Assad's military and the IS. She explained the situation:

"They send a bomb to them, and they send a bomb back to them. But the bombs came down on the hospital too, and there were more and more bombs on the hospital. Part of the hospital was destroyed and many of my colleagues and sick people that was in the hospital died. To understand it is really hard".

Yara said that she moved away from Damascus to a smaller town where; *"...it was not bombing and war, but it was war in another kind of way. It was very expensive to live there. It was a lot of kidnappings, thieves and such, it was a lot of unrest"*. Fatima also explained how she and her family moved away from their city and into the small town where her grandparents lived.

The higher costs of living and the lack of available necessities were mentioned frequently by all participants, except for Farid and Rima. The cost of living, as Yara mentioned in her quote, changed dramatically during the years after the Arab Spring had started. Jamal said that it turned your life upside down. Farid explained how this was much of the reason he had to work in addition to doing his studies:

"In Syria it is a bit different from maybe in Norway, when you start studying a bachelor or high school you need [financial] support from your family. So, family pay everything. But for me, family helps, but the situation was not so good".

Karam explained how the war, indirectly, had a huge effect on tenant prices, so finding a new house after the old one was bombed was a struggle for his family. His family had to reside at his grandparents' house for a while, which after an incident with a car bomb needed replacement of all windows. They decided to restore with bullet proof glass. Yara emphasized the hardships it brought on to lack things like diesel to create warmth in the winter, and fuel for the cars. She told me how her family now have between two to three hours of electricity, how the situation is making people desperate, leading to raids and crime. For her, she explained, it was especially hard because of a reduction in her income; *"Yes, in a way we lived on a much lower level than we did before, I had to. And we were lacking medications too. My mother is sick... ...but there were lacking medicines in the hospital too"*.

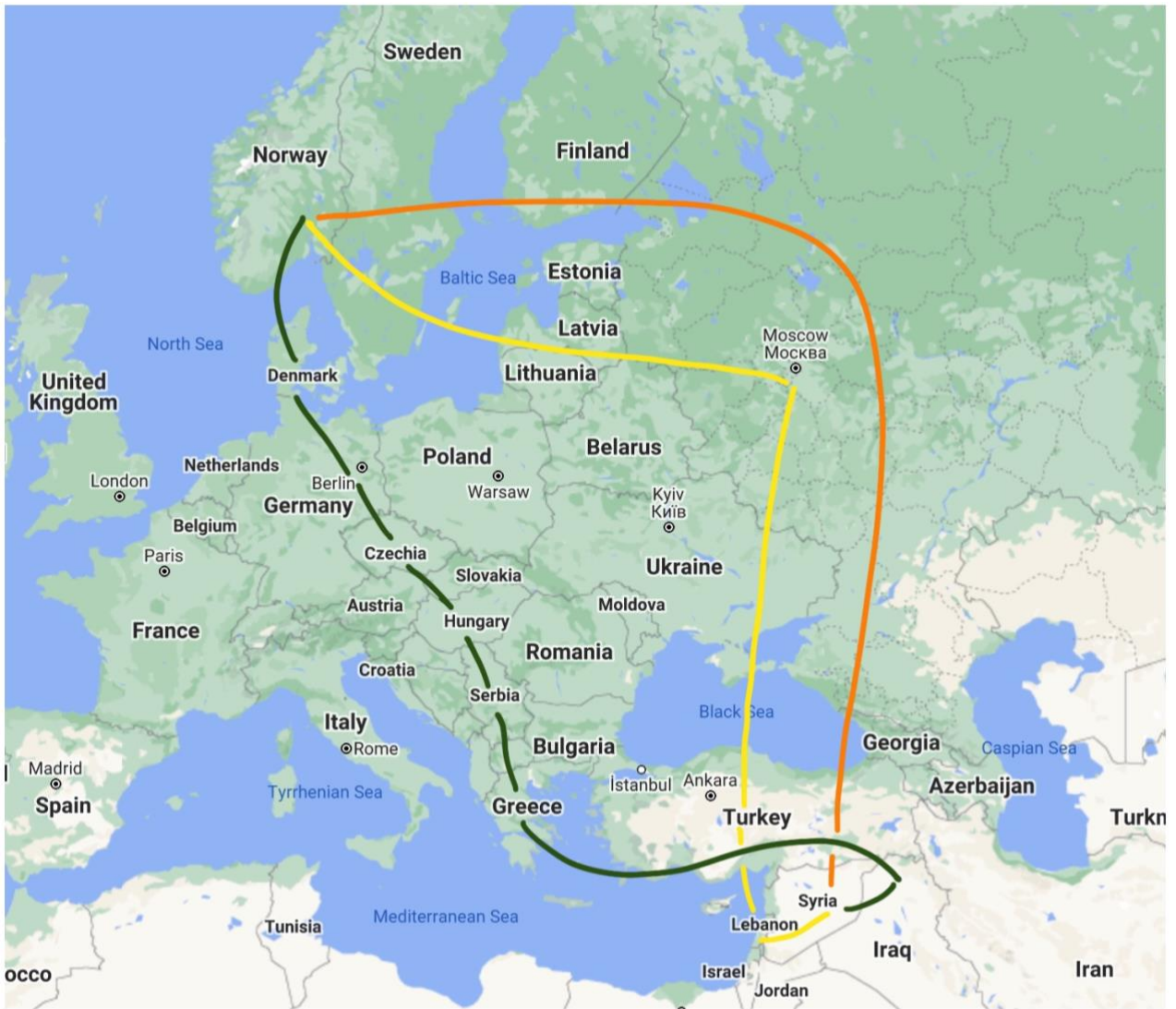
Jamal experienced the stressor of losing his job and having less economic freedom as well. For him, this was a result of protesting in the streets against the regime:

“The regime they suspended our job, everybody was out in the protest, and they have their eyes in the streets. You know the eyes, the agents I mean. So, they report to the police – this man this this and catch photo of us in the street during the protest. So later on, I lost my job as a teacher of English, yes”.

For Farid, the point when he decided he had to move from Syria, was when he was called to military service; *“I cannot, I don’t have it in me to kill, people, or I don’t want to be killed. There were other reasons too, but this was the most crucial reason”.*

On the journey

Farid, Hassan, Jamal, Rima and Yara all came to Norway by going to Turkey and taking a rubber boat from there to Greece, continuing north, using public transport and on foot. Karam and Fatima were able to take the route through Russia, while Iman was transported by airplane to Norway, because of her husband who had applied for family reunion. The travel routes are important to mention here, because they present very different stressors. Figure 4: Map of Routes Taken presents a general indicator of the three routes that were most commonly taken by the participants.



- Through Europe
- By family reunification
- Through Russia

FIGURE 4: MAP OF ROUTES TAKEN

The participants who took the route through Europe met the most challenges and stressors. Both Farid and Jamal attempted to start a life in neighboring countries to Syria, but both had problems with managing financially. The first stressors that were mentioned in relation the journey itself, was related to the rubber boats that were used as a means of transportation between Turkey and Greece. Yara had to make several attempts before she was able to cross, because of bad weather they had to turn around twice. A common stressor was related to the overfilled boat. Jamal explained that there were 52 people in the boat. Hassan’s boat had 55 people; he told me it was originally made for 10 persons. The boats that Jamal, Hassan and Farid were in, started taking in water. Jamal was picked up by the coastguard, while Hassan barely made it to the shore in time, before the boat sank. Farid’s boat sank, and he met another

acute stressor as the life-vest he had bought for himself took in water and made it harder to swim and stay floating. He had also given the lifebuoy he had purchased before hand, to a fellow passenger in need. After he had spent about half an hour in the ocean, he was picked up by the coastguard from Greece.

Disappointment in people was another reoccurring stressor that was mentioned by the participants. For Farid, this was mentioned in relation to the people who had sold him the lifebuoy and life-vest:

“I bought two things; a good quality vest, or what I believed to be a good quality vest from Turkey, and one of those rings, you know. So, when we sank, I thought I don’t need the ring since there wasn’t enough [life vests for everybody]. So, when we were in the ocean and the vest doesn’t help, but it was opposite, it took in the water and made me go down. So, at this time I thought: OK, so people who sell this in Turkey, how do they do this, it is people’s lives, and they don’t think about people, they just cheat”.

Hassan told me that he was constantly met by people who tried to trick them (him and his brother) on the journey. They were offered fake tickets on trains and busses, as well as being transported in the wrong direction. He also emphasized how stressful it was not to be able to trust people around:

“It was very scary, because I had much money that I spent little by little on the trip, so I had a belt under my clothes with about 3000 EUROS. So, I was scared of sleeping in the train station and stuff, so, my brother and I had to take turns on being awake”.

He told me that a lot of refugees experienced losing their money, as people cut the belts off. *“Without money you are locked”*. Fatima had a very different experience, which can be related to disappointment in people – she explained how in Beirut at the airport, her family was treated better when the staff saw that they had an international visa. She felt that everyone should be treated equally, in spite of visas, which was not the case now in the Middle East. Another stressor for her was that she did not know if the visa they had would guarantee them to be able to enter Russia. At the airport in Russia this was a stressor for her until they were granted access.

For the participants who took the route through Europe, closed borders were a stressor shared by all. Farid and Hassan talked about large amounts of people wanting to pass. Jamal and his

wife were shot with tear gas, and because she was pregnant and inhaled it, she had to be admitted to the hospital. The closed borders also led to a lot of walking, especially in the night, according to Jamal. He found it very stressful; *“It’s like a one-way journey. When you start you don’t have the choice to go back, because even when it was getting worse and harder, still even trying to get back is worse”*. For him an additional stressor was that his pregnant wife was sick. Hassan also explained how they had to walk across mountains to avoid being caught, because it was illegal. Walking in the night and crossing the mountains was rooted in trying to avoid getting their fingerprint registered in a country they did not want to seek refuge in (due to Dublin Regulations). Getting the fingerprints registered was a big stressor, Hassan explained a worry they all shared:

“We were scared of being taken by the police, because if you get, uh, stopped by the police, you have to apply for asylum in the country you get stopped in. And I did not want to become a refugee in Greece or Macedonia, they have their own problems, they have nothing to offer”.

This fear resulted in hikes through the woods where no one could see and report them.

Farid explained that human smugglers help escort people across borders to avoid the police and fingerprints. A common stressor related to human smugglers was how expensive their services were, Farid also reflected on how they seemingly controlled the market. He told me about his experience: *“The problem was, and it was hard, we asked the smugglers and they wanted 2000 EUROS to go from just Hungary to Austria”*. The high costs were confirmed by Jamal. Fatima had planned and coordinated with a human smuggler ahead of time for herself, her mother and brother in Russia. She described how a very big man was waiting for them outside the airport in Russia. She was a bit nervous at first, but then seemed more relaxed once she noticed that he was very nice and helpful. He organized and provided them with bikes to cross the border from Russia to Norway (the border cannot be crossed by foot). She said she wished she could have given him a hug when they parted.

At some point in Syria or on the journey, all the participants were separated from their immediate family. Jamal went to Turkey with his parents and siblings and left there with a wife. He explained that his family stayed in Turkey, and her family later made it there too, although it cost them a lot of money. All participants, except for Farid, expressed how it was a stressor to be separated from their family. Hassan started the journey alone but met up with his younger, underage brother, who came after him with a neighbor from Syria. His brothers boat

sank, but he was saved by a Norwegian ship. When they finally made it to Norway, they were sent to two different asylum reception centers, since his brother was underage. Karam, who was also underage, was clearly sad when mentioning his mother throughout the interview. When he arrived at the border to Norway from Russia, the police confiscated his phone. Choked up and with tears in his eyes, he talked about calling his mom:

“When I got back my phone, I had 14 missed calls. I bought an international line for my phone, so it works wherever I am. Syria, Russia or Norway. So, like, I found 14 missed calls, when I called my mom, I told her to relax. I arrived. She was happy”.

A common stressor was to leave family behind in Syria. Yara talked about her family back home, and had to take a deep breath when she explained their situation:

“There are people who steal, they want food, they don’t want to a car and travel to have fun, they want food. They [my family] have children who wants milk and diapers. And then I live here with my husband and my boy, and the rest of my whole family is still in Syria”.

Iman explained how hard it was when her husband left before her, with a plan to apply for family reunion:

“It was hard. He left him, but I will get him back, I will see him again, but what could happen to him, that was really stressful. Very stressful. He could have died three times, you know in 2015, people travel in a small boat, and many people died because of this. It was hard. It was hard to wait during this time.”

Yara left her son in Syria to travel to Norway and apply for family reunion. She was clearly affected when she talked about how hard this time was for her; *“It was a very hard time, yes, I missed him a lot, and in addition to this it was a new country with a new language, and I had some issues with the people I lived with.”*

Integration and life in Norway

After arrival in Norway, the participants were placed at new accommodations for the new stages of the asylum application process they entered. Farid, Hassan, Jamal, Karam and Fatima mentioned how they found it stressful to move between different asylum reception centers in this time. Hassan explained the process:

“I lived in an asylum center, but there are different centers, and I have been through three or four, but at the second one I lived in a cabin, it was a temporary center, where there lived 60 people”.

Crowded asylum reception centers were one of the two stressors and concerns that were most frequently brought up and discussed by the participants regarding their first time in Norway. Fatima sighted and put her hand on her heart, she elaborated:

“My mom and I think we want to back to Syria; we don’t want this anymore. We went in [to the transit center] and it was chaos, dirty everywhere, people use the same cup for water, no control, bad smell, uh oh-oh (wrinkles her nose), it was disgusting, the worst experience I have had in Norway”

The housing situations for the participants were also brought up, as they often were placed together in homes with other refugees. Yara explained why this was stressful to her:

“We lived five women in a little house, and yes. They were from Syria too, but in Syria we have many different religions and places, so each woman was from a different. Place, so we don’t think the same way. That is why it was difficult”.

A long waiting period to get the residence permit was the second most talked about stressor. This was mentioned by six of the participants – only Yara and Iman did not bring this up, and Iman did not have any waiting per as she came through family reunion. As Farid put it; *“... most asylum seekers, when they are at the refugee center, they do nothing”*. I find this phrase to match what most participants describe in their surroundings and experiences with other refugees, but it also reflects their own living situation to some degree. Before the residence permit is approved, one is only granted part time Norwegian course. Farid continued to explain; *“if you don’t have contact with people, have friends and network, have no job or education, you get isolated and not integrated and stuff”*. Rima seconded this, and explained that she did nothing, and it would have been so much better for her if she could have started life and had the opportunity to get to know people and learned Norwegian. She concluded by saying; *However, at that time, I did not want to go out, I was depressed. Not just a little bit”*. As the participants explained, as long as you are an asylum seeker, you are not allowed to work or study. This does limit what can be done in the waiting period. Jamal elaborated:

“It took one year, and it was very frustrating for me to be honest... ...So when we were staying in the camp, we did nothing at all, it was very boring, very frustrating and disappointing for me.”

Karam called UDI every day in hope of some news. It was so frustrating for him; *“I couldn’t do anything. I couldn’t even shop a sim card that has free calls, like for 50 NOK, I couldn’t buy it”*. Rima had a similar meeting with Norway as the rest of the participants, however, her experience of the situation was a bit different:

“Total time before we got the residence permit was one year. It was a long time for me. It is ok for war, but since I did not come from war, I had my life, my job, my, yes... When I was in the asylum center it was not allowed to do anything... .. It was not very good. We had to wait for 12 months and do nothing. We lost a lot, if you are good at something, you start to forget if you only sit at home. I think we lost some of our qualities, yes”.

Fatima was the only participant who mentioned meetings with the UDI and officials as a stressor. She had turned 18 when she arrived but travelled with her mother and younger brother. She presented herself to the border police as the one who would communicate on behalf of her family. Ahead of the meetings she said that she was very nervous, as she expected the officials to be scary people. This especially evident before the meeting with UDI in Oslo, where she also talked about how they wish to apply for family reunification in order to bring her father to Norway. Family reunification was an additional stressor for her:

“Mom is allowed to wait for one year to get my dad, if she is in Norway for more than one year, she loses the right to get dad. To get dad she needs money, they take 6000 NOK, it is not free. So, we have to think we need to wait to get the residence permit, then we have to wait till we get assigned a municipality, till we get introduction and money, so then we lose the year”

Fatima was also the only participant to explicitly mention how the change in her social position was a challenge to her. She illustrated by telling a story from the immigration office right after they had crossed the border from Russia:

“We sat there and had not eaten from about 7 in the morning... .. You know, generally, we don’t like to say hello we want food in the police station. But I, in Syria, my family has good economy. So, we are from this family that if you need anything, you get it. So, if for a second someone feels pathetic for me, it was not good. For example, if someone would come to me and help me because I’m pathetic... I don’t know. But I as a person have not been in this situation before when someone feels sorry for me and gives me something”.

A very common challenge experienced by the participants, was in relation to the Norwegian law. This unfolded in several different areas of the integration process. Perhaps especially evident, which has been mentioned briefly as a stressor already, was the limitations to what could be done during the waiting period. This included being withheld the opportunity of working. For Hassan, the economic situation this brought on, was frustrating; *“we received very little money, we only got about 100 NOK every two weeks, but food was included, but it did give very little freedom”*. Jamal felt limited by the law that says he cannot move from the municipality he was placed before five years has passed. Only if he got a work contract or is admitted as a student, he would be allowed to move. He did, however, struggle to find work from his current place of residence, as it was in a small village outside of Bergen. He stressed that it would be easier if he lived in a big city where he could make contacts and apply for jobs in person.

Iman viewed the Norwegian law as too strict, and said it was hard for her to follow it; *“in Syria, if you want one thing, you can just pay money and it will be given to you”*. She argued that it probably was better in Norway, but she was struggling with it. A specific example she gave was customer complaints in her salon. Handling these things were very stressful for her, but she also valued the rules and rights that existed in Norway, for instance with free medical care.

Yara expressed that because of the strict rules in Norway, a lot of immigrants with higher education were not able to use it:

“It will be very tiring to start over, all over. But there was not much opportunity, or choice, so, I thought I can either sit at home and do practical work that I don’t like, or I can start studying over again, and I can learn the language. So, you have to respect the rules, but yes, it is not easy and very challenging for some people”.

Hassan left Syria with two years left of his dentist education. Farid, Karam and Iman started new studies here in Norway, while Rima and Yara had to take certain subjects and courses to get their Syrian education approved. They were both nurses in Syria.

Fatima struggled understanding the Norwegian system of high school, applying for education (through the application service Samordna opptak) and what the professions her parents wished for her entailed in Norway. She found this very frustrating:

“I don’t understand anything about doctors here, or grades, or what they do in the system, or anything. I sent my papers through Samordna opptak (the service in Norway that coordinates the admission to Universities) that I wanted to become a doctor. But they know that it is very hard for me with Norwegian, I cannot get 6 (top grade in Norway) in every subject. It is hard for me”.

Fatima described her days at high school as very depressing. She was bullied and did not feel like she was heard by the teachers and staff at school; *“So I go every day, I cry and do nothing, at last I told my mom that I just wanted to pass. I did not want a grade”*. Iman, Rima and Yara also struggled with finding school to be too hard. They all mentioned that the stress of integrating in a new society, as well as attending school or the introduction program, was too much.

Getting a job has been a common stressor for all the participants. At the time of the interviews, Jamal was the only participant who was unemployed. Hassan, Jamal and Fatima all have part-time jobs alongside to their studies. Farid mentioned how he considered it would be harder getting a job with his Syrian education, as the people hiring in Norway did not have any quality control of the educations from abroad. He said that he had many friends who were highly educated, that did not get a job in Norway. He had trouble himself, when first applying for jobs. He quickly gave up and reeducated himself. Jamal had a tough meeting with the Norwegian labor market. He had his education from Syria and wanted to continue and take a PhD in Norway. He struggled to find a way into the labor market, and suspected that it was because he needed a network and contacts.

The challenge of making friends in Norway was brought up by Fatima, Iman and Yara. Iman told me how everyday life in Syria was structured differently, so that it encouraged social contact:

“People here [in Norway] are not social like us [Syrians]... .. We are very social, and we get sad here because we don’t have time to visit each other because everyone needs to work. In Syria we are done at school by 1300. Then you have time to eat a little and visit each other, go shopping for example. And it is very hard for us to not be in a social country, actually. It is a big problem for me. All places close at 20.00, in Syria they don’t close until like 22.00, or 23.00 or 24.00. You can buy whatever you want at any time you want, if you have a car you can just go out”.

Neither Fatima nor Yara had close friends in Norway, which they highlighted as challenging to them. Yara stated that part of the reason for this might be that she was so busy with being a mother, working and going to school, that when she finally had time off, she would rather be at home and relax, than to have contact with people.

6.2.2. Resources

Family

Family is mentioned by every single one of the participants – whether that be the spouse and children, siblings or parents. For the two youngest participants, Karam and Fatima, the immediate family was mentioned frequently, as loving providers of stability and safety. Fatima spoke about how her parents, especially her father, tried to shield her from the worst parts of the war, at the same time as he wanted her to understand what was happening. She elaborated:

“You have to know that it is war, it is happening. It has happened all over the world before, and now we have to understand that we just have to be calm and be with mom and dad, if we need anything we just ask”.

Fatima also mentioned how her father supported her after she saw a man being beaten and kidnapped by the military, right outside their house.

Parents as providers of opportunities were also mentioned multiple times. Two of the participants were from resourceful families that valued spending longer periods of times abroad. Rima spent much of her time growing up in Lebanon, going to school there. Karam spent several years in England where his mother took a PhD. He later elaborated on how his time there helped him prepare for his new life in Norway, as he was around many Somali refugees at this time.

Another aspect mentioned of family relations as a resource, was the support the participants received on their decisions, especially in regard to their choice to flee. Karam was challenged on his decision:

“I told my parents that I wanted to move. They said no multiple times at first, then they said take your high school first... ..While the situation is getting worse, my father said “ok, if you want to go, I won’t stop you. I can’t see a future for you here in Syria, and I want the best for you, so I won’t stop you, but it is your decision”.”

Farid's family was skeptical when he made the decision to move, although, after he got a good job here in Norway, they seemed very satisfied and happy for him. Their only concern now, was that he was getting old and needed to marry. He made it clear that the support from his family meant a lot to him.

Money

A reoccurring theme during the interviews, was how the participants (while still in Syria) had to move in order to get their education. Farid, Hassan, Jamal and Yara mentioned how they did not have a University in their hometown. In relation to this, financing education was also mentioned. For Hassan, these expenses were covered entirely by his family. He also received a large amount of money as heritage from his grandfather, which helped him finance the journey to Norway.

Through the interviews, mentions of how only the upper middle-class families were able to flee further than the neighboring counties, were made. Money and the freedom to move does therefore seem very closely connected. Both freedoms to flee, but also in regard to moving to where there is a University. Hassan explained: *"It is important to know that the poor cannot flee to Europe, you have to be middle-class. The poor end up in a tent in Turkey"*.

Network

The importance of having or building a network comes up in various settings through the interviews. For some, this was helpful in fleeing. Both Karam and Fatima mentioned how family friends helped obtain a visa to Russia. For Jamal, family friends, specifically a friend of his mother, was how he got a wife.

"My mother talked to the family of the wife, and asked for permission that we speak together, because my wife was still living in Syria with her family... Later on, we decided to get married, we told her family, and I made an official proposal, as depending on our culture".

Once having arrived in Norway, both Karam and Fatima found support in meeting people in similar situations as themselves. Rima also mentioned how it was a resource (as well as a stressor) to her, living with three other girls in the asylum reception centers. Both Hassan and Jamal were very pleased with their experiences making friends in Norway. Hassan underlined

that he had more Norwegian friends than Arab ones, he was impressed by the response he had received on a Facebook post where he reached out to Norwegian people to teach him the language. The post led to invitations to celebrate both Christmas and Easter with Norwegian families. Jamal, who had a pregnant wife on the journey to Norway, especially praises one friendship him and his wife has made here in Norway:

“[the midwife] that helped my wife to deliver our first baby, which is my son, he was the last baby she delivered and then she got retired from her job. So that was very special for her”.

This meeting led to an exchange of phone numbers, and numerous visits, also after Jamal and his family moved to a different location in Norway.

Building a professional network is emphasized as important by many of the participants. For Hassan, Fatima, Rima and Yara, the network that they built played a direct role in entering the labor market. Rima said:

“I got to know a pharmacy technician... and through his wife, I know have the opportunity to start working there [at the pharmacy], but not in quality control, but it is a job. And actually, I started building network for it, and I know that helped me find a job”.

Iman had a very different entry way to the labor market. A person that she knew and trusted, helped her to start her own hairdressing company in Norway. When COVID-19 closed down large parts of the society in March 2020, she mentioned how important her network of clients was to her, as they came home to her house to have their hair cut and eyebrows fixed.

Social support

Social support provided by other people than family and self-created network, included different forms of advice and sources of information, as well as volunteers. Jamal, Fatima and Rima mentioned volunteers through nonprofit organizations and the asylum reception centers, as resources. Fatima elaborated on how she, her brother and mother became friends with the volunteers that cooked food at the refugee center they were lodged at:

“We bonded with those who worked there, every time someone was done with breakfast, lunch or dinner, we were there, we helped them, we take out trash, sometimes they give me a dishrag and I wash the tables. For example, mom sometimes washes the

window and such. When we were leaving, we started to cry, and they did too. So, they told me you have to come back, and you will get free beer. So, I said that it is ok.”

Fatima, who was underage and not done with her high school education at arrival, received great help from a teacher at her brothers' school.

Through a triangulation interview with the department manager for introduction courses at Årstad High School, the importance of information for the high school students with refugee background was brought out. Årstad High School, has, in cooperation with Bergen municipality and Vestland county, set up a combination class, which provides students who lack parts of the school education from their home country, with a reinforced primary school offer. The high school additionally offers a one-year introduction course, before the students start high school, to reach Norwegian level B1+ (needed to fully comprehend and manage high school) and get an introduction to what is expected in the various subject at that level. The department manager informed that their experience was that students who do not attend their introduction, were often overwhelmed when starting high school because they were not yet on Norwegian level B1. Årstad additionally has an advisor for minorities at the school, a social pedagogy advisor as well as a school nurse, all to ensure the well-being of the students with refugee background. The demand to attend has been big, and unfortunately, they have had to turn down students who has wished to attend.

NAV was mentioned by Fatima and Iman; however, this was in relation to entering the labor market. Fatima explained: *“So I talked to NAV, and they said they have a course that I can take there. They have a course on writing a CV, application, everything you need”*. Iman had most of her experience with NAV through her husband, who received his job through their services.

Triangulation shows that the NorA-program, run by NAV Årstad, has to a large degree been able to connect their candidates with relevant workplaces. The candidates are very motivated, and have given feedback that getting into paid work, really gives them hope, as opposed to going from one measure to another, that are in place to help, which makes them exhausted mentally. The program has mainly aimed at helping those who do not have the language skills that are needed to be able to get an ordinary job. The goal of the placements varies between language training, learning a new profession and sometimes it is to get a job. NorA is not an available resource across Norway, but it is an example of a successful imitative in regard to matching refugees/immigrants to workplaces.

In the triangulation phone call with Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry (BCCI), two programs were presented: From Refugee to Resource and Bergen Opportunity. The first, was put together by a cooperation council as a response to the refugee crisis of 2015. There was a huge response from local businesses, and 30 internships were set up right away. Although stating that internships are not the best entrance to finding a permanent job, BCCI's business policy advisor argues that it serves as a very important first step in order to integrate to the Norwegian labor market. This program is not active anymore; however, it is on hold for times when there is a sudden influx of refugees to Bergen. One of the challenges that were met in running this program was an overload on the work capacity at Bergen municipality – BCCI's business policy advisor explained that the market was open and ready, but they experienced the process of mapping the competence and interests of the refugees, as a bottle neck. Bergen Opportunity is a mentor and leadership program for immigrants, where 20 participants and 20 mentors are admitted each year. BCCI has experienced this to be very successful for all parties involved, and is happy with the cooperation with NAV.

Support mentioned by the participants included measures offered through refugee services in Norway. Rima visited a nurse and opened up a little bit about her problems, she did not, however, open up about her depression, according to herself. Iman felt that the visit from the child services at the introduction course was an important source to information for her. She highlighted that it was good that they came and explained what they did and how they work. Farid elaborated on the opportunity to get a loan and to learn language through the introduction program, which he believed helped him get a job and education. Rima and Yara mentioned their experience with the refugee service and the guidance they provided when it came to choose the best possible way into the labor market. Yara explained:

“I got advice on how to choose from all the choices, that yes, you can become a nurse, but you can also become a health worker first. That way you will get a much bigger position than you have, and that can help you support your economy, and you can take further education”.

In regard to utilizing previous education, NTNU and OsloMet offer supplementary education to refugees. NTNU did not have many participants overall and experienced a decrease in applications in the first few years. The school year of 20/21 and 21/22 the program will not take up any participants. OsloMet has experienced a relatively high and stable demand,

especially in the nursing education (which has had to turn down applicants, due to limited capacity). The informant from OsloMet believes that the extensive practitioner programs could be a determining factor in the success that they experience, as they had a very low drop-out rate, and many of the participants are now hired in relevant jobs or are enrolled in ordinary higher education.

Time

A remarkable difference between the participants was how time was spent. At first, I decided to code this under meaningfulness, as some seemed to value their time more, and used it for meaningful activities. After coding and working through the thematic network, it did, however, seem more logical to put time as a separate basic theme under resources.

For some participants, it seemed natural to take on multiple jobs and responsibilities at the same time. Farid is a good example of this – while in Syria, he worked fulltime in international oil companies on the side, while he studied fulltime and was a student assistant at the University. He said that doing this gave him opportunities. His exploitation of time continued in Norway, where he, during his waiting period for the residence permit, worked as a volunteer in multiple places:

“I was a volunteer in [municipality in Norway], I was in the Red Cross, and at different festivals in [municipality in Norway]. I also decided the refugee center, there was a council to help people at the refugee center, so I was the leader of this council”.

Staying active in this way, helped him connect with a lot of Norwegian people he said. He was also able to learn the language fast, as well as having the opportunity to connect with and help other people in his own situation, through the council at the refugee center. When Farid was placed in Trondheim, he got a job at a grocery store, worked as a teacher assistant at an elementary school, and then he worked as a research assistant for two months before he started his master’s degree at NTNU. He had also worked as a volunteer in different places during his time in Trondheim. Yara also found that working and studying full time was possible to combine, and that this gave her opportunities – she did this while working as a nurse and studying law in Syria.

Hassan explicitly mentioned that while other refugees at the asylum reception center said they had nothing to do in the time it took to get the residence permit approved, he felt that by learning the language he saved his time for later. He stated that:

*“[Learning the language] really helped, because I don’t waste my time...
...When I get my residence permit, I can start school or work right away. So, I don’t
have a problem waiting for a long time, as long as I use and learn Norwegian, I have
not lost time”.*

Language

Knowledge with languages has been highlighted as a resource – both in connection to fleeing from Syria, but also in regard to integration. Jamal had considered the first for years. He decided early on to learn and study English and considered this to be his ticket out of Syria. Fatima and Farid experienced English to be an available and useful resource on the journey out from Syria. Fatima, who travelled with her mother and brother, was the only one who spoke English properly, this helped her communicate at the airport in Russia, with the man who helped them reach the Norwegian border, as well as the border police and UDI here in Norway. Farid explained that knowing English opened up for him to avoid human smugglers and find his own ways to travel through Europe.

Farid considered language to be the key to society. He believed that through learning Norwegian, it would be easier to get a job and education, like he did. Hassan got his first job in Norway after reading and reviewing terminology and words from a dictionary, while waiting for his residence permit:

“One month after I got my residence permit, I applied and got a job as a door-to-door salesman at Sector Alarm. This job really contributed to positively to my language skills because as a door-to-door salesman, I visited people at home and had to speak Norwegian with them every day, so the learning curve was steep”.

Later on, during his continued studies to become a dentist, Hassan watched debates on NRK (The Norwegian Broadcasting Corporation) in order to increase his communication levels to better master advanced terminology he could use with his patients. Iman also experienced how knowing Norwegian helped her connect with her customers at her salon. Jamal found that his knowledge of the English language helped him get a job in Syria in international oil companies, as well as in Turkey in international nongovernmental organizations.

Work experience

In applying for new jobs in Norway, previous work experience is a resource. Both Farid and Jamal had previous experience from international oil companies. All participants except Hassan, Karam and Fatima (who have not completed their education at this point), had previous experience with the labor market before entry to Norway (Hassan volunteered at the local hospital when studying in Syria). In Norway, Hassan, as we know, worked part time as a door-to-door salesman for an alarm company, he later also worked at home improvement chain store. Karam now worked a part time job as a security guard in additions to his studies. Volunteer work was also considered to be a good way to enter the labor market, this was especially highlighted by Farid. Jamal had multiple certificates to show to, in addition to his degrees, which he believed to be important resources when applying to jobs.

Available technology

The use of phones, internet, apps and computers was mentioned in the interviews as resources that were useful on the journey to Norway, but also as a tool in the integration process.

On the journey to Norway, technology was used mostly to acquire practical information. A commonality here is smart phones with apps for navigation. Farid and Hassan explicitly mentioned this as a way to maneuver across Europe. Farid stated that: *“You have to try yourself, because it is not hard to walk across the border if you use Google maps and such things. Everybody has internet”*. When arriving in Norway, technology was mentioned as a resource as a means to communication. Both Karam and Fatima were eager to call home to their families in Syria, when they made it to the Norwegian border and had their phones returned from the border police inspection. Yara and Rima kept in touch with their families at home in Syria by using international sim-cards. Hassan found Facebook very useful for connecting with and making Norwegian friends.

In Norway, Hassan used Duolingo, an app that helps you learn a new language, as an introduction to the language. He also bought a laptop that would help him learn the language faster, while allowing him to work from home instead of the library. The internet was mentioned to Jamal, by friends, as a suggestion of a way to enter the work market, but he did not believe that this was a resource that was useful.

6.3. Meaningfulness

Meaningfulness in sense of coherence, refers to the wish to, and motivation behind, coping with a situation. The first organizing theme is based partly on questions in the interview guide (see Appendix 5) asking for the participants goals and dreams. I chose to code this here, as goals can serve as motivators to push forward. The goals mentioned by the participants were directed in two main directions – education and employment, and to have freedom. The second organizing theme in this global theme, was found mostly at latent levels in the conversations. This organizing theme reflects on a person's opportunity to participate in shaping outcomes. I decided to include this here, as being in charge of one's own life and choosing what will happen next, gives freedom, and perhaps more motivation, than being directed and controlled by someone else. Two themes emerged that seemed to have this effect on the participants. The first one was the decision to flee and how to conduct the journey – did they make the initial decision on their own? Did they just go along with someone else? Were they able to participate in the planning process? The second one is in relation to the integration process. Especially the time before receiving the residence permit is a time with many restrictions on how to live – did the participants have any say on important life changing matters in this time? The participants were not asked direct questions linked to the last organizing theme, but it still emerged regularly.

6.3.1. Goals

Hassan, Jamal, Fatima, Iman and Yara mentioned goals in relation to continuing or starting their education. Jamal's choice of education, English language and culture, was a dream from an early age. As was mentioned under "Manageability", Jamal considered the English language to be his ticket out of Syria. He had a clear goal from a young age and completed his master studies in Syria. His new goal was to get a PhD in Norway. Hassan and Fatima both had dreams of studying abroad. Fatima would love to study English, preferably in the United Kingdom. Her parents on the other hand, would like her to become a lawyer, doctor or pharmacist. If someone else asks her what she wants, however, she said she would still reply that she wanted to study: *"English literature in the UK! It is very hard, I know, but I don't know why I say it"*.

In addition to pursuing a PhD, Jamal's goal was to contribute and give back to Norway. He expressed:

“... the most important thing for me is to contribute here in this country. After that country gave me, and my wife, and my children the secure we need and the safety life we dream of. And you know, I would like to work, pay taxes and contribute to this country, in any way, in whatever way I can do something I would like to do something. Just to express our gratitude for what Norway and Norwegian people has done for us.”

Fatima shared Jamal’s goal of contributing to the society. She did not want to stay at home after she got married, she wanted to work and do something useful in the society. Getting a safe and “good” job was mentioned by three of the male participants. Farid elaborated:

“In Syria my dream was to have a good job. And at the same time a well-paid job. In Syria a lot of jobs were not well-paid... .. So, it was my goal to have a good job that is also well paid, it is important for a man to have a good income”.

After having arrived in Norway, his new goal was to get a job. Jamal shared this goal. He specified that he had a dream job – a PhD at the University, but that his new goal was to get any job. Karam said he always wanted to work with IT engineering, and now that he finished high school, this was what he was studying.

Throughout the interviews, the participants mentioned different types of freedom. Jamal emphasized political freedom as something he had been wanting and dreaming about for many years. After his incident with the military (mentioned previously under stressors and life in Syria) when he was 15 years old and accused of being a spy, he slowly realized the extent of the political issues in Syria, and the limited freedom the citizens could enjoy. He stated:

“After the accident, I realized that I cannot live in that country. Besides the things that we see and hear from our parents at home and the big things about political issues, all together these things give me the impression that there is no hope in Syria to live the way I wanted to live with the freedom and democracy, with my dignity”.

Yara had one goal when choosing the country, she would apply for asylum in – to secure a good life for her son. She was clearly set on Norway because she had read about how family and children were prioritized and valued, even in politics. This reflected her own mindset.

Hassan, Iman and Rima mentioned returning to Syria as a dream. Hassan stated that with the current situation, it is, of course, not possible. He did not want to dismiss the opportunity if it arrived at a later time. Iman and Rima emphasized, multiple times during their interviews, their love for Syria, and in Rima’s case, also Lebanon. Iman struggled with the uncertainty and gave

this statement as to when she was leaving; *“It was sad and a little happy, and sad, you know, you are moving from your country. You will return one day. You will see your country again, or no. It is very hard”*. Rima talked about her life in Lebanon, and how she always had a clear plan to move back to Syria to work. She described Syria as her country, and that she did not want to be away from it. After the war broke out and she left for Norway, she found it difficult to think about:

“I think that if I were to travel to Syria now, everything will be ruined, my city, yes, everything. My city, Aleppo, you might have seen it on the internet, there are no places to live there, everything is completely destroyed. I think about how it has to get better to travel; I cannot travel now. It is not safe there, it is filled with bombs, and bla, bla, bla. (Takes a break and looks down). I try not to watch the news (laughs nervously), I can’t do it. Yes. I watch the news and I get depressions. I try to watch it once or twice every week, and not daily”.

6.3.2. Participation in shaping outcomes

While some participants made the decision to flee on their own, others were influenced by family. All four men participating in the study, state that fleeing, as well as the choosing the destination, was on their own free will. As Karam was underage at the time, he went through a long process of convincing his dad. Yara is the woman who said that she chose to flee, and she chose Norway. Fatima and Rima both make direct statements indicating that they were not in control of the move. Fatima had just turned 18 and was accompanied by her mother and brother on the journey. Her father was concerned with her safety in Syria, as she would soon attend the University; *“dad said no, you have to leave now this summer”*. Fatima did not object and seems at peace with the decision made by her father. Rima, on the other hand, was convinced by her siblings that leaving was the best choice:

“I travelled to Turkey with my brother, it was my birthday. We celebrated there, and I had a plan to go back to Lebanon. Suddenly my brother had decided that he wanted to continue to Europe. There were a lot of people from Syria traveling from Turkey to Europe. And we had no plan made. It was sudden. In the beginning I said no, I don’t want to come with you, I will travel home to Lebanon. Then my other brother and sister arrived, I also have a brother and sister in Lebanon. We were four, and I said no. We can travel together they said, it will be nice, bla, bla, bla, and in the end I went with them. But it was not the plan”.

The extent to which the trips were planned also varied. Karam and Fatima both emphasized that the trips were carefully planned. Another similarity between the two is that they both went through Russia on their trip to Norway.

When the participants had arrived in Norway, new opportunities arose to influence on shaping the outcomes. This subject was not mentioned much, however, through the interviews, it was evident that one of the participants, Farid, was determined to do what he could to make the best of the situation. While others, as mentioned under stressors, were desperate and anxious during the waiting period, Farid found a loophole, to avoid “doing nothing”. He volunteered in nonprofit organizations in order to learn about the new culture and language, as well as he saw it as an opportunity to make new friends. In this way, he contributed to faster integration. The point that was mentioned by three of the participants that would give them a chance to participate in shaping an outcome, was in the settlement procedures with UDI where the participants were asked to provide a list of top places and reasons for this. Farid, Jamal and Fatima all mentioned this. Jamal and Fatima expressed their wishes to live in big cities – Oslo or Bergen. For Jamal, this was important as he believed his opportunities to build a professional network here, would be of great value. For Fatima it was because she was used to the big cities from back home in Syria. Neither of them got their wishes granted. Jamal stated:

“So, during my interview, I gave my options, but then they ignored it and they just decided to live in a small village here. It is away from Bergen, driving by car it takes one hour and a half, and when by bus it takes me two hours to ride to Bergen. So, it is very isolated, small place”.

Farid was happy that he got his wishes granted by the UDI and was moved to Trondheim. He had reasoned that he wanted to continue his education, and in technical educations, NTNU was the best choice in Norway.

Chapter 7: DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to explore how Syrian refugees' sense of coherence impacts perceived opportunities for employment in Norway. In the previous chapter, the participants' views and responses from the interviews were presented, using the theoretical framework as an outline. This chapter will be structured around the research questions; firstly, I will address the three sub-questions, then I go on to address the main research question as presented initially. Sub-question one and two will be addressed together, as the first addresses the stressors experienced by the individuals, while the latter aims at exposing which resources were available and employed in these conflicts. The Ottawa charter and two of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) will also be used as a reference points, not only as to what health promotion is, as touched upon in the Introduction, but how this relates to the experiences told by the individuals. I will then go on to address sub-question three, aiming at uncovering how job opportunities in Norway are perceived. The findings will be discussed and situated in existing literature and studies. Each of the participants sense of coherence will be addressed, based on the knowledge collected through interviews, combined with similar studies, as well as thorough descriptions of the theory and its origin. This will lead to answering the overarching research question; *How does former Syrian refugees' sense of coherence impact perceived opportunities for employment in Norway?*

7.1. Research sub-questions one & two

What challenges and stressors have been experienced in Syria, on the journey to Norway, and here in Norway? What strategies and resources helped deal with the stressors?

Due to time limitations and limited number of pages, it would not be beneficial to discuss all stressors and resources mentioned by the participants. Therefore, a smaller number of those stressors and resources that stand out, and perhaps also connect the participants together, will be brought up. Some will also be included, as they have appeared to play essential roles in other studies. This way, it will be possible to discuss each in an in-depth manner, hopefully exploiting latent material from the interviews, working from the participants experiences, and exploring how it is connected to the theory of Salutogenesis.

7.1.1. In Syria

In Syria, a reoccurring stressor among the participants, was the various limitations the war brought to their lives. A commonality between these stressors, was that there did not seem to be a specific resource that could deal with them, so that the participant could overcome the stressor. Handling the stressor in a permanent manner can appear to have seemed out of reach for the participants, and in the hands of the Assad regime and the multiple allies and rebel groups that play an active role in the civil war. Only Jamal tried to influence the politics by participating in protests and educating himself through smuggled books on democracy and freedom. His involvement, however, appeared to be passive – the books were smuggled by his friends, and he read them. The protests seem to have been initiated by his friends, and he joined. Antonovsky (1996, p. 16) states that fighting for a political cause, however, will not radically impact a person's SOC. The participants in the study had the choice to either deal with the stressors by using GRRs in order to make the best of the situation, or they had the choice to move to different locations, and finally, flee, to make new home and life for themselves. The latter does not necessarily indicate that they avoided confronting the situation and dealing with the stressor. Antonovsky (1993, p. 972) explicitly mentioned that a person with a high SOC could choose to flee when coping with a stressor. Fleeing was, as was pointed out by Hasan, an option that is only available to middle class Syrians. Money was therefore a resource that was available to all the participants in the study, that they did take advantage of in order to cope with the situation. Money was therefore a GRR.

Whilst still in the home country, the initial meeting and realities of the situation and war seemed to be recognized differently by the participants. The two youngest participants, Fatima and Karam, lived at home with their parents and described their experience with the war as more abstract at first. They both portrayed resourceful parents that were supportive, but also who protected and shielded them from the ongoing conflict. Feldt, Kokko, Kinnunen, and Pulkkinen (2005) report that children with parents who live together, and with higher education show higher levels of SOC. Sagy-Schwartz (2008) mention family cohesion as a protective factor to trauma and stress during times of war. Both Fatima and Karam distinctly recalled and described their first meetings with the war (a kidnapping outside of Fatima's house, and shooting and helicopters around Karam's house), and they both reflected on how shocked they were that the war at that point had "entered" their lives. This stands in contrast to the other participants, perhaps because they did not have someone to actively watch over and protect them from the

situation. A common factor between the other participants was therefore that they are responsible for themselves. Jamal, on a similar note, had a rough experience with the police at the age of 15 (being threatened with torture and accused with being a spy), while still under care of his parents. He expressed that he did not understand at that time that he had done something wrong and was not aware that this was something he could be punished for (perhaps because of inconsistent messages from the regime). Although this was before the war, Syria was at the time under the same dictatorship regime, but under Assad's (current president) fathers' presidency, Hafez al-Assad. Jamal explained the situation vividly. This was a traumatic experience for him, motivating him to, in the long run, find a way out of the country. As stated by Sveaass (2005), incidents like these with the government, can cause a degradation of meaningfulness, consistency and relationships. Hassan was young at the time when he left Syria too (21), however, he had moved out from his parents' house and started his college degree in Aleppo. Hassan, as well as the other participants, appeared to have been continuously exposed, which can seem to have resulted in gradual habituation; they were distressed over the situation, the unsafety and the limitations that it brought, but they were not surprised or acutely overwhelmed by the natural day to day changes, it seemed that they comprehended the overall situation at hand and are aware of the dangers. Hassan stated: "*...it was challenging, but not mentally, as I was gradually exposed, not suddenly.*" He explains how he felt that people adapted to the situation and made compromises. Hirsch et al. (2015) refers to how women in their study met the comprehensibility aspect of SOC, through understanding the situation they were in (rocket attacks targeted at Israeli territory).

It is evident that the participants had different experiences in comprehending the situation they found themselves in, this can partly be explained by existing literature on the topic. Sagy-Schwartz (2008) bring up two types of dangers: acute and chronic. Acute stressors are defined as single events and are short lived – a line can be drawn to Fatima, Karam and also Jamal's first experiences with the war. They were shielded from the ongoing and arising conflict and were suddenly met with extreme situations in close range that can lead to trauma. Chronic exposure to trauma, on the other hand, bears a resemblance to the experiences of the other participants (apart from Rima), and perhaps also Fatima, Karam and Jamal, after their first and initial "shock" exposure. Chronic exposure to danger can result in lower thoughts of worthiness of oneself (Sagy-Schwartz, 2008). However, a strong SOC shows to decrease the traumatic effect of such ongoing exposure to danger (Eriksson & Lindström, 2005; Eshel & Kimhi, 2016a). In a pilot-study done by Braun-Lewensohn, Sagy, and Roth (2011) (with 230

teenagers), they found convincing evidence that a strong SOC has mediating effect on stress and trauma caused by missile attacks. Literature exploring the effects of being under care of others, or being the caretaker, on the experienced situation of war, was difficult to acquire. However, a study done with Palestinian women living in Gaza, reveals that motherhood is a protective factor to women's mental health (Veronese, Cavazzoni, Russo, & Sousa, 2019). Yara was the only female participant who had a child during the war in Syria. Her son was mentioned multiple times as her reason for fleeing and choice of settlement, this will be returned to later.

The majority of the participants were gradually exposed to the war over a longer period of times – they were in chronic danger. This does not exempt them from acute experiences. Yara, who worked as a nurse, experienced bombings directed at the hospital where she worked. Reports of attacks (by both the government and opposition groups) targeted at health care facilities and workers during the war is documented (Elamein et al., 2017; Omar, 2020). The impact on the mental health of the health care professionals working under these conditions in Syria remains an area in need of more exploration (Footer, Clouse, Rayes, Zaher, & Rubenstein, 2018). Yara, herself, explained the situation and said that she hoped nobody would have to experience the same things, because it was very hard. When I asked what she did to be able to manage in that situation, she answered that there was nothing to be done, you just had to have patience. Sveaass (2005) points to situations such as these – the particular cruel occasions and aspects that will break down and destroy all meaning, coherence and relations, as threats to the components of SOC. We will return to the subject of traumatization and SOC later, as we explore how the participants function and experience their life in Norway.

The experiences the participants had with the war did not merely consist of acute, life-threatening situations like missile attacks, bombs and shootings. Hassan, for instance, told us how he eventually had to walk long distances to retrieve clean water, this relates to SDG number six; *“Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all”* (United Nations). Iman, on the other hand, expressed most distress regarding the dangers related to going to the mall and shopping. This stands in contrast to the statements made by the other participants, who mention indirect stressors brought on by the war as economical – difficulty in affording housing and gas, as well as shortage of necessities like water and medication – all prerequisites explicitly mentioned in the Ottawa charter to improve health and well-being (World Health Organization, 1986). The commonality for all participants (except

Rima who lived in Lebanon), was that their life after the war started, displayed a big gap from how life was portrayed before the war. Mzayek (2019) studied the well-being and resilience of Syrian refugees who were resettled in the United States after being recognized as refugees by the UN. She found that the refugee's definition of well-being changed over time – before the war, it was described as social stability and happiness, during the war it shifted to safety and freedom from financial, physical or psychological problems. The latter is summed up in the quote made by Yara in findings – she describes how all her relatives in Syria now wants is diapers and milk for their children, it is not to travel and have fun. Iman, on the other hand, does not seem to match this description – she expressed anxiety and uneasiness because of the risk she would face if she went shopping. It appears as though for her, the definition of well-being has remained more or less the same, despite of the chronic danger she found herself in. This will be returned in 7.1.3: In Norway.

A sense of future and agency, as referred to by Borwick et al. (2013), has been an emerging theme after discussing life in Syria, especially in relation to oppression by the regime. This was, for many, a goal that they wished to achieve – freedom for their family to live safely. I coded it under meaningfulness, as it was referred to as something that was highly valued, and at the time, missing from their lives. This is especially evident in the case of Yara, who highlighted over and over during her interview, the importance of settling somewhere safe where her son could prosper and be a child. Jamal expressed hope for political change when living in Syria, this was motivated by freedom – which seemingly was the same motivation that made him flee. In complete opposition, during Rima's interview there was no mention of this (perhaps, as indicated previously, because she was not directly nor indirectly affected by the war in her everyday life).

A difference can be observed on whether the choice to flee was made by the participant themselves, or somebody else. Farid, Hassan, Karam and Yara, made the initial choice to flee themselves – Karam even argued and advocated for it, in order to get permission from his parents. Jamal went with his then immediate family (parents and siblings) to Turkey, later on he took the choice to continue to Europe with his new wife. He, did, however, seem motivated from an early age to leave Syria, thus, it can be assumed that the fact that he left together with his family did not mean that he did not feel that he was in control of the decision. Fatima, who also went with her family, seemed willing and did not show hesitation when her father made the choice that they needed to flee (without him). Iman went through the family reunion

program as her husband had already left, and thereby had a very straight forward journey to Norway. She did not mention in her interview whether she was part of the decision, just that she did no longer felt that she could live safely in Syria in her daily routines. Rima, however, stood particularly out among the participants on this point. She expressed clearly that it was not her wish to leave, and that she felt that she was convinced by her siblings during a vacation in Turkey together. She also stood out in the way that she had spent her past years living in Lebanon, out of immediate danger, although it was argued among her siblings, that also Lebanon would soon be unsafe to Syrians. It can therefore seem that she was missing the motivation of safety and freedom in daily life, that all the other participants mention.

The prerequisites for health found in the Ottawa charter, presented in Chapter 1:Introduction, were not met in Syria at this time (World Health Organization, 1986). In addition, the findings of this current research project, shows that several of the SDGs are not met. Reviewing literature on the war in Syria exposed further deficiency beyond what the participants in this study conveyed. SDG number three – good health and well-being, number four – quality education, number six – clean water and sanitation, number eight – decent work and economic growth, number nine – industry innovation and infrastructure (with emphasis on the latter), number 11 – sustainable cities and communities (cannot be regarded as “safe” and “resilient”) and number 16 – peace, justice and strong institutions, all relate to subjects mentioned by the participants as stressors, and some also as reasons for fleeing (Druce et al., 2019; United Nations). It is evident that the participants of this study did not have the fundamental conditions for health covered. It is noteworthy that so many of the SDGs are similar to the fundamental conditions for health identified in the Ottawa charter. As the Ottawa charter states, it is vital that there is a coordinated call for action, among which the government is mentioned as an important contributor and supporter of the health care sector (World Health Organization, 1986). Dugani, Bhutta, and Kissoon (2017) refer to armed conflict as a cause for reduced access to health care and increased forced migration.

7.1.2. On the journey

Literature on Syrians own experiences of the journey to exile in Europe, and its implications on well-being was hard to obtain. Literature on the political implications is more common (Østby, 2016), and studies on fleeing processes from other parts of the world (Borwick et al., 2013), will be used for contextualization.

There was great variation as to how active the participants were in planning and executing their flights. Farid, Hassan and Jamal described their journeys, stressors and GRRs. They portrayed themselves as active and motivated in navigating through Europe, avoiding fingerprints and border police. An extra motivation for Jamal, that the others did not have, was a pregnant wife. This also seemed to have been an extra stressor, as the journey included a lot of walking, especially at night, in addition she got very sick on the way. Jamal and his wife used available human smugglers, but also went by foot. Farid took the task of planning in his own hands, and a step further than the other participants navigating the same route, who all mentioned use of smugglers. Karam was extremely eager to flee. He planned the process and route himself and appear as independent and aware of his goal. Fatima travelled with her mother and younger brother, but as she was the only one who knew English well enough to communicate, she took a leading and active role on the journey as a translator and communicator. Through the interview, it was evident that she found this very motivating – she appeared very proud, but also nervous. It did seem that this is a very different role than she has held in her family before, and it was evident that this meant extra much to her as she could use her English skills (recall that her dream was to study English literature, but her parents had told her it was not useful).

The importance through having an active and involved role in the decision-making around fleeing, is evident through the theory of SOC. Decision-making power is, according to Antonovsky (1996), one of three components that shape or determine the strength of an individual's SOC. Antonovsky specified that this must be in socially valued context. Participating in the choice to flee is, I will argue, socially valued. One is reduced to being an object if there is no room for participation in the decision-making process (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 92). This shows the importance of participating in the decision to flee, as it contributes to a strong sense of meaningfulness to the individual. We will return to the subject of decision-making shortly.

The dangerous crossing in rubber boats from Turkey to Greece was mentioned by five participants, described by all as very stressful. All participants who took this route, seemed aware of the danger the rubber boats entailed. Borwick et al. (2013) found that, through interviews with Burmese refugees, most had extremely dangerous escapes, but that they made meaning of it by describing that they would not be free and safe in Burma. This helped make meaning of a difficult situation. On the basis of what the participants in this study described,

both from their experiences lacking safety and freedom in Syria, and on the extremely difficult and demanding journey, I would argue that the findings in this study confirm what Borwick et al. (2013) and her colleagues found.

The individual participants expectations to what the trip would entail, and the contrast to the reality that was met, I will argue is an important indicator to their SOC. Their resources to information vary from social media to news and friends. Farid used this information and elaborated on how he prepared for his journey – by buying a life vest and life buoy. He used the information as a resource. The findings of this study produce rich data on the journey, however, due to little existing research on the field, I have found it hard to contextualize.

7.1.3. In Norway

The acculturation strategies that resembled the participants adaptation process the most, were integration and separation. Iman continuously brought up aspects of life in Norway that she wished were different, and how this was considerably better in Syria, in her opinion. She did, however, also bring up some points where she concluded that Norway might be “better” – for instance in contrast to the need to bribe in order to get what you want in Syria. Rima said that she had been battling depression after arriving in Norway, and that she did not consider herself the type who enjoys socializing with others. Although she managed to get a job through creating a network in Norway, she did not seem satisfied with her life here. Both Iman and Rima had motivation to return to home, as they did not identify with the Norwegian culture and way of living. They both expressed that they did not feel at ease here, and that Syria (in addition to Lebanon in Rima’s case), was the real home. Much of what she described relates to the cultural aspects and relations, and not to a physical place (Hirsch et al., 2015). These factors worked as motivators to return home when the situation in Syria stabilized, which, in turn, could slow down the integration process here in Norway. Their acculturation strategy moreover resembled separation – holding on to their old culture, while also avoiding contact with Norwegian citizens (Sam & Berry, 2010). Rima and Iman showed interest in having social interactions with people in Norway, however, less than the other participants. Sloopjes and colleagues (2017) found that, in addition to Antonovskys’ claim that decision making power had an impact on meaningfulness, so did identity and belonging in migration. The others, to varying degrees, seemed to lean towards an integration strategy. This was evident through their

wish to hold on to their original culture, but at the same time be an active part of and interact with the Norwegian society.

Most closely to acculturate by the integration strategy, were Farid, Hassan and Karam. They appeared to be well integrated and it seemed their adaptation, both in regard to psychological and socio-cultural aspects, were successful. This is a typical outcome for those who chose integration as the method of acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Farid and Hassan impressed with Norwegian language skills in their interviews, while Karam chose to do the interview in English (he justified this with the fact that he was most comfortable expressing himself, especially emotional and personal experiences, in English). The three participants seemed to have self-esteem, as they had “mastered” what is viewed as successful integration (Regjeringen, 2015); they are in the education system and they all had jobs (Karam and Hassan had part-time jobs alongside their studies). Another commonality was their expressed wish to communicate and interact – Hassan thrived on having dental patients to communicate with, and Farid demonstrated this through his multiple positions within volunteer work. Wood et al. (2019) found that both paid work and volunteering contributed to a sense of belonging, as well as increasing the chances of successful integration into the new society. This can appear to be true for these three participants, as they all managed to enter the labor market (not within their previous fields).

Farid, who is the only one of the three with a completed university master’s degree, seem to cope with the difficulties in an embracing matter, in accordance with Zikic et al. (2010) model on qualified immigrants and career orientations – *“Extremely motivated to succeed despite barriers. Coping with the new career challenges and the prospect of learning and trying something new”*. This is particularly reflected in his extreme motivation to succeed, as well as desire to learning and trying new things. Jamal’s career orientation resembles resisting, indicating that he is more *“motivated by [his] old professional identity and desire to continue where [he] left off. Lack of new motivation to change identity and cope in the new context”* (Zikic et al., 2010, p. 679). This is further argued to result in a hard time in gaining success in the new country, as well as a continued feeling of being discouraged by family and environmental barriers. These characteristics of the resisting type of qualified immigrant is reflected in Jamal’s statements – he appears to blame the system for placing him outside the city, depriving him of the opportunities to apply for jobs in person. He claims he is open to any job, but between his statements about his dream job and PhD, there is not any mention of taking

a job that is not in his field. This can also be argued to be tied to professional identity, and the fact that a lower position can result in feeling loss of status (Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018; van Dijk, 2021).

Whether Farid knew about the program that was in place at NTNU as a complimentary education, is not known. Therefore, we can only speculate in whether this would have led him to stay in his professional field, or if he had still chosen to go in a new direction. Considering the hardships the Norwegian oil sector met at this time, reeducating himself could be argued to have been a safer choice.

Cultural and family expectations in regard to education, which had been present since her time in Syria, still brought distress to Fatima in Norway. The subject that she touched upon, was not mentioned by any of the other participants, but to Fatima, it was a continuous source of stress and conflict. Fatima told me how she did not get an introduction to how high school worked in Norway and how the grading system was built up. Fatima was clearly affected when she told me she was bullied and lost all motivation to complete with good grades. It is clear that many of these issues derive from lack of information. She does not have the cultural knowledge needed to navigate through this phase. Sloopjes et al. (2017, p. 574) refer to this as devaluation of resources, and state that it is typically found in people with a low SOC. It seems Fatima had many available resources in her life in Syria, however, she does not find these useful in her life in Norway. A lack of mastering and understanding schooling systems and applications process can also be thought to impact on extrinsic incentives. Because Fatima did not understand the school and grading systems, she got bad marks (in subjects she had mastered in Syria), and thereby lost motivation, as she did not have the information available, as to how to overcome the barriers. Lack of a support system does also seem to be quite significant in this case. This can be a crucial factor to the meaningful component of SOC. Fatima explicitly mentioned how she did not receive proper information and the care that she needed from the staff at her first school. After reaching out to the high school her brother started attending, this changed, and she met a teacher here who took her under her wing. Lynnebakke and Pastoor (2020) highlight the stabilizing and positive role the school can play in this stage. Pastoor (2015) underlined the importance that adaptation to schooling is a mutual process, much like described in the acculturation process by Sam and Berry (2010). Also mentioned are two aspects of adaptation – a psychological aspect and/or a socio-cultural aspect. The latter is based on, among other things, norms and language skills, which is natural that the school address. The second, the

psychological aspect, refers to sense of well-being and self-esteem. Pastoor (2015) found that students looked for initiative to mutual adaptation and support from the teachers. This is very evident in Fatima's interview – she looked for a grown-up person who could help and guide her, teach her the norms and requirements (of grading systems and how to become a doctor in Norway, for instance). Fatima described how she was taken care of by her parents in Syria, always protected and shielded. In Norway everything is new for them as well, and it appears she is looking for someone else to fill this role. Trauma (can originate from witnessing a kidnapping, like in Fatima's case), can also lead to problems at school and anxiety (Sagy-Schwartz, 2008).

An interesting observation is how different the experiences with high school and integration were for Fatima and Karam, who both were minors at arrival. Karam, who arrived unaccompanied, seemingly had an easier transition than Fatima. Bartlett, Mendenhall, and Ghaffar-Kucher (2017) found evidence that pedagogical approaches that especially focused on language and conveyed cultural assets were important factors to a positive experience for former refugees in high school (study done in New York, USA). Teachers who showed support and peers that encouraged relationships were additional factors mentioned. It is evident now, that in order to further explore this direction in the research, more in-depth knowledge would be beneficial on the school experiences of Fatima and Karam. From the data collected, our knowledge is that Fatima did not feel as though she had peers (on the contrary she felt that she was being bullied), nor did she have teachers that showed support. The experiences communicated by Årstad High school through triangulation largely confirms the findings. They explicitly state that the students need much help and support, especially in the application process, and that this is provided by personnel at the school, including an advisor and health worker. The importance of enough information, both practically, but also academically, is also emphasized as vital to the students. It is likely that Fatima would have benefitted greatly from an equivalent program in her high school. Lynnebakke and Pastoor (2020) found that sense of mastery and future hope were important factors contributing to good educational results and wellbeing. Sense of mastery, Antonovsky (1987) claims, is an outcome of a good load balance. The subject of load balance as a determining factor to the manageability component of SOC will be returned to in more detail shortly, discussing how Karam seems to have a good workload and Fatima appears to shift from an underload in Syria, to an overload in Norway. This can perhaps also be a contributing factor to a smoother integration process for Karam, particularly in high school.

Norway is committed to working towards the SDGs, in which number 16 is to promote peace, justice and strong institutions (United Nations). The Norwegian government highlights that *no one* should be left out. The most vulnerable groups shall be included. Educational institutions fall under this category. The findings made by Pastoor (2015) confirms that Fatima's experience is not a single incident, thereby, showing that the educational institutions in Norway are not yet strong institutions, creating equal opportunities for all. For Fatima, and likely others in her situation, these experiences do not reflect quality education – it does not provide her with the information she needs to navigate society, the norms and systems, which brings us to SDG 4 – quality education (United Nations).

The waiting period experienced upon arrival in Norway and until the asylum application was processed, was mentioned by all participants, except for Iman (who arrived through family reunification). As pointed to by Pastoor (2015), asylum seekers at the age of 16-18 in Norway, do not have the rights and access to education. During the waiting period for the residence permit, young refugees are therefore not allowed to go to school. As we heard from Karam, this was an extremely hard time. He tried to influence and speed up the process by calling weekly for updates but felt that it had no effect. Friends from the asylum center that were in the same situation were a GRR to him in order to cope in this time. The liminal phase that is experienced in this time lacks opportunities for the refugees, and consist of non-status conditions (Ghorashi et al., 2017; Turner & Abrahams, 1995). This is manifested in the findings and presented as a dominant stressor for the majority of the participants. Rima states that she was depressed and it was evident that this time was hard for Karam and Jamal as well, negatively impacting their mental health. Baker, Irwin, and Freeman (2020) discovered in their research, that the refugees in their study felt a strong sense of urgency and was scared to waste time. Liao et al. (2013) discusses social time and propose to look beyond chronological descriptions and understandings of time and suggests a new range of categories. One of which is *wasted time*, described as: “*due to waiting relates to one's (lack of) power, reflecting the scarcity of the goods and skills one possess*” (Liao et al., 2013, p. 125). Although little research is obtainable on refugees' experience of time during this liminal phase, what is available complements each other. Rotter (2016) reflects on how the refugees in her study portrayed their waiting period as frustrating, empty and disempowering. She did, however, also find that this time, by many, was spent on reflection of the future and by using their resources actively in the local community. The latter, of course, was restricted for the participants of this current study,

due to the Norwegian law encompassing asylum seekers in the application process. Farid is an excellent example of someone who used their resources actively in the local community during his waiting period, by volunteering. Wood et al. (2019) found that volunteering increases community involvement and understanding of the norms and structures of the host culture. Ghorashi et al. (2017) also found that some refugees experience positive outcomes of this liminal phase in form of creativity and reflection. Based on the results from the current study, it is evident that especially Farid and Hassan saw that time was a resource that was available and used it to develop and put other resources into use (language and cultural knowledge). Jamal did not feel useful in this time and did not see any ways to use his capacities. Fatima, along with her mother and brother, helped out the volunteers at the asylum center, by cleaning up after meals and asking if there was anything they could do. Their acts of kindness and help resulted in gratitude and new friendships. The feeling of using one's capacities is an important determinant for SOC. This brings us to the concept of load balance.

Load balance, or underload – overload, is presented by Antonovsky (1996), as one of three components that shape a person's SOC, manageability. Migration and integration, according to Slootjes et al. (2017) pose a particular threat to an individual's load balance. Slootjes et al. (2017) define the outcome of a good load balance, as *“an individual is able to meet posed requirements”*. Particularly low employment with immigrant groups, pose one of the main challenges, which causes lack of options to use the capacities. The participants load balance, however, appears at all three points of time (in Syria, on the journey and in Norway). Experiencing a good load balance, is believed to be connected to a strong SOC. Farid is the perfect example of this, as he, throughout the interview, when telling me about all three periods in his life, conveyed stories that proved his good load balance. As Farid told us, he worked alongside his studies while in Syria, and planned ahead on when there would be too much work at school to work a job on the side, all the time, ensured that his load balance was good, he did not take on too much responsibility, but knew his limitations. On the journey to Norway, he took the work of planning and executing the route on his own hands, as he saw that there would be unnecessary problems and costs (stressors) if he went with the help of human smugglers. He showed that he used GRRs to manage the situation. This combination shows that Farid had a strong sense of manageability. Farid never became part of the statistics on people with refugee background that stand outside the work market in Norway – he stayed active in the processing time and went right on to studies and had a work contract set for when he completed his master

thesis. Continually, he ensured that his load balance was good. Hassan, Karam & Rima also showed signs of a relatively good load balance.

The counterpart, experiencing an underload, can lead to disinterest and demotivation (Slootjes et al., 2017). This is especially evident with Jamal. He described feeling depressed and useless when he did not get a job and seemed unwilling (although he stated that he is motivated) to move forward. This will be returned to shortly, under 7.2: Research sub-question three. During the waiting period after arrival, a common feeling was that there was much time, but nothing to do. It is evident that too much time thus leads to an underload. It is likely that this feeling of underload and too much time is enhanced by the feeling that Lynnebakke and Pastoor (2020) find that young refugees have – they must accomplish much in a short period of time. During the time in Syria it is likely that Fatima experienced an underload – she portrayed a life highly influenced by the decisions of her parents, as very protected and shielded (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 20).

An overload in work balance is especially apparent with Fatima and Yara during their time in Norway. Fatima had a very difficult time navigating the Norwegian school system, as well as the application for higher education. This, especially her schoolwork in high school, perhaps in combinations with the high expectations from her parents, resulted in an overload. Considering the load balanced she experienced in Syria, this sudden change can also be assumed to be overwhelming. Yara, who was separated from her son at this point, explicitly said that she had too much going on in her head. She did not feel that she mastered the Norwegian course, as well as learning the language and understanding the culture. Lynnebakke and Pastoor (2020) address this – many accomplishments that are expected to be done in a short period of time. Fatima’s feelings of being overwhelmed, are similar to the ones described by Slootjes et al. (2017); *“higher demands than the individual can meet, can result in insecurity and the feeling of failing”*. Iman’s load balance is hard to evaluate, as she did start her own salon with help from a friend, however, she specified that she had a hard time navigating Norwegian laws and rules around owning and running your own business with customers. She said that she was on a sick leave for some months, however, she did not elaborate on the reason for this.

Once an asylum seeker is granted resident permit, they are assigned a municipality to reside in by IMDi. This process was mentioned by two participants –Farid and Jamal. IMDi has a policy

which allows the new residents to influence on where they are placed. As seen in the interviews, Farid's wish to be placed in Trondheim was accepted, allowing him to reeducate himself at NTNU, according to his plan. Jamal on the other hand wished to be placed in a big city, because he believed his opportunities for work and a PhD would be greater there. This was denied. As previously discussed in relation to making an active and own choice on whether or not to flee, and in regard to being actively involved in the process of planning the journey – this decision on place of settlement is equally a socially valued decision regarding one's own life. For Jamal, it is evident that being deprived of this decision, that he felt was a key to success in integration, led to a decrease in motivation.

The expectations of Norway and the reality that met the refugees upon arrival and in their years in the country, varied from person to person – some had expectations close to reality, while others, as we have seen, did not feel that they had their expectations met. Expectations and “reality” were explicitly probed for during the interviews. Antonovsky believed that an individual's comprehensibility was determined through experiencing consistency, and to “*believe that the challenge is understood*” (1996, p. 15). There are two participants who emerge as opposites on this subject, more specifically expectations to the work situation – Farid and Jamal. Farid showed an understanding and was able to adjust his expectations to the situations he found himself in, throughout his narration. This is further reflected in his realistic expectations regarding employment and using his education from Syria. Farid showed that he understood the challenge, and knew he had the resources he needed to cope. He appeared to comprehend the situation and use GRRs. Jamal, on the other hand, expressed repeatedly how he had expected to get a job right away with the education and experience he had. He did not show any signs of adjustment, nor did he consider GRRs as available to him. Sloopjes et al. (2017, p. 574) had similar findings in their study, concluding that disruption between expectations before migration and the reality that met their participants “*...appear to be a key threat to experiencing consistency, load balance and developing meaning.*”

7.2. Research sub-question three

How are opportunities for employment in Norway perceived?

During the interviews, the participants were asked to talk about their life in Norway. If not mentioned by the participant themselves, I followed up and asked explicitly about stressors and

resources, and work. To what extent the participants talked about this varied – perhaps because it did not seem of that much importance to some, while others found it to be a dominant part of their life in Norway. In retrospect I have debated on whether the experiences related to the opportunities for employment should have been included in the interview guide explicitly, due to its salient role to the overall research question. Although the research could have benefitted from this, the stressors that the participants found to be most demanding were not formed by the context, and the fact that they emerged in answer to general questions, perhaps make them more genuine, which again contributes to provide a more realistic image of how they perceived the employment phase (whether they perceived it as a stressor at all).

Experience with approaching the Norwegian labor market is a factor all the participants shared. A common stressor mentioned by Farid, Jamal, Rima and Yara, was in relation to their previous education and work experience. As Rima and Yara were educated within the health sector, they were both obligated to get their license in order to work in Norway. This process was described as long and hard to navigate, but with the SRR of guidance counseling they found it manageable. Farid and Jamal experienced how hard it was to get a paid job within their field of competence with education from Syria (both with additional experience within the oil sector). This is interesting, because education and work experience would initially be considered to be a GRR, but in this case, even though it is not culturally dependent (so it would not be relevant in other places than its original culture), it still loses value upon arrival in Norway. Farid found the job hunt much easier once he had enrolled in a new master program at NTNU and had a planned date for graduation. This suggests that Farid rebuilt his GRR, constructed and customized it to be of value in Norway. This is not done by Jamal, who stated that he would take any job he was offered, but still exhibited signs of only looking in the direction of the field in which he had his background. It therefore looks as if though he did not consider that this GRR has decreased in value since arrival, hence giving him no reason to work on evolving it and leading him to consider his stressors to derive from other external factors.

Social contact and networks are mentioned by several of the participants as important resources in getting a job in Norway. Hassan, Fatima, Iman and Rima all used this GRR to get access to the labor market. Jamal expresses how he considered the lack of opportunities in the (small) municipality he resided to be the reason for not having a job. He did not view the internet as a GRR in the job application process, because he considered the value of networking and handing in applications in person to be the only way to be hired, which he found not to be a viable

option as there were no vacant jobs in his field in his place of residence. This is an interesting remark, as in Norway, the norm, especially when applying for jobs that require formal education and experience, is to apply via email or online application systems.

Jamal was the only participant who seemed consumed by the stress of employment, perhaps because he was the only one of the participants who was not employed at the time of the interview. van Dijk (2021, p. 2) states that it is often harder for highly skilled refugees to find suitable work, than for the lower skilled refugees. She also highlights that among highly skilled refugees, professional identity is strong and that taking work in a lower position could contribute to losing status. Wood et al. (2019) reflect on how men who are used to being breadwinners for their families, often experience increased stress when they are unemployed and struggle with finding a relevant job in a new country, as this impacts their sense of identity. Although Jamal had his first child after arrival in Norway and thus technically never lost his status as breadwinner for his family, it is still evident from his statements that he considers this to be his job and something he is expected to do.

The results from this study deviate from results in previous studies and research done on the topic, as none of the participants mentioned that they themselves had experienced what they perceived as discrimination in the labor market (Baranik et al., 2018). Whether discrimination is not mentioned because it did not take place, or left out for other reasons, can only be speculated in at this point. However, it is possible that the research could have benefited from more probing on themes that have been reoccurring in similar research. A resource that is reported as important to refugees and immigrants in becoming integrated into the labor market, is trust in a higher power (Borwick et al., 2013; Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2015; Gericke et al., 2017). This is not a resource mentioned by any of the participants in this study, nor did any of them mention being religious.

7.3. The participants' SOC

Discussing the SOC of all the participants in depth will not be prioritized because of the page limitations. I will however, based on the interviews, theoretical background and previous empirical studies, attempt to evaluate the SOC of all the participants. While SOC is dynamic and will change over time and thereby effect one's position on the dis-ease – health-ease continuum, I do not have sufficient and detailed data to make claims on the development of the

individuals SOC. I will therefore make a postulation on an overall position on the SOC of the participants, without consideration for fluctuation over time. Based on previous knowledge on SOC, a person with a high SOC will be more likely to cope well with major life events that can influence the SOC, and thereby it will stay relatively stable. The opposite can be expected from a person with a low SOC. As initially stated, not all participants will be discussed in depth, but all will be presented. Two participants, Farid and Jamal, will be discussed more in detail as they stand out as, if not completely, close to definitive examples of persons with high and low SOC. Firstly, a discussion will be done on Farid in relation to the three components of SOC, before we move on to do the same with Jamal.

Farid consistently showed high levels of comprehensibility. This is reflected in his ability to make realistic plans and expectations, clearly based on information that he viewed as consistent and structured. This is exhibited many times, among which include how he planned to work during semesters where school was not as demanding in Syria, preparing with a life vest for the rubber boat ride, in navigating through Europe without human smugglers, and his research on further education before arrival in Norway. He expressed understanding and reflection of his surroundings, and did not seem affected negatively by unexpected challenges, like the waiting period experienced upon arrival. He had overall comprehended the challenges he met, and further on showed high levels of manageability.

Farid showed that he was in possession of multiple GRRs, and continuously used them when faced with stressors and challenges. These GRRs include, among other things, knowledge and intelligence – this shone particularly through in his level of education and capacity of interpreting the structures of society, his interest in learning the Norwegian language and understanding of the importance of socialization and activation in integration into a new society. Money is another GRR he is in possession of, which he showed respect and understanding of its value. By working a long side his studies (in order to fund them), not spending money on the journey in places he saw potential to save, as well as showing a constant drive towards getting a job in Norway, he proved that money was a resource that he did not take for granted but worked hard to attain and not waste. Farid valued social support – in Norway he pointed to this as a reason for having adapted so well to the norms and social codes of society, he also indicates that his family is important support. Farid also took use of GRRs, like Facebook and Google maps as navigation and source of information on the journey through Europe, as well as the life vest and buoy that he purchased for safety on the flight. Farid's

continuous utilization and employment of the GRRs available to him, resulted in a good overall load balance – he knew his limits, and through comprehensibility, he retrieved necessary information to plan ahead and take use of his time, further developing his GRRs. All while staying motivated and feeling mastery and success from having a good load balance.

Farid's expressions which indicated his meaningfulness, is most frequently mentioned as connected to having a good job and salary, which he stated was important for him as a man. This also worked as motivation for him to continue his journey, after not finding what he looked for in Iraq. The point in Syria where Farid decided that he had to flee, can in a sense also be connected to meaningfulness, through his ethical compass – he could not join the military, because he knew that would require him to kill, which he would not do. Meaningfulness is also reflected in Farid's decision making in socially valued decisions – especially made evident in this discussion in relation to the initial choice of fleeing, as well as the choice of municipality to settle in after his residence permit was approved. This is also reflected elsewhere during the interview – for instance through his engagement and will to contribute his time and knowledge in volunteer work and helping other refugees. In regard to Table 1: Dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components, considering the strength of each of the three components – comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, I will argue Farid scores high on all, hence he is type 1, according to the model, and will thus be stable on the dis-ease–health-ease continuum. This is evident as he, regardless of stressors met, managed to activate his GRRs and navigate through the challenges. Based on the data collected, both empirical and theoretical, there is strong evidence that Farid has a high sense of coherence.

Jamals' sense of comprehensibility, in many ways, seems weaker than that of Farid. Jamals' harsh meeting with the police at the age of 15, likely had an enduring impact on his trust in the information provided by the government. He stated that at this time, he did not have the knowledge that what he did was wrong, he did not feel as though the information from the government was consistent. Jamal seemed highly affected by the uncertainty and unpredictability of the war. Upon arrival in Norway, Jamal expressed that he was very disappointed – the expectations he had formed prior to the flight, were very different than the reality he experienced. He had envisioned arriving in Norway and being integrated in the labor market quickly, which again would let him provide for his family and contribute to his new country. Jamal had grossly overestimated the life in Norway, based on glorified information from social media. Jamal also offers a lengthy statement (see Reflections, under 6.1),

questioning the allocation of financial resources spent on refugees by the Norwegian government on the bureaucratic procedures in place, suggesting that he finds this information to be inexplicable and chaotic. This could indicate that his distrust in the government in Syria affects his perception of the Norwegian government and as though his comprehensibility was fundamentally influenced by inconsistent information from the regime. This reflects a low sense of comprehensibility – Jamal did not comprehend the situation and did not feel that the information he obtained was consistent.

This brings us to Jamal's sense of manageability. A consistent stressor for Jamal, during his life in Syria, was living under the dictatorship regime. GRRs that Jamal mentioned repeatedly in his life in Syria included is likeminded political active friends, protests and smuggled books, giving him the opportunity to influence, and in his way, manage the situation. Jamal does seem to be more passive than his friends in regard to initiating these GRRs, but he still does contribute, and even loses his job as a consequence (indicates that this is meaningful to him). It appears, however, that Jamal does not find use of GRRs that were central in his life in Syria, upon arrival in Norway. This also includes extended family, which he does not mention as a resource after leaving Turkey. His education and work experience, which served as GRRs for him in Syria and Turkey, seems to limit him in Norway, in the sense that he expects it to help him and be a GRR, but in reality, it appears that it keeps him from seeing opportunities beyond getting a PhD and working within his field. It seems that Jamal is struggling with transferability and, perhaps, a devaluation and loss of his GRRs. The only GRR Jamal mentioned after arrival in Norway, is social contact with Norwegians. Jamal thus went from having a good job in the oil industry in Syria, seemingly with a good load balance, to an underload in Norway, where states multiple times that he has nothing to do in Norway. The liminal phase was extremely challenging for Jamal, as he experienced a severe underload and was not able to use his resources to contribute to the Norwegian society, leading to disinterest and demotivation.

Jamal's sense of meaningfulness is clearly demonstrated early on through his expressed wish for freedom and democracy. This undoubtedly brought him motivation to leave Syria – which in execution provided him with a socially valued decision. While in Norway, it appears as if Jamal had a setback in regard to his sense of meaningfulness. He was unable to participate to the welfare system and greater good. This further manifested through the rejection he experienced in the participation of the decision on which municipality he would settle in (preferred a city but was placed in a small town). This was clearly demotivating for him,

influencing his manageability – which will be returned to when discussing the main research question. Initially, in Syria, it appears that Jamal scored low on sense of comprehensibility, while his sense of manageability and meaningfulness was high. Looking at Table 1: Dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components, the composition of the results of these components identifies him as type 2, which is defined as rare – most likely because an individual with a high sense of manageability would most likely have a lower sense of comprehensibility. This could be due to the totalitarian regime and living in a constant state of war and uncertainty, but due to the limited data provided in the study, these are merely assumptions. Upon arrival in Norway, however, there seemed to be a drastic change to the levels of the components – Jamal's sense of comprehensibility remained low, his manageability, which used to be higher, is at this point drastically decreased alongside his low sense of meaningfulness. Overall, I will argue, that in Norway, Jamal is left with a low sense of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. In accordance with Table 1: Dynamic interrelatedness of the SOC components, this indicates that he now identifies as number 8, predicting that he is stable on the dis-ease-health-ease continuum, but with a low SOC.

The evaluation of the SOC of the remaining participants will be kept remarkably shorter than with Farid and Jamal. They will be evaluated in order of the Table 2: Presentation of main participants. Hassan and Karam show a strong sense of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness, and are therefore both type 1 – stable with a high SOC. Fatima shows signs of being highly protected and shielded from the world around her, indicating that she has a lower sense of comprehensibility, but also affecting her sense of manageability, as she then experiences an underload before arriving in Norway, and then an overload when starting the integration process. Her sense of meaningfulness is strong. This indicates that she is type 4 – which predicts she experiences pressure to move down. Iman shows a lower sense of comprehensibility, partly reflected in statements showing that she does not fully understand the seriousness of the war (perhaps this is also a coping mechanism). Her manageability does at first glance look high, but it does seem as though opportunities are handed to her, more than her having to work and use GRRs, which affects how she values the opportunities. She worked hard in the salon before she went on sick leave, but she also expresses that she had too much work, which indicates an overload. Overall, it seems as she also has a low sense of manageability and meaningfulness. This rates her as type 8 – a stable and low SOC. Rima reflects a high sense of comprehensibility and manageability, as she views information as consistent and logical, in addition to having used GRRs and creating a balanced workload for

herself. Her meaningfulness, I will argue, is low, much due to her not having experienced the dangers of the war when living a normal life in Lebanon, giving her no meaning and motivation in fleeing, except her siblings' arguments that it could become dangerous in the future. This places her as a type 5 – pressuring her to move down on the scale. Whether she has a high or low sense of coherence is hard to evaluate, though it is decreasing, but considering that she defines herself as depressed during the interview, it is most likely that it is low. Yara reflects a high sense of comprehensibility, manageability and meaningfulness. This shows through her understanding of the war, and how she chose to flight to Norway alone, in order to then bring her (now ex-) husband and son into safety in a country she knew focused on family values. She had a very rough period when first arriving without her son and husband but managed to take use of social support provided to her by her municipality and pushed through. This indicates that she is a type 1 – hence she has a high and stable SOC.

The difference between the SOC of men and women in the study, is noteworthy. Volanen, Lahelma, Silventoinen, and Suominen (2004, p. 323) states that previous studies share these results, that men generally have a higher SOC than women. It remains unknown, however, if there is a difference in which factors contribute to a high SOC among men and women. They do, for example, state that there is a correlation between high education and a high SOC – the education levels between the men in this current study are higher, than among the women. The same study points to unhealthy relationships with a partner was a threat to SOC – this is interesting in the context of Yara, who seemed to regain power and charge of her life once her son and husband came to Norway, and they got a divorce (Volanen et al., 2004, p. 328).

7.4. Sense of Coherence and employment opportunities

The discussion of each of the three research sub-questions, in addition to a total evaluation of each participants SOC, forms the foundation for answering the main research question – *how does former Syrian refugees' sense of coherence impact perceived employment opportunities in Norway?* As discussed in Chapter 2: Theoretical framework, whether SOC stabilizes at the age of thirty or keeps developing has been debated, however Eriksson and Lindström (2006) argue that there is sufficient empirical evidence to claim that it does develop. Using qualitative methods in the study, has allowed for a deep and thick description of the experiences and life events that influences the participants SOC, but it also limits the particular and specified way of measuring that is typical for studying the topic. I will argue, however, that based on previous

research and the theoretical framework, I am able to make a logical and justified arguments for the assessments of the participants SOC. In the following, a discussion will be done based merely on sub-question 3 – the perceptions of the opportunities for employment in Norway in relation to the evaluation of the SOC of the individual participants, before I go on to answer the research question.

A significant distinction between the participants that emerged through the study, is to what extent time is used as a resource, this is especially evident in the liminal phase upon arrival in Norway. Participants like Farid, Hassan and Karam show a strong motivation for starting the integration process in the Norwegian society, early on, before their residence permit is approved. This was evident through their push and motivation to learn about cultural codes and norms, as well as learning the language. For Farid, who has a high SOC, volunteering multiple places, undoubtedly gave him an advantage for when applying for paid jobs after receiving his residence permit. Working in the liminal phase can also be thought to maintain Farid's strong sense of meaningfulness (which shows to be one of the three components that suffered a decrease across many of the participants) as he is able to help others and create a sense of belonging for himself. Slootjes et al. (2017) found that these were important factors to developing a sense of meaningfulness. Hassan's dedication in the liminal phase to learn the Norwegian language, he states himself, was a direct reason for his second part-time job. His high sense of manageability and meaningfulness was determinant to motivation and building relationships and a network. Volanen et al. (2004) states that resistance resources contribute to a strong, but also the other way around. This is evident in the cases of Farid and Hassan. Yara, who also displays a high SOC, had harder time during the liminal phase and the first steps of the integration than the three other participants with a high SOC. Her strong sense of meaningfulness, strongly founded in creating a safe home for her son and a strong sense of comprehensibility, also showed through the understanding of what sacrifices had to be made for her family to be in safety, seems to have helped her, particularly with transferability in relation to developing her manageability. Yara stands out as a participant who, with a high SOC, that managed to fight depression, stressors of applications to get her education approved, and get a job in Norway. These participants convey a message that getting a job in Norway is obtainable, however, a realistic view on the transferability of previous work experience is consistent. Their expectations to Norway and the labor market were also not far from reality, and where there was a contrast, the message seemed to be understood, and the participants used

GRRs available to them in order to cope and integrate into the Norwegian society and labor market.

The participants on the lower part of the scale of SOC, include Jamal, Fatima, Iman and Rima. Within this group, it appeared to be much variation (perhaps partly due to the fact that SOC, is as mentioned, measured on a continuum, and without quantitative methods and numbers, it cannot be measured precisely, thus the variance between the participants can be significant). Jamal stood out as the participant who demonstrated the most stress around this subject – his perception of the labor market and work opportunities in Norway, was that it is next to hopeless. He blamed much of this on the fact that he was not located in a city where he could hand out his resume and do networking face-to-face. It is also prominent that Jamal struggled with devaluation of resources (a sign of low SOC (Slootjes et al., 2017)), perhaps impacting his chances of getting a permanent job. Being unemployed is also associated with a poor SOC (Volanen et al., 2004), which again, will contribute to an underload, and feeling that one's capabilities and resources are not valued. Fatima had a rough meeting with high school in Norway, seemingly much do to lacking support and information from the teachers and staff. In connection to her time in Syria, where she was protected and shielded (and perhaps under stimulated and thus had an underload), this created an unbalance, and inconsistency for her. Undeterred by her low SOC, Fatima was still able to get a job (other than working at her parent's restaurant) through social contacts and the network she had built. Iman and Rima's experiences reflect this importance of a network in the process of getting a job. Although, as has been argued before, it seems as if though Iman was handed many opportunities, without realizing the value, she did get a job, and she worked and contributed (to the point where she got an overload). Rima, who originally appeared to have a high SOC when living in Lebanon, in many ways showed that this was still an advantage to her – she took use of GRRs available to her and got a job. Antonovsky have stated, however, that meaningfulness is the most important component (Antonovsky, 1987, p. 22), which it is clear that is missing in her life in Norway, including the decision-making process on moving here. This can also explain her lasting depression, even though she is integrated in the labor marked. It is possible that her SOC suffered a temporary change, as Antonovsky (1987, p. 124) argued could happen in response to major changes in patterns of life experiences, which in the case of Rima is manifested through her leaving a stable and predictable life.

Based on these eight interviews and the valuable information shared by the participants, it is, I will argue, possible to see evidence that a strong SOC will impact the perceived opportunities for employment in Norway, in a positive direction. However, a lower SOC, does not necessarily prove the opposite. The results reflect that some of those with a lower SOC, have a harder time navigating into the labor market, and experience it as a bit more challenging. It appears as they need to be handed resistance resources more directly than the participants with a higher SOC, who, by intuition, will draw on GRRs, and as we saw, often valuing their time as a resource and ensuring that they have a good load balance.

The initial motivation for conducting research on former refugees in the labor market, was based on observations of former refugees who were employed in positions that they were overqualified for. Four of the participants, Farid, Jamal, Rima and Yara, had tertiary education and work experience upon arrival in Norway and Hassan continued his studies as a dentist after receiving his residence permit. Three of the participants had not finished high school upon arrival, two of whom were minors at the time. Hassan, Karam, Fatima and Imam can therefore be exempted from this following paragraph, as the adaption process in which previous experience meets the labor market of the host country, will be discussed. As introduced in 3.3.2: Labor market, and applied in 7.1.3: In Norway, the model suggested by Zikic et al. (2010) for qualified immigrants' career orientations, can give valuable insight in the way the labor market is approached by the individual. Farid was argued to have an embracing career orientation, while Jamal fit the resisting kind. There is also a third orientation – the adaptive.

The way in which the individuals' approach, or orientate themselves toward the labor market, is likely to have an effect on their perception of it. It is clear that Jamal, who is clearly motivated by his "old" professional identity and holds on to his "pre-flight" dreams of a PhD, is struggling to find his place in the labor market. Farid, on the other hand, display extreme motivation to learn and try new things. Yara expressed thankfulness to the support she had gotten through NAV, helping her navigate and chose the course of action to get a job. She was encouraged to take courses becoming a health care worker, instead of a nurse which was her occupation in Syria, and was motivated to do this as a start, and then develop further from there. It seems as though she uses an adaptive orientation:

"Motivated by the prospect of succeeding/helping their families, and able to adapt & cope by pursuing a variety of jobs. Survival jobs taken if needed and used as

help in the direction of their desired career path and identity change accepted” (Zikic et al., 2010, p. 679).

Rima, showed signs of both high sense of comprehensibility and meaningfulness, managed to navigate her way into becoming a pharmacist in Norway, by building network, and having her license approved. It appeared as though she was a mix of resisting and adaptive – she wished to continue where she left of, but through being adaptive, she accomplished her goal.

Based on only four participants, it is hard to say anything about a possible connection between the participants SOC and the relevance of their careers in Norway. Farid, who had a high SOC, changed directions entirely in his profession, by reeducating himself and securing a job before graduating from the new master program. Yara who also had a high SOC, had family to be considered, and used an adaptive approach. Rima, who we have stated had a high sense of comprehensibility and manageability, and a low sense of meaningfulness, has been challenging to place as either having a high or low SOC.

7.5. Health promotion

With the knowledge that there is a difference between the participants with higher and lower SOC and their perceptions of the employment opportunities in Norway, there is room for improvement. One cannot generalize based on the results of this study, as has been mentioned. The insights provided, give indicators for fruitful discussions and further studies in the future, as well as, in combination with existing knowledge on the field, provide foundation and justification for recommendations for further work with refugees in Norway.

The three components to health promotion, as introduced in Chapter 1: Introduction, included equity, participation and empowerment (Eriksson & Lindström, 2008). These values, I believe, are reflected in the new Integration Law. The Integration Law in Norway (commenced January 1st, 2021) facilitates for individual assessment for training in the introduction program by mapping out the individual’s previous knowledge, education and professional experience, in order to customize the learning needs to them. This stands in contrast to the repealed Introduction act, which was explained in Chapter 1: Introduction, which was the applicable act during the participants arrival and integration process. It is evident that the Integration Act focuses on providing equity, in opposition to the repealed Introduction Act, which provided equalities treatment and training, which resulted in unequal opportunities.

Considering health promotion in a Salutogenesis perspective, contributing and facilitating to strengthening the three components of SOC which in turn empowers people to take control of their health.

7.6. Limitations

A number of limitations to the study have been mentioned throughout this report. Those that stand out particularly as most significant will be addressed in this section.

Firstly, when the interviews with the main participants were not conducted face-to-face, it can be harder to build rapport with the participants. Conversation does not always fall so easily through the screen. However, this made the recruitment process, that was challenging at times, easier, because participants from all of Norway could partake. As the researcher, I left the interviews with the feeling that the participants had opened up and talked, and that it did not create much disturbance with the screen.

As self-selection was the first step in recruitment of the participants, it is not unlikely that it was those with strong feelings and opinions on the subjects who volunteered to contribute. A Facebook post inquiring about labor market experiences can also be considered to attract those who feel that they are succeeding, which perhaps also is reflected in the selection of participants in the study, compared to the statistics that were presented initially.

As the process of analysis began and evolved, I discovered that the interview guide could have had more focus and emphasis on the entrance to the labor market in Norway. Some probing was done on the subject, however, considering that this was such a major topic in the research, it could have been beneficial to more and richer data on this.

Some of the results in this current study deviate from results of existing studies. The most notable, I have found, is the lack of mention of a higher power or belief as a resource to cope with hardship. Because of the variety in ethnic groups and religions within Syria, it is likely that there are great variations in how dominant this variable is to the individuals. It is likely that the study could have benefited from probing on this subject during the interviews.

Although there are qualitative studies done on SOC, the methodological approach initially used for in investigating the concept is quantitative studies, using the SOC-13 or SOC-29 scales. I believe that this research could have benefitted greatly from applying a mixed methods approach. The quantitative questionnaires would have opened up for more direct indicators on the participants SOC, measured using the same scales as other research projects. The qualitative interviews would have added context and thick descriptions, and explanations for the why's and how's, which can be beneficial when building recommendations for practice. Unfortunately, a study of this magnitude would not be possible within the time frame of a master thesis.

Chapter 8: CONCLUSION

Based on the results from this research, there is a link between an individual's SOC and their perception of the labor market in Norway. Three men and one woman were regarded to have a high SOC in this study. Farid, Karam and Hassan all showed a high sense of manageability through transferability of resources, a good load balance, and an excellent understanding of what is demanded of them to succeed. Yara appeared to have a rougher start in the integration process while being separated from her son, who was still in Syria with her (now ex-) husband. In the face of this stressor, she managed to see GRRs available to her, she investigated what was needed for her education to be validated and listened to the advice given to her. These four participants managed to get jobs (fulltime for Farid and Yara, and parttime for the two students – Karam and Hassan). It seemed as though they were under the impression that it required an effort, but that did not perceive it as particularly challenging and out of reach. Evaluating Rima's SOC proved to be challenging based on the data that were collected. She was depressed, as she stated several times, and a contributing factor to this can seem to be the lack of motivation and meaningfulness behind fleeing to Norway, as she was safe and had a stable life in Lebanon. Regardless of this, she was able to utilize GRRs available and get a job. She detected that networking was important and she found the information she needed to apply to have her education approved in Norway. Getting a job seemed to be manageable for Rima as well.

Two of the female participants and one male participant were ranked to have a low SOC – Jamal was the participants who appeared to be most stressed about the situation, and expressed hopelessness over not being valued as a resource in Norway. Fatima, who appeared to have been experiencing an underload, and perhaps also falling under Antonovskys "housewife" category regarding meaningfulness, experienced a rough start in Norway, but once she received the information she needed and handed the resources so cope, she managed to get a part time job, and is wanting to get a University education. Iman was also considered to have a low SOC, however, it seems that she found a job quite easily. As discussed, it can seem as though she was handed resources and opportunities, which can also appear to have caused an overload. The common factor between these was especially low on the meaningfulness component, which caused her to move down on the continuum, towards dis-ease, and although she showed high sense of manageability and comprehensibility, it did not appear to have an effect on her

depression. One woman also appeared to have a higher SOC. One common theme amongst the participants with a low SOC, is that they are not immediately able to transfer their resources, or GRRs, to be applicable in the new society. As we saw with Fatima, information at the right time, a grown up to guide her, and a establishing a network, appear to be crucial factors for further motivation. After the interviews were completed, Jamal let me know that his wife and he had moved and enrolled in a master's program in comparative politics. The participants with a low SOC in this study are capable and resourceful, however, it is apparent, through this study and previous literature, that information at the right time about how to navigate in the new society and what is expected, is a key factor to participation and well-being.

It is apparent that Norway did not have the systems prepared to efficiently handle the sudden influx of a new group of refugees in 2015. Norway, and other European countries, have attempted several programs and measures in order to increase employment rates among refugees. Indirectly, this starts with stimulating factors meant to help underage refugees in high school, as well as making higher education more available, by supplementary educations.

Three of the core components to health promotion was presented in 1.2: Context – equity, participation and empowerment. The findings and discussion, I will argue, provides evidence that there was still work to be done in these three areas in regard to the integration process in Norway. Equity is particularly evident as an area that needed work, as the introduction program and systems for integration under the Immigration Act was standardized. This did not accommodate for people being different and having different levels of SOC. There is, in this research and previous research, evidence that SOC will impact the individual's ability to take full use of resources and understand what measures are necessary to succeed in meeting with a tension. Participation, which is argued in SOC to be particularly important in socially valued decisions, was also a point that appeared to be challenging for especially one the participants – Jamal did not feel that he was part of decisions that structured the foundations in his new life. Through the triangulation in this research, it is evident that there are institutions and programs in place that work particularly with empowering and strengthening the individuals, drawing on their strengths and resources. Unfortunately, institutions and programs like these were hardly mentioned by the participants of the study, begging the question – is the information that these programs exist reaching those who can take use of them, and are they available to all who need them? The Integration Law meets all these points and specifies how they plan to deliver – equity in form of a custom introduction course to the individual, participation through having

a say in the way that this introduction course is structured, and empowerment through building on the resources and experiences that the individual already have. An emphasis is also put on equal access and opportunity to all – no matter where they are placed in Norway.

Recommendations for future research

- I. Further exploration of the use of time as a resource by refugees.
- II. The literature search revealed a gap in knowledge on the experiences of Syrian refugees on the journey of exile through Europe. This would be particularly interesting by use of the SMH.
- III. Expand the current study, by applying a mixed methods approach. This would allow for further generalization, as well as provide in-depth descriptions of the views of the refugees themselves, a field that is not much explored.
- IV. Explore how to stimulate the external environment for refugees with a low SOC, if possible, in order for them to take use of GRRs to the same extent, as those with a higher SOC.

Recommendations for practice

- I. Facilitate and show importance and applicability of resources to those who struggle with seeing them. Based on this study, it is evident that people with a lower SOC struggle with taking available GRRs into use. It cannot be expected that institutions evaluate the SOC of their participants, however, they can help and facilitate, by drawing on motivational factors and provide information at the right time about their GRR.
- II. Provide and share more knowledge and information across sectors, enhance interdisciplinary action. This could also contribute to better strengthening the institutions, and thus work towards SDG 16 (United Nations).
- III. Strengthen the primary schooling systems and provide quality education for all, aiming at SDG 4 (United Nations).

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Ethical clearance from NSD

Det innsendte meldeskjemaet med referansekode 556011 er nå vurdert av NSD.

Følgende vurdering er gitt:

Det er vår vurdering at behandlingen av personopplysninger i prosjektet vil være i samsvar med personvernlovgivningen så fremt den gjennomføres i tråd med det som er dokumentert i meldeskjemaet 15.01.2020 med vedlegg, samt i meldingsdialogen mellom innmelder og NSD.

Behandlingen kan starte.

MELD VESENTLIGE ENDRINGER

Dersom det skjer vesentlige endringer i behandlingen av personopplysninger, kan det være nødvendig å melde dette til NSD ved å oppdatere meldeskjemaet. Før du melder inn en endring, oppfordrer vi deg til å lese om hvilke type endringer det er nødvendig å melde: nsd.no/personvernombud/meld_prosjekt/meld_endringer.html Du må vente på svar fra NSD før endringen gjennomføres.

TYPE OPPLYSNINGER OG VARIGHET

Prosjektet vil behandle særlige kategorier av personopplysninger om etnisitet, politisk oppfatning, religion, filosofisk overbevisning, helse og alminnelige kategorier av personopplysninger frem til 31.12.2020.

LOVLIG GRUNNLAG

Prosjektet vil innhente samtykke fra de registrerte til behandlingen av personopplysninger. Vår vurdering er at prosjektet legger opp til et samtykke i samsvar med kravene i art. 4 nr. 11 og art. 7, ved at det er en frivillig, spesifikk, informert og utvetydig bekreftelse, som kan dokumenteres, og som den registrerte kan trekke tilbake. Lovlig grunnlag for behandlingen vil dermed være den registrertes uttrykkelige samtykke, jf. personvernforordningen art. 6 nr. 1 bokstav a, jf. art. 9 nr. 2 bokstav a, jf. personopplysningsloven § 10, jf. § 9 (2).

PERSONVERNPRINSIPPER

NSD vurderer at den planlagte behandlingen av personopplysninger vil følge prinsippene i personvernforordningen om:

- lovlighet, rettferdighet og åpenhet (art. 5.1 a), ved at de registrerte får tilfredsstillende informasjon om og samtykker til behandlingen - formålsbegrensning (art. 5.1 b), ved at personopplysninger samles inn for spesifikke, uttrykkelig angitte og berettigede formål, og ikke viderebehandles til nye uforenlige formål.
- dataminimering (art. 5.1 c), ved at det kun behandles opplysninger som er adekvate, relevante og nødvendige for formålet med prosjektet.
- lagringsbegrensning (art. 5.1 e), ved at personopplysningene ikke lagres lengre enn nødvendig for å oppfylle formålet.

DE REGISTRERTES RETTIGHETER Så lenge de registrerte kan identifiseres i datamaterialet vil de ha følgende rettigheter: åpenhet (art. 12), informasjon (art. 13), innsyn (art. 15), retting (art. 16), sletting (art. 17), begrensning (art. 18), underretning (art. 19), dataportabilitet (art. 20).

NSD vurderer at informasjonen som de registrerte vil motta oppfyller lovens krav til form og innhold, jf. art. 12.1 og art. 13. Vi minner om at hvis en registrert tar kontakt om sine rettigheter, har behandlingsansvarlig institusjon plikt til å svare innen en måned.

FØLG DIN INSTITUSJONS RETNINGSLINJER

NSD legger til grunn at behandlingen oppfyller kravene i personvernforordningen om riktighet (art. 5.1 d), integritet og konfidensialitet (art. 5.1. f) og sikkerhet (art. 32).

For å forsikre dere om at kravene oppfylles, må dere følge interne retningslinjer og eventuelt rådføre dere med behandlingsansvarlig institusjon.

OPPFØLGING AV PROSJEKTET

NSD vil følge opp ved planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet.

Lykke til med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Gry Henriksen
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Updated information: new end date for project

Behandlingen av personopplysninger er vurdert av NSD. Vurderingen er:

NSD har vurdert endringen registrert 11.01.2021.

Vi har nå registrert 31.05.2021. som ny sluttdato for behandling av personopplysninger. I tilfelle det skulle bli aktuelt med ytterligere utvidelse, må vi vurdere hvorvidt det skal gis ny informasjon til utvalget.

NSD vil følge opp ved ny planlagt avslutning for å avklare om behandlingen av personopplysningene er avsluttet/pågår i tråd med den behandlingen som er dokumentert.

Lykke til videre med prosjektet!

Kontaktperson hos NSD: Gry Henriksen
Tlf. Personverntjenester: 55 58 21 17 (tast 1)

Appendix 2. Table of literature

Refugees & employment	Forced migration	Trauma	(Eshel & Kimhi, 2016b) (Fazel et al., 2005) (Lavik et al., 1996) (Mzayek, 2019) (Sagy-Schwartz, 2008) (Sundquist et al., 2000) (Sveaass, 2005) (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996) (Varvin, 2014) (Vaage et al., 2010)
		Decision making	(Antonovsky, 1996) (Borwick et al., 2013) (Ozaltin et al., 2020) (Slootjes et al., 2017) (Sveaass, 2005) (Wall et al., 2015)
	Labor market	Participation	(Aalandslid, 2009) (Afdal, 2004) (Baranik et al., 2018) (Bevelander, 2016) (Bourdieu, 1986) (Dzamarjia, 2018) (Kosine et al., 2008) (Newman, Bimrose, et al., 2018) (Olsen & Bye, 2020) (Ruiz & Vargas-Silva, 2018) (Wehrle et al., 2017) (Wood et al., 2019) (Zikic et al., 2010)
		Unemployment	(Eggenhofer-Rehart et al., 2018) (Knappert et al., 2018) (Lundborg, 2013) (Olsen & Bye, 2020) (Rantakeisu et al., 1999) (Strümpfer & Mionzi, 2001) (van Dijk, 2021)
		Resources	(Abkhezr et al., 2018) (Borwick et al., 2013) (Dako-Gyeke & Adu, 2015) (Wilson & Mittelmark, 2013) (Gericke et al., 2017) (Newman, Bimrose, et al., 2018) (Robeyns, 2006) (Slootjes et al., 2017) (Slootjes et al., 2018) (van Dijk, 2021) (Yakushko et al., 2008)
	Acculturation & adaptation	Acculturation & stress	(Redfield et al., 1936) (Sam & Berry, 2010) (Riedel et al., 2011) (Berry et al., 1987) (Berry, 1997) (Abu-Kaf & Khalaf, 2020) (Ghorashi et al., 2017) (Turner & Abrahams, 1995) (Turner, 1992) (Mzayek, 2019)
		Coping strategies & resources	(Lloyd et al., 2017) (Borwick et al., 2013) (Slootjes et al., 2017) (Tingvold et al., 2012) (Hirsch et al., 2015; Slootjes et al., 2018) (Varvin, 2014) (Hauff & Vaglum, 1997) (Pastoor, 2015) (Newman, Nielsen, Smyth, Hirst, & Kennedy, 2018) (Wood et al., 2019) (Bucken-Knapp et al., 2019)
		Health	(Sundquist et al., 2000) (Riedel et al., 2011) (Haj-Younes et al., 2020)

Appendix 3. Consent form

Are you interested in taking part in the research project: “The Impact of Sense of Coherence on Syrian Refugees’ perceived employment opportunities in Norway”?

This is an inquiry about participation in a research project where the main purpose is to uncover how the opportunities for employment in Norway is perceived for Syrian refugees. In this letter we will give you information about the purpose of the project and what your participation will involve.

Purpose of the project

This research project is about how the opportunities for employment in Norway is perceived by people who have arrived here as refugees. The project also aims to uncover how previous life experiences might affect this.

The research question I will use in the thesis is: “How does Syrian refugees’ sense of coherence impact perceived opportunities for employment in Norway?”. The project also seeks to identify stressors that have been met and resources used in the life of the participant.

This research project is part of my master’s thesis in the global development program at the University in Bergen.

Who is responsible for the research project?

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

Why are you being asked to participate?

In total 8 participants are needed for this project – two men and two women who are employed, and two men and two women who are not employed. All participants must be Syrians over 18, completed the introduction program, must have been in Norway for at least 4 years, and be able to communicate in English or Norwegian.

What does participation involve for you?

If you chose to take part in the project, this involves one interview (approximately between 45 – 90 minutes). Questions will focus on the time in Syria, the journey to Norway and the time here in Norway. The interview will be sound recorded with your permission.

Participation is voluntary

Participation in the project is voluntary. If you chose to participate, you can withdraw your consent at any time without giving a reason. All information about you will then be made anonymous. There will be no negative consequences for you if you chose not to participate or later decide to withdraw.

Your personal privacy – how we will store and use your personal data

We will only use your personal data for the purpose(s) specified in this information letter. We will process your personal data confidentially and in accordance with data protection legislation (the General Data Protection Regulation and Personal Data Act).

- Only I as the researcher will have access to your audio files and full names. My supervisor will have access to the transcribed interviews with your new names (pseudonyms).
- The list of names and contact will be stored separately from the rest of the collected data. The data will be stored on a research server.
- The participants will not be recognizable in the final thesis.

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

The project is scheduled to end in December 2020. Digital recordings will be deleted as soon as the interviews are transcribed. The transcriptions will be kept for verification purposes until the master thesis is approved and graded. After this, it will be deleted.

Your rights

So long as you can be identified in the collected data, you have the right to:

- access the personal data that is being processed about you
- request that your personal data is deleted
- request that incorrect personal data about you is corrected/rectified
- receive a copy of your personal data (data portability), and
- send a complaint to the Data Protection Officer or The Norwegian Data Protection Authority regarding the processing of your personal data

What gives us the right to process your personal data?

We will process your personal data based on your consent.

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

Where can I find out more?

If you have questions about the project, or want to exercise your rights, contact:

- University of Bergen via Anne Natalie Helgøy (anhelgoy@gmail.com or 404 88 909), or supervisor Marguerite Daniel (Marguerite.Daniel@uib.no or 55 58 32 20).
- NSD – The Norwegian Centre for Research Data AS, by email: (personverntjenester@nsd.no) or by telephone: +47 55 58 21 17.

Yours sincerely, Anne Natalie Helgøy (Project leader)

Appendix 4. Information and initial contact with main participants

In this appendix, the first and second post I made in the Facebook group “الطالبة السوريين في – النرويج – Syrisk Studentforening i Norge” during my recruitment process, are presented. Thereafter, the initial message I sent out to those who contacted me is presented.

First post (January 2nd, 2020) – 18 likes and 4 comments

Hello!

I am currently looking for participants for my master thesis project, and my friend was so kind to add me to this group. I am a student at the Global Development master's program at the University of Bergen. My thesis is about the experiences of Syrians in the Norwegian labor market. I need participants that I can interview that are employed, but also participants that have not yet entered the labor market. Other criteria for the participants: must be at least 18 years old, must have finished the introduction program, must be fluent in Norwegian or English. The interviews will take place in Bergen.

If this sounds like something you would be up to, please contact me! All participants will be anonymized, you can also withdraw from the interview at any time or skip any questions you do not wish to answer. The interview will last for approximately 1 hour. If you are interested or have any questions, please contact me here or by SMS at 404 88 909.

Second post (March 30th, 2020) – 30 likes and 27 comments

Good morning!

I'm a master student at the University of Bergen, currently doing my thesis on Syrian refugees' perceived employment opportunities in Norway. I need participants for interviews (they will of course be done via Skype because of the Corona virus) and hope that you are interested!

If you fit the following criteria and would be interested in participating, send me a DM:

- You are over 18 years of age
- You have completed the introduction program
- You are able to do the interview in English or Norwegian
- You have been in Norway for at least 4 years

I need both men and women to participate. I'm looking for people who are employed, but especially those who are still looking for employment. Interviews are anonymous!

Do not hesitate to contact me if you are interested or just want some more information!

Hope to hear from you!

Initial, direct contact via Facebook Messenger

Hello!

Thank you so much for your interest in my project! Through this project I wish to explore Syrian refugees' experiences with the labor market in Norway. There has been an overwhelming amount of response to participate in the study, I really appreciate it! Unfortunately, I will not be able to interview everyone who has showed interest, so I will have to pick those who answered first and fit the criteria. Can you tell me a little bit about yourself? Are you currently employed, or are you looking for a job?

The interview is based on three periods: your time in Syria before you left, the journey to Norway and your time here in Norway. The overall focus will be on employment, but I am also interested in your life in general, as well as your experiences coming here to Norway. During the interview you can choose to skip any questions you are not comfortable answering; you can also withdraw at any time. As I mentioned in my Facebook post, you will be anonymized, so the information cannot be traced back to you. The interview lasts for about one hour. If you are still interested, let me know, and I will send you a consent form for you to read through before the interview.

If you have any questions, do not hesitate to ask!

Best regards,
Anne Natalie Helgøy

Appendix 5. Interview guide

This interview guide was used as a pointer during the semi-structured interviews, this helped ensure that I visited all the points that were essential during the conversations. The bullet points were also used for probing.

1. Tell me about your life in Syria.
 - Education and work experience
 - Goals and dreams
 - Expectation to situation
 - If stressors are mentioned – how did you deal with these? (What/who helped) If not mentioned – what challenges did you face?
 - How was your health?
2. Tell me about your journey (to Norway)
 - Expectations versus reality
 - Goals and dreams (ex. Was Norway your goal?)
 - If stressors are mentioned – how did you deal with these? (What/who helped) If not mentioned – what challenges did you face?
3. Tell me about your life here in Norway
 - Expectations versus reality
 - Goals and dreams
 - Work
 - If stressors are mentioned – how did you deal with these? (What/who helped) If not mentioned – what challenges did you face?
 - How is your health now?

Appendix 6. Triangulation email

The emails that were sent out to institutions and programs that were relevant to the project were in Norwegian. The information in the emails were the same for all 5 emails, however, the questions varied depending on their programs and available information on their websites. In this appendix, I have translated the initial email sent out to everyone, as well as the questions for each of the institutions.

Hello!

I am currently writing my master thesis in Global Development at the University in Bergen and have therefore conducted interviews with former refugees from Syria, regarding their experiences with the Norwegian labor market. This has brought up themes like previous education and experience from the home country, and particularly how (or whether) they feel that they are qualified and valued in the Norwegian labor market. None of my participants mentioned your program, however, my wish is to map out and collect information regarding which opportunities are available to refugees in this situation. For context and triangulation in my thesis, I am therefore hoping you, or someone else at *insert institution here*, are available to answer some quick questions.

Insert questions here.

I would greatly appreciate it if you have the opportunity to answer some, or all, of the questions by email within Friday this week (19.03.21). If it would make it easier to the interview orally, let me know and we can set up a Zoom or phone call. Because the answers you give to the questions presents *insert institution here*, and your position here is of value to the credibility of the data provided, you will not be anonymized. Please let me know if this is a problem, or if you have any questions regarding this, and we will come to a solution.

Best regards,
Anne Natalie Helgøy

Appendix 7. Triangulation questions

Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Can you tell me a little bit about the response that you have received on your program? Among both refugees and in the trade and industry?2. I see that you had a goal for 2020 to get 75 refugees in a work placement/ internship, was this successful? Will you continue the program?3. How has the demand been?4. How do you inform about the program to potential applicants?
NTNU	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How was this educational program started? (Who's initiative, cooperation, etc.)2. What results have you seen with the students that have completed the program?3. How has the demand been?4. How do you inform about the program to potential applicants?
Oslo Met	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. How was this educational program started? (Who's initiative, cooperation, etc.)2. What results have you seen with the students that have completed the program?3. How has the demand been?4. How do you inform about the program to potential applicants?
Årstad High School	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Do you experience a high demand for introduction courses for minority language speakers? Are there many who skip the introduction course and start high school directly? What are your experiences with this?2. I see in the curriculum that the introduction course is based mainly around academic and language skills. Do you inform about other things, like educational system, grading system, Norwegian norms at school of the application process for further education? Is there a demand for this kind of information (among students who are in the introduction course, and among others)?3. Do you receive close monitoring and assistance from the municipality?4. Do you offer any specific kind of support to the students (educational, for mental health, etc.)? Please explain.5. Can you elaborate a little on what the combination class is, and how it works?
NAV	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Can you tell me a little bit about the response that you have received on your program? Among both refugees and in the trade and industry?2. Can you give a short description of how you work with the individuals in order to connect them to the labor market? What are the procedures.3. How has the demand been?4. How do you inform about the program to potential applicants

Appendix 8. Introduction to the triangulation institutions and programs

A short introduction to each of the institutions and programs that were represented by the key informants in this research project contributes with context for the reader.

Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry states themselves that: “*Our role is to build relations between businesses, government, local administration and research institutes. Our vision is to promote and inspire!*” (Bergen Chamber of Commerce, 2021). Bergen Chamber of Commerce and Industry participated in a cooperation between the public, private and local businesses, that started 10 years ago, as a response to the sudden influx of refugees from Syria. The program they started, *From Refugee to Resource*, was set on pause in 2019, because there was a decrease in refugees arriving. The representative from BCCI explained how the initiative among people to help was big, however, they experienced the program as more “top-down” – people showed up because they saw that it was a crisis. They do, however, have another highly relevant program, *Bergen Opportunity*, which provides immigrants with a mentor from a workplace, the goal is to give career progress. This is a cooperation between NAV, the municipality and the county municipality. This program is very beneficial for all parties involved, and BCCI’s experience is that this way of getting a job is more inspiring.

NTNU The Norwegian University of Science and Technology, located in Trondheim, offers a one-year complementary educational program in science and technology for refugees. The deputy director for education at the department of information technology and electronics, informs that the program was started on an initiative by the department of education. NTNU further worked with OsloMet on structuring the education, with funding from the department of education. Unfortunately, NTNU’s experience was that there was a low demand, and a further decrease after the two first years, which is why they decided to pause the program and not take in any students in the school year of 2020/2021.

OsloMet OsloMet, offer similar complimentary educational programs to NTNU, however, they offer a wider range of programs. In addition to the complementary education for engineering and technology, they offer education for teachers’ education and for nurses. The Senior advisor at section for career, internationalization and student life, informed that many of the participants who had completed successfully got relevant jobs, and some continued into ordinary educational programs. She also reported that they have hardly had any dropouts from the complementary education programs. It is the experience, at OsloMet, that comprehensive internships and work placements has contributed to the success of the programs. They further experience that the demand is relatively stable. The complementary education for nurses has had more applicants than their capacity, however, some of these applicants do not have status as refugee. They report that the numbers are lower for the teaching and engineering programs, but stable. The program is informed about through their network at NAV, the municipality, adult education, they also arrange an “open day”.

Årstad High School

Årstad High School is a public school, situated in Bergen. They offer an introduction course to minority language speakers which they recommend before starting ordinary Norwegian high school, in addition a combination class which offers a more comprehensive primary school education, this is especially meant for those who arrive in Norway that have not completed or had sufficient schooling in their home country. The combination class is a cooperation between Bergen municipality and Vestland county municipality. They further offer special guidance and follow-up for the students in form of a contact teacher, minority advisor, social pedagogics advisor and nurse.

NAV

The program NorA, run by NAV, is focused particularly towards including immigrants who stand outside the labor market into work, through work-oriented measures and guidance. Their work focuses on using the resources and experiences of the participants, providing them with an active every day with relevant experience and network. They work toward and with representatives from the ordinary labor market, public institutions, business representatives and voluntary organizations. The participants in the program are referred by their case worker at the local NAV office.

Appendix 9. Introducing the participants

As narrative research design has been used throughout the study, a short profile on each of the participants and their stories seemed in place. This will hopefully be helpful to the reader, as it gives more background and context to the statements and experiences of the participants, perhaps contributing to conveying the stories as a whole, not just as single events in time. My hope is that these participants will be seen as complex individuals and be distinguishable.

Farid

35-year-old Farid moved around a lot back when he lived in Syria, mostly for studies. Originally, he was from North-East Syria, an area largely reserved for the Kurds. He held a bachelor's degree in automatic quantum computer engineering, one year of studies in solar energy, as well as a master's degree in administration. His dream was always to have a good and well paid job, which he had in Syria, in an international oil company. He had many part-time jobs to be able to finance his education.

When Farid was called into the military in 2015, he decided to move. The journey first took him to Kurdistan in Iraq, where he had a brother. He then continued to Norway after he found it hard to start a life in Iraq. He travelled by way of Turkey, and from there by a rubber boat to Greece. From there he continued by foot and public transport till he reached Norway.

After reaching Norway, Farid waited a year and a half to get his residence permit. He spent his waiting period working as a volunteer and learning the language. Once he got his residence permit, he started reeducating himself at NTNU with a master's degree in cybernetics. He now has a full-time, relevant job waiting for him in Oslo when he finishes his education.

Hassan

25-year-old Hassan grew up in big city north in Syria. He moved to Aleppo to go to University after high school and managed to complete three years of his dentistry education before fleeing. His dream had always been to become a doctor, study abroad and return to Syria to work. Because his grades were not good enough, he chose to become a dentist instead and is very happy with his choice.

Hassan explained that it was hard to get a part time job next to University studies, and that it was normal to be financially supported by parents, which he was. He chose to flee in 2015 when the University was attacked by missiles, the power supply was unstable, and water had to be collected from specific places in town. Hassan left from Syria alone, but his brother later decided to join and met him in Germany.

In his waiting period in Norway, Hassan spent his time learning Norwegian. He was happy that he immediately was able to continue his education once he had his residence permit approved. He was thankful that he got one of his three years of school approved and had now started his third year again. Hassan had part-time jobs next to his studies that were not relevant to his education.

Jamal 40-year-old Jamal was born in a small city, east in Syria. He studied English language and literature at the University in Aleppo and later at Damascus. Jamal has worked a lot of different jobs, but mainly in an international oil company in Syria, because of his good English language. His goal has always been to leave Syria. In 2013 he left for Turkey. While staying in Turkey his family arranged a marriage for him, and not long after, he and his new wife left Turkey to go further north in Europe. On the journey through Europe, his wife was pregnant, which made the trip more challenging.

The waiting period in Norway was hard for Jamal. They got a son in the first city they were placed in and stayed in contact with the midwife after they moved. Jamal found it hard to get a permanent job, and told me that so far, he had only had part-time jobs as a substitute for people on sick leave. His goal was to get a PhD in English language and literature.

Karam 21-year-old Karam grew up in the Damascus, the capitol of Syria. His father is a UN employee, and his mother is an engineer. He lived parts of his childhood in England, where his mother took her PhD. He always dreamed of working with IT engineering. When he felt like the war was too close and affected his everyday life too much, he begun to try to convince his father to let him leave Syria. After he got approval, he started to plan his trip. Karam went via Russia and crossed the border to Norway by bicycle. At the time of arrival Karam was an unaccompanied minor.

The waiting time was tough on Karam, but he managed to learn a lot of Norwegian. He then went on to finish high school here in Norway and started his studies in IT engineering. He managed to get a (not relevant) part-time job next to his studies, and recently decided to start a second bachelor's degree on the side in comparative politics.

Fatima 22-year-old Fatima grew up in a big city, west in Syria. In Syria, she lived with her younger brother and her parents. After moving around in Syria because it was unsafe, the family decided that Fatima, her brother and her mother would flee to Norway. Her dad stayed behind and waited for family reunification. Fatima's dream was to study English, preferably in London, however, her parents wanted her to become a lawyer, doctor or pharmaceutical.

In planning the flight, Fatima played a contributing role, as she was the only family member who spoke English well enough. She also took on this role on the flight to Norway, where they travelled via Russia.

The waiting time in Norway appeared to be ok for Fatima, as she lived with her brother and mother. The application for getting her father to Norway, did, however, seem to be a continuous stressor. When starting high school in Norway, she felt that she was bullied and did not understand the Norwegian schooling system. After reaching out to the high school her brother attended, she got help. Fatima managed to get part-time jobs while retaking some subjects from high school, as well as working in the restaurant her parents opened.

Iman 25-year-old Iman was from a small city, north-west in Syria. She did not finish high school or have any education from her time in Syria. Iman felt that it was not safe anymore to live her everyday life in Syria, shopping and hanging out with friends.

After flying into Norway, through her husband who applied for family reunification, Iman attended Norwegian courses for a year, then she went on mothers leave with her son. Through help from friends in Norway, she was able to start a salon, but went on sick leave and decided to attend high school instead.

Rima

40-year-old Rima lived in Lebanon when the war in Syria broke out. In her family, it is common for girls to be sent out of the country to study. Rima decided to stay in Lebanon after her ended studies, to work as a pharmacist. She had no plans of fleeing, but was convinced by her siblings to join them, when celebrating her birthday in Turkey.

Rima and her siblings took the journey through Europe. They did not really have any plan on where to go, but her brother wanted to try Norway, so they decided to come here. During the waiting period, Rima was depressed, and did not have the capacity to learn any Norwegian. Once her residence permit was approved, she decided to start her new life, learn Norwegian and immediately started applying for jobs. Through networking she managed to find a job but is at the time of the interview still awaiting approval from the Directory of Health for practicing her nursing degree in Norway and has just signed up for an exam that she needs for this.

Yara

36-year-old Yara grew up in a big city, north-west in Syria. Yara moved to Damascus when getting her nursing degree and stayed there to work when she finished. Before the war started, Yara got married and had a son. While working at the hospital, she decided to take a law-degree on the side, she has one year left of her studies before finishing.

Living with the war seemed unsafe, and the hospital where Yara worked was in-between Al-Assad's military and the IS. In addition to being in immediate danger of bombs, Yara experienced how the war affected the availability of necessary, basic supplies, both at the hospital and in her personal life. Yara appears to have made the decision to flee herself, on her own, while leaving her husband and boy behind. She took the route through Europe.

Yara talks about her waiting period as extremely hard – very cold and dark, too much stress to learn anything new, and hard to make contact with people and missing her boy. Once her husband and boy made it to Norway through family reunification, and they got a divorce, she is doing better. Yara now has a part-time job that is in nursing, while going through the formal steps to become a certified health care worker.

Appendix 10. Relevant Sustainable Development Goals



“Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”
(United Nations).



“Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (United Nations).



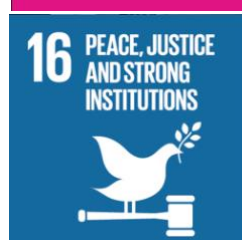
“Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls” (United Nations).



“Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all” (United Nations).



“Reduce inequality within and among countries” (United Nations).



“Promote peace and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels” (United Nations).



“Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development” (United Nations).
