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Important factors that influence integration of refugees in the host societies

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Abstract

This research will deal with the complexities of refugees' integration in different societies. The paper will focus on the refugees' perspective regarding what is helpful to them to better participate in the society. It will also provide examples on how European Union member states and also other states support refugees' unification in their social order. It should be noted that this study will not deal with all factors that affect refugees' participation and integration in host societies. Through taking in consideration the refugees' viewpoint and the state procedures this study will analyze three of the most important factors that influence in refugee integration: Education and language, employment and housing. These factors will be examined separately but it will be also noticeable the correlation that these components have with each other and how they can influence not on only in one another but also the refugee integration.

Key Words: *Refugee integration, refugee perspective, state practices.*

Introduction

Refugees' integration is an interact and multidimensional assemble regarding their inclusion into the social, educational, health and economic context. Over the past decade, the forcibly displaced population grew rapidly. According to The UN Refugee Agency (UNCHR), in 2009 the displaced population was 43.3 million while the latest report shows that in 2018, 70.8 million people were displaced due to violence, persecution, conflict, or human rights violations. Meaning that every day in the world 37 000 people were forcibly displacing from their homes. Among these people 25.9 million¹ were refugees of which more than two thirds came from Syrian Arab Republic, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Myanmar and Somalia. Consecutively, for many years the largest number of refugees was hosted by Turkey with 3.7 million people.² This increase of the number of

¹ 20.4 million Refugees under UNCHR's mandate and 5.5 million Palestine refugees under UNRWA's mandate.

² Global trends, Forced displacements in 2018, UNCHR.



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refugees and other displaced people came as a result of different conflicts that have happened in the world such as the Syrian conflict. The adaptation of refugees depends on a number of components, including, the departure process, the post-arrival experiences, pre-migration experiences and environment³.

Many asylum seekers and refugees have suffered severe trauma including genocide, mass violence, witnessing the killings of their loved ones, starvation, lack of shelter and water, physical and mental torture. Even though the arrival in a host country considered as a safe place provides some kind of ease, it may be associated with other problems such as language barriers, unemployment, homelessness, family separation issues, legal status or lack of access in healthcare system or educational system⁴.

This paper aims to show the facilities provided by different EU member states to the refugees in order to ease their process of integration as well as highlight the main factors that influence this process. To European continent has been quite difficult to deal with the large influx of refugees coming from different problematic countries. Within the European Union there have been separations of perspectives regarding refugees and their acceptance inside different states⁵. Some European countries concern over the spread and increase of terrorism, diversity is not always for the better regarding mixing of cultures and religions⁶

However, other countries have been more helpful in trying to integrate refugees in their social life. Every member state practices its own domestic legislation when it comes to accepting refugees but regarding the factors that influence the adaptation of refugees can be considered as the same. France, Ireland, Germany, Sweden and Austria consider as a key factor of integration of refugees in the society, the employment factor followed by education, language, housing, active citizenship, social integration, social inclusion, healthcare etc.⁷

“One-size-fits-all” it is not the view-point needed in order to achieve refugee integration. It should be taken into consideration that people diverse in what they are looking for as well as in what they are skilled. Some people might be low-skilled and require a more intensive adaptation assistance compared to those that are higher skilled. Minor refugees that are unaccompanied require

³ Mihaela Robila, P. C. (2018). Refugees and Social Integration in Europe. United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, New York. Retrieved May 15- 16, 2018, from https://www.un.org/development/desa/family/wp-content/uploads/sites/23/2018/05/Robila_EGM_2018.pdf

⁴ Tom Craig, Peter Mac Jajua, Nasir Warfa. (2009). Mental health care needs of refugees (Vol. 8). Retrieved september 2009, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1476179309001177>

⁵ Paludan, A. (2009). Refugees in Europe. *The International Migration Review*, 15, no 1/2, 69- 73. Retrieved March 02, 2020, from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2545325?seq=1>

⁶ POUHTER, J. (2018). European opinions of the refugee crisis in 5 charts. Research Paper. Retrieved from <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/09/16/european-opinions-of-the-refugee-crisis-in-5-charts/>

⁷ (2013). A New Beginning Refugee Integration in Europe. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Bureau for Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>



specialized assistance. Women should also get help to easily adjust to the social and cultural changes by the gender sensitive polices.

There is a two-way process in order to achieve the result wanted which is refugees' integration that is the reason why it must exist a strong collaboration between the society and the refugees. Although the states authorities may create guidelines to follow in order to facilitate this complex process, there must be an effort from the refugees and the civil society to create the conditions needed in order for these guidelines to work.

This paper is about the clarification of the main components that influence on the refugee integration after they leave their country of origin and are part of another society in the host country. The study is going to be divided into three main sections which include education and language, employment and housing. These components are not only three of the most important factors that influence the refugees' integration in the social and economic life of the host country but they also are factors that influence on one another. Education and language are provided by the host country in different ways after the individuals have gained the status of refugee.⁸ Employment is one of the main factors of social integration of refugees that is also related to language but it can be considered as a midterm need since first of all the refugees after coming from their country of origin they firstly need housing in order to be granted their basic needs.

Refugees' perspective and state practices on: Education and language.

Education and language are both key components in refugees' integration process in the host countries but are closely linked and that is why they are going to be discussed together in this section. Education process for many refugees is either simplified or interrupted by the absence of professional certificates or educational certificates that shows the individual qualifications. When the certificates and documents are left behind in the country of origin or lost, the process to validate these certificates it is much more challenging. This process is often long and the consequences can be repeating the education, delayed process of entry to education or starting the education at an elementary level⁹. Refugees often participate in the lower level of education such as general courses that are inadequate to train them for higher levels of employment. Higher education is generally unapproachable for refugees due to the pressure that they have in order to earn money. That is why refugees usually sacrifice their own futures by being stuck at lower levels of education and those who do enter higher education do so at their personal cost by working various jobs.¹⁰ Language has been also an issue. Usually, the refugees arrive in the destination country with no or limited

⁸ A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion, Refugee Education 2030, UNCHR.

⁹ (2013). A New Beginning Refugee Integration in Europe. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Bureau for Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>

¹⁰ A Strategy for Refugee Inclusion, Refugee Education 2030, UNCHR.



language knowledge. Language trainings are provided by many EU Member States. Learning the language is one of the key components for integration because it can simplify the process of employment and allows the refugee to adapt in the society, facilitates networking and it creates a sense of belonging.¹¹

Lack of language skills make impossible job seeking, networking, securing housing, the ability to be self-reliant in terms of economic activity and it is a barrier to other adaptations in the social interactions therefor; the individual becomes isolated by the lack of language. Refugees' participate in language courses after receiving the refugee status, but these trainings offer basic level of knowledge which differs from one state to another and it enables only the everyday communication. Factors that influence refugee education and language are also key factors that influence integration itself including age, economic situation, employment and health. Stakeholders have commented that refugees that are above 50 years old find it difficult to study a new language while youngsters are more motivated to study and educate themselves.

The personal economic situation of refugees is a basic component in order to get motivated to study and if they find it hard to settle their money resources education becomes much more difficult. Health issues are another concern for refugees that does not facilitate education and studying of a new language because many refugees suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).¹² This disorder can be caused due to the severe trauma they have suffered. . According to, the stakeholders there is enough evidence that shows that while language can facilitate the process of job finding and employment, on the other hand employment can also facilitate the process of education. In Sweden, refugee students are required to follow the language courses while they are employed because it has a positive effect on the practicing of the language outside the classroom. It is very helpful even according to the refugees because of the practicing and the level of confidence that they gain during this period.¹³

Researchers in Germany show that the refugees who followed a language course from the A1-B2 level were able to find a job much more easily¹⁴. Another state even though it is not part of the EU that provides to its refugees' language courses after they gain the status is Canada. It provides the

¹¹ (2013). A New Beginning Refugee Integration in Europe. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Bureau for Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>

¹² Tom Craig, Peter Mac Jajua, Nasir Warfa. (2009). Mental health care needs of refugees (Vol. 8). Retrieved september 2009, from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S1476179309001177>

¹³ Puschmann, P., Sundin, E., De Coninck, D., & D'Haenens, L. (2019). Migration and integration policy in Europe: Comparing Belgium and Sweden. Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press. Retrieved Mars 01, 2020, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dkhm.4?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

¹⁴ Puschmann, P., Sundin, E., De Coninck, D., & D'Haenens, L. (2019). Migration and integration policy in Europe: Comparing Belgium and Sweden. Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press. Retrieved Mars 01, 2020, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dkhm.4?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents



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refugees with the possibility to follow English or French language classes in an appropriate level for each refugee¹⁵.

Refugees' perspective and state practices on: Employment

Employment is one of the main concerns of refugees other than the housing aspect. The first thing that refugees respond when they are asked of what makes them feel integrated is the fact of being employed¹⁶. Although the legal frameworks are different across countries the obstacles about employment are similar including language deficiency, skills and qualifications, payments and access to information.¹⁷ Many factors may stand in the process of refugee employment even though the legal access to finding a job and the labor market is provided. Labor market integration is an important sign that shows that refugees are adapting well in the society of that particular country. Some refugees indicate that entering any job even a low profile one may lead for better employment opportunities in the future. While other suggests that they became trapped by entering in the beginning at a low socio-economic cycle. The employment rates of refugees increase rapidly over the first years after being in the host country because immediately after arrival these rates are very low. EU member states are prepared to support and address the needs of refugees.

Some of the factors that influence employment include health, language, qualification, driving license, networks, discrimination and housing instability. Integration of refugees it is primarily a national issue that each member state deals with it differently and one of the most controversial topics regarding employment are the wages of the refugees that often are influenced by the education, skills and capability.¹⁸ In the French literature the primary factor that influences the integration of refugees is the employment. Many studies like Département des Statistiques des Etudes et de la Documentation (2010) and Haut Conseil à l'Intégration (2012) over the years have conducted that refugees have a higher tendency to be unemployed rather than French people. Ireland provides for refugees a number of different reports for the labor market in order for the refugees to apply and help them adapt better.¹⁹

¹⁵ Courtney Brell, Christian Dustmann and Ian Preston. (2020, Mars 01). The Labor Market Integration of Refugee Migrants in High-Income Countries. *The Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 34 (1), 94- 121. Retrieved from https://www.jstor.org/stable/26873531?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

¹⁶ (2013). A New Beginning Refugee Integration in Europe. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Bureau for Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>

¹⁷ Migration Policy Debates © OECD/UNHCR, N°10 September 2016

¹⁸ Labor Market Integration of Refugees

¹⁹ (2013). A New Beginning Refugee Integration in Europe. United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Bureau for Europe. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/52403d389.pdf>



For the Sweden government the integration of refugees in the labor market is a top priority in order to help refugees adapt but also to increase the labor force in their country through refugees²⁰.

Refugees' perspective and state practices on: Housing

Housing is one of the most important components that are related to the refugees' integration in different societies but it is also one of the areas that is less searched for and has few statistics. In Cork, Limerick and Galway of Ireland, 9.3% of refugees were in need of housing. In France, during the first years of the recognition of status, very few refugees were able to secure housing. In Sweden, more than 85% of refugees live in rented houses²¹.

One of the reasons why refugees cannot secure affordable and independent housing are the landlords that hesitate to rent houses to the refugees due to their negative perceptions. Other reasons why refugees cannot get housing are the unemployment, urban preferences etc. That is why refugees often end up in social housing granted by the government of the state which can increase the anxiety and no integration feelings. Housing can impact the stress levels on individuals and lead them to mental health, anxiety and depression problems. Housing of refugees also depends on where they are located. In Austria, many stakeholders reported landlords for discrimination against the refugees and the immigrants. Germany is the destination for many refugees coming from all around the world and their integration is the most important for the German government. There are different competencies and regulations inside the national administration when it comes to housing and the accommodation of the refugees' in order for their adaptation. The state leaves this task to the municipalities. Germany's housing policy is different based on the income of the refugee families. Low-income families receive housing reimbursement.

Conclusion

This research provides the complexities of refugees' integration in different societies. It shows that the process of integration in a host society for refugees it is not easy regardless of the fact if it is a high income country or not. It conducted some specific viewpoints on the integration of refugees and how to make the adaptation less difficult according to the refugees themselves and also it provided some examples of European Union Member States practices. Although, these states and their domestic laws on regulating refugees' matters are different, it allows making a comparison between these different practices.

²⁰ Puschmann, P., Sundin, E., De Coninck, D., & D'Haenens, L. (2019). Migration and integration policy in Europe: Comparing Belgium and Sweden. Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press. Retrieved Mars 01, 2020, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dkhm.4?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents

²¹ Puschmann, P., Sundin, E., De Coninck, D., & D'Haenens, L. (2019). Migration and integration policy in Europe: Comparing Belgium and Sweden. Leuven (Belgium): Leuven University Press. Retrieved Mars 01, 2020, from https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvh1dkhm.4?seq=1#metadata_info_tab_contents



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Even though the arrival in a host country considered as a safe place, this research provides that even when it exists some kind of ease, this may be associated with other problems such as language barriers, unemployment, homelessness, family separation issues, legal status or lack of access in healthcare system or educational system. Many asylum seekers and refugees have suffered severe trauma and suffer from Post- Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).

In conclusion, this research is about the clarification of the main components that influence on the refugee integration after they leave their country of origin and are part of another society in the host country. The study was divided into three main sections which include education and language, employment and housing. These components are not only three of the most important factors that influence on the refugees' integration in the social and economic life of the host country but they also are factors that influence on one another.