

**A qualitative study exploring the acculturation processes among well-adapted
Somali females in Denmark**

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Abstract

Background: Research on Somalis in Europe tend to focus on poor integration and adaptation of the group into western societies. In Denmark, Somalis are highlighted as a migrant group impossible to integrate, resulting in the political agenda becoming increasingly radicalized and assimilation politics outlived. A Salutogenetic approach on well adapted Somali females in Denmark is an underlit research area which could provide valuable information for changing the migrant paradigm in Denmark.

Methods: This was a qualitative descriptive study applying several in-depth interviews as sampling method. The aim was to explore the acculturation processes, including the concept of integration and adaptation of female Somali migrants in Denmark. This from a Salutogenetic perspective focusing on strengths and sense of coherence among the group. For analysing the data, thematic networks were applied and results were interpreted by applying Antonovsky's salutogenetic theory, Sense of Coherence and existing relevant literature.

Results: Integrating into Danish society is linked to fulfilling personal goals and Denmark is seen as a country full of possibilities migrants should take advantage of. Integration is perceived as socially strengthening and necessary, to move forward in life. The women see themselves as main role players and taking control over own life in order to fulfil dreams, is a matter of course. The women have a strong sense of Somali identity, which is shaped by a supporting upbringing and strong role models in their parents. Finally, Denmark is perceived as a country not necessarily suited for permanent settlement, should better options occur.

Conclusions: Having life goals, social needs and an optimistic mind-set, helps shape the drive for these women to adapt into Danish society. The results support an existing study from Southern Spain, suggesting a shift in the political paradigm and discourse of migrants, could in fact, support greater integration over a larger migrant group.

Keywords: Acculturation, Adaptation, Salutogenesis, Sense of Coherence, Multiculturalism, Mental health promotion, Somali migrants

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Abbreviations and acronyms

GRR: General Resistance Resources

MIPEX: Migrant Integration Policy Index

NSD: Norwegian Social Science Data Service

NVK: National Committee on Health Research Ethics Denmark

REC: Regional Ethical Committee Norway

SOC: Sense of Coherence

UN: United Nations

UNDP: United Nations Development Program

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

WHO: World Health Organization

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to my amazing firefighter of a sister- in-law, Ayaan Mona Musse. You are, possibly, the strongest woman I know.

Chapter 1: Introduction

“I’ve built my castle here” (an informant of this study)

This study focuses on Somali women in Denmark, and their experiences with integration into the Danish society. The opening statement above is an apt description of one of the main findings from the study.

Irrespective of the reason for the migration, migration is a challenging process, but more so for refugees, whose emigration quite often is precipitated by traumatic events such as persecution. According to the UN International migration report of 2015 there are about 244 million international immigrants worldwide. That number increased to 258 million in 2017 (1, 2). Immigrants have always existed, however the cause for migration can be anything from education and family reunification to natural disasters and war. In 2015 alone, 27.8 million people worldwide were displaced against their will (3). Fleeing from war, no matter origin, can negatively impact on one’s health. Having the status as a refugee, is a major stress factor that can undermine their psychological well-being especially when people remain in the refugee status for a longer period (4). In that sense, how come some refugees do better than others when integrating into a new society? Migration does not invariably result in poor health, however several factors (e.g., settlement policies within the settlement society) may make one susceptible to mental health problems following migration (5). These mental health problems may exacerbate the challenges in living in a new country and live up to the expectations of migrants. There are large differences across migration nationalities and how they adapt to new life in the host country.

One might speculate upon, why it may be so difficult and demanding for the most vulnerable migrant groups to be accepted into host societies and settle down. In 2016, UN member states, as part of the *New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants*, declared to implement new migration policies that were to be maintained. The declaration focused on limiting the amount of hostile host environments and general intolerance towards migrants. UN members were to take equal part in the burden of supporting the world’s migrants. Still there seems to be very different national approaches to how welcome migrants are, and which policies are

applied (6). Most Somalis come to Denmark as refugees, thus it is important to clearly define who a refugee is. The United Nations Convention for refugees defines a refugee as:

“(...)any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it”(7).

This definition underscores the international awareness of refugees as a vulnerable group, and of which it may be essential to secure them proper and supportive environments for a good, if not better health and life. Seen from a socio-economic perspective, a good and healthy life may be a reflection of successful integration in the settlement society (5). One can imagine how the nature of the settling down process may be a prerequisite for successful integration, and these may lay the necessary foundations to supporting the health of refugees and their capability of becoming working, taxpaying citizens contributing and adjusting to the welfare systems in the north.

Somalis remain as one of the most difficult migrant groups to integrate into European societies. In the Netherlands, 36 % of Somali migrants receive public benefits compared to other Low-income country migrants of 10 %. In the UK, 50 % of the Somali community have no level of qualifications, and only 3 % qualify for higher education (6). In Denmark 72.11 % of the Somalis between the ages of 30 and 54 years receive fulltime public benefits, (including maternity leave and student funding), and unemployment rates are as high as 90 % for Somali female descendants and 77 % for Somali male descendants. Somali males have some of the highest rates for non-europeans committing crime in Denmark, with a crime index of 3 times the average Danish male. Furthermore, the socio-economic status of Somali migrants and their descendants in Denmark are among the lowest (8). It is within this dismal context that this study is undertaken, using the Salugenetic model by Antonovsky, to explore the acculturation processes of well-adapted Somali females in Denmark.

Studies of Somali migrants in Europe and worldwide abound. These studies, however, have tended to focus on mental ill health, the problem of integrating Somalis, and why their culture

may clash with Western cultural values (9-11). This present study aims to work along those lines and to fulfill three gaps in knowledge: First it focuses on Somali females and secondly it focuses on the experiences of positive adaptation and well-being. Third, this study uses a Salutogenetic perspective, aiming to explore the sense of coherence among the participant group. All in all, this study seeks to gain a deeper understanding of successful integration and mental health of female Somalis in Denmark.

This thesis is made up by 5 chapters. This first chapter, besides the introduction, deals with a literature-review, including a background of the history of Somalia and the current health status of Denmark. It outlays the objectives and research questions and also covers the theoretical approaches applied in this study. Chapter 2 deals with the methodological approaches and the analytical tools applied. Chapter 3 covers a thorough examination of the results and chapter 4 deals with a discussion of the findings contextualized with the theoretical approaches. Chapter 4 also covers a discussion of the method, and finally chapter 5 covers the conclusion of this study and further recommendations. For a clear understanding of this study, follows a definition of frequently used terms.

Definition of terms

Integration: As described in the Danish integration-law. For a migrant to be integrated, the migrant must exploit own abilities and resources to become a self-supporting, participating and contributing citizen on equal terms as the rest of the society, according to Danish norms and values. Furthermore, that the migrant carries the responsibility for own integration, and as quickly as possible become self-supporting through employment, which will contribute to an understanding of the values of Danish society. This includes learning the language, and engaging in everyday life of society (12). As integration plays a main part of this thesis a more detailed discussion of the concept is done later on in the work.

Migrant: This is a generic term for any individual with a foreign background residing in a country that he or she is not a citizen. Unless stated, this person may be an immigrant (who is a foreigner with a permanent or long-term legal residence in the country); an asylum-seeker (who is waiting for a decision regarding an application to be recognized as a refugee) or a refugee (who falls within the UNHCR 1951 definition of refugee or has been recognized as a refugee on the basis of humanitarian ground). The definition of a migrant also encompasses international students, tourists, expatriates and the like, but the study sample excludes these, because of the temporary nature of their residence.

Acculturation: Can be defined as “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups” (13). Acculturation being the habits individuals adapt to when exposed to a new culture, that being the culture met when migrating to a new place, or the culture host nations meet through migrants. For example, the way a handshake is carried out, might change after adapting to the traditional handshake carried out in a certain culture. Either or both groups can experience these cultural patterns of change.

Adaptation: As defined by Berry;

“In its most general sense, adaptation refers to changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands. These adaptations can occur immediately, or they can be extended over the longer term” (14).

Health: As defined by the WHO;

“Health is a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity”(15).

Mental health: As defined by the WHO

“Mental health is defined as a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community”(16).

Multiculturalism: As described by Sam;

“A policy with its attending practices regarding the coexistence of many ethnocultural groups in a plural society, as well as the normative beliefs that characterize how the relationships should be among the groups”(17).

Salutogenesis: As described in *The handbook of Salutogenesis*:

“Salutogenesis refers to a scholarly orientation focusing attention on the study of the origins of health and assets for health, contra the origins of disease and risk factors” (18). For the purpose of studying health, focus is being put on how the healthy stay healthy, despite challenges and diseases, in contra to how the diseased became diseased and how to make these healthy again”.

Sense of Coherence: Central concepts within Salutogenesis are the General Resistance Resources (GRR) and the Sense of coherence (SOC). GRR are the inner and outer assets a person possesses, such as; money, experience, social support and intelligence. SOC is the individual's ability to use these assets, to overcome life challenges (19).

Literature review

WHO refers to health as *"a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity"* (20). The European Commission already in 2015 requested further research on mental health promotion through a collaboration project identifying research priorities for future actions and strategies (21). The awareness underlines the internationally recognized importance of an increased focus on mental health, hence the value of a study of this kind.

Migration towards Europe and Denmark

Despite an European common legal framework for migration, integration policies differ a lot across countries, and has in recent years, become much stricter in some countries such as France, Germany and Denmark (6). Among programs, the pre-departure integration programs for migrants who origin from a low-income country have been introduced. First by the Netherlands in 2005, then within a 6-year period, followed by Austria, Denmark, France, Germany and the UK. Pre-integration programs are especially present for family reunification cases, where the spouse of the applicant is to document basic proficiency in the language of the host country and have passed different tests before being allowed entrance to the country of settlement (22). Despite lacking evidence of these programs being well-functioning, it seems they have been promoted by several national governments as a shared policy practice among certain EU-member states, and not from formal European frameworks (6, 22, 23). The countries behind these programs have argued for them as a way to secure successful integration. However, as these programs are focused on migrant's ability to integrate, and thereby their ability to be self-supporting and independent, some research refers to them as a way of selecting- and applying restrictions for, migrants (22, 23). Pre-integration programs are just one way to control entrance of migrants.

MIPEX, which is an acronym for Migrant Integration Index is an index that scores different European country's efforts to integrate migrants in their society along 8 different dimensions, (i.e. Labor market mobility, Family reunion, Education, Health, Political participation, Permanent residence, Access to nationality and Anti-discrimination). Migrants from countries of settlement scoring low on Mipex, is proven to experience poorer socio-economic status and worse health outcomes (24), due to poverty, acculturative stress, environmental risks, lifestyle changes and health care accessibility (25). Denmark has a Mipex score of 59 out of 100 and is 13 out of 38 countries. In comparison, Sweden is ranked 1st with a MIPEX score of 78. The comparison is given, from the perspective that Denmark and Sweden, two high-income European countries, are equally capable of creating a good integrative environment for migrants, yet the differences is huge. Denmark has a general low score on all 8 dimensions where Sweden has a general high score (26). In this sense, the acculturation process of settling down into Danish society, should be more difficult having to meet more demands and being surrounded by a hostile environment. However, according to MIPEX, the low score does not reflect the general Danish perception on migrants, it is rather the consequence of a center-right minority government needing support from the DK people's party, who in exchange get their immigration and integration restrictions voted through. The change of dominance of the political arena in the past decade has meant continuous restrictions of migrant policies and reductions on same. Since 2007, 40 major changes have been made, with 30 changes affecting the Danish MIPEX score, proving Denmark to have become less migrant friendly (26). The 8 dimensions of MIPEX, one can imagine would affect the health of migrants negatively. In contrast, there are several reasons for wanting to maintain good health of migrants though. In fact, improving migrants' health in Europe, will bring wider benefits to the socio-economic development of both the home and host countries, as migrants contribute positively to the western welfare system whilst helping to build up their country of origin. Furthermore, with the increasing life expectancy in Europe and the decreasing fertility rates, migrants having children in Europe, are contributing positively as more babies are needed for future workforce, for maintaining the welfare states on a permanent basis (27).

Today being granted permanent residence or citizenship in Denmark as a non-European citizen, is a long journey and depends on one's economic status and willingness or capacity to integrate into Danish society. Citizenship is only possible to obtain after having lived 10 years

in Denmark. For the permanent residence, the migrant (no matter the reason for applying) must have been living in Denmark for at least 8 years, reapplying every 1-2 years for the temporary residence to be expanded. Furthermore, an economic safety of 100.000 Danish crowns must be placed, which will be paid back, as integration requirements such as managing the Danish language is met. In some cases, one can apply for permanent residence after 4 years, however special requirements are then in play, such as Danish language skills and a higher yearly income of at least 286.526,16 Danish crowns (28). One can imagine that these demands might only be possible to meet if the acculturation process and adaptation has been successful.

Acculturation and Adaptation

Acculturation is a process which affects both the dominant and the nondominant group (i.e. host country and migrant group), in the meeting of a new culture. According to Berry, there are four acculturation strategies from the perspective of the non-dominant migrant group: *Assimilation, Integration, Separation and Marginalization*. Assimilation is the strategy chosen when a migrant has left previous cultural identity behind, and engages in daily activities with the host society. Integration as strategy, is the maintenance of own cultural believes whilst engaging in the host society. When a migrant avoids all interaction with other cultures, but values maintaining own cultural believes, Separation is the chosen strategy. Finally, when a migrant neither values own cultural believes or engaging in the host society, Marginalization is the chosen strategy, however often as the consequence of forced Assimilation.

Integration has been proven to be the most efficient and successful strategy, that being when integration is pursued as a voluntary choice, not by force. It is the choice to maintain own cultural beliefs, while pursuing daily interaction with the new society of settlement (14). One can imagine that when migrants use integration as an acculturation strategy, the overall well-being can be affected, when national policies meant to help integration forward, are instead perceived as assimilation strategies, affecting the motivation for integration negatively. Even though the integration policies in Denmark, according to MIPEX, do not reflect the general Danish perception of migrants in Denmark, a dominant attitude towards migrants is reported and the feeling of not being welcome in European host countries is present (23, 29). How the acculturation process is pursued by different migrant groups, depend on the context of settlement and host country's attitudes towards migrants is an important factor for migrants'

well-being. Refugees are already one of the most vulnerable groups, with low socio-economic status and high risk of social exclusion. It is difficult to generalize however, across different refugee groups, as country of origin, destination, language, culture and religion are factors that vary across the groups. These factors affect the health and well-being for refugees in Europe (27). Obviously originating from a society similar to those in the West, would make it easier to adapt. In contrast, originating from a society, like Somalia, which is still grounded in traditional gender roles and furthermore have not been able to develop due to continuous war and conflict could make the meeting with a Western society, like Denmark, a challenging event with a lot of conflicting emotions.

Berry argues, that the integration strategy can only be successful in Multicultural societies, where the host society acts in acceptance of other cultures and non or only a low level of prejudice is present (14). How the acculturation process is experienced and which choices are made, will affect the individual adaptation. According to Berry, Adaptation is "*the changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands*", that being the individual experiences of acculturation in the context of resettlement(14). Individual behavior is affected by influences and demands from society and adaptation is a complex mix of psychological, socio-cultural and economic factors. The acculturation and adaptation process are inevitable when migrating, however it varies by the context of the migrant (i.e. student, refugee, expatriate. Etc.) (14). This only underline why background and context of different migrant groups must be outlined, for the purpose of research.

Background of Somalia

Somalia, a post-colonial country has not been able to see an end to its internal conflicts evolving ever since the country gained independency from colonialization by Britain and Italy in 1960. These conflicts are partly because of the many clans within the country fighting for power and territories, which in 1991 resulted in armed conflict (30). Despite many efforts, including international peacemaking, the situation has only escalated and the number of internally displaced people and people who have fled the country has increased dramatically since the beginning of the 1990's (31). Somalia, a country of about 10 million people, has 2 million people displaced in the region, mainly in neighboring countries including Kenya. Kenya has 5 major refugee camps in the north-eastern side of the country and hosts some 420.000 Somali refugees. More than 1 million Somalis remain internally displaced (1). Among the 2

million Somalis who no longer reside in the country, 280 thousand have migrated to Europe (32). Due to the “nomadic” trends of the Somalis, it remains difficult to keep track of where the Somalis reside across the European countries. However, of the 280 thousand estimated Somalis in Europe, 22.000 or 8 % have settled down in Denmark (8).

The majority of Somali migrants in Denmark, entered the country in early 1990’s, mainly through Asylum-seeking programs and as family reunifications. At that time, Denmark had the highest rate of accepted asylum seekers in the world (6). After the millennium the number decreased dramatically, which one can imagine correlates with stricter national immigration policies and “new” demands for residing in Denmark. Mainly due to a big proportion of migrants not succeeding to integrate into the Danish society. Among the worst integrated groups were and are Somalis (6).

Somali migrants in Europe and gender roles

Somali migration to Europe has come in 3 major waves, which can be grouped under (i) during the colonialization; (ii) after the country gained independence and (iii) after the armed conflict broke out in 1991 (33). The Somalis have become known as a “nomadic” population moving a lot across European borders in search for a better life and better social status. They have obtained a marginalized status throughout Europe, with low socio-economic status (11), hence the importance of studying this population. Migrants often expect greener grass in Europe, but the reality is that many have to live in limbo, as they wait to have their refugee or residence application to be processed in the midst of unfriendly host environments where migrants are looked down upon. The net result is the experience of complete “loss of status”.

Warfa et. al found “loss of status” as a main issue in their mixed methods approach regarding migrant experiences in new environments of settlement. Their study included 189 male Somalis in London and in Minneapolis. The findings indicate that Somalis males have a “devalued refugee status”, that they struggle and that several socio-economic factors play a role in the development of psychological distress. A study by Johnson-Agbakwu et. al supports these findings, focusing on Somali males in a refugee community in the US (34, 35). Both of these studies obviously focus on Somali males, and are (partly) focused in the US. They raise awareness of the prevention of ill-health and highlight Somali’s as experiencing the migration as especially challenging. This is the dominant approach in most studies focusing on Somali migrants in Western societies (25, 29, 34, 36, 37). It is a contrast to the purpose of this current

study, focusing on Somali females as a well-adapted group. Moreover, a contrast to other studies showing the need for further research within health promotion (38, 39).

Within the existing literature, there are different opinions however, as to how the Somali gender roles change after migration. The studies by Warfa et al. and Johnson-Agbakwu et. al suggest that Somali females obtain a higher gender role status in European societies, especially when they get some education, secure a job, and become the breadwinner of the household compared to their status in Somalia (34, 35). Furthermore, their resilience increases especially when their husbands are not with them. Under these conditions the females gain higher roles in the communities and more responsibility for the family life (37). Factors such as the aforementioned “loss of status” challenges the men’s masculinity in European societies, as the men are not recognized or have the privileged status, they were used to back in Somalia (29, 34, 40). In Norway, Khat addiction, which is part of Somali culture, is a main factor for unemployment among the Somali males (9). A study by Phillimore and another by Pavlish et. al., focusing on Somali females in the UK and the US, argue that in general migrant females getting a higher position, will indeed make them more at risk for gender inequalities, as they will be torn between the traditional cultural expectations and beliefs and the norms of western society (25, 29) or be struggling to maintain family traditions and become isolated (29). It is well known that Somali females are both more engaged in the traditional culture, and expected to carry on family traditions to future generations (36). This could be a problem when settling down into Western societies, for these women to be torn between their traditional cultural beliefs and living up to the expectations of Western societies. In that sense, how do Somali females who are engaged in and well-adapted to the Western society of settlement manage the cultural traditions and expectations?

When it comes to the question of gender differences, what is agreed upon, is that gender, often in favor of the males, is a key variable for the health of migrants. There is a need for further research on both genders of Somalis in Northern Europe.

Policies focusing on gender equality increases the health of females, including migrant females in Europe (41), however the policies, must actually work. When migrants end up with low socio-economic status, and lose their status, old hierarchy’s of masculinity in the household may be reinforced by the males instead of the present hierarchies of social class (42). Migrant women often experience inequities in health, due to gender, country of origin or socio-

economic status, and females from labour classes are at highest risk (43, 44). Some aspects of Somali Culture, seen from a western perspective violate female rights. These abuse of human rights include forced marriages, female circumcision or veiling, which conflict with core values of western, political society, making it a social problem (9). This exacerbates the already marginalized position of Somali females and underscores the need for a study of this kind, where their independent voices can be heard. Furthermore, since the literature on Somali migrants tend to focus on the US and a lesser extent Europe, and on the overall poor integration and adaptation of Somalis, a shift of focus is needed. The well-adapted Somali females in Northern Europe must be put in the center of attention, so that we can learn from them.

Applying Antonovsky's theory to this study and based on the evidence shown so far, there is a need in the field of research to share light on mental health instead of mental illness. What strengthening qualities does well-adapted Somali females in Denmark have, and how is sense of coherence among this group expressed? A 2016-study by Bonmatí-Tomas et. al. explored possible assets among 8 immigrant women living in Catalonia from 3 different regions in the world (excluding Somalia), using Antonovsky's model of Salutogenesis. Bon-Mati found that the women had individual assets such as; knowing how to overcome challenges, being motivated and showing initiative, being high in optimism and religious beliefs and finding strength in helping others. Furthermore, the women knew how to use their assets along with available community and institutional assets. The study encouraged further research on health promotion, for gaining a higher level of evidence of this approach being useful in social, educational and health policies regarding migrants(43).

The study applies valuable data, while it is based on migrants in Southern Europe. This provides a very different context than the one migrant's meet in Northern Europe. Furthermore, basing the study on various migrant groups, have clearly given common perceptions of migration among the women, it does not however, take the cultural context and history into consideration. To understand migration and the perceptions of migrating and settling down into a new society, the broader background of the migrant group in question must be included.

This study focusing on a single homogenous group (i.e., female Somalis) in a specific country with some of the strictest integration policies in the world (i.e., Denmark), will be highly beneficial and useful in the cause of health promotion.

Purpose of this project

The Somali females remain important to study as their role in the family is bound by Somali culture and the females being responsible for the family's health and well-being, which clashes for the younger generations of Somali females, being torn between Somali culture and western (culture?) society (25). Increasing knowledge on this group could not only increase their positions in western society, by becoming well integrated and contributing to society, it could also improve their health, as their socio-economic status increases.

Restricting Danish integration policies based on current trends of migrants not integrating according to the requirements, have not been proved to work. In that perspective, what is needed for moving the integration of migrants forward? Studying one of the most vulnerable migrant groups in-depth and focusing on well integrated females will give new insights, how to change the integration patterns of Somali females. This study has the potential of shedding light on the pathway towards improving the socio-economic status and female empowerment. Such empowerment may both affect the traditional gender roles of Somali females and emphasize their voices and point of views to shed light upon how to better integrate a larger migrant group in Denmark.

The above arguments lead me to the objectives of this study.

General objectives and specific aims

Goal: To explore the lived experiences of integrated Somali women in Denmark

Objective: To examine the acculturation processes and adaptation of female Somali migrants in Denmark from a Salutogenetic perspective.

Research questions:

- What are the perceptions and experiences of integrating into Danish society among Somali females in Denmark?

- What are the common strengths among the participant group in terms of integrating into Danish society?
- How is sense of coherence expressed among the participant group?

Country profile of Denmark

Denmark has a total population of 5.8 million people. It is a small country of only 42.000 km² with longest driving distance of 551 km. However, counting the area of the total kingdom including Greenland, it becomes the 12'th largest country in the world of 2.2 million km² (45).

Picture 1; Map of Denmark (46).



Of health parameters, Denmark lies in the top range in the world. Life expectancy at birth is 81.1 years, under 5 mortality-rate is 3.86 / 1000 children born, and the fertility rate is 1.76 babies pr. Woman (47). This, in the context of a needed fertility rate of 2,5 for a population to remain stable (48). Yet, the total population is estimated to increase by 4,8% in the next decade, mostly because there will be 150 000 more people of + 80 of age (49). Migrants are in fact a much-needed workforce as the fertility rate is not following the number of elders and people to care for them will be needed (29).

The Danish political arena is formed on the base of parliamentarianism, where the political party in charge is challenged every 4 years, when national election for the political arena is on. Since year 2000 the political power has shifted side between left- and right-wing a few times. However, since the political party in charge needs supporting political parties, not to have a majority against them for exhibiting new laws, the immigration policies have followed the same path of restricting migration- and integration laws in the past few decades. - Often in a trade zone of laws across political parties exchanging support in order for getting own agenda through (50).

The health system in Denmark is among the strongest in the world, as is the average tax of 34 % for Danes (51). This, however, covers Universal healthcare, and it covers social security to the poorest of the society. It also covers a major public health sector that provides health professionals, and public employees for all social services. A well-functioning welfare system providing security for all, forms the ground of this study.

The process of being allowed into Denmark as a migrant

Being allowed into Denmark as a migrant depends on the ground of which residency is applied for. For refugees, asylum must be sought, and different conditions, such as length of temporary residency granted, will depend on whether the asylum seeker is granted convention status or temporary protective status. This again depends on the conditions of which the applicant has left own country. Moreover, how to apply depends on whether asylum is applied for as an adult or as an unaccompanied child (52).

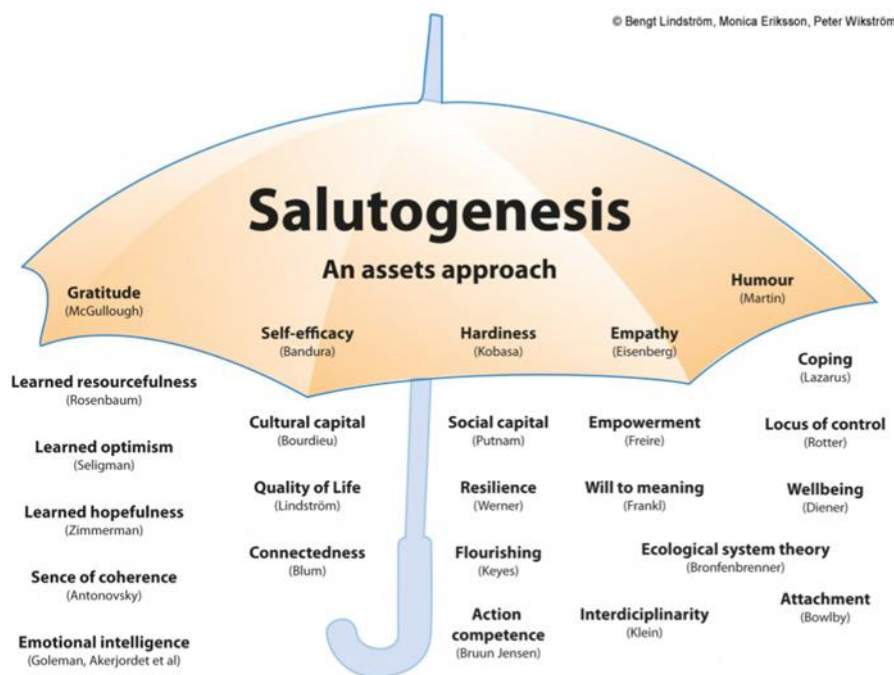
Family unifications with spouses and minor children is possible after 3 years of temporary residency in Denmark. Temporary residency can, and has to be extended several times before permanent residence can be sought after 4-8 years in Denmark. Certain requirements are in play, if the permanent residence is sought after 4 years. The Danish citizenship can be applied for after 10 years in Denmark. – Among several conditions, citizenship requires passing a Danish national test, and being able to prove stronger connection to Denmark than to home country (52).

Concept of Salutogenesis

Salutogenesis and Sense of coherence are often referred to in the same meaning. Salutogenesis is a scholarly orientation on studying the healthy, originally developed by Aron

Antonovsky in 1979. Antonovsky realized that health research had wrongly been focused on the origin of pathogenesis instead of the origin of health. He furthermore developed the concept of Sense of coherence to explain how come some people stay healthy during stressful life events, while others become ill (19). Since then, many more concepts have been developed and included under the Salutogenesis umbrella, as shown in figure 1. The concepts are different but alike, however a comparison is often done between Salutogenesis and resilience. Whereas Salutogenesis focus on the origin of health through sense of coherence and the general resistance resources, resilience focuses on protective factors for staying healthy through hardships. Most important difference, however, is that while Resilience lacks clear theory, Salutogenesis has a coherent theoretical framework (53).

Figure 1: Umbrella of Salutogenesis (54).¹



Sense of Coherence

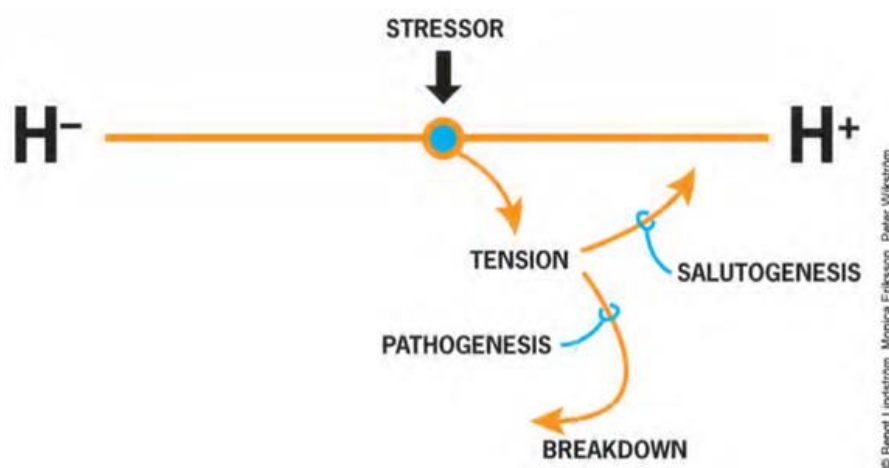
Sense of coherence (SOC) consists of 3 interrelated aspects, meaningfulness, comprehensibility and manageability and the general resistance resources (GRR), which are the assets, a person has, to cope with stressors in life. Sense of coherence is shaped through

¹ Figure 1 has been shared after written agreement of copyrights with the original authors.

life experiences. A strong sense of coherence is essential for being able to mobilize the general resistance resources to cope with the inevitable stressors of life successfully.

Antonovsky argued for the Salutogenetic model to be *particularly appropriate* for health promotion, especially within the field of health research, as Salutogenesis focuses on what makes a person able to deal with stressors, while staying well (53). He refers to the river of life that all humans are in, and argues that research should focus on how people stay swimming instead of why people drown (55). Another way to picturize it, is shown in the figure below, where on the health/disease spectrum, Salutogenesis stays and focuses on health (53). Antonovsky argues that everybody inevitable will experience hardships through life, however some people have assets to overcome these and stay mentally healthy instead of breaking down (56).

Figure 2: The health/disease spectrum in relation to Salutogenesis (54)².



To be able to apply this study into a Danish present context, a recent national health promotion initiative will be included for contextualizing the findings. The ABC framework was initially an Australian campaign for well-being promotion. It was outlined as a guide for how to enhance well-being and was later implemented in some European countries. The guide has now been published in Denmark at the national institute for public health. For promoting mental health, one should; A: Do something active, B: Do something with someone and C: Do

² Figure 2 has been shared after written agreement of copyrights with the original authors.

something meaningful (57). Moreover, the findings will be contextualized through existing literature on the subject.

Chapter 2: Methodological approaches

Research Strategy

Prior this study, very little literature could be found on well integrated Somali migrant's contra poorly integrated Somali migrants in Europe and in Denmark. This gave a broad spectrum of possibilities of studying this population group why limitations were needed. First and most natural limitation was to focus the population group in Denmark. Both due to the strict migration laws hovering in Danish politics now a days, and as a Danish citizen myself, with the background knowledge of growing up in Denmark. From the beginning, the wish was to stay within the qualitative method as it would give great possibility to go in-depth with a group of individuals to be able to explore their perceptions and experiences of integrating into Danish society. Especially as the migration politics throughout Europe are changing very fast and the effect that has on the individual Somali migrant, as one of the worst integrated migrant populations, could give valuable data. The wish was to study the individual meaning of a common issue and outlay inductively build themes from a small group of study participants (58). Prior the study I had an idea that seeking out Somali participants in Denmark could be difficult, not least because of my own Danish origin. For this reason, conducting individual in-depth interviews were planned as sole sampling method. The assumption proved right, finding enough participants was in fact difficult, and an important reassurance for the women to agree on participating was that interviews would be conducted on a one to one basis with me as sole researcher. When first participant relation was created, locating further women became easier as the Somali network in Denmark is closely related and participants led me on to further participants whilst also functioning as a reassuring factor of the honest intentions of this study.

Qualitative study design

This study is a descriptive qualitative research which aims to gain factual responses from integrated Somali women in Denmark about their experiences and perceptions of integration. Applying descriptive qualitative research as method, is useful in this context, to *"provide a comprehensive summary of an event in the everyday terms of those events"* (59). It is an appropriate approach, as it allows me as a researcher to stay close to my data, and represent

the findings in a participant close, trustworthy manner (59). The findings are represented descriptively, with less of an interpretational approach, to reach a “true understanding” (60). Qualitative method is suitable when studying individuals, as it gives flexibility for the researcher to adjust approaches along the way, according to findings (58, 61). However, with the aim of obtaining this “true understanding”, descriptive qualitative research provides an unique opportunity for several researchers to reach consensus about results (59).

Study setting

Denmark, a high in-come country in the north of Europe, was the setting for this research, as the purpose was to study perceptions and experiences of integrating into Danish culture and sense of coherence and strengths among Somali women living in Denmark. No limitations to geographic area in Denmark was made, as it is a small country, and the immigration politics are identical and closely in-cooperation between regions. No place in Denmark is in fact rural, due to the close distances no matter the location. Participants were found both in cities and on the country side.

Researcher

This study was conducted with a sole researcher. As data was collected in Danish, I was able to conduct all interviews by myself without the need of an interpreter. Furthermore, no research assistant was needed which proved important in the matter of building up trust between researcher and participant. It was however important that I, being a sole researcher, became fully aware of how qualitative research is in fact done. Prior starting the fieldwork, an in-depth knowledge of the qualitative method was obtained through a qualitative course and thereafter read up upon in teaching material. Especially the role as a researcher and what was needed from me to conduct a successful study, was focused upon. Interviews were practiced, and the interview guide was readjusted several times before first interview with a participant was done.

Data collection

Fieldwork was conducted from September – November 2018, following ethical approval by REC in May 2018. We planned to evaluate on the functioning of the interview guide in practice after the first interview. However, as the interview guide worked as required, and questions neither overlapped each other or was misleading in function, no further changes were made before continuing with the interviews. The interview guide and interviews were conducted in

Danish, due to Danish being the inclusion criteria for participating and a criterion for being integrated successfully in Denmark. Interviews were conducted on one to one hand basis at a, for the participant, preferred place. in some cases, over skype, also to the wish of the participants. Either due to lack of time or convenience. Using skype, seemed to make some participants more comfortable.

Sampling strategy

For recruiting participants, purposive sampling was applied, which is suitable for descriptive qualitative research, to gain a homogeneous group of participants to answer the objectives (60). With purposive sampling, participants are located within the range of the inclusion- and exclusion criteria. In this case meant that the participants were selected due to specific qualities which suited this study to answer the objectives. Within purposive sampling, number of participants does not need to be set prior locating participants, - it is rather decided as the study progresses. Purposive sampling method is a time and cost-effective method that suits the purpose, due to the size of this study. Moreover, it is a method which suited this study, as the aim was not to generalize results over a larger population, but rather to provide a rich, in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of interest (62). Inclusion and exclusion criteria were adjusted during the data collecting period, as finding participants meeting preliminary criteria proved extremely difficult. This was a decision made in collaboration with my supervisor. Changing specific inclusion and exclusion criteria would still leave this study with a group of information-rich participants who would be able to provide valuable knowledge to answer the research questions (62).

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Preliminary inclusion criteria for participating in the study were (i) Somali (ii) female (iii) understands and speaks Danish (iv) an adult (i.e., 18 years or older) when entering Denmark so, coming as a responsible grown up and (v) having lived in Denmark for more than 8 years, so the permanent residency or citizenship has been achieved. (vi) Participants must be part of the labour market, (i.e. Having a job, being a student or similar), as that is a criterion for having settled down in Denmark successfully. This to ensure that participants have been through the acculturation processes, including integration as a strategy (14), - passing Danish classes and possibly passing the national test, finding permanent housing, way of income etc. (vii) willing to be interviewed 2 or 3 times. Exclusion criteria was to a large extent to be the opposite of

the inclusion criteria such as not speaking Danish, not being active in the labour market. Furthermore, women partnering up with a Danish partner and women showing any sign of trauma.

Inclusion criteria (iv) was changed, to having entered Denmark from school age, however having come without parents. This due to only having found 3 participants entering Denmark as adults and a great number of, in the project, interested Somali women having escaped Somalia and arrived in Denmark between the ages of 7 and 17. All of these participants were either family unified with a husband as teenagers or arrived in Denmark as unaccompanied refugee children. This forced these women to take an adult responsibility from a very early age. Moreover, inclusion criteria (v) was changed from having lived in Denmark for 8 years to 4 years. This because permanent residency is possibly obtained after 4 years.

One participant had partnered up with a Danish native person, which in the beginning of the study was planned as an exclusion criterion. However, this participant arrived in Denmark in her early teens and went through the whole integration process by herself not partnering up before her mid-twenties, why choice of marriage would not have affected her perceptions and experiences of settling down in Denmark.

Recruitment

Participants were recruited primarily through social media. A bulletin was created on the Facebook page *Somali's in Denmark*, where all who have an interest in the Somali population in Denmark, Somali's or not, can apply for membership. The Bulletin in large extent explained the purpose of this study, researcher's background and current education. It advised interested women to send a private message for further explanation and agreement, to comply with the confidentiality of the project. Some participants unexpectedly contacted me, not because they had seen the bulletin on Facebook, but because they through friends or relatives had heard of the project and found it interesting. During time of recruitment, which with qualitative research being continuously, also was the time of data collection, it became clear that a project focusing on the "positive" side of Somali integration rather than the negative side, was a long-desired topic. For this reason, participants who at that time did not meet the inclusion criteria, still made contact wishing to be part of the project. Participants with very little time on their hands, were determined to make time and to contribute to the "positive" story of Somali integration.

Characteristics of the study participants

In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with a total of 10 study participants who varied in age between 33 and 50 years. Participants were found as homogeneous as possible by applying the inclusion and exclusion criteria. See table 1 for an overview of the participants. The group of participants had lived in Denmark between 6 and 35 years and had all been through the process of being accepted into Denmark. 3 participants arrived in Denmark as adults, 3 as nearly adults, 2 as teenagers and 2 as children above 7 years of age. All the participants were obviously refugees, however the 3 arriving as nearly adults entered Denmark for family unification. 2 participants (1 who came as a child and 1 who came as a teenager) had to lie about family relations to be allowed to stay in Denmark, (i.e. by pretending the travel companion during the flight from Somalia was a family relation). The participants who came as teenagers had different issues which forced them to act as grownups from the beginning. Either by being the eldest sibling with responsibility of younger siblings or by being forced to live by family members way of traditional Somali upbringing. Despite a variation in how many years each participant had spent in Somalia growing up, they all still had a positive image of how Somalia used to be prior the war.

All the participants but one, were active in the labour-market: they were either self-employed or employed in the public sector. One participant was still a student. All the participants had worked, were working or wished to work as health professionals (i.e. public workers, nurses or nursing assistants), where helping others is in the core of the work. Civil status varied equally between being married, divorced or single, and all the participants had 2-4 children who varied in age between minors and adults. The distribution of geographical area varied equally across Denmark.

The participants arrived in various times in Denmark from mid-1980s to 2012. This both gave different experiences due to the time of arriving in the country, it also made most of the participants follow the developing of Danish and European immigration politics through time.

Table 1: Characteristics of the women who participated in this study

Age Distribution	Nr. Of participants arriving in Denmark at different ages
6 - 11	2
12 - 16	2
17 - 22	4
23 - 30	2
Age Today	
31 - 36	3
37 - 42	2
43 - 48	2
49 - 55	3
Marital Status	
Married	4
Widowed	3
Divorced	2
Single	1
Geographical Distribution	Women
Cities (More than 10000)	6
Towns (Less than 10000)	4
Education	
Primary School	2
Secondary school	1
Upper secondary school	3
Higher Education	4
Occupation	
Student	1
Public Employee	7
Labour Worker (fabric work)	1
Self Employed	1

Semi structured interviews

As the purpose of this study was to get real life participant descriptions, semi structured in-depth interviews were conducted as sampling method. This method is useful in the context, as it offers the opportunity to study participants in-depth over time. Having the interview-guide outlined as semi structured, gave each participant the opportunity to answer freely and add explanations where it seemed fit whilst still having questions written down for me as researcher to guide the conversation (63). This allowed the participants to unfold themselves

in a way natural to them whilst still having broad questions to answer the research questions. Conducting one to one interview's as sole sampling method, was thoroughly thought through as part of the ethical considerations for this study. The participants had different reasons and difficulties travelling towards Denmark. With the Somali network in Denmark being rather open, limiting the data collection to one to one interview's was necessary.

As qualitative method is an on-going process of collecting and analysing data, the aim prior starting the study was to collect and analyse the data continuously until no new data emerged in the process and point of saturation had been reached (63). When the final participants were being interviewed, answers did seem to repeat themselves, initial codes added to the existing data. However, knowing when point of saturation is reached can be very challenging. Within the scope of this study, it might not have been possible to reach point of saturation.

The interview situation

The 10 participants were each interviewed twice with a total of 20 interviews. Conducting a second interview made it possible to apply respondent validation between interviews, and to go through my interpretations and understandings through fieldnotes, with each participant at the second interview. What is understood and how findings are laid out, depends on the researcher in qualitative research, as we always carry our own pre-assumptions with us. Findings might change and add to our understanding, but with the aim of describing study objectives as participant close as possible, we interpret less, and aim to give a participant true reflection of findings (59, 60).

The interviews were conducted in private natural settings for the participants, to endure as little control or manipulation as possible when the objectives were being answered (64). It helped the participant to relax in the interpersonal situation an interview is, where the researcher and the participant mutually act and affect each other. It is in this relation knowledge occurs (64). In some cases, a videocall was preferred to conduct the interview – do to time and distances. A videocall is easier accessible and more flexible why in some cases it was preferable. Using a videocall still gave me, as researcher possibility to observe body language and attitude of the participant to apply to my fieldnotes. Moreover, it still demanded for me as a researcher to be aware of my own body language, and to apply active listening (64).

I experienced that interviews varied in time, and that the need for following the interview guide varied from each participant. Some participants easily expressed themselves in detail, while others needed more description of the questions. Putting aside own assumptions can be something to strive for, but difficult to achieve (59, 60).

Data management and analysis

Transcription and Translation

All interviews were audio-recorded along with field-notes made during interviews. After each interview, recorded data was transcribed word for word. Both to make sense of the written along with the fieldnotes, and to create “add-on” questions for the next interview, while the first interview was still fresh in memory. All data was kept in a password protected computer and smartphone, to secure the anonymity of the participants

As a way of securing quality of the data and error reduction, Respondent Validation was applied. The transcribed material was handed out to the participants between interviews, giving them the opportunity to make corrections to misinterpretations (61, 65). Furthermore, when the second interview was carried out, I shortly introduced the main points I as researcher had understood from the first interview. The discussion of the first interview made the base for the second interview (66).

All data was collected in Danish as Danish is an integration requirement for Denmark. Moreover, conducting field work in Denmark and with participants speaking Danish, no changes were needed for language requirements. The data was handled in Danish from working out the interview-guide, to the end of the analysis procedure. When final global-organizing- and basic themes were developed, they were translated into English, along with participant quotes when the report was developed.

Analysis procedure

Thematic analysis

To analyse the data, thematic analysis (TA) was applied. TA is a method that through systematic organization of the data, allows the researcher to discover meanings across a data-set and to categorize these meanings according to main findings and the topic of research (67). As a supplement to the TA analysis, Thematic networking was applied to present the data in a clear and systematic way using the web-like networking as the organizing principle (see

figure 3). All transcription and analysing of the data were done manually by the researcher. In the following, the 6 steps which forms TA will be disclosed in relation to this study.

1. Step; Familiarizing yourself with the data.

The transcribed interviews were read through several times. Field notes were read together with the transcribed material and new notes were made each time to capture the essence of the interview. I had a small notebook of which each participant had a few pages of key points and notes from our interviews. The transcripts were also annotated to go deeper into the data.

2. Step; Generating Initial Codes.

Data was divided into initial codes. This was done manually by cutting up the printed transcripts and organizing the codes into piles. The codes either stood alone or gave meaning together with other codes. Code names were either developed from words or quotes the participants had said, others from my interpretation of the quotes or in relation to the framework of the study. In some cases, portions of data were coded with several codes. Codes were also sometimes renamed to capture new pieces of data. A first draft of codes resulted in 50 codes.

3. Step; Searching for themes.

In this phase, the codes started to take shape in relation to- and continuous of each other. The list of initial codes was divided by colour to create an organized idea of the data and initial themes also started to emerge. Codes were reduced and put together, re-grouped several times and choices of how best to organize codes under themes to present the essence of the data were made. The piles of quotes were written into a table on the computer for an easier overview and initial grouping of codes were put under basic and organizing themes. Thematic network was applied here with one big global theme.

4. Step; Reviewing potential themes.

The table of themes and quotes on the computer were read through and held up against the global- and organizing themes. Some basic and organizing themes were re-grouped again. The entire data-set was read through again to secure coherence and that meaning of the data was

captured in the framework. As the work progressed, this study ended with a data-set of 1 global theme, 4 organizing themes, 10 basic themes and 40 codes which formed a refined network.

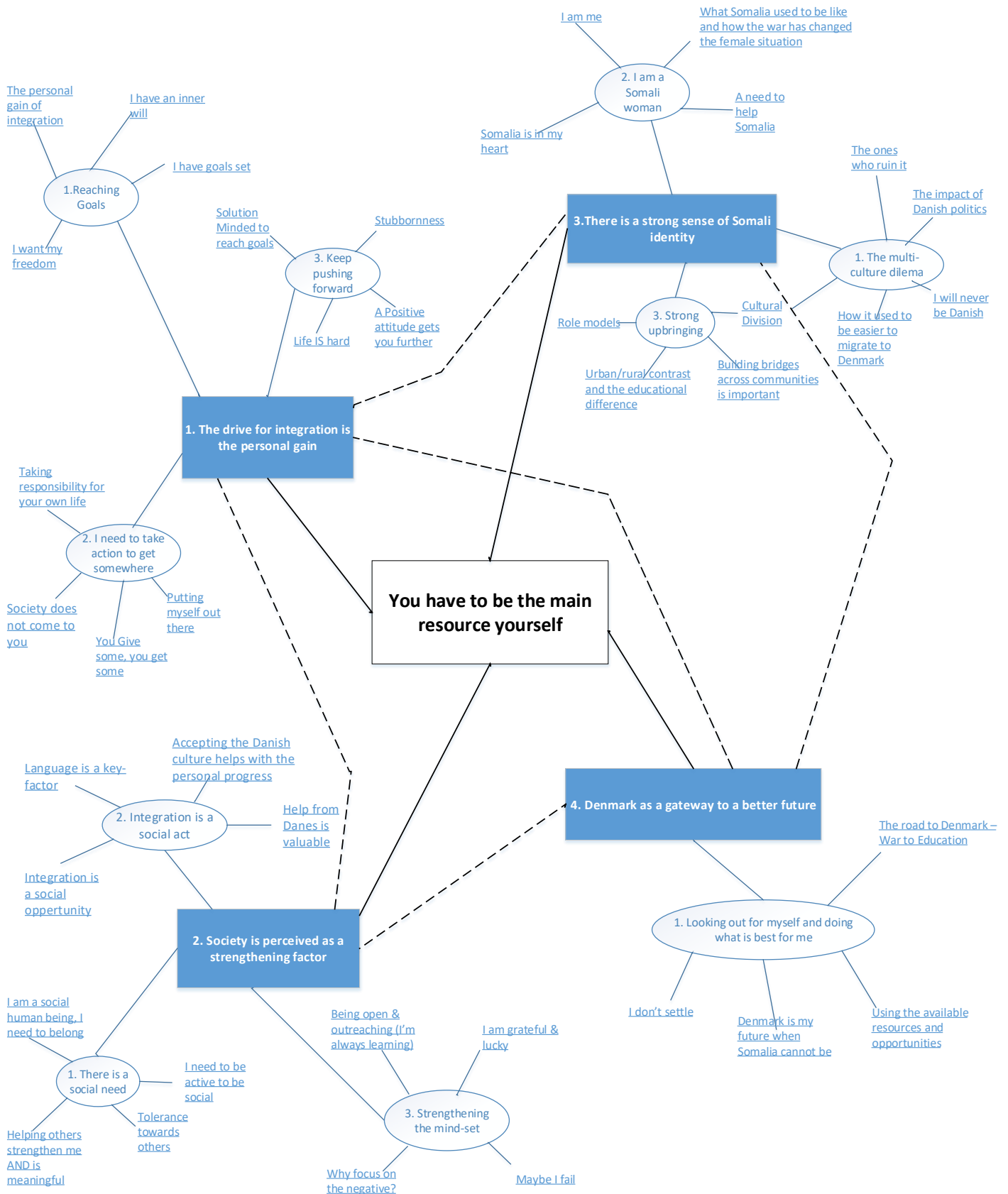
5. Step; Defining and naming themes.

Each theme was defined in a small sequence of text to test whether it served its purpose of being on the point and unique of capturing that particular part of data. The themes proved to be continuous of each other whilst still being able to stand alone. Together the themes formed an overall story of the data.

6. Step; Producing the report.

Again, the table on the computer was used, and the organizing themes, one by one were gone through. Basic theme at a time, meaningful quotes across the data-set were highlighted and then used to produce the report of the results, while being held up against the thematic network to secure that quotes illustrated key conceptual findings (67, 68).

Figure 3; The thematic network which was done in the analysis process of the current study.



Ethics

Ethical clearance

Most critical consideration before conducting research is the potential harm participants could experience and whether the aim of the study exceeds the risk of harming involved parts. This study was undertaken according to the declaration of Helsinki and the ethical principles therein (69). To follow procedure for conducting research within the health field, the ethical approval for the study was applied for in April 2018 at the Regional Ethical Committee (REC) in Norway. As setting for the study was Denmark, knowledge of rules of conducting health research in Denmark was obtained and included in the application at REC. Conducting research based on interviews without use of biological material, does not need Danish Ethical approval nor approval from the Danish Protection agency (cf. appendix 3). However, in the letter of approval which was received from the Norwegian REC, it was stated among minor changes before conducting fieldwork, that written consent had to be achieved from REC in Denmark. Danish REC was contacted by mail and written consent of not having to apply was given (cf. appendix 2), why ethical approval from REC Norway was received before starting the data collection (cf. appendix 1).

Informed consent and confidentiality

Once final clearance was obtained, potential participants were contacted and all participants willing to take part in the study was given an information letter in Danish, describing the purpose of the study, requirements regarding the study and that participation was on voluntary basis (cf. appendix 4).

Participants were also asked to sign a consent form prior first interview (cf. appendix 5). - It was clearly expressed that participants could withdraw from the study at any point and that if a participant were to react in an unexpected way, support would be given, either by me or a professional. - That confidentiality would be taken seriously and that interviews would be conducted in private natural settings for the participant to feel comfortable. Data collected would be stored inaccessible to any others than the researcher and participants were given random pseudonyms known only by me as researcher and the participant herself. Furthermore, translating the quotes into English, further anonymised the participants, not to have ways of expressing themselves recognized. Transcripts and records of interviews will be

deleted after ended research, and participants will receive written interpretations of the data (58).

CHAPTER 3: Results

This study set out to explore perceptions and experiences of integrating into Danish society among Somali females in Denmark. Based on the analysis, the global theme; *You have to be the main resource yourself* was developed. Moreover, four organizing themes emerged from the data. These were; *The drive for integration is the personal gain*, *Society is perceived as a strengthening factor*, *There is a strong sense of Somali identity* and *Denmark is a gateway to a better future*. The global theme, organizing themes, their basic subthemes and codes are described below with quotes from across the data set. Furthermore, the results are presented in figure 4 and table 2, for a quick overview of the different levels of themes that emerged from the data. Please note that figure 3 (from the analysis chapter) and table 2, are two different ways of presenting the results. When pieces of the interviews are presented, the interviewer is always represented with an *H* and the interviewee with the front letter of the pseudo name. The findings are summarized after each theme.

Figure 4; Overview of the four organizing themes and their basic themes.

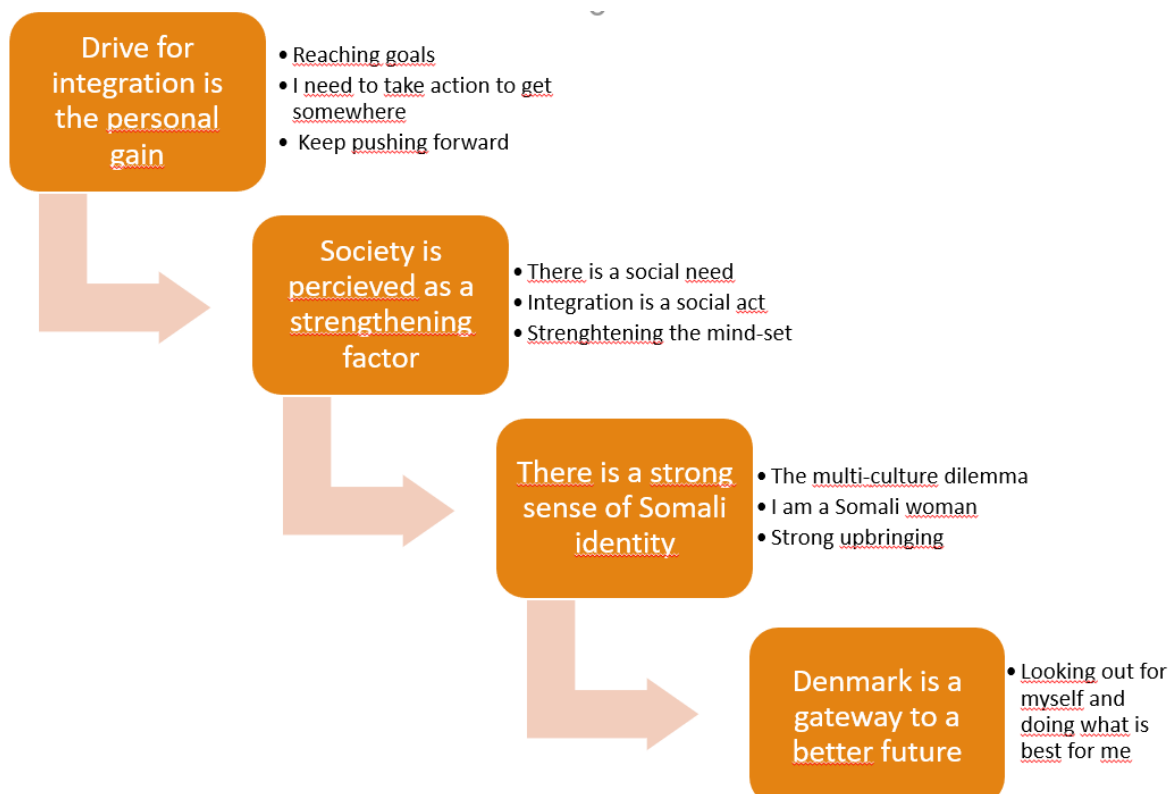


Table 2: Overview of the different levels of themes that emerged from the data

You have to be the main resource yourself			
1. The drive for integration is the personal gain	1.Reaching Goals	The personal gain of integration	
		I want my freedom	
		I have an inner will	
		I have goals set	
	2. I need to take action to get somewhere	Taking responsibility for your own life	
		Society does not come to you	
		You Give some, you get some	
		Putting myself out there	
	3. Keep pushing forward	Life IS hard	
		A Positive attitude gets you further	
		Stubbornness	
		Solution Minded to reach goals	
2. Society is perceived as a strengthening factor	1. There is a social need	I am a social human being, I need to belong	
		I need to be active to be social	
		Helping others strengthens me is meaningful	
		Tolerance towards others	
	2. Integration is a social act	Integration is a social opportunity	
		Language is a key-factor	
		Accepting the Danish culture helps with the personal progress	
		Help from Danes is valuable	
	3. Strengthening the mind-set	Being open & outreaching (I'm always learning)	
		I am grateful & lucky	
		What focus on the negative?	
		Maybe I fail	
	3. There is a strong sense of Somali identity	1. The multi-culture dilemma	The ones who ruin it
			The impact of Danish politics
			I will never be Danish
How it used to be easier to migrate to Denmark			
Cultural Division			
2. I am a Somali woman		Somalia is in my heart	
		I am me	
		What Somalia used to be like and how the war has changed the female situation	
		A need to help Somalia	
3. Strong upbringing		Role models	
		Urban/rural contrast and the educational difference	
		Building bridges across communities is important	
		Cultural Division	
4. Denmark as a gateway to a better future		1. Looking out for myself and doing what is best for me	The road to Denmark – War to Education
			Using the available resources and opportunities
	Denmark is my future when Somalia cannot be		
	I don't settle		

Global theme: You have to be the main resource yourself

1: The drive for integration is the personal gain

Reaching Goals

The personal gain of integration

All the participants see a personal gain in integration themselves into Danish Society. For Ladan and Caaisho who came to Denmark when they were 7 and 9, they only realize this, after having been through years of hardship in school. This because of language barriers, not being able to follow the other pupils academically and the feeling of being “left out”. A shift happens for both, when they realize the opportunities, as Ladan illustrates;

“I was making trouble (in school) until 5th grade, where a shift happened and I started doing my homework (...) I just thought “These people are made of gold” and I started to get a different understanding of it.. “So, if I cooperate with these people, maybe I can get far.” So, I started pulling myself together and cooperate.” (Ladan)

Beginning school when these girls arrived in Denmark is not perceived as easy. Aamiina and Arwa, who came when they were 14, described personal issues as being the cause of their problems, Ladan and Caaisho describe the actual upgrowing in school as problematic. Trying to get the attention of the adults and acting out as a way to react when not fitting in. The difference in age between the participants when being admitted to school could be a factor for the perception of the period. There is a clear distinction between the participants who came as children and the ones who came as adults. Most of the later, describe coming to Denmark as “easy” and as a “luxury”. When its most negatively described, Sadya refers to it as “strange”.

The perception of seeing a personal gain and wanting to learn, as it is a strengthening factor and not because Danish society expects it, is a shared believe across the participants despite the age differences. As Sadya and Hani illustrates;

“But like, the commune has paid (for language school), it doesn’t matter if I learn or not, of course they are happy if I learn and become independent and speak Danish and I don’t need an interpreter etc. Of course, that’s good! - BUT if I don’t understand what other people are saying, or what my caseworker is saying... is that good for me or for the commune? It strengthens my life! I think I’m cheating my life and I’m wasting my time if I say that I am sick even though I’m not sick...”

That I can't do it, even though I can. It's not good for me. I ruin my life and my children's future life." (Sadya)

and

*"Yes, I integrate for myself. It makes sense for me because the language is an advantage for me. It's not because I want to be Danish. I will never be Danish."
(Hani)*

A different view of the personal gain is expressed by Xoriya who mentions feeling safe as a main factor;

"For example, if you don't know the language and don't learn it, then you can't communicate. When you come to a country, the best you can do is to learn the language. (...) IT'S GOOD FOR ME! Because it has something to do with safety. For example, if I don't speak the language, maybe I will feel scared. Scared to take a taxi, to go out etc." (Xoriya)

Xoriya is conscious about advantaging herself and feeling safer by learning. She is mentioning language as a factor for feeling safe, and the possibility to communicate with other people hence, feeling safe because she can express herself, and understand what is being said to her. For Arwa, on the other hand, learning the language was not a conscious decision but more a matter of course;

"I didn't know what it meant to be integrated. It's something I have done for myself. And I had arrived in a new country, (...) it wasn't because I had to satisfy Denmark and the demands Denmark required of people (laughing) I didn't even know these things back then." (Arwa)

Arwa learns Danish and settle's down unaware that she is following the Danish integration requirements for migrants, this was a shared phenomenon among the participants who came to Denmark as children.

I want my freedom

Another basic theme that emerges from the dataset, was the aspect of being free from obligations towards the state and the feeling of freedom to be able to do whatever the participants pleased in and with their lives;

"I don't like receiving all those public benefits. I want to earn my own money...Ehm... I guess it's a form of control over my own life and being able to do whatever I want and travel to wherever I want. Without having to ask anybody for permission. Can I travel 3 weeks, 2 weeks, something. Being able to decide for myself what to do." (Hani)

As illustrated by Xaawa, taking care of their own lives and not expecting anything from the Danish society, also gives them freedom; *“Shortly said, you have to support yourself and look after yourself. As long as you support yourself and have a job or you own business, no one’s going to interfere in your life. If you however, come (to Denmark) and expect help for all sorts of things, that’s when people interfere.”* (Xaawa)

Meeting Danish integration requirements benefits the participants in terms of being able to live their lives as they please. Hani was at a point of her life in Denmark forced to being in contact with social authorities, she did not appreciate that and the memory of that only supports her opinion of needing to feel free.

I have an inner will

There was agreement across the participants, that an inner will is crucial for integration, and that force is of no use as Fatima explains;

“It has to come from within. You need to have the will yourself. If you don’t have the will, then you don’t get anywhere... All that with force and power for example “You have to join language school etc.” and all that with the commune who is putting pressure on people, it is of no use. If you don’t have the will you don’t get anywhere.” (Fatima)

The inner will of the participants was driven by different personal goals. For Aamiina, it was to continue the dreams she had had in Somalia. Being able to live out the plans she already outlined for herself as a child; *“I also had hope and dreams back then.”* Xoriya is referring to the day to day living as a reason for her to learn Danish; *“Yes, I WANTED to learn Danish, so I could communicate and be active.”* The participants express different desires for wanting to integrate into Danish society and learn the language. They all have different goals for their lives which keeps them going and find a way to achieve these.

I have goals set

“Having a goal and to have something you can work towards, that matters.” (Ladan) It is furthermore described how planning life in long- and short-term goals help the women to keep focus; *“Well, I always have a list of what I want to achieve. Mm, every year I set a goal, or if I haven’t achieved the goal from the previous year, I continue in the following year.”* (Arwa) Goals are described, not as something that is crucial to accomplish, but something that keeps the participants on track. Goals being anything from professional, family, physical. Kiin who because of her current situation can’t begin her desired education, still has the motivation to accomplish that goal in

the future; *“I have a goal when my kids grow older that I can take an education. I want to be a nurse. I’ve worked with elders before, in homecare and in nursing homes. That’s my plan when my kids grow older.”* (Kiin)

Having goals is also something about being in charge regarding decisions about how they want their life to be and taking control. Sadya illustrates how, by planning her life, she can influence the outcome; *“A Danish saying is “You can do what you want”, If you make routines and say “Okay, my life should be like this. Of course, sometimes it can’t be that way, but 99% of the time it becomes like that because it’s you who are in control.”* (Sadya)

Having goals for their lives is not necessarily encouraged by coming to Denmark. Most of the participants are schooled from Somalia, and some even came as educated. For Aamiina who came when she was 14, her goals did not change; *“And I had to... I had goals. I also had goals before I came to Denmark. That I had to take an education etc. SO, I learned Danish in 3 months.”* (Aamiina)

I need to take action to get somewhere

Taking responsibility for your own life

Caaisho came to Denmark as a child and experienced years of hardship in school. Due to the war in Somalia, Caaisho never enrolled in school before she came to Denmark when she was 10 years old. She quickly became fluent in Danish but could not manage to keep up with her classmates academically. Even though she did not have the best terms, when she was 16, a shift happened in her perception of own responsibility which helped her to move on from that point.

“That’s when it actually hit me that this couldn’t go on. That I HAD to do something. Take responsibility and be a role model (...) I knew I couldn’t keep pointing fingers and blaming other people... I couldn’t do that. I just had to say “Ok, I’m an adult now, so what do I do?” So that’s actually where it started for me.” (Caaisho)

For Caaisho this is a description of the turning point of her life and how she realizes that feeling sorry for herself will not get her anywhere. This is a general perception across the participant group. They do not want or need pity from others, it is only them who can help them. Ladan illustrates how she sees it as her own responsibility to get the most out of learning situations and to be an active part of her own learning, - despite of what others might think of her; *“I’ve*

been told so many times, “X give space to the others” because in school I raise my hand all the time. – Not because I’m telling you that I’m a good student, on the contrary, but it’s about taking responsibility and do something.” (Ladan)

This code also points towards having to help yourself before anyone else will, as Xoriya illustrates; *“If I don’t help myself, no one’s going to help me. Not doctors, or the society. It is me. I have to focus on myself. That is my responsibility.”* As she explains, society won’t help her if she does not take responsibility and act first. This is illustrated further under the next code, where there was agreement among the participants, when asked what has made it possible for them to be part of Danish society. Society is not seen as something that will come to them, but as something they have to take part in and contribute towards.

Society does not come to you

“If I just stay at home and say “Oh, I don’t know no people” Of course, no ones going to come to you and say, “I want to get to know you”. It’s you who want to learn something, Ehm it’s you who have to be part of the integration etc. (...) Then you have to figure out how you want to be part of Denmark and how your kids should be part of Denmark.” (Sadya)

Furthermore, it is not up to society to make sure they have a good life, the participants clearly put their lives in their own hands, as Arwa illustrates; *“You can create your own life and have a good life... It is not up to Denmark or where you live in the world, it’s just up to one self, how you create a good life and how you define a good life, right? It’s just up to you.” (Arwa)*

Having a good life is not directly connected to the country you live in. It is more a state of mind and the country you reside in, is more of an independent factor. A different view was shared under this code where being part of society is not only knowing the Danish language, to work and so on. It is also about knowing what is going on in society. Several of the participants work in the public sector, either within health care or as caseworkers for migrants. Aamiina and Xaawa illustrate how they agree with the need to take responsibility and reflect upon migrants they meet through their work who have misunderstood the system; *“I help myself by being active! Knowing what’s going on and by taking responsibility! I also tell other migrants when I meet them, that it’s important that they take responsibility over their own life.” (Xaawa)*

You give some you get some

According to the participants, contributing to the Danish society and taking responsibility over own lives and respecting themselves, is also what makes society include them.

“Society will accept me, if I show the positive side of myself and who I am. But if I don’t accept myself, society won’t respect me either. Because society is out working, is under education and pays tax. And tax is paid throughout the life, because society is health AND education for all – these things are free.” (Xoriya)

Xoriya is indirectly describing society as the people living in it. People work, educate themselves and contribute to society, and people ARE society. If Xoriya presents herself in a positive way towards her fellow citizens, they will also accept her and include her in the community /society. For Arwa it was not Denmark or the experience of coming to Denmark which pushed her towards the integrating factors, she was already determined by herself – this was a common opinion across the participants who arrived in Denmark as adolescents or adults; *“You need to take responsibility and initiative. I think, already when I arrived in Denmark, I was determined to learn the language, – which made Denmark open its doors for me”. (Arwa)*

It is a subconscious act of Arwa to learn Danish. She is trying to make the best of the situation for herself which happens to please the Danish society and include her. Aamiina also describes this fact in relation to the people around her; *“In the end I got a job because the grown-ups believed in me so much. (...) I was very responsibly aware and mature, and they respected me a lot. (...) - People gave something to me, but I also took some responsibility.” (Aamiina)*

Putting myself out there

Besides taking responsibility for their own lives, the participants described what they have practically done to achieve their goals. For Hani it was the need to become socially involved that made her take the case in her own hand, despite it being rarely seen, that asylum seekers work whilst awaiting status as a refugee.

“And I said to him; “1 thing is going to help me, getting a job!” and you know I was at the asylum center, so working wasn’t allowed. He contacted all the hospitals if they wanted me, a female nurse for a volunteer job. Then I got the job at the maternity ward. After only 2 months in Denmark.” (Hani)

Across the dataset it becomes clear that all the participants in one way or the other, have taken the case in their own hands to achieve what they wanted. It being anything from finding extra classes to learn Danish properly, forcing their children into Danish school classes for them to be integrated successfully or to force their chosen education or love, despite cultural diversity and lack of support from the Danish or Somali community. Their children are mentioned as massive factors for the decision-making;

"I live in Denmark and my children are here and they must learn. You can have Somali friends, but you need to know something about the society you have been included in. (...) If I don't say my opinion today, then I haven't done enough. Because it's a question from them why you haven't applied for a job, why your children can't perform academically." (Sadya)

Sadya refers to making sure that her children are placed in a classroom consisting mostly of Danish pupils, for them to integrate better and to interact with primarily Danish children. This is supported by Fatima who mentions choosing a place to live, far away from the Ghettos in Denmark, where neighbors and people she and her children will meet every day are Danish e.g. Somebody who's company helps their integration. The participants clearly see themselves as active players in their lives. They do not expect help from others, or for anybody else to guide them or tell them what to do. It is their lives, their decisions and their responsibility to make it happen. The mind-set of not expecting anything from society but on the contrary see themselves as someone who needs to contribute to society, both places them in a self-strengthening position as well as a position which is appreciated in terms of the Danish integration requirements.

Keep pushing forward

Life IS hard

All participants, when asked of challenges or barriers in their coming to Denmark, respond with various stories of difficult times. Some participants need time to think as the challenges they have had, are not dominant in their mind-sets and some are nearly forgotten. The telling's, all have an inclusion of a naturalness to the fact that life IS hard and that it is expected that not all periods of life can be good, as Fatima illustrates; *"But I just feel like, if you don't fight for your life, then its just hard... Some give up and some continue until they find what they are looking for. We are all different."* This also gives a hint of having to fight for a good life which Aamiina

illustrates by saying; *“I have fought and fought and fought and that helps! (...) If there’s something I want, then I fight. It can be difficult, hard and take time, but I believe in it, and I succeed.”*

Both participants refer to *not fighting* as something that makes life harder than if you fight. That life will get more difficult if you stay passive. Arwa more directly describes why her life was difficult when she first arrived in Denmark, but also refers to life as having only one way forward, moreover, when she did not have anybody to help her, she needed to help herself by moving forward;

“It was extremely difficult (...) the first 5 years was really hard. (...) I missed my parents and everything. It wasn’t funny at all having to live in Denmark. (...) I went to school and life had to go on right. Only 1 way forward. Obviously... I didn’t have anybody who could help me.” (Arwa)

Helping themselves and keep on going even though life is hard is something the participants see themselves benefit from in the future. When they keep pushing forward it is in their believe that the hard time is only a temporality which will be over quicker if they work harder as Kiin illustrates;

“It WAS hard. Because my children were small, I was married, didn’t have a driver’s license and I couldn’t handle it. (...) I did handle it though (...). It WAS hard becoming a single parent, to go from 2 to 1. I was working so hard with the school, taking a driver’s license etc. But I survived right. AND I’m happy I did it because it has made it easier for me to come around.” (Kiin)

The participants see tough periods as part of life. These periods however, all have a means to an end. For Kiin, the feeling of being happy that she got through a tough period, is as, or even more, important than the actual tough period itself.

A positive attitude gets you further

A believe among the participants is that self-belief is important to achieve anything in life, and that negativity is of no use for learning, despite challenges. *“YOU CAN learn Danish and YOU CAN learn something. Don’t think that it’s difficult for you, you need to think; “YOU CAN!” Don’t think; “you can’t.” If you think that then you won’t learn nothing.” (Sadya)*

When asked about how the participants experienced coming to Denmark, it is mostly described as a great experience. Most of the participants struggled to remember challenges.

This being most dominant among the participants arriving as adults. Some of the women focus on their newfound possibilities when arriving in Denmark compared to Somalia. Others perceive the asylum center in Denmark as a place of luxury. A place that has food security and is safe. Furthermore, Denmark is seen as a field of opportunities for learning;

“Well I was... Really excited! And I felt positive. I came to Sandholmlejren (Asylum camp) and I was very positive. There was food, we went to the cantina and we could eat everything we wanted. I remember thinking “It’s really lovely here”.”
(Hani)

And;

“Besides having the motivation and the will to learn something (...) Some of the things I found really exciting, was when you sat in the bus, the women would be knitting. THAT is something I learned. Now it’s one of my best hobbies. I just wanted to learn that. Besides that, I found it amazing that the women were bicycling.” (Xaawa)

Coming to Denmark is expressed as a positive experience, or at least as experienced through a positive mind-set. Denmark is also referred to as a place with newfound possibilities as women.

Stubbornness

Several of the participants describe themselves as stubborn which is mentioned as a determining factor for the outcome of different situations. Arwa is illustrating how she is not willing to compromise her own cultural beliefs despite of it putting her at risk at times; *“Because I wear a scarf, it’s easy for me to be assaulted, - I know that. But it’s not going to hold me back, like never being able to do something because I’m scared all the time. I do whatever I want, I also walk late at night (laughing) – so I live my life dangerously.”* (Arwa)

Caaisho refers to her own stubbornness when she, during her application for citizenship had to prove her knowledge about Danish society and do the citizen test about Denmark. It became something she refused to do, however in the end she had to give in and do it despite of her own disbeliefs;

“I just got so stubborn that I didn’t want to do that stupid test at the language school. I fought so hard against it. Because I was already educated (In Denmark). I obtained 11 (on the grade scale equal to a B) in Social Science. (...) I thought it was so stupid that I had to go and take a test and proof that I knew something about society. I refused and said, “Hell no!”.” (Caaisho)

By this quote, Caaisho refuses to be seen as a migrant who has to prove herself and her knowledge about the society of settlement. It is also the expression of a frustration of not being recognized for previous achievements as a migrant. Aamiina on the other hand refers to her stubbornness as a strengthening factor that pushes her forward and makes her keep going. Furthermore, the stubbornness is seen as something which assures success. *“I’m just like that... Maybe there’s some stubbornness involved as well... It’s not something I talk about, but if I want something, I do it and then I succeed.”*

Solution minded to reach goals

Despite the participants having goals for their lives, they show awareness that not all goals will necessarily be met, when asked about their future plans. However, when goals cannot be met, several participants show awareness towards finding a solution which can move them forward even though it might be on a lower level. As Sadya illustrates when talking about work;

“I’m healthy and well – I’m doing fine... (...) I can look for a job. For example, I would like to be a nursing assistant, and if I don’t get that (get admitted) then I’ll apply again and again and if I still don’t get in, then I have to try something else. And if I don’t get that... Then cleaning or... A job is a job.” (Sadya)

Arwa says *“If I don’t succeed, then I have to try something else. It’s not like I have anything to lose”*, as nothing can be lost, she might as well find an alternative to move forward. If a goal is not met, being too difficult or unreachable, some participants describe themselves as withdrawing from the situation only to return later when new energy has been found. Other ways of illustrating being solution minded is in relation to managing daily life either as single mums having had to learn Danish at the same time or managing a career and the demands from Denmark living with a chronic disease, which is the case for one of the participants.

Ladan refers to being solution minded in finding new career paths as she grows tired of the businesses, she is in. She becomes creative in finding solutions, depending on her feeling for the job. Staying in a job that tires her and does not evolve her, it is not seen as a solution; *“That’s why I change professional paths. I grow tired of it. I’d rather try something new than stay stuck in one place. That will only make you grumpy, if you stay in one place and aren’t happy.” (Ladan)*

Summary

These themes refer to how the participants handle their lives, and how they navigate through every day challenges. The drive for integration for these women is the personal gain. They need freedom over own lives, and control to achieve personal goals. Integration is seen as an asset which helps the participants achieve their desires. The integration requirements are perceived as helping instruments, and not following these will be more of a personal cost than the actual expenditure for the commune. The participants have an inner will to keep pushing forward despite life being hard at times, this is to be expected, and not something that is beneficial to dwell upon for too long. For any progress to happen in their lives, the participants see themselves as main actors and take great responsibility for moving forward. It was clear from the data set that the participants are naturally positively orientated. Even when referring to or describing difficult periods of their lives, it is told with a smile, followed by a laughter or referred to as indifferent compared to the good times. Some of the participants describe using their stubbornness to find solutions to problems. If a goal is not met, these participants do not see it as fail, but rather as something that needs a solution. All the participants refer to life being hard in one way or another, however, keep in mind that a positive attitude will get them further.

2: Society is perceived as a strengthening factor

The aim of this theme is to explore other aspects for integration and how integration is also a way to cover basic needs for the women. It explores their strengthening mind-set and how negativity is dis-focused upon.

There is a social need

I am a social human being, I need to belong

The feeling of belonging is necessary for the participants, it is part of having a good life. Life makes sense because of the relations they are in. The relations being family or friends, new or old relations. Most of the participants have parts of their family spread across Europe, and despite having established a lot of new friendships in Denmark, it is still however, important

to some of the women to stay in contact with their family members in the neighboring European countries as well as the family in Somalia;

“I have kids who I love and who help me a lot. I can feel I’m not alone. It’s something social. I have a good family that supports me, even though they don’t live in Denmark. They call, and we visit each other. For example, in England once a year. I have a good life.” (Kiin)

When the women are alone in Denmark and their families are in Somalia, new relations are created to be able to stay social. It is reported however that some of the women feel it is easier to feel whole and belonging, when their families are gathered in the same country. This is also to do with the unknowing of safety for family members and friends who are still located in Somalia. The need to belong in a greater context is also described in relation to obtaining the Danish citizenship and passing the citizenship test, and how not having done that, makes Caaisho feel excluded from society;

H: What makes a good life?

C: To be part of the community I think is most meaningful. It’s so important to feel included and I felt that a few years back, because I didn’t have citizenship. I could feel how important it suddenly became for me. (...) I got bitter and angry. For example, when an international football match was on, I wouldn’t be on the Danish team. I got so angry, I just thought;” You just sing your own national song”. I also cheered for the other team and was against Denmark because it didn’t represent me. It was just because I was angry that I was excluded from the society.” (Caaisho)

I need to be active to stay social

A general perception across the participants is the need to be active as well as the need to be social. The participants are using the active aspect to interact with other people, establish new relations, and to satisfy their social needs. Some of the participants recall times of their lives in Denmark where they have been without employment or involuntarily been forced to stay without a job, for example during their first time in Denmark when they had their case for asylum under process. These periods are recalled as “Terrible” and as “hell” as Fatima illustrates; *“I couldn’t handle it. I have to be with people. I have to be social and have fun. To do something and to have something to get out of bed for. I can’t handle just to sit and stare at the wall.”*

The participants take great responsibility to find employment or volunteer work to avoid the feeling of isolation. The data set also proved the participants to be very pro-active for the same reason. If they feel isolated, Fatima for example chooses a job that will pay her less than staying on public benefits just to have something to get out of bed for. Xoriya when feeling depressed, very quickly gets up and about to change her mood.

Hani illustrates how she through a volunteer job when she first arrived in Denmark made her first personal connections and started learning things about Denmark and the Danish society and how her will or rather her unwillingness to stay passive helped her towards interaction and integration.

“It made me so happy. The first girl I got to know, she was a midwife student and that became a close friendship. Today you could call her my best friend. I looked after the new mums and stocked diapers. The ward midwife she was so impressed with me; “You have been here 2 months and you are already wearing scrubs and you understand some things, culturally and language wise. When I came (to work) I was happy and when I left, I was happy.” (Hani)

Working as volunteers is a shared phenomenon across the participant group. It is described as something they do to interact with people, either to interact with Danish people or to interact IN Danish to improve own Danish language skills. The social aspect becomes something with further beneficial effect of supporting the integration;

H: Why did you choose to become a volunteer?

S: Because I wanted to learn Danish. I don't know Moroccan so If I wanted to talk to the others, Moroccans or Danes, I had to learn Danish.” (Sadya)

Being active and thereby social is reported as essential for having a good life.

“If I was deprived my job, if somebody said; “You are no good, you are sick”- they told me once. I refused! Because it gives me... I'm part of the community and I can't have that deprived from me. I live and breathe for being active on the labor market.” (Hani)

Helping others strengthens me and is meaningful

“I've been a volunteer, because I wanted to do the same for others as some people did for me.”

(Aamiina) Some of the participants illustrate a need to give back what have been given to them.

Helping others in different ways is meaningful as it gives the participants a chance to repay for the help they have received. It might also have to do with being in a better position where

they now function as the helping hand which is a strengthening factor. Xoriya describes the personal win of seeing her help benefit others; *“It gives me energy (to help others). It’s what drives me. It’s meaningful, when I’ve seen a mum who’s lonely, when she comes out and laughs and talks with people. When she gets employed or in school and gets fresh air, THAT is meaningful to me.”*

Several of the participants mentions the gender aspect when it comes to helping others. There is a need to empower women. Either by sending money to female relatives in Somalia to increase their socio-economic position or by challenging some traditional gender views within the Somali culture in Denmark;

“My thought was to help the women with empowerment. (...) Some women need to know their worth. The saying; “You’re a girl!” I don’t think women should be limited because of their sex, - just because they are girls. They need possibilities, they need to be able to say no. I thought they needed support and for someone to say; “You can do what you want and still be a good mother.” (Xaawa)

Wanting to help others is described as something that lies within the participants and as something ranked as a higher goal for their lives – it gives them energy. Ladan in detail describes how helping others affect her, and how she tries to cooperate it into her daily life;

It strengthens me, and I feel... I feel good about myself when I can help somebody. It’s like, if I was in their shoes, I’d also like somebody to help me. (...) So, the point of helping and advising others, that makes me feel good. I get the feeling that I’ve done something for somebody else. It’s not like I’m thinking that I’ve created the cure for cancer, but it’s about the small steps and to be able to do something.”
(Ladan)

Helping others is also something to be proud of. Nearly all of the participants refer to themselves as a major resource to other migrants and /or Danish society. For example, when they help their fellow country-men understand official letters or join migrants’ clinical visits to act as interpreters. Even guiding migrant children how to live in Danish society and how to make the best of their possibilities in Denmark when the parents are unfit to guide them. It is being illustrated how being someone other people relay on, makes the participants feel proud;

Hani: You know I still have mentor girls who have just finished high school and who are now studying (...) We still have contact. She was 3 when she arrived in Denmark.

H: So, helping others gives you something too?

Hani: YES! It gives me something because... I lift somebody who is lying down and can’t lift themselves. Her mother for example, she couldn’t speak any languages because she was a house mum with the husband working. (She), came when she was 18 with 2 kids. Even the tests she had to go to, I joined

because she couldn't understand. I've really been a great resource for that (asylum) center because they had to save money on translators. (...) And these people felt safe with me". (Hani)

Most of the participants have chosen professions within the public sector, where their daily work consists of helping either patients or working for the commune. Having chosen that path seems to be a way for the participants to fulfill their need to help other people; *"When I've chosen to take that (career) path, you know I always give that extra and I like it because it satisfies me and makes me happy because I've made a difference right. So, I feel like I have a big heart. I'm caring(laughing)." (Arwa)*

Tolerance towards others

Along with the need to help people around them, these women also show embracing qualities. When asked, in their opinion, what makes them see themselves as integrated, the natural curiosity towards the Danish way of living, and the tolerance towards the Danish culture are dominant factors. Communication seems to be key along with spending time together;

K; Of course, there are different cultures and religions, but it's very important that no matter what culture you have... It's when you communicate with people you understand each other.

H; Hmm. Is that what makes you see yourself as an integrated woman in Denmark?

K; Yes. But I don't know what my colleagues think, but I believe I'm integrated. For example, I don't have a problem going out with them, eating, bowling. No matter what clothes I wear etc. No one makes a problem out of it. I don't drink or smoke, but I don't care if they do. As long as we are together and caring for each other. If they invite me, I'll come and so on." (Kiin)

Several of the women bring out Danish culture of drinking and smoking as being some of the things furthest away from their own cultural beliefs. However, by accepting these habits in their relations, they can be social, and it makes the participants see themselves as integrated. Integration becomes a social phenomenon where tolerance and acceptance of other people is a way to overcome cultural barriers for the higher meaning of social interaction between people. *"We are of 2 opinions. AND we can have a friendship that way. I respect him, and he respect me, and we meet." (Hani)*

Some of the participants share their opinion of how it was easier coming to Denmark plus twenty years ago, and how the tolerance, trust and respect for each other was naturally

present in relations. This being having their children play with Danish children without the need to mention specific food requirement (i.e. pork) etc.

“Today it’s difficult getting to know each other. For example, back then when I came, no one knew about halal, harem, Muslims and non-Muslims. All that came later. Back then we were just humans and we respected each other. I mean, you knew..., but no one talked about it. – So, for me it was just me and Louise (Danish friend).” (Xaawa)

This organizing theme shows different aspects of being social, what measures the participants take to be social and what effect it has on them to be in relations. Furthermore, how important the interaction with people is, indifference of race, cultural beliefs etc.

Integration is a social act

Integration is a social opportunity

That integration is more than the Danish official requirements is a general opinion among the participants; *“I just mean, integrations doesn’t mean you have a job, you go to school etc.- It’s the socialization with the outside world in the society you live in. I feel I am... (Integrated) That’s my point of view. To be part of the big fellowship.” (Ladan)*

Having your actual day to day life in society and interacting through work, activities and everyday duties is what integrates a migrant properly. According to Ladan, a migrant who has a job and is active every day is not necessarily integrated if he or she only moves around own countrymen and within own culture. A migrant must socially interact with Danes in order to learn how Denmark functions properly. Aamiina however, adds that having a job and being part of the labor market is a great start to becoming integrated, because it gives the migrant a chance to learn much more about norms and ways of doing things than the actual job; *“And just being part of the labor market helps so much. Because you get to learn the playing field. How is the culture, what’s Danish – you are invited for the Christmas lunch etc. You become a part of the country.” (Aamiina)*

It is also mentioned that being able to support one’s self and not being a burden to the society you live in, is part of being integrated. It is an obvious matter for the participants. To be able to take care of yourself, work, go about etc. the participants mention knowledge about the country they are in as a crucial factor. If a migrant knows Danish history, politics, the law and so on, it also increases their possibilities to settle down successfully, being able to open their

own shops because they know the rules and regulations for this, in according to Danish law etc. *"I think integration is to be part of the society you have moved to and to be with them (the Danes)."* (Fatima) Integration becomes something more than the official requirements. It becomes a social phenomenon that is improved through interaction with Danes. To be able to interact with Danes you need to be able to communicate and thereby speak a common language.

Language is a key-factor

"Language is most important. Without language you can't communicate with people. Language makes it easier to understand who the other person is, what are the habits and manners, Right... So that's the key I'd say to become integrated." (Arwa) Language becomes the starting point for integration. Several of the participants act as intermediary for fellow migrants, who don't speak Danish or know the rules in Danish society. *"I had a language where I could be the interpreter. (...) I was well-educated, and I had the English language, I was translating for everybody."* (Hani) Taking this position is something which strengthens the participants own position and self-belief. Because many of the participants already knew English and some of them several other languages, settling down in Denmark was perceived as easy. English is seen as a great advantage point for entering society;

"Knowing English was an advantage for me. I was mixing Danish and English and gradually less English. For example, no one has ever translated for me at the doctor. First I used English and then Danish and my doctor was following my development – within 1 year I was able to communicate with her in Danish."
(Xaawa)

Learning the national language makes it easier for a migrant to go about the everyday life. Several of the participants point towards being educated within many languages and being able to communicate with people worldwide as a great advantage. When coming to Denmark, placing oneself isolated from fellow countrymen is looked upon as necessary for learning Danish properly and to learn the Danish way of living;

"And I was living in a small village so... That also helped me to integrate and learn as quickly as possible, because I had to. (...) For me it became easy because I HAD to communicate with them (Danes) I didn't have any other possibility, speaking Somali or something similar, I just had to dive in." (Fatima)

Accepting the Danish culture helps with the personal progress

The participants either came to Denmark through family unification programs (the adult women) or as refugees or unaccompanied refugee children. For the participants who came as children, they describe not knowing in advance that they were about to leave Somalia without their parents, but with a stranger. They describe years of hardship especially in relation to the Danish public schools they were placed in. They do however after some time, start to adjust to their lives in Denmark as it is the only possibility given to them; *“I was just placed there (in a village) and started to adjust... It was just the road I had to take.” (Caisho)* For the adults it was more specifically described; *“I could see that all people work. Work is part of life, a part of the identity. Therefor it became easier for me. As soon as I was done with the asylum, I entered the labor market.” (Hani)* It becomes easier for Hani to adjust to Denmark, because she accepts the way the society works. Moreover, she is impatient to join and be part of the society.

“Before I gave birth, I decided to live the way the others (Danes) were living... Like the other Somalis here. Here (In Denmark) you work and earn your own money. From where I came from, it was the man who took care of it. In Denmark you work and help each other (In marriage). I just did the same.” (Xaawa)

Xaawa experiences how society works in Denmark and decides to adjust. She also points towards seeing her fellow countrymen adjusting to Denmark, which becomes a reason for her to do the same. Another point made from the participants, is the need to have a job in Denmark, to be able to live, due to the different living standards, between Denmark and Somalia.

Help from Danes is valuable

There is big agreement among the participants that having Ethnic Danes people in their lives is a major asset. Both in the integration processes as well as for their feeling of well-being in Denmark. It is reflected upon in relation to private relations, as entry point to Danish society and in relation to achieving recognition for who they are. Fatima managed to create a close relationship with her Danish neighbors and describes how the relation added to her well-being; *“Of course, I felt as one of them. When they called for me or honked “Hooooonk, when are you coming for coffee?” (Laughing) (...) It was nice.”*

Having official Danish figures in their lives who do not only care for the official requirements but also care for the participants personal well-being is strongly appreciated;

“My case worker she got so happy and I said to her; “You are a part of my life because you backed me up and you helped me. You are a part of my life” (...) Because she told me every time there was opportunities; “X That, you can do!” and “No, don’t say you can’t do it.” I was thrilled when I succeeded.” (Sadya)

The Danish relations are described as priceless. Especially when they have supported the participants through difficult times and they might have been the reason, Fatima for example did not give up;

“Mm, Actually I was about to give up. I had a lot of Danish friends and they said;” If you do that, people will always say;” Yes that’s how migrants are, they always give up”. Then you are no better than what they are saying”. You can make it. We will help you, but you must fight” And I did.” (Fatima)

Some of the participants who came as children refer to adult figures in school or at the children home who helped them when life was difficult. It is suggested that having these relations empower Somali women; *“I recognize that the Somali women who use their voices in Denmark, are the ones who’ve had Danes in their lives.” (Aamiina)* This is supported by Xaawa who says;

“To arrive in a country, even though I had my husband, getting the recognition from the older women... (...) To get the “You can do it! You can become whatever you want. Your Danish is good enough...” I only got that from the Danes I was with (...) These Danish women have played a major role in my life. And it’s easy to say that they have been my role models. No matter their age, they stayed positive and made me confident that I could do that or be that”. (Xaawa)

Finally, personal relations to Danes have proved important to the participants in terms of being recognized and appreciated. It being their private doctor supporting them to continue studies, schoolteachers supporting them through school or the boss standing up for the women as employees, if treated unfair. Getting recognition and appreciation makes these women work harder. Being *Included* compared to *excluded* is also important for the succession of integrating into Danish society;

“I had somebody who believed in me. Subsequently I was lucky and met some people who have been there for me, who listened to me and who have opened some doors for me. That’s very important. I wouldn’t have been able to do it. (...) I had a lot of friends and... I’ve never had anybody who didn’t want me.” (Aamiina)

Strengthening the mind-set

Being open and outreaching (I'm always learning)

"By asking questions, wanting to learn and by being curious. Showing that I'm active. That's better teamwork. It's up to me to show openness and kindness." (Xoriya) This was a general opinion among the participants that attitude and mind-set was a major factor for learning and establishing relations;

"H: Have you met any challenges as a Somali woman in Denmark?"

L: I think it's what you make of it. How you present yourself. If I come to a school and don't pull myself together, for example by asking the teacher if there is something, I haven't understood, if I'm at work but I feel bothered and irritable, then I have to ask for help and raise my hand. Because if not, you don't do enough yourself." (Ladan)

This theme brings back the responsibility aspect, of having to take own learning in own hands. This was a general perception among the participants. Along with taking responsibility for own learning, was also the aspect of always learning. The participants see themselves as continuously learning throughout their lives and the learning situations happen in the interactions they are in;

"When you start working, there will be people that you have to cooperate with and be able to tolerate. You need to be able to be in teams and resolve tasks. I'm good at that. If I don't understand a word, I ask! I'm not afraid to ask the meaning of a word. It's easier when you recognize yourself and say to yourself; "YOU need to develop and learn the language". - You know I'm still learning. That way it's easier for me and now I've worked here for 22 years." (Hani)

To be able to learn, the participants see themselves as active players who are outreaching and ask questions to increase own knowledge; *"I haven't met any (barriers) because I just asked questions and was open to learning. I walked straight into it." (Xaawa)* The participants are humble to the fact that they are never done learning, and they recognize themselves for who they are and what they can do;

"Also, I'm not reluctant. I'm good at saying "What do you mean" or "can you explain a bit more?" So I'm not reluctant. (...) I don't believe that I've learned the Danish language completely, learned the Danish culture and the Danish traditions or... We are always learning and I'm not done learning." (Fatima)

Being open to learning also means being tolerant towards different cultures and traditions to be able to learn from them. Xaawa describes how accepting Danish traditions such as Christmas, has created a unique learning situation for her, to learn about Danish culture. *“She gave the kids Christmas presents. And so did I, so they wouldn’t feel left out. I think it made it possible for us to learn the Danish traditions.”* Being role models for their own children is valued as very important. Raising their children to want to achieve higher goals in their lives;

“If my kids see that I’m not good at making contact to other people what will they then think of me? Instead, if they see that I’m participating in the everyday life, they learn to be active. I have to be good role model. (...) Imagine if I only received public benefits and slept all day until my kids got home, what would I say? That I had spent the day at home? Then my kids would say; “But mum, from where do we get the money?” – “public benefits” “Oh okay, that’s nice, then we should also stay at home.” Instead if I’m able to say “I’ve been at work” The more active you are, the more you learn the right things.” (Sadya)

I am grateful and lucky

A general perception was the feeling of gratefulness and being lucky ending up in Denmark. When the participants arrived in Denmark it was food security and peace that they valued as important; *“I was very grateful. The fact that there was stores, there was peace and you were able to sleep at night without closing the door. There were so many amazing things, in which it was difficult.” (Aamiina)* Several of the participants refer to the flight from Somalia as highly stressful and how arriving in Denmark was a complete contrast they continuously compared to the state of Somalia. Hani was first arrested when she arrived in Denmark, even the arrest is not mentioned greatly, but rather the open arms she was met with; *“Denmark is my 2nd country. In Denmark I’ve given birth. In Denmark I got married. In Denmark I was given a people who welcomed me. They didn’t know me and still they said; “Welcome, here is your 2nd home”.” (Hani)*

The participants reflect upon how their lives would have turned out if they were still in Somalia, and that thought make them feel grateful for their lives in Denmark.; *“I thank God and everybody for coming to Denmark. Because I also sometimes think;” what wouldn’t have happened if I lived in Somalia today, where would I be?”” (Ladan)* Fatima refers to always having a grateful mind-set as something that lies within her; *“Mm, I’m always very grateful for what I get and have. I’m very grateful that I came to Denmark, that I live in Denmark and can be with my family.”*

Finally, the participants see originating from 2 countries as something that strengthens them and their position. Denmark is seen as a country the participants care for and a country that have become part of who they are. Being transnational is an asset to their identity; *“I’m lucky to origin from 2 countries.” (Ladan)*

Why focus on the negative?

The participants all mention, in one way or the other, how they have experienced racism, throughout their stay in Denmark. It is referred to in relation to how the Danish immigration laws and the political decisions affect them, how their Somali community (dis)approve of their life decisions or how they experience racism and bad vibes in their everyday life, as illustrated by Ladan;

“(There’s) always negative people, but if I take all that negativity in and think; “Mrs. Jensen said I should go home to Somalia, she doesn’t want me in Denmark” or someone calls me a n.... or something. If all that stays with me, then you are not going to get far. You’ll hardly get out of the door because it happened to you. It’s how you, as a human being, manage to handle these feelings and you can think; “You know what, peace be with it.” (Ladan)

There is strong agreement that the negative experiences are not worth wasting energy on, and since it is not something that benefits the participants or their lives, it is “unfocused” upon;

“I think I just shut it out. I don’t want to spend time on it. It’s just my psyche that doesn’t want to take it in – the negative... Where I., I’m aware that I’m going to experience negativity throughout my life, so I’ve chosen not to think about it too much and not put my energy towards it. There’s more I can spend my time on, than the things ‘that happen’. I don’t think about it so much, it’s not important.” (Arwa)

As Arwa illustrates, she both anticipates that challenges are going to come, however, by accepting the fact she able to focus her energy towards the things in her life, she finds benefitting. Asking Fatima about challenges or barriers in her life in Denmark, she first gave this answer; *“I have in no way experienced any racist words or something, met anybody who was against me, I’ve never met that.”* Continuing the interview however, she suddenly describes feeling alone and excluded by her Danish classmates whilst studying; *“And then I thought; “Okay, do I have something infectious?” But I’ve never said that out loud. I just thought to myself; “Okay, it doesn’t matter. It will be over one day. I have me and my life. AND it doesn’t matter” And THAT’S what I fought for.” (Fatima)*

Fatima does not think of these events when asked about barriers or challenges, even though it is something that affected her. It is only described as a detail at a later point of the interview. Her way of handling it, and referring to “her life” and “it will be over one day” correlates with the other participants way of handling bad experiences. Arwa describes how she, is blamed for various things, and how she does not even want to defend herself, simply because that would take her energy. She rolls her eyes however to show her disagreement but then leaves the confrontation;

“But like, I shut it out because I don’t want to concentrate on the negative. Of course, there’s racism, but when it happens against me, I just don’t focus on it. I have other things to spend my time on actually than wasting time and energy on defending myself. (...) Like, blaming you for something, I’ve tried that many times. But that’s okay, that’s how it is. Not all people are good right.. Yes well, the negative, what do you need it for? (...) I just shake my head and keep on walking.”
(Arwa)

Maybe I fail

Final basic theme is in relation to no being afraid of failing. This is an ability that many of the participants describe having. It is firstly described in relation to making life decisions and taking chances as illustrated by Ladan; *“Sometimes you just have to try. If I say that I’ll wait till the right time, until I have money etc.- Then the opportunity might have passed. That’s why I just jumped on board and thought;” You know what, of course I’m going to do that. (Laughing)”* (Ladan)

Xaawa refers to herself as being braver when she was younger and had just arrived in Denmark, which made her make bold decisions, but also made her use the possibilities; *“I remember they said we should have a meeting, and I just showed up (laughing), I wasn’t afraid. I was young, I didn’t think;” You are alone, they are speaking Danish” etc. For me it was a matter of course that I had to go. Now when I think back, I think; “Wow I was brave.””* (Xaawa)

This basic theme also comes back to the continuously learning aspect as illustrated by Fatima; *“When people think;” Okay, now you get it,” “No, I don’t get it”, I’m good at saying that. I always say that, (Laughing) – and then it’s something I learned today, I’m not afraid to say that.”* Finally, the maybe failing aspect was referred to in relation to learning the Danish language. Not being afraid to say something wrong, has made the participants learn the language very quickly, as learning by doing; *“I don’t...give up. Like, I’m not embarrassed or afraid to fail. SO, if it doesn’t succeed*

the first time, then I just try again and again and then it succeeds. For example, the way I learned Danish, I wasn't afraid to say words wrong. SO, I succeeded." (Aamiina) Saying words wrong, and trusting people to correct them, is according to these women, a big part of succeeding at learning Danish.

Summary

Being social is important for the participants lives and to integrate is seen as a social value. These women adjust to Denmark because it strengthens them to be part of Danish society. It fulfills their social needs, through work, volunteer work, and through general interaction with people. A key element of integration is learning the language. With language a big part of integration is already achieved. It is the starting point for socializing and thereby the opportunity for learning things about Danish society and taking part in society. The participants express not being afraid to fail as a barrier removed. They have an open-minded attitude towards others and towards continuous learning throughout their lives. – Society is a way for them to learn new things and to interact with people.

3: There is a strong sense of Somali identity

The third organizing theme aims to explore the diversity between the participants being affected by the political agenda in Denmark and Europe whilst showing a great sense of identity and unwillingness to compromise who they are.

The multi-culture dilemma

The ones who ruins it

There are two directions in which the participants share frustration towards poorly integrated migrants. One; that some criminal migrants, especially the Somalis, make a bad reputation for the rest of the Somali population in Denmark and that the consequence of someone else's deed, is an intolerance towards all migrants in Denmark. Two; Frustration that some migrants they meet and help through their work has no intention or motivation to engage themselves into Danish society and are not willing to sacrifice anything in order to fit in. *"Some migrants have completely misunderstood the system."* (Aamiina) A lot of the participants engaged themselves massively to adjust to Denmark and took it as a matter of course to act independently to settle. This goes for example for Xaawa who came through family unification

when she was an adult, but also Ladan, who came to the country when she was 9. Even though the participants do what they can to adjust, they are still being judged;

“I will never feel Danish. I can say that I’m Somali/Danish, and I can do what I can for this society, but some people just ruin it for us. Some Somalis are criminals cheating the system. They can do so I get the stamp of “Somalis aren’t integrated, Somalis don’t work, Somalis are lowest on the scale etc.” You know, what you don’t hear about Somalis, and I don’t blame them. It’s my countrymen giving us the reputation we have today.” (Ladan)

Living the direct opposite of what these women are being judged by is a big frustration. Several of the participants also mention having to pay for the public benefits of other Somalis who cheat the system through the high tax in Denmark. Frustration is especially shared towards migrant parents not raising their children according to western norms, or at all. It being described as the boys having no surveillance and the girls being raised in traditional patriarchy ways. The participants described a great sense of responsibility regarding their own children and having them raised properly, in a modern manner.

A critical mind-set among some female migrants, including Somalis is, according to some of the participants, a twisted idea of how the society works, and how the commune is supposed to support the individual;

“Many of the (migrant) citizens I work with, they’ve been here for 20 years. They’ve had so many placements and they feel used, but they’ve completely misunderstood how the society works. If I ask if they’ve ever tried looking for a job themselves, they haven’t. They just think it’s the commune who handles it (work opportunities) (...) I’m also aware that the ones I’m talking about are 5 years older than me and have 10 or 5 kids. Arabic women or women with another ethnic origin than Danish. They don’t understand how their life has turned out so differently from mine.” (Aamiina)

The frustration is shared among the participants, of other migrant women not living up to the expectations of society and not being able to live independently without help from society;

“I think that Somalis need to take responsibility for their own lives and do something about it and not expect others to fix their problems. Of course, you should use the system that’s there to help. But generally, I hear migrants thinking;” Then I have to go to the commune and ask” But I think, the commune has nothing to do with you, take care of yourself. It’s when you are out of options that you go to the commune.” (Xaawa)

Especially receiving public benefits “Kontanthjælp” is mentioned a lot. Both in relation to supporting that the politicians are working towards cutting the public benefits, and anger that

the participants, by working and paying tax, are also funding other migrants who are purposely cheating the system;

“Only the people who can’t work or who are seriously sick (...) – should get the public benefits, children’s support etc. But if I’m well and healthy then getting public benefits EVERY MONTH??? For example, if I’m at work and paying tax, you stay at home for 12 hours “I have to be with my kids, sleep in, clean the house and make it look nice and I’m only thinking of myself.” How are we different? I’m well and healthy and so are you but you are staying at home and I’m paying tax so that you can get my money? – Sometimes I get angry and I’m thinking “wow they talk a lot (the politicians) if they were good, they would cut the public benefits”.”

(Sadya)

Along with the annoyance of some migrant’s attitude towards the system, is the powerless act which stands in contrast to the participants own feeling of proudness to be independent.

“Some women will just say; “I need to get some money” I just hate that attitude. I shouldn’t go to a woman my age and act like I’m powerless. The day I’m sick or something happens so I really can’t, then that’s how it is. -But as long as I can take care of myself and in a good way affect my life in a positive direction, then I want to do that. But I can see that a lot of refugees have that “having the rights to something” (...) but they don’t understand that they are also obliged.” (Xaawa)

The impact off Danish politics

Focus was also put towards the political situation in Denmark and how political statements affect the participants;

“I’ve been assaulted 3 times since I came to Denmark. One time I was heavily pregnant. I was walking in Århus with 3 girlfriends. A grown-up man well trained gives me a fist in the chest. Right in the middle of the walking street! He shouts at me; “Fuck of to wear you belong.” The politicians forget that, that a lot of people listen to them and all the frightening images – we sense that. When you are walking on the street, you sense it. And it’s just not okay!” (Aamiina)

This quote is a contrast to the previous chapter, of shared frustration with migrants living on benefits from the system. While Aamiina is frustrated with poorly integrated migrants, she is also angry that the way Danish politics are outlived today has personal consequences for well-functioning migrants, like herself. Several of the participants describe distancing themselves from public arenas such as the media, not to have to deal with the negativity it brings them. Especially because, positive stories are not focused upon as much.

"I know my home-country and that's why I like to represent myself positively. It always bothers me when they (politicians) are talking about the negative Somali's. Somali's, Somali's Somali's, but they don't know me and where I come from. (...) You can't just say that all people from there (Somalia) are bad and negative. Maybe it's 2 or 3 who ruins it all." (Xoriya)

Aamiina shares her worry for where the Danish society is heading and is seeing similarities to Somalia prior the war;

"What I like about Denmark is that you are okay, and I'm okay. (...). That's also why it's been easy for me to take in the Danish culture. But we are losing it right now and we are becoming like Somalia. "You are not okay, it's only me who is okay." There's a reason we (Somali's) are here and it... I can't explain it in a better way than by saying; "I don't think you can control people by saying;" "You are not okay, you are not okay," until you become like me." (Aamiina)

I will never be Danish

A change in society is described. The participants sense that the Danish society is becoming more hostile towards migrants and it makes them feel unsafe. Ladan refers to her own division in relation to feeling Danish herself but never truly being accepted as Danish because of what she wears and how she exhibits own cultural beliefs.

"I'm Somali Danish... But I will never ever feel 100 % Danish. I'd lie if I said that. When I'm walking on Nørrebrogade with a headscarf and my clothes etc. People are not that blind. It hit me one day when I was nursing a patient (...) She was really sick and still goes; "When are you going to go home?" Then I said; "I'm not off duty yet." "Nono, to your own home-country?" I looked at her and went; "But I'm in Denmark now, why do I have to go?" "Well you are just too many people now." You know, I know not to take her words as the final word, but there are just some people where you'll never ever feel at home." (Ladan)

As Ladan describes not being valued among the patients she is caring for, Hani describes not being appreciated equally to her Danish colleagues by her coworkers and her boss;

"The barrier is that I'm still fighting for recognition. I'm not valued as a nursing assistant like Anita and I will never be like Peter (Danish names). I will always have a look that means limitations for me. That bothers me. (...) I don't see myself as ethnic. I see myself as an ethnic Dane and I'm proud of that. I see this as my second home and still, there are limitations." (Hani)

That the participants because of race will always have people against them is a shared belief. No matter how hard they work, or how much energy they put into caring for people or sharing

their beliefs, it does not matter; *“It’s funny, because there are some people who will always think that I’m wrong. I think that it doesn’t matter what I do, there will always be somebody who don’t think I’m okay.”* (Aamiina)

Xaawa takes a humoristic approach towards the political situation and her own position. She acts exactly opposite of how she is pictured through the media and political spotlight; *I’m the one they run from right. (...) Somali’s are difficult and I’m Somali. Nothing to do about that. Even though I’m part of the head board in my area and I know what’s going on.”* (Xaawa) This is supported by several of the participants. Ladan explores the subject in more detail and refers to being judged not only for chosen area of living, but for everything that has to do with how she represents herself; *“Already because I live in Mjølnerparken (Ghettoarea) then I have a stamp on me. There are so many stamps. Whether it’s the area you live, how you dress, how you speak the language.”* (Ladan) The participants see their ethnic group as a group which is especially pointed out in the media; *“There’s a very harsh tone towards Somali women. It’s difficult to be in Denmark when you are a refugee. On top of that you are a Muslim, and then you are Somali. – Then it’s not easy.”* (Aamiina)

How it used to be easier to migrate to Denmark

Many of the participants are active within politics. They are reflecting about Danish requirements for integration and how it affects migrants having to live up to these demands; *“When I look at the integration in Denmark, it’s pretty tight. Danish Folk party with rules being tightened etc.”* (Sadya) Moreover, the participants experience Denmark not giving space to migrants, especially refugees, and Denmark is experienced as an isolated state only accepting own cultural beliefs;

Today you have to leave everything you are and know and everything that’s in your identity and then completely assimilate. And the more you assimilate, the more integrated you are. (...) We must stop saying that integration is assimilation and instead go for actual integration. I think that would benefit Denmark and the Danish people. That you kind of have an idea that “ours is best and we can’t take anything from other countries because ours is perfect.” I don’t think that’s a healthy attitude.” (Caaisho)

Caaisho questions the way the Danish integration system is put together and questions its usefulness. Compared to the participants arriving in Denmark many years ago, a completely different picture was given; *“Wow, back then I experienced it (coming to Denmark) as something positive, it wasn’t like it is now. Back then we didn’t have problems. Mm it was nothing compared to*

the media and the unease today." (Xoriya) The impact of media today is seen as something which increases the negative view on migrants. The number of migrants having increased rapidly over the past decades is also referred to as an explanation of the unease in society;

"I arrived in 84. Back then there wasn't many Somali's. My experience of coming to Denmark was completely different than what it is today. It was a good place for me, as a woman (..) Back then you weren't a "problem". People were more curious getting to know you, where you came from etc." (Xaawa)

It is a shared believe that is has only got more difficult residing in Denmark as a migrant, especially refugees in the past decades. The participants see the timing of settlement as a supporting factor for having settled down successfully. Moreover, Aamiina requests that Denmark does not lose itself and its loving and embracing character towards humanity, and illustrates how the situation in Denmark today makes her, along with the other participants, feel at unease;

"I don't think we should lose the (Danish) culture, - I was thinking when I arrived; " I wish the whole world was like Denmark" Well mm, I criticize my own culture every single day because there are so many in-human things happening, every single day down there – and that's why I'm here. But sometimes I'm afraid that that's where we (Denmark) are going. Because it's a bit the same. In Somalia some people feel better than others." (Aamiina)

The participants appreciate the Danish culture greatly, they are however, afraid that Denmark is losing its own culture, by trying to protect it through laws and restrictions towards refugees.

I am a Somali woman

Somalia is in my heart

Somalia plays a big role in the participants lives, and the state of the country today brings the participants sorrow. Especially when realizing that Somalia isn't what the participants remember it to be growing up, as illustrated by Arwa; *"In my heart I feel that it (Somalia) is my home country. But when I go there, the picture I had in my head is so different from what it is today. So, I don't have that feeling when I'm there anymore. But somewhere I know that it's my home country."* (Arwa) The connection to Somalia is also due to family members still living there, as illustrated by Fatima when asked if she is happy with her life in Denmark; *"Mm I always say no. The reason I say that is that I don't have my family here. They are in Somalia. So, of course I miss them sometimes. My culture, the traditions. I miss the whole package."* (Fatima) The participants try to

bring in aspects of their life in Somalia into their Danish lives today. And being able to do that and to give some of their Somali culture on to their children are valued as important;

“Where we live now reminds me of where we used to live in Somalia. Now we have a new neighbor who is my friend, so we have knocked down the fence and the kids used to be in daycare together. I appreciate that. And I think it’s important because it’s what I grew up with, that we could run to the neighbor. It’s important that I can give the same to my kids.” (Aamiina)

Some of the participants still carry hope to return to Somalia when the war is over. However, the perception of the war is that it is a never-ending situation. At the same time, the string to Somalia is becoming weaker the more family members passes or moves away; *“It’s still my home country (...) I miss Somalia. But not as much when my parents aren’t there. My dad is dead and my mum lives in England.” (Kiin)*

I am me

“I’m from Somalia, but again I feel like, it’s not my fault that there’s war in Somalia. I am Somali, and I always will be.” (Aamiina) As much as the participants experience never being valued as “true Danes” or being prejudged for where they come from, they stick to who they believe they are as Somali women while maintain a strong feeling of belonging in Denmark. *“I know where I belong, it’s here, I’m not confused.” (Xoriya)* In contrast, the participants share their need to live out own culture;

“It’s difficult to mix up with Danes, we are few who are married to Danes. It’s like, we stick to our culture, mind ourselves and don’t... If I got married to a Dane, I would have to compromise.

H: With your Somali identity?

Hani: Yes, with everything. How I dress etc. And that’s difficult for them (...) It’s very much “them” and “us.” (Hani)

Standing by who they are is brought up in relation to hostile comments, and hostility is met with friendliness and a strong sense of self belief which is benefitting; *“Then I put out my hand, so they can see that it’s brown. It’s blasphemy, but that way we actually become friends.” (Fatima)* Hostility, just like other negative impacts is not focused too much upon. The participants are able to do this, because of their strong sense of identity; *“I just take it as it comes. And I don’t take it personally either. If someone says to me; “You are dark”, I say; “Yes I am”. (Fatima)* It is expressed as the ability to recognize oneself and being clear of own position which is vital for joining society and become integrated;

“The thing about integration... No matter how hard you try to be someone else, it’s better that I try to be me and do the right things. It’s better to be yourself and to live a good life. Get a job and an education. No matter how hard you try to change yourself, we don’t look alike so it’s always easy pointing fingers to where you belong.” (Xaawa)

And;

“I think the most important person for me to satisfy, is me. If I want a good life and move on in this country, I must satisfy myself. Be able to look myself in the eyes and to feel what is right. Of course, you have to stick to the law, but besides that, to remember that’s it’s okay to be Somali also – because it is!” (Aamiina)

The perception is, that focusing on being themselves, get these women much further; *“My life is my life. My opinion is my opinion and my choice is my choice. Because my name is X and I’m supposed to be X (...) it doesn’t matter what other people say.” (Sadya)*

What Somalia used to be like and how the war has changed the female position

How the participants were brought up is especially focused upon with gender not being an important factor or something that was particularly focused upon; *H: Did you go to school in Somalia also? “Yes yes, it (education and girls going to school) was common before the war.” (Xaawa)*

The descriptions of Somalia prior the war is similar to the understanding of Western societies. Somalia is described as a free country, having the war changing that;

“Somalia prior the war, freedom of religion, freedom of speech, priests etc. that’s how it was. Somalia will never be the same. Now small kids must be completely covered up... I can’t be part of that. I grew up with swimming on the beach (...) Life down there has changed. It’s difficult. The women are being suppressed. The boys and the men, hierarchy.” (Hani)

The Civil war is described as something which has changed the gender position to benefit men. That is something which is difficult for the participants to accept. Especially because of the big contrast to what the participants have grown up with making it difficult for them to connect in the same way to their original country;

“BUT, for Somali women, before 1990, we had opportunities too. Everything changed in 1990. After that there was no opportunities NONE! Only the war, and all you would think about was when you’d die. Not tomorrow. No jobs, no hospitals.” (Sadya)

Somalia being in conflict and being a dangerous place, especially for women, also stands in contrast to life in Denmark, making it easier for the participants to connect to Denmark, and to see it as the place where they have a possible future.

A need to help Somalia

A general thought among all the participants, is the need to maintain the connection to Somalia, regardless of relatives still living there. Especially the need to help Somalia becoming a better place again is a theme that stands out;

“If there’s no suffering in Somalia, that’s happiness for me. It’s because I want to do something for Somalia – its calling for me. You know I listen to Somali music and speak Somali. I am Somali, but I don’t think that I just have to live in Somalia, - I just want it to become a better place to be.” (Aamiina)

Frustration is especially described in relation to Somalia being remembered as a good place to grow up, rich on resources, which are not being used, because the country is being destroyed by the people instead. There is a need to help Somalia, for the Somali people to have the same possibilities as the participants have had. This cover helping Somali’s in Somalia and in Denmark; *“I interpret for free, so the system doesn’t have to pay (...) That way I affect that... The society I come from, that life, that people from my own country will also have the opportunities I did.” (Hani)* This correlates with the increasing demands towards refugees and the need Hani describes to help Somalis being accepted into Denmark. For the participants having come to Denmark, having successfully completed educations, having increased their socio-economic situation etc., have only emphasized the need to give something back to Somalia and their countrymen;

“That’s how it is with Somalia, it’s a part of me, so I want to do something for them also. I don’t want to be selfish and say that I don’t want to sacrifice or do something for my country (...) Because we are needed, the future young generations. Because the people who are there today, they are fixated on clans, only thinking about their own belly’s and their four walls. Not society.” (Ladan)

The country having shaped the participants is clearly valued as important and for Somali’s who are still in Somalia who are stuck there because of the circumstances creates massive frustration for the participants;

“I think of myself as obligated to do something. It is the country who have made me who I am. Have developed me. I came (to Denmark) as a young, active girl. I was well educated and had opportunities that the ones who came after me haven’t had. That’s why I feel obligated. Especially when I see the ones that ruins it.” (Xaawa)

Strong upbringing

Role models

“I’m from a family where the bread on the table was worked for. So, for me, I also have to work and make my own living. It’s my mentality because I’ve grown up like that.” (Hani) All of the participants have had parents where one or both were working and supporting the family. In some cases, only the father is mentioned as the working figure, however the mother has still managed to make a living by herself by opening a small shop or similar. There is no doubt that the upbringing has played a major role to how the participants have seen themselves and their own positions, even as refugees in Denmark;

I also had dreams there (in Somalia). That’s because I come from the capital where all children went to school just like here (in Denmark) I was skilled, had dreams and ambitions to complete high school and move on to university. That was my plan when I was a kid. How my parents had raised me. Both my parents were part of the labor market.” (Aamiina)

Having one or two parents working and supporting the families have made it possible for the participants to go to school. Especially for Xaawa and Hani, their father figures are described as very strong role models, both in relation to using their educations to help in Somalia. Hani’s father by applying medical aid to all in need, and Xaawa’s father by building schools in rural areas for equal access to education regardless of sex.

“My father was an Islamic teacher. He was educated. Both from Sudan, Yemen and Egypt. He was a man who was aware of how important education is, – also for women. (...) So, I’m from a family where education and knowledge were important. I also think that’s why I took it as a matter of course that you have to learn something, - and that it was okay that I was a girl.” (Xaawa)

Some of the participants did not go to school even though they were raised in Mogadishu, this due to the war. They were still, however raised in a mentality where education and work is part of life.

The Urban/Rural contrast and the educational difference

It is described that being brought up in an urban area contra a rural area makes the difference as to whether children were sent to school in Somalia. This is not the case anymore though, because of the war. Coming as a refugee today from Somalia, whether it is from an urban or rural area does not make a difference in having attended school;

“I’ve met girls who have lived in Mogadishu for 20 years and they have never been outside their house because of conflict. Back then it was 84, a western country. There was freedom, openness, peaceful, really nice and a nice city. Lovely! But that doesn’t mean that the ones that come from Mogadishu today have it easier when it comes to integration.” (Xaawa)

Somali’s not integrating well into Danish society is also mentioned in relation to rural or urban origin and thereby whether Somalis have been educated in a western manner or not and what context they have grown up in.

Building bridges across communities is important

Most of the participants either work or dream of working within healthcare or social work, where helping people is the core. Another value which is described, is the need to build bridges between migrants and Danes and affect the integration in Denmark in a positive direction, this especially because of the perception of a radicalized Denmark through the past decade; *“Right now it’s not like before, there is a fright for foreigners, towards others. So, I feel there is a big difference today from back then and still I want to build bridges between migrants and Danes. And show the positive. Help them to get a job, take part of society, migrants and Danes.” (Xoriya)*

It is described as especially important to turn the migrants who form the grounds of the bad statistics in Denmark in a positive direction. Moreover, to affect the migrant youth, to take advantage of the possibilities in Denmark and become pattern breakers in comparison to their parents;

“I’ve been part of bridge-building with the youth, especially the girls. I’m a mentor for them and I tell them; “It worked for me, I’m not like your mother who is at home, who can’t read or write, so look at your future here. You need to take an education, because it’s important” That way I’m a mentor and a bridge-builder. And I also relieve the system when I interpret for free. I give a hand to the state.” (Hani)

Fatima works directly with bridgebuilding through her work, where her job is to create connections and avoid misunderstandings in prime school between migrant families and the Danish educational system; *“All the conflicts have decreased since I was hired. Because what do you do when you can’t communicate? You use your hand. The hand becomes a language.” (Fatima)* A different view is shared by Caaisho, who mentions the bridge builder aspect, not only in relation to Denmark, but in general in whichever community she finds herself in;

"Now I'm in Denmark, why it's the Danish community. It's important for me to expand communities and build bridges between communities. (...) It may sound weird, but I look at myself as a citizen of the world. You know, I know a lot about the Danish society and the culture, but I'm not...If you ask me if I'm Danish; "Mmm" I'm everything and that way I see myself as someone who build bridges between communities." (Caisho)

Cultural Division

A cultural division is described widely in different aspects. Firstly, in relation to trying to fit into Denmark and the Danish way of living as a Somali female migrant, and in relation to having become too "western" for Somalia; *"Today when I look back at Somalia, I am Somali yes, I'm a Somali who lives in Denmark. Over there I'm too Danish and here I'll always feel like a foreigner."* (Ladan) Some of the participants have been back to Somalia since they arrived in Denmark. What is described as especially hard for them, is the female position in Somalia today, as illustrated by Xaawa;

"Every time I go to Somalia, it's difficult for me. I'm so different, my way of thinking etc. (...) The female conditions, it hits me so hard. You know where I'm... Also, because the Somalia I left and the Somalia that stands today is completely different. (...) Woman-hood shouldn't be defined by "I'm a wife who gives birth, I'm more than that." (Xaawa)

Xaawa illustrates the gender inequity aspect in Somalia, where it is described as an equal problem among Somali migrants in Denmark by Hani; *Because the girl is too Danish, and the boys join gangs, - it doesn't make sense for me that the girls should be punished."* (Hani) The participants also experience frustration, when Somali relatives try to bring in old cultural traditions which is not approved of in the west; *"I've just had a fight with my big sister. I'm against! My sister's son is getting married with my other sisters' daughter. I really cannot approve of that!! (...)"* "We are going to Somalia to bring..." I said; *"Are you blind and stupid? It's dangerous with inbreeding."* (Hani)

Another yet frequently described aspect of the cultural division, is the participants describing being harassed by own countrymen in Denmark, whether it is regarding way of dressing, food habits or choice of work; *"You get looked down upon because it's a "man-job" they said. How could I allow myself to drive around with men in that car, so they pointed fingers all the time. In the beginning I didn't care, but when it got to the point where they'd seek out my husband and ask him to "put your wife in her place..."* (Ladan) The participants describe being "used" by own countrymen because of their language abilities, and their knowledge about the Danish Society;

I interpreted in my spare time (...) And I had to say: "listen! As an interpreter I'm just a parrot. I say what you say and vice versa what the doctor or social worker is saying" But they couldn't understand that, it was like: "Help me and guide me to the right answer". So of course, sometimes I felt I got stuck between the 2, so I thought, I don't want to do this anymore." (Ladan)

The Ghettos are described as a main factor for poor integration, some of the participants have moved to a ghetto area to affect the integration in the opposite direction, where others have moved away to get properly integrated; *"How can it be that I have a greater vocabulary than migrants born here? – It's because of the area. (...) You don't learn the Danish way of speaking and how to pronounce. If you want to be integrated, you have to live far away from the Ghettos." (Fatima)*

Finally, under this theme is how the participants position themselves between Somali and Danish culture, and how they find standing ground between a migrant hostile Denmark and suppressive Somali traditions;

"I'll always be black. It's important that you have yourself 100 %. (...) It's about respecting yourself. I'll never be 100% Danish, but I take 50 % from the Danish culture of the stuff that I can use, and 50 % of what I can use from my Somali culture. Then I mix it and make the best of it, if you get what I mean. There's so much in my culture that I dissociate from." (Aamiina)

The majority of the participants have now spent more than half of their lives in Denmark, which clearly amplifies their connection to Denmark and makes it their home country just like Somalia;

"The way I am now, I belong to Denmark. (Laughing) Sometimes I just feel divided you know, I think: "This is where I should belong, this is where I origin." - Why do I feel like this about a country I moved to when I was 14 years old, why is that? -It's because I've lived in Denmark more than half of my life also. So, IT IS my home country too, that's how I feel. Both countries have a place in my heart." (Arwa)

Summary

The participants all recognize the political pressure in Denmark, and how this has increased since they arrived. There is a general feel among these women of never truly being accepted as Danish or in Denmark, even though Denmark is as much a home country to them as is Somalia. However, a cultural division is also described towards the Somali culture and Somali relatives in relation to how these women see themselves after having lived in Denmark for decades. The participants describe standing by themselves and refuse to give in for who they are. They have a very strong sense of own identity and are proud to be Somali. This theme also includes their upbringing by strong role models in their parents, and how most of these

women were already schooled at different levels before they arrived in Denmark, which has to do with the urban /rural difference in education before the war.

4: Denmark as a gateway to a better future

The final theme aims to explore how flexibility is an important aspect of the participants lives, and how Denmark in that sense, is not necessarily looked upon as a permanent place of settlement. The theme also explores how the participants find strengths in using the possibilities available.

Looking out for myself and doing what is best for me

The Road to Denmark – war to education

“The war, as a girl, it was terrible, so terrible. They took everything. And if you said a word, you’d be raped. There was no other way but to keep quiet. Then you come here (Denmark) where no one corrects you and you have rights as a woman.” (Hani) Denmark gives a world of possibilities compared to Somalia. The participants both came to Denmark as refugees and through family unification programs, even before the war broke out. Disregarding how the participants ended up in Denmark, they have all used the possibilities and been determined to make the best of their lives here; *“The culture was a chock, I came from a (refugee) camp where all we did was joining the Coran school and pick up water (...) I come from a very harsh life.” (Aamiina)* And; *Today I’m a social worker and work at the job and integration house as a job consultant and mentor. (...) I deal with people from other ethnical backgrounds. I was 16 when I came to Denmark, I lived in a children home with my siblings.” (Aamiina)*

Using the available resources and opportunities

“I think we HAVE to learn something. WE HAVE to start an education.” (Sadya) For all the participants, living in Denmark and not taking advantage of the various possibilities to shape own life and opportunities to educate one’s self, seems irrational and foolish; *“The society does a lot, that’s nice. It means a lot, health, school and getting an education. SO, it’s up to oneself to take the chance. Then it’s all available.” (Arwa)* There is great awareness of just how important the well fare system is and how it has helped the participants get to where they are today; *“I haven’t been alone to get where I am today, (...) It’s a possibility I’ve got from the society that has made it possible for me. It (society) has created a frame where I’ve been able to do what I do today.” (Ladan)*

Denmark is seen in contrast to how life would have been for the women in Somalia. Especially as the female gender; *“What would have happened if I still lived in Somalia? Where would I be? 100% be married and have 8-9 children. My big sister is there, it’s like that for her.” (Ladan)* The participants express gratitude for being in Denmark compared to Somalia. Moreover, Denmark is compared to other European countries for the unique welfare system which creates possibilities that other European countries cannot offer; *“In some countries, when you are an adult, you don’t have the possibility to study at college, you don’t, - SO I’m happy I came to Denmark.” (Fatima)* Using the available possibilities is also described as making the most of life in the present, because that is how it is these women benefit the most. For example, the goal of learning the Danish language is seen as more important than the trouble of having to learn the language;

“I think it’s a good idea to think: “Where do you live now?” Because for example, I live in Denmark right now and I have kids. When I go out, I need to get in contact with the shops, pharmacy, bus driver, other people etc. So, if I think: “I don’t want to learn Danish because I’m going back (to Somalia) one day, - I think that’s a bad idea. I’m alive now and I live in Denmark now.” (Sadya)

Denmark is seen as a free place creating excellent possibilities for the participants, and they feel obliged to use these. Choosing to explore possibilities makes the perception of life in Denmark easier as illustrated by Kiin; *“But now I have all the possibilities in Denmark, then I take them. That helps. It makes it easier for my life right’. I’m happy about life and the possibilities I have in Denmark. I have so many possibilities.” (Kiin)*

Denmark is my future when Somalia cannot be

All the participants describe a close connection to Denmark. Having spent big parts of their lives in Denmark, makes it as much a home country as Somalia; *“I feel that Denmark is my home country. I do, even though I’m from Somalia. I still care a lot about Denmark (...) It’s where I belong and where I’ve grown up. Denmark means a lot to me.” (Arwa)* Perceiving Denmark as the future home, also have to do with the possibilities Denmark offers and have offered the women, including basic needs for survival;

“I’ve built my castle here. I’ve never been back to Somalia (...) I know that I’m not going back. I must be here and then I have to work as I would in Mogadishu and live with that. I call Denmark my 2nd country. I’ve been given a home. I’ve been given food, I’ve been given medicine and I’ve been welcomed with open arms.” (Hani)

The women have made peace with the state of Somalia, which makes it easier for them to accept their lives in Denmark. Making sense of their lives has to do with safety, having basic needs met and seeing a future for their lives through the various possibilities in Denmark. Even though the participants have accepted Denmark as a home country, some of them still carry a great wish to return to their roots; *“Right now, I don’t now, but as a human, you always return to your roots (...) I can’t say that in 20-30 years that I don’t want to return to my home country.” (Ladan)* It has to do with wanting to return to where they origin but also to do with wanting to be close to relatives;

“They(family) are in Somalia. So, of course I miss them sometimes. My culture, my traditions. EVERYTHING. I miss the whole package. Of course, I’ve got to the place where I am today, but the Somali country is mine... I’m not going back because I don’t think that the war is going to end (...) I don’t have my hopes up. If there was peace, I was the first to return, I always say that. (Laughing).” (Fatima)

Even though Fatima express an inner wish to return to Somalia, she has still accepted her life in Denmark; *“I don’t want to go back, so it (Denmark) is my country. I feel at home and it’s my country.” (Fatima)* She does not expect Somalia to ever become a place she can return too, why she accepts Denmark as her second home-country while carrying that inner will to return. Other participants have distanced themselves from Somalia long ago, others still have a strong connection to Somalia, but are disappointed every time they visit.

“Every time I go down there (Somalia) my kids tease me. I say: “I’m going down to sunshine etc.” and they say: “Yeah, see you later” And when I return, I think: “Wow I’m so happy to be home. (...) Even though I have a home in Somalia, THIS is where my heart is. It’s HERE I feel at home. HERE I feel respected as a woman.” (Xaawa)

Xaawa describes a longing and a deep connection to Somalia, however, after several decades in Denmark, it has become a home for her. This is supported by Xoriya who have taken Denmark in, to a level where it is not just an European country but the European country she resides in;

“I miss Denmark no matter where I am. If I go to England, as soon as I arrive back in Kastrup (Copenhagen airport), I feel comfortable. (...) Even though it’s a multicultural society like France, Denmark and England are very different. Denmark is Danish and then maybe with some migrants, where England is completely mixed.” (Xoriya)

All the participants share a deep connection to Denmark. They take different approaches to how they accept Denmark as their home country. Some of the women have taken Denmark in completely whilst distancing themselves from Somalia, others accept their lives in Denmark and see Denmark as a 2nd home country, but still carries a longing to return. What is common for the participants however is that Denmark is seen as the place for them to reside right now, because of its endless possibilities and the possibility to dream and plan a future; *"If I look at my dream, it looks good. I have got my education, a job, pay tax and am part of the Danish society. WAAAUW in 10 years YES! And my children are done in high school and at university. That's my dream! AND to be here in Denmark. Denmark is the future."* (Sadya)

I don't settle

The participants share a common perception of not wasting their lives waiting for something they do not know will happen, for example being able to return to Somalia. They are determined to make the most of their lives, using all the possibilities and make the best of it; *"I think of right now. I don't think about 'if I went back' or what the future is going to bring or something. I think about right now and opportunities. And that's that. No more than that. If peace is accomplished I'd be the first to go, but I don't park myself there."* (Fatima)

There is no reason to dwell over something that cannot be changed, instead energy is focused upon the present; *"I don't know if I'm going to die tomorrow, and I think that I'd be wasting my time if I thought that after 2 years or 10 years I'm going back and there will be peace. I don't know when there's peace, and now I'm in Denmark."* (Sadya)

All of the participants are happy and grateful to be in Denmark. However, most of the participants do not necessarily see Denmark as their future country. Only a few make retirement plans in Denmark, the rest keep their possibilities open; *"I'll probably be in Denmark in 10 years."* (Ladan) It has to do with family members residing in other European countries and the wish to be closer to them. No decisions are made though, possibilities are merely kept open; *"Maybe I'll move to England to my mother, because I'm alone with my family here. I don't know what the future brings, but right now I'm in Denmark."* (Kiin) As earlier mentioned, relating to Somalia also has to do with family members still residing there, and the lack of these, makes it less important where to reside; *"I care for Somalia, but I'd just as well live in Kenya or Dubai or wherever. It's not like I'm thinking: 'I only want to live there'."* (Aamiina)

The participants feel at home in Denmark, why they accept living there for now. However, it is very important for them to keep their possibilities open and to move around according to what benefits their lives the most, and what goals they want to achieve. They all have a great wish for Somalia to become a peaceful country, - for some of the participants to reside there, for others to have the possibilities to travel as they please;

“I feel at home and I’m not going anywhere, but you know if my kids are doing well maybe we’d move to Italy – that’d be warmer (...) Feeling at home is very important, and it makes me not hurry to get away from here. It has to be my own choice and because I want to experience the world and travel. Then I can always go back. That’s also how I’d like Somalia to be for me.” (Aamiina)

However, what’s most important is the freedom to do what they want, reach personal goals and to be able to control where, when and how they reside. Denmark is not necessarily so much of a home country that no other possibilities can be thought of, it is more a ‘home country’ which is cared for and which brings the participants great opportunities.

Summary

This theme explored how the participants stay flexible and do not settle. This having to do with keeping their possibilities open and doing what is perceived as best for one self in the present. The women have various ways of relating to Somalia, some have distanced themselves never wanting to return and feeling more Danish than Somalian, others carry a deep wish to return, while others again wish to keep the relation to Somalia open. How Denmark is perceived stands in great contrast to Somalia. - By making this comparison continuously, the participants always keep in mind where they origin from and how Denmark is a world of opportunities in contrast. This is something which needs to be taken advantage of.

Chapter 4: Discussion

This chapter will be divided into two sections. In the first section I will discuss the findings of the study in relation to the theoretical context. Thereafter considering the concept of Salutogenesis by Aaron Antonovsky as the theoretical framework. In the second section of the chapter, I will discuss the methodology, my own role as researcher and the limitations for this study.

Discussion of results

The aim of the discussion is to hold the results up against existing literature both in terms of how integration is perceived and experienced, and how the mind-set of the participants is a strengthening factor, benefitting their lives and shaping their sense of coherence.

Perceptions and experiences of integration

The participants understand integration similar to how Berry describe it, as an acculturation strategy (14). Where Berry sees integration as part of the acculturation process, the participants see integration as an overall theme however defined by many aspects of acculturation. Integration is not only to meet official requirements; learning the host language, becoming employed and contributing to the welfare state, it is as much to do with taking the responsibility to engage oneself in society, being aware of present matters and the cultural context and socializing with (native) people. Other studies have supported this (70-72). However, the participants also forced that learning the language and engaging in employment or school as soon as possible was crucial factors for being able to start proper integration, why integration as played out by the official requirements, was perceived to be the best strategy towards acculturation. Social connections are established, supporting the further integration. This is also supported in the literature (70, 71, 73). For entering society, one must see oneself as the major role player of own life. The responsibility is shared between the host state, civil society however most dominant on the migrant and hereunder refugee herself. This idea has been shared by other refugees and NGO's (70). The perception of what makes true integration in this study corresponds with the existing literature. Especially, that for becoming well-settled, the migrant must be the main resource herself.

The mind-set as a strengthening factor

Main strengths of the participants can be divided into them having a *Drive, maintaining a positive mind-set, maintaining own Somali identity in the Danish context* and keeping an attitude of doing *what is best for them*. The drive is mainly maintained by the continuous goals the participants have for their lives. Seeing integration as a way to come closer to achieving own goals, keep the participants on track whilst also acting according to Danish integration requirements. This is self-benefitting, because it gives the participants freedom to live as they please and focus on goals. People having goals are more self-generated and socially skilled

(74), and motivated by their deeply valued goals which increases the psychological well-being (75, 76). The participants showed great social skills and needs which were met through social activities, that being volunteering, employment, or social engagement in public matters, family relations etc. Several studies share light upon how the subjective well-being and general health is increased by volunteering (77-84) being active (78, 79, 85) and social engagement and capital (74, 78, 79, 86-89). At the same time, well-being increases social capacity (90-92), by this statement the participants affect themselves to be happier through the activities in which they engage, and by engaging in these and socializing, their feel of well-being is increased. These findings follow the Ottawa Charter already outlined by the WHO in 1986, that "Health is created where people "learn, work, play and love"(20). Interesting to note, is that the results are very much in line with the existing work by Bonmatí et al. from 2016, which was highlighted in the literature review. Bonmatí conducted a study in Southern Spain, and included migrant women from 6 different origins (not Somalia). Their focus was therefore women originating and adapting from completely different contexts, yet the results were the same as this current study. This suggests a similar picture to what is needed for migrants to settle down successfully according to national requirements and the subjective well-being, regardless of the context.

The Act Belong Commit (ABC) framework

By being active, entering social relations and committing to meaningful activities the participants are living by the Danish national guidelines for mental well-being promotion. Being active and social is perceived as a need for the participants, where helping others, for example through volunteering, is valued as something self-strengthening and meaningful. By being active we become happier and everyday challenges become manageable. By involving ourselves in social activities, social networks can be created, and one can become part of the community. The positive relations can help the individual with emotional and practical support when needed, and in general being part of community-oriented networks promotes mental health. The meaningful activities both relate to helping others and to accomplishing personal goals. By helping others, we create a mutual happiness which enhances the feeling of meaning and purpose in life. By accomplishing personal goals, we enhance the feeling of effectiveness and self-worth (57). The participants of this study are going through everyday life, whilst continuously strengthening their positions and well-being in spite of negative

experiences. By doing so, it seems like these women have overcome the hardships of their lives by focusing on goals and sticking to social, active and strengthening relations for the purpose of personal growth.

Belonging and bridging and placing oneself away from Ghettos

Ager and Strand support the statements of the participants regarding proper integration requiring both cultural knowledge of the host society and a broad social aspect. Ager and Strand argues that these two aspects are equal to other integration parameters, such as; obtaining rights on the same level as the natives and having basic needs met. The basic needs being housing, employment, education and health. The terms *Belonging* and *Bridging* are used which refers to belonging in a group and building bridges across groups. The participants both describe having a good life because of the relations they are in and belonging as an essential part of well-being. With many family members living outside Denmark, the feeling of belonging becomes more complex. However, by building new relations and bridges across communities, the participants are helped to get ahead (70, 88). Bridging and Belonging is another way of social engagement, which increases their feeling of well-being and thereby their mental health (90). Studies suggest that migrants are increasingly in need of networks when settling in (71, 93), however this might make them vulnerable in terms of what kind of relations are being created (94). Ghettos could be an example here, which was referred to by the participants as making active choices to withdraw themselves from Ghetto environments to become better integrated or pushing for having their children entering purely ethnic Danish schools. Even deciding to settle down in a Ghetto area, to affect the statistics opposite was mentioned. What is interesting to note here, is that following current Danish politics, the Ghettos remain a much-discussed topic. The current government is fighting for a complete removal of recognized Ghetto's in Denmark, to 1) push the integration among all migrant groups forward and 2) break up the existing parallel societies³(95, 96). The results from this current study regarding Ghettos, support the political focus, that Ghettos remain a problem in Denmark. Other aspects where the results follow the political agenda, is regarding language

³ A parallel society can have several meanings. In this context a parallel society refers to the organization of a minority group of migrants, who lead their life in a way that does not match the greater society. The consequences are poor integration of the group and lack of cohesion in the whole of society (96).

being necessary for proper integration and the necessity of restricting the possibility of public benefits, for Somali migrants not to misuse the system.

The participants, on the one hand, express not feeling welcome in Denmark and not being able to live their lives without prejudice. This, despite following all integration requirements. The political agenda and the public negative focus on migrants are partly to blame. At the same time the participants highlight Ghettos, language and other migrants misuse of the system as the problem. The participants thereby partly agree with the political agenda and recognize these issues as problematic. As angry as the participants are to be generalized as poorly integrated no matter their achievements, they agree with the politically identified problems. One could speculate how to make these two ends meet. How does one eradicate existing problems for integration (i.e. Ghettos, which prevents learning the language properly, and which prevents migrants from entering society and thereby learning how Danish society works), whilst making sure that the majority of migrants who are well-integrated and adapted do not have to live their everyday life in the position as a marginalized group? Another line of thought when addressing the Ghettos, is the feel of belonging they create for some migrants, being surrounded by own countrymen. Especially with the discourse of migrants being quite harsh in Denmark. The feel of belonging and social support through traditional cultural heritage might be something some migrants feel they need.

There is no doubt in the data-set of this study that the political focus on migrants creating a societal problem must be addressed. However, the current political and thereby societal generalization of all migrants (especially refugees, asylum seekers and their 1st - and 2nd generation descendants) causing societal problems, is unfortunate for the well-functioning migrants and unbeneficial for Danish society in the long run (i.e. the need of migrants because of the decreasing fertility rates and the increasing life expectancy). As previously addressed in the fourth organizing theme of this study, migrants will continuously be looking for better settlement options if the current place of settlement does not live up to the wishes of the migrant. One can imagine that being harassed whilst doing everything to fit in, could create the wish to move on. The challenge is the discourse. It is the way the integration problems and migrants in general are addressed. As previously shown in the statistics of Somalis in Denmark, there is a lot of data supporting the political agenda. However, the political

articulation makes it difficult to carry out everyday life for the well-functioning migrants who are willing to be integrated and live by Danish standards.

Maintaining own identity

The participants' descriptions of never truly being accepted as Danish, and the political impact on especially third world country migrants in Denmark, follow the literature. With right-winged parties gaining more votes in Scandinavia, Denmark becomes a country that expects complete assimilation with the result of excluding migrants (50, 72). The participants described how walking on the street as a black woman could reinforce racism. Especially the political attention in the media, on the Somali population in Denmark living in a parallel society, not following Danish norms and values. Being black, a Muslim and then Somali makes Somalis at top risk for discrimination (36). Frustration was shown among the women, because living by Danish standards, following the law and integration requirements did not stop the discrimination towards them. The participants took active choices not to let the discrimination be dominant in their lives, while urging that Denmark should be more open and willing to take in other cultures.

The literature both shows that 'hardy' women deal with discrimination better (97-99) and that how discrimination is handled, depends on which culture the migrant is engaged in. According to a study on discrimination in relation to mental health, the research varies whether a migrant highly engaged in own culture face discrimination better because of the social support received, or if that engagement makes them at higher risk when living in a host society (36). The participants lived out their own culture on different levels and reported that keeping parts of their culture was important to them. It is documented that the female gender among Somalis often have a stronger sense of ethnicity and need to pass on the culture to future generations (36, 100). However, the participants also highlighted many aspects of their Somali culture which they distanced themselves from and did not approve of. That the participants have made a clear distinction of what cultural aspects they (dis)approve of, have helped shape their feel of identity.

The participants stand their ground on own identity. They handle the acculturation by incorporating desired aspects of the Somali and Danish culture. Furthermore, when faced with life challenges in Denmark, the participants draw on Danish connections. Social strings

become a resource the individual draws on when faced with challenges(101), and having 2 cultures make the participants engage in whichever of them seems most beneficial in the context. Having both a Somali and Danish identity, is perceived as positive and as something which strengthens their person. This could be related to having had to make active choices of what cultural aspects they approve of and bring with them, both from Somalia and in Denmark.

Salutogenesis and accepting the stressors of life

The participants had all experienced hardships of different kinds during settlement in Denmark, however, were determined not to let the negative impact affect their lives or hold them back. They were positively minded, stubborn to reach goals and focused on solutions when needed, to move forward. According to several studies, positively minded individuals have strengthening outcomes, such as creativity(102-104) and are seeing themselves and their surroundings in positive lights which generate positive behaviors and vice versa (105, 106). The participants contained positive qualities such as; gratitude, openness and tolerance which strengthened them in terms of being able to block out negativity.

The participants forced that life IS difficult, however it is important not to let the stressors affect them. As Huppert describes, well-being is not about being constantly happy, but rather the ability to overcome the negative impacts (90), which follows the theory by Antonovsky of Salutogenesis. According to Antonovsky, life experiences help shape the sense of coherence (SOC), which consists of Manageability, Comprehensibility and Meaningfulness, why the SOC will be stronger the more life experiences. A strong SOC helps the individual to mobilize general resistance resources (GRR)(19), which helps to overcome stressors. SOC and GRR are interrelated, why they will be discussed together.

The participants saw themselves as active role players, in charge of choices being made in their own lives. Expecting hard times to come and being sure of the ability to overcome these. It was important for them to have the freedom to do as they desired and to set and accomplish goals while having important needs met, that being social and active engagement. This seems to fit Antonovsky's argument, - sensing stimuli one gets in everyday life and perceiving this as clear information rather than chaotic noise is referred to as Comprehensibility, where life events can be explained. The participants are taking control over their lives by making active choices which helps to find structure and meaning. Life becomes Manageable. The women

expect life to be hard, which helps them to manage challenges. Moreover, they ask for, and receive help from their network when needed, why their social relations become resources together with their own strengths. Everything the participants have gone through have helped them to strengthen their SOC, and through experience, they have learned to use and find resources available to overcome tensions. These women see themselves as active role-players in their own lives. In Antonovsky's words, "*Meaningfulness relates to how an individual see oneself being part of life events and thereby having an influence on the outcome*". Antonovsky's theory incorporates the individual as the center for all processes. This correlates with the main finding of the study, that to become well-settled and adapted, the individual must be the main resource using the possibilities outlaid in the framework of society. The participants see it as an asset not to be permanently settled even though they described the feeling of relieve when obtaining rights and the opportunity for permanent settlement in Denmark. It is meaningful for them to keep the possibilities open and to move around according to the best opportunities available, this is supported in the literature(72).

Keeping possibilities open and being the main role player of own life is perceived as strengthening. Not least taken into the perspective of the women not feeling completely welcome in Denmark. What keeps the women going, is their several assets, (i.e. social needs and abilities, activity and relations, drive for reaching goals, and the maintenance of a strong sense of identity.) Even more importantly, the knowledge of how to use the available assets to shape their lives and move forward. Also the awareness of knowing how they want their life to be and more importantly how they do not want their life to be (i.e. they will move if better options occur). This is important for their well-being, especially as the data set showed that the participants feel the political pressure but choose not to live by it. Since the data of this study supports several political statements of Ghettos, public benefits and lacking the national language being a problem for the integration and adaptation of migrants, a common path is necessary. This for supporting the well-adapted migrants and for them not having to live their everyday life with a political and thereby societal hostile discourse on migrants.

Discussion of the method

My own role as researcher during this study, and a discussion of the method, will be presented below.

Reflexivity

As Creswell (63), describes, Reflexivity is the phase before conducting research, where the qualitative researcher reflects upon own role in the study, and how own background, culture and experiences might affect the interpretations of data and the data collecting. As a researcher, my thoughts prior the study was to stay objective, and not let my own background and beliefs interfere the findings. I was however aware, that own pre-assumptions always subconsciously are present. During interviews, I aimed to avoid leading questions and stayed within the clear methodological approach for data collection and analysis.

Presentation of the researcher

I am a Danish woman who lives and works in Denmark and Norway. I obtained my nursing degree in 2014 from Denmark and have since then worked for longer periods various places in Denmark and Norway. During my nursing studies, I both had a placement within psychiatry in Gloucestershire, England, and a placement at a public slum hospital in Namibia. Here I spent 3 months working primarily at casualty. For as long as I can remember my interest has been focused around global health matters, and the placement in Namibia only confirmed that it was within the global health field that I wished to start my career. I enrolled in the program Master of Philosophy in Global Health at the university of Bergen in August 2017.

Professional and personal background

As a nurse I have worked with various patient groups, however primarily with acutely diseased patients. I have had to deal with a lot of sensitive situations with patients and relatives, where my communication skills have been shaped. This was something I brought with me into the interview situation, especially as a strength to draw upon in case a participant should react unexpectedly. Moreover, through my placements and travels abroad, I have learned to engage with many different cultures. However, most important to mention in this context is that a close family member of mine is from Somalia. She fled the civil war as an unaccompanied refugee child and has always just fitted into the Danish context and my family. I have grown up with a picture of Somali's as a reflection of her, – a complete contrast to what the statistics show. I was aware of own pre-assumptions and tried not to let these, influence my view on participants. However, having grown up with this positive influence, have most likely affected my pre-superstitions subconsciously.

In the interview situation, mentioning that I was a nurse did seem to help gain trust with participants, but even more that most of the participants knew of my personal Somali family relation.

Culture, Upgrowing and Setting

My own background is a family-minded childhood on a farm. Today this might not be an everyday sight neither in Denmark or abroad for reasons like divorce, work location or even war and conflict. If you are a migrant, you have left your own country for different reasons and moving to another country demands resilience and capability to adapt into the new society. Having the history of Somalia in mind, many of the participants for this study came to Denmark as asylum seekers with war memories of escaping their country. Our backgrounds and way of thinking might be completely different. Furthermore, my whole up growing has been modelled by the structure of a high-income country with a well-functioning health system which stands in contrast to Somalia today being labelled as a collapsed country.

Prior conducting this study, as part of the background research, I gained a deep understanding of the history of Somalia, the traditional culture norms and how the war has changed the country. It helped to develop trust during the interviews, especially as I did feel that the participants were a bit restrained to begin with regarding my position and view on Somali's in Denmark. I think it also helped, that only the participant and myself were present during interviews. Rather quickly did the participants seem more comfortable and open in the interview situation. I think that being a female researcher and focusing solemnly on female Somalis was a strengthening factor for gaining trust.

Description of the methodological process

Settings for the interviews

Interviews were conducted in the homes of the participants, over skype, a café and at private workplace offices. All these places and means of interview were the wish of the participants. The environments in which interviews were conducted, proved to make the participants feel comfortable and relaxed in the situation. However, conducting an interview for example in a café or at a workplace might have affected the women to how much they would reveal. At the workplaces, even though talking privately, the boss and colleagues were aware of the participation, and a café is obviously a public place even though seated deserted. Conducting

skype interviews creates an obvious distance compared to real life interviews, however it did seem to help the participants feel more relaxed both in terms of being open but also in terms of taking their time for the interview without having to rush somewhere, since they were already at home.

Obligation to participate

Prior to conducting the interviews, participants were made aware of their complete voluntary participation and the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without any repercussions. No participants expressed second doubts about participating or the wish to withdraw. In general, the participating women seemed very happy that a study with a positive impetus was taking place. Some referred to themselves as “obliged” to participate, but only in relation to counteract the overwhelming amount of literature and statistics on poorly integrated Somalis in western societies.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis (TA) was applied for analysing the data. For further visual contextualization, Thematic Networks was applied. TA is a straight forward 6 steps procedure, which is suitable for a novel researcher. The 6 steps made it easy to follow the data, while the method gave me the opportunity to constantly reflect on choices and make changes to the interpretations along the way (67). TA is furthermore suitable for the descriptive qualitative design, as it helps gaining a deep understanding of the data to be able to present the results in a descriptive and low interpretative manner (67, 68).

Limitations

This study relies on a single data collection method. Applying different methods would have strengthened the results through triangulation. Furthermore, the study was conducted by a single researcher which both excluded the possibility for peer debriefing and for an external auditor to review the entire project which would have strengthened the overall validity. Applying these factors was outside the scope of this project, due to time and resources, not to forget the limited access into the Somali society in Denmark.

Scientific rigor and validity

The qualitative descriptive approach was useful in this context for outlaying straight forward descriptions of the perceptions and experiences of integrating into Danish society. The aim of

descriptive qualitative research is to add or provide discoveries of scientific value to the research field, by providing an *“exploration of meanings of social phenomena as experienced by individuals themselves, in their natural context”* (107). It is not the purpose of qualitative research to generalize over large populations, but rather to secure that evidential criteria are met, for the research to be applicable in different settings. Many different terms are described by researchers as evidential criteria. However, following Malterud (107), relevance, validity, and reflexivity are used in this study for evidential guidelines alongside a detailed description of each step in the research process and how results were found, to secure rigor (60).

There is no doubt that migration towards Europe and Denmark is an increasing phenomenon. Moreover, that rules are being tightened while very little statistics on the effect of these tightening's exists. I found the area of research relevant to dig into. It is an underexposed area, with the need for knowledge on how to make these two ends to meet. Increasingly radicalized migrant laws and policies, poor statistics and a political description of “parallel societies” in Denmark supports the need for research on mental health promotion and well-being among migrants.

For securing validity, respondent validation was applied, for participants to approve of interpretations. Furthermore, prolonged time was spent in the field with each participant, which helped me to develop an in-depth understanding of the subject in question. This study proves intern validity as it studied what it was meant to study, and furthermore corroborated with existing literature and the theory of Antonovsky. Obviously, this is a small study, and is only using a single method for the research. However, as this study proved similar results as the existing study by Bonmatí, conducted in Spain on different ethnic groups, it could be suggested that the results would be alike, asking other well-integrated migrant groups same questions in Denmark and possibly Europe. Of course the integration laws of European countries varies, however similar results in different contexts suggests equal integration patterns.

Chapter 5: Conclusion and recommendations

Conclusion

This current study supports elements of successful integration, while it challenges the way migration in Denmark and Danish integration is articulated. It suggests that well-functioning

migrants are willing to live by Danish requirements for migrants, however, are held back by the political discourse.

Integration is perceived and experienced as a strategy to reach personal goals. To follow national integration requirements and to, according to western norms, settle down successfully, requires the migrant to be willing to do so herself. Different levels of social skills and needs are clarified as strengthening factors along with a strong sense of identity and individual life goals. These findings correlate with the existing literature, the ABC framework for health promotion and the theory of Sense of Coherence by Antonovsky. Control and being pro-active in own life along with resources from oneself or surroundings to overcome stressors of life, creates the Sense of Coherence. The findings are important for recognizing and adding to (mental) health promotion in Denmark. Furthermore, the results both correlates and contrasts to the political agenda on migrants in Denmark. This study proves the necessity of finding a balance of making Denmark a place for well-integrated migrants to feel at home without prejudice, while the integration problems are addressed in the public space. While the migrant must be the main resource herself, everyday racism which supports the assimilation theory must be eradicated.

Recommendations

The following recommendations are done to further promote global health. To support the mental health among migrants in Denmark and to let mental health and well-functioning migrants be the guideline instead of the prevention of ill health and poorly integrated migrants.

- This study suggests a lot of hidden knowledge. The first recommendation is to establish a larger study where funds could be sought. A research project where it would be possible to cover a larger area of research. For changing the political discourse, establishing a project exploring both the political perspective (i.e. ministries) and reasons for the discourse, external partners and different migrant groups (i.e. different nationalities or both men and women) could prove highly useful.

- Changing the articulation of the political agenda so it highlights well-functioning migrants in a positive way whilst addressing the existing issues recognized by both groups.
- Acknowledgement of migrants doing well in Danish society, through a higher focus on this phenomenon in the political agenda and in the media.
- Incorporating the migrant perspective into national frameworks for mental health promotion, such as the ABC framework.
- Easier access to social arrangements with the benefit of support and engagement, - also for asylum seekers who are not allowed to work.
- Establishing a migrant to migrant commitment, with the purpose of well-integrated migrants to share own experiences and advise for the positive effect on new commers.

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Appendix 1: Norwegian Regional Ethical Committee



REK vest

Anna Stephansen

55978496

23.04.2018

2018/588/REK vest

David Lackland Sam
Center for International Health

2018/588 Utforskning av akkulturasjonsprosesser blant somaliske kvinner i Danmark

Research responsible institution: University of Bergen
Project manager: David Lackland Sam

With reference to your application regarding the abovementioned project. The Regional Committee for Medical and Health Research Ethics (REC Western Norway) reviewed the application in the meeting 12.04.2018, pursuant to The Health Research Act § 10

Description of the project

Several studies already shed light on the Somali population in European countries as one of the groups doing very bad when integrating and settling down in western society. Poor socio-economic status, high crime rates and a lot of cultural problems dues to the western way of free thinking and the traditional gender roles in Somali culture. This study aims to explore the acculturation processes as experienced by well doing Somali females in Denmark. The phrase well doing covers managing the Danish language, being part of the labor market and of the Danish society. Which strategies have these females used, and how can we learn from these? By conducting phenomenologically designed interviews and life story interviews with approximately 10 Somali females we can by interpreting their experiences and perceptions in a Salutogenetic perspective learn how to approach Somali migrants in the future and possibly affect the present trends of the Somali group in Denmark (not revised).

Ethical review

Obligation to seek approval

The Committee discussed whether the project is within the scope of the Act on Medical and Health research. REC West puts emphasis on that the project includes the vulnerable group, i.e. Somali females in Denmark. The interview is embedded in the 'Salutogenetic perspective' and may reveal the information about health and sickness of the participants. Therefore, the Committee considers the project to be within the scope of the Act on medical and health research (§ 4).

Following up on the Somali females

The REC West requires a follow-up plan for the participants that may need it after the interview. The interview may trigger strong and unpleasant memories/experiences that the participants might have difficulty to handle on their own.

Ethical approval in Denmark

Besøksadresse:
Armauer Hansens Hus (AHH),
Tverrfloy Nord, 2 etasje, Rom
281, Haukelandsveien 28

Telefon: 55975000
E-post: post@helseforskning.etikkom.no
Web: <http://helseforskning.etikkom.no/>

All post og e-post som inngår i saksbehandlingen, bes adressert til REK vest og ikke til enkelte personer

Kindly address all mail and e-mails to the Regional Ethics Committee, REK vest, not to individual staff

REC West cannot see that the Ethical Committee for Medical and Health Research in Denmark has approved the project. Committee presupposes that such approval will be obtained.

Information sheet

- Information about the purpose of the study and explanation of the 'salutogenetic perspective' has to be included.
- Logo of the institution responsible for the project has to be included
- Use the following template: https://helseforskning.etikkom.no/frister/malforinformasjonskriv?p_dim=34672&_ikbLanguageCode=us
- Heading has to be the same as title of the project application

Condition:

- Revised information sheet must be sent to: post@helseforskning.etikkom.no
- The Ethical Committee for Medical and Health Research in Denmark shall approve the project

Decision

REC Western Norway approves the project in accordance with the submitted application as long as the aforementioned conditions are met.

Further Information

The approval is valid until 31.05.2019. A final report must be sent no later than 12.01.2019. The approval is based on the grounds that the project is implemented as described in the application and the protocol, as well as the guidelines stated in the Health Research Act. If amendments need to be made to the study, the project manager is required to submit these amendments for approval by REC via the amendment form.

The decision of the committee may be appealed to the National Committee for Research Ethics in Norway. The appeal should be sent to the Regional Committee for Research Ethics in Norway, West. The deadline for appeals is three weeks from the date on which you receive this letter.

With kind regards,

Marit Grønning
dr.med.
Avdelingsdirektør, professor

Anna Stephansen
sekretariatsleder

Kopi til: bente.moen@uib.no

Appendix 2: Danish Regional Ethical Committee



Region
Hovedstaden

Center for Sundhed

De Videnskabetiske Komiteer

Kongens Vænge 2
3400 Hillerød

Hannah Regitze Kristensen

Opgang D
Afsnit Sundhedsjura
Telefon 38866395
Direkte 38866345
Mail vek@regionh.dk

Journal-nr.: H-18023931

Dato: 08-06-2018

Exploring acculturation processes for female Somali migrants in Denmark

Du har ved mail af 31. maj 2018 spurgt, om ovennævnte projekt skal anmeldes til det videnskabetiske komitesystem.

Komiteen har vurderet, at der ikke er tale om et sundhedsvidenskabeligt forskningsprojekt som dette er defineret i komitélovens § 2¹, men at der er tale om interviewundersøgelse.

Projektet er derfor ikke anmeldelsespligtigt, jf. komitélovens § 1, stk. 4 og kan iværksættes uden tilladelse fra De Videnskabetiske Komiteer for Region Hovedstaden.

I Danmark har det videnskabetiske komitesystem til opgave at vurdere sundhedsvidenskabelige forskningsprojekter.

Ved et sundhedsvidenskabeligt forskningsprojekt forstås projekter, der indebærer forsøg på levendefødte menneskelige individer, menneskelige kønsceller, der agtes anvendt til befrugtning, menneskelige befrugtede æg, fosteranlæg og fostre, væv, celler og arvebestanddele fra mennesker, fostre og lign. eller afdøde. Herunder omfattes kliniske forsøg med lægemidler på mennesker og klinisk afprøvning af medicinsk udstyr.

Sundhedsvidenskabelig forskning omhandler primært forskning inden for de lægevidenskabelige fag, den kliniske og den socialmedicinsk-epidemiologiske forskning. Begrebet omfatter, udover forskning af de somatiske sygdomme, tillige de psykiatriske og de klinisk-psykologiske sygdomme og

¹ Afgørelsen er truffet efter lov nr. 593 af 14. juni 2011 om videnskabetisk behandling af sundhedsvidenskabelige forskningsprojekter med senere ændringer (sammenskrævet i lovbekendtgørelse nr. 1083 af 15/09/2017).

tilstandsformer. Herudover inddrages tilsvarende odontologisk og farmaceutisk forskning under begrebet.

Registerforskningsprojekter, interviewundersøgelser og spørgeskemaundersøgelser skal kun anmeldes, hvis der indgår menneskeligt biologisk materiale i projektet.

Undersøgelser af anonymt biologisk humant materiale skal dog ikke anmeldes til en videnskabetisk komite, med mindre der er tale om et forskningsprojekt vedrørende befrugtede menneskelige æg samt konseller, jf. §§ 25 og 27, stk. 2 i lov om kunstig befrugtning i forbindelse med lægelig behandling, diagnostik og forskning m.v. Det er et krav, at materiale er fuldstændig anonymt (der må ikke være en identifikationskode til data), og at materialet er indsamlet i overensstemmelse med lovgivningen på indsamlingsstedet.

Forsøg på cellelinjer eller lignende, der stammer fra et forsøg med indsamling af celler eller væv, som har opnået den nødvendige godkendelse, skal heller ikke anmeldes.

Forsøg, der alene har til formål at fastlægge et kemikaliums toksikologiske grænse i mennesket, er ikke anmeldelsespligtige. Ved et kemikalium forstås i denne forbindelse et stof, der ikke finder terapeutisk anvendelse.

Der ligger således ikke i afvisningen af at bedømme projektet nogen etisk stillingtagen eller negativ vurdering af dets indhold.

Vi gør opmærksom på, at Styrelsen for Patientsikkerhed i visse tilfælde skal godkende videregivelse af oplysninger fra patientjournaler. Nærmere oplysning kan findes på styrelsens hjemmeside.

Behandling af personhenførbare oplysninger er omfattet af persondataloven. Nærmere oplysning herom findes på [Datatilsynets hjemmeside](#).

Klagevejledning:


Komiteens afgørelse kan, jf. komitélovens § 26, stk. 1, indbringes for National Videnskabetisk Komité, senest 30 dage efter afgørelsen er modtaget. National Videnskabetisk Komité kan, af hensyn til sikring af forsøgspersonernes rettigheder, behandle elementer af projektet, som ikke er omfattet af selve klagen.

Klagen skal indbringes elektronisk og ved brug af digital signatur og kryptering, hvis protokollen indeholder fortrolige oplysninger. Dette kan ske på adressen: dketik@dketik.dk.

Klagen skal begrundes og være vedlagt kopi af Den Regionale Videnskabetiske Komités afgørelse samt de sagsakter, som Den Regionale Videnskabetiske Komité har truffet afgørelse på grundlag af.

NB: Der må ikke foretages ændringer i dokumenterne, som har været til behandling i komiteen, da sagen ellers vil blive sendt retur til komiteen.

Med venlig hilsen


Louise Kobbemagel
Juridisk konsulent

Nedenstående skal ikke anmeldes:

- Spørgeskemaundersøgelser og interviewundersøgelser, som ikke omfatter menneskeligt biologisk materiale (komitélovens § 14, stk. 2).
- Registerforskningsprojekter, som ikke omfatter menneskeligt biologisk materiale, men er baseret på rene data, dvs. bogstaver, tal, tegn osv. (komitélovens § 14, stk. 2). Se her om [anmeldelse til andre myndigheder](#).

1st of April 2018. For further interest, please visit this link to the home page for NVK.
<http://www.nvk.dk/forsker/naar-du-anmelder/hvilke-projekter-skal-jeg-anmelde>

Appendix 4: Information letter to participants in the study (Danish)

Mit navn er Hannah Regitze Bond. Jeg er en dansk sygeplejerske, som lige nu er i gang med min kandidatuddannelse i global sundhed, ved Universitetet i Bergen, Norge.

I forbindelse med mit kandidatprojekt, skal jeg udføre mit feltarbejde i Danmark. Formålet med projektet er at undersøge hvordan somaliske kvinder med permanent opholdstilladelse og som er veltilpassede i det danske samfund (Dvs. Taler dansk, har eget job eller uddannelse og er en aktiv del af samfundet) har oplevet det at komme til Danmark og slå sig ned. Jeg er interesseret i at finde ud af, hvordan det føles at blive en del af det danske samfund og hvilke personlige styrker der har hjulpet dig i denne proces.

Til formålet bruges en teori kaldet Salutogenese der er udviklet af Aaron Antonovsky i 1970. Teorien går i korte træk ud på at studere de "sunde" mennesker i modsætning til de "syge". Dvs. man kigger på mennesker der har klaret sig godt og undersøger hvordan/hvorfor de har klaret sig godt, i modsætning til de mennesker der ikke har klaret sig godt. Til dette, kigger man både på hvordan du finder mening i din tilværelse samt hvilke personlige styrker der har bidraget til din situation i dag.

Det vil for dette projekt betyde, at jeg er interesseret i at studere velintegrerede somaliske kvinder som trives i og som del af det danske samfund. Formålet er at lære, hvilke styrker og aspekter der har hjulpet dig igennem hele processen. Denne viden er enormt vigtig, for at lære hvordan endnu flere somaliske kvinder som gerne vil være i Danmark, kan slå sig ned og bidrage positivt til samfundet.

Dette projekt er baseret på frivillig deltagelse, og skulle du ønske at deltage, vil du blive bedt om at underskrive en samtykkeerklæring før deltagelsens begyndelse. Al information som jeg kommer i besiddelse af i vores relation, vil blive behandlet anonymt. Det vil desuden blive slettet når projektet slutter i maj 2019.

Deltagelse implicerer at du deltager i 2-3 interviews med mig, hvor jeg stiller nogle brede spørgsmål forbundet med projektets formål. Hvordan og hvad du svarer er op til dig, og hvor

samtalen fører hen afhænger også af dine svar. Dvs. at jeg vil have spørgsmål til at guide samtalen, men derudover er det en forholdsvis fri samtale mellem dig og mig.

Du vil ikke blive presset til at svare nogen spørgsmål. Dine svar vil blive brugt i mit kandidatprojekt, og dit navn vil ikke være at finde nogen steder, da du får et synonymt navn. Desuden har du mulighed for at trække din deltagelse tilbage til hver en tid.

Skulle du have nogen spørgsmål før eller efter deltagelse, kan du ringe til mig på 0045 51 33 52 32.

Mvh Hannah Regitze Kristensen

Appendix 5: Letter of consent (Danish)

Anmodning om deltagelse I forskningsprojektet

Problemformulering: Udforskning af akkulturationsprocesserne blandt somaliske kvinder i Danmark

Baggrund og formål

Dette er en forespørgsel om din deltagelse i et forskningsprojekt der har til sinde at undersøge hvordan somaliske kvinder I Danmark, har opfattet og oplevet dét, at komme til Danmark og slå sig ned og blive en del af det danske samfund. Statistikkerne viser, at Somaliere har flere udfordringer I forhold til andre migrantgrupper, når det kommer til integration og dét at tilpasse sig i det danske samfund. Dette studie har til formål at undersøge hvordan hele denne proces bliver opfattet af velintegrerede somaliske kvinder, og hvordan disse mener man kunne ændre den trend.

Du er blevet udvalgt som mulig kandidat til at deltage i 2-3 interviews i projektet, da du møder inklusionskriterierne for at deltage. Kriterierne er; Somalisk kvinde som har permanent opholdstilladelse/statsborgerskab og som kom til Danmark som voksen, Dansk talende og aktiv på arbejdsmarkedet.

Projektet er et kandidatprojekt, som bliver udført af en kandidatstuderende fra Universitet I Bergen, Norge, ved afdelingen Center for International Health.

Hvad betyder det at deltage i studiet?

Som deltager i studiet vil du blive bedt om at deltage i 2-3 interviews med nogle ugers mellemrum. Interviewene foregår sammen med mig, som kandidatstuderende og vil hver især vare 60-90 min. Lokation for interviewene afhænger af, hvad du finder mest trygt. Interviewene vil blive optaget, så jeg kan give dig min fulde opmærksomhed imens du snakker. Jeg vil muligvis tage nogle få noter under interviewet.

Hvad sker der med dataen efter interviewene?

Jeg vil transskribere det optagede materiale, og hverken dit navn eller anden information der muligvis kunne afsløre din identitet vil blive vist. Du vil ligeledes få et synonymt navn, for at sikre din anonymitet. De optagne interviews vil blive slettet efter transskriptionen og alt materiale slettes når det færdige produkt afleveres.

Mulige fordele og ulemper ved deltagelse

Dine beskrivelser af dine erfaringer og oplevelse har stor betydning for at forstå hvordan det psykologiske velfærd blandt somaliske kvinder i Danmark kan forbedres. Ligeledes for at klargøre hvilke udfordringer der forekommer når man som somalisk kvinde slår sig ned i et danske samfund.

Dette studie har på ingen måde til hensigt at skade deltagere på nogen måde, og er baseret på fuldkommen frivillig deltagelse. Hvis du på nogen måde skulle lide nogen skade ved at deltage i projektet, vil du blive hjulpet på enhver mulig måde.

Anonymitet og projektdeltagelse

Al data der indsamles i forbindelse med dette studie, vil udelukkende blive brugt til projektets formål, som beskrevet ovenfor og vil blive slettet efterfølgende. Ligeledes vil alt data blive behandlet anonymt.

Frivillig deltagelse

Deltagelse er som tidligere beskrevet baseret på frivillig deltagelse, og du kan, som deltager, trække dig fra projektet på ethvert tidspunkt. Også efter interviewene er udført kan du vælge at sige at materialet ikke må bruges alligevel. Hvis du som deltager kan acceptere disse vilkår, venligst underskriv samtykkeerklæringen nedenunder.

Skulle du have nogen spørgsmål, kontakt mig venligst på informationen givet nedenunder, eller kontakt min vejleder i Norge.

Hannah Regitze Kristensen

Email; hannahregize@gmail.com

Telefonnummer; 0045 51 33 52 32

David Lackland Sam

Email; David.Sam@uib.no

Telefonnummer; 0047 91 87 28 15

Jeg forstår den information jeg har fået. Jeg forstår at dette studie udelukkende er baseret på frivillig deltagelse, hvad formålet med studiet er, og at jeg kan trække mine udtalelser tilbage på ethvert tidspunkt. Ligeledes bekræfter jeg at vide, at jeg er anonym ved deltagelse, og at enhver tvivl eller forvirring jeg skulle have haft, er blevet løst.

Hvis du ønsker at deltage, venligst underskriv erklæringen nedenunder.

Jeg er villig til at deltage I dette projekt

Underskrift og dato deltager

Jeg bekræfter at jeg har fået information om dette studie

Underskrift og dato deltager

Pseudonym for deltager: _____

Appendix 6: Interview guide

Semi structured In-depth interview

1. Lad os starte med at du så detaljeret som muligt beskriver dig selv?

Hvornår og hvordan du kom til Danmark?

- Hvordan oplevede du det at komme til Danmark?
2. Hvad er din forståelse af integration?
 - Ser du dig selv som en person der er integreret i Danmark?
 - Kan du forklare hvorfor du mener det?
 3. Kan du beskrive hvad du tror har gjort det muligt for dig at blive en del af det danske samfund?
 - Hvilke barrierer/udfordringer mødte du?
 - Hvordan overkom du disse?
 4. Hvordan tror du din personlighed har bidraget til hvordan dit liv har udviklet sig?
 - Og hvor du er i dag?
 5. Finder du livet i Danmark meningsfyldt?
 - Hvordan det?
 6. Hvad gør livet meningsfuldt for dig? (Hvorfor er livet værd at leve i Danmark?)
 - Hvordan kan du selv påvirke dette?
 - Hvordan kan samfundet/din omgangskreds bidrage til dette?
 7. Hvilken indflydelse har din omgangskreds haft i dit liv?
 - Hvordan har de hjulpet dig til at blive den du er?
 8. Hvordan ser du dit liv i Danmark om 5-10 år?
 - Har du nogen afsluttende kommentarer?
 - Hvordan har du det med det vi har snakket om?

Tak for din tid.

