

TWO-WAY LABOUR MARKET INTEGRATION?

Perspectives on youth with
a refugee background and
employers in Finland
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Eveliina Lyytinen & Nita Toom

Executive summary

This project report is the main outcome of the *Coming of Age in Exile (CAGE)*¹ project's sub-study 3B *Young Refugees in the Labour Market – What are the Experiences of the Trajectory from Education to Labour Market?* In this CAGE 3B project report, the experiences of youth with a refugee background are explored in terms of their education and (un)employment in Finland. The study investigates the experiences of employers at employing people with a refugee background. A total of 13 qualitative interviews with youth and 12 interviews with employers were conducted in Finland for this study. Additionally, 13 other experts working with refugees and/or employment matters were interviewed to help contextualise the research findings. Thus, 38 interviews in total were conducted between 2016 and 2018, mostly in urban areas in the southern, eastern and north-western parts of Finland.

Of the 13 *youth interviewed* for this study, seven were men and six women. At the time of the interview, they were between 19 and 31 years of age and all had a permanent residence permit or Finnish nationality. They had arrived in Finland from Iraq (N=6), Somalia (N=5) or Myanmar (Burma) (N=2). Some of them had arrived as children through resettlement with their families (i.e. as so-called quota refugees) (N=4), some as unaccompanied asylum seekers in their teens (N=4) and others with their family as teenagers (N=5, one through family reunification with her sibling and four as so-called quota refugees) (See Appendix A). The youth had been living in Finland between 5 and 22 years at the time of the interview. They had arrived in Finland between 1992 and 2011 – four of them had

arrived in the 1990s, five in the 2000s and four in 2011.

The *educational paths* of the youth differed significantly, as the 13 youth interviewed for this study have arrived in Finland when they were between 4 and 19 years of age. The youth interviewed had various degrees of education ranging from primary school to higher education degrees. Three factors were identified as having particularly impacted their educational aspirations and achievements. First, taking time to learn the Finnish language well enough had been important for their educational success. Second, turning other people's, such as their teachers', belittling attitudes into a strength had been an important motivation for pursuing further education. Third, the youth's educational and career paths have not been linear, and many have experienced unexpected disruptions that have negatively affected their education.

The youth have *found employment through various mechanisms and personal networks*. Some applied for open vacancies in their field of their expertise and were hired. A few of them also utilised official online employment sites or the TE office (i.e. the public employment and business services) when searching for jobs. However, many of the youth felt that the local TE office had barely or not at all helped them. The youth have had at least one, but typically several work traineeships, but hardly anyone had been recruited for a paid position after the training periods. Overall, personal networks and connections seem to be the key to successful entry into the Finnish labour markets.

None of the youth had experienced long-term *unemployment*. Rather, their life was characterised by periods of employment, unemployment, work traineeships,

¹ <https://cage.ku.dk/>

volunteer work and education. The youth perceived that they were unable to find employment for various reasons, such as insufficient work experience, interrupted education, unrewarding traineeships or a lack of social networks. The periods of unemployment have been difficult, even traumatic, for the youth. Many had their daily routine completely changed. Others had experienced low self-esteem and self-reported depression, which had led to social exclusion.

A total of 12 interviews with employers having recruited refugees or other immigrants were conducted for this study. The *main recruitment methods that the employers* utilised varied, but the most common channels they used were employment agencies and practical traineeships and work trials through educational institutes and the local TE office. Several employers also had some experience with different projects that aim to employ immigrants. Other recruitment methods were employment websites, a company's own webpage and noticeboard, work trials, apprenticeship training, job advertisements, temporary posts, traineeships and employees' own networks. Some sectors have experienced a labour shortage, and thus have systematically developed their recruitment process to attract immigrants.

Regarding *the key factors that determine recruitment*, the main barriers that employers mentioned were either related to skills that immigrants lack or some cultural features. The most common reasons given for not hiring a refugee was insufficient language skills and a lack of work experience. However, it was not a requirement to have previous work experience or high-level Finnish language skills at all potential places of employment. Cultural factors, such as wearing a hijab and

needing set times for prayer, have also turned out to be barriers that have prevented the recruitment of refugees, but only in a few cases. Some employers also mentioned that the reason for hiring immigrants is that they want to give them a chance to succeed in the Finnish labour market and they believe that immigrants bring value to the company. According to the employers interviewed, all of whom had recruited immigrants at one time or another, reasons that may have prevented similar companies from hiring immigrants include such issues as a lack of trust and the employers' insufficient language skills and prejudices.

The factors enhancing refugees' *staying in the labour market after a successful entry* were not extensively elaborated upon by the employers interviewed for this study. Doing a job well was seen by them as proof that the employee had the proper qualifications for the position. In order to remain in the labour market, one also needs to have faith in oneself. Additionally, employers expressed the desire that there would be more resources for language training and courses regarding the Finnish work culture. Employers advocated facilitating meetings between them and potential employees, for example through open recruiting events. More individual career guidance is also called for, in their opinion. Overall, the employers argued that the bureaucracy in hiring immigrants should be reduced.

Regarding the *experiences* and particular advantages/disadvantages faced by employers as a result of having hired employees from an immigrant background, the analysis demonstrates that similar issues were interpreted as advantageous or disadvantageous by all of them. This is because such employers reportedly see their employees as individuals and not as a homogeneous category of 'immigrants'. In

general, however, all the employers were pleased with the employees they had hired from a refugee and/or immigrant background. The *advantages* they mentioned included their employees' diligence, high level of motivation, honesty, politeness, flexibility, commitment and strong work ethic. Benefits can also be found in workplaces where the immigrant employees may share the same cultural background and mother tongue as clients. Employees with different backgrounds can also enliven the workplace, offer new points of view, enable cultural exchange and bring valuable contacts to immigrant communities. Immigrant and refugee employees can, moreover, create a positive image for the company.

When it comes to *disadvantages*, employers mentioned such factors as a lack of Finnish language skills and certain cultural differences, such as praying and wearing a hijab. Different working methods were also seen as a challenge. Reportedly, the work ethic of some immigrant employees has not always been good, and they are not always familiar with Finnish work practices. Additionally, employees with a refugee background may have traumatic experiences in their past, which may affect their wellbeing and job performance. In some cases, other employees' attitudes towards the employees with an immigrant background might have been negative, creating tensions within the workplace. The employers also mentioned structural disadvantages, such as bureaucracy, which makes recruiting immigrants, particularly asylum seekers, more difficult than it should be. Also, the process of proving oneself to be qualified to work in certain professions can be extremely long and difficult in Finland. Despite some challenges, almost all the employers said that they are going to hire employees with an immigrant background also in the future.

1. Introduction

1.1. Aims and research questions

This study is part of the larger Coming of Age in Exile (CAGE) project (2015–2020, funded by NordForsk). This qualitative study (Study 3B) provides information about and contextualises the other studies of the CAGE project, such as the register studies (Study 1) and the policy analysis (Study 2C) regarding young refugees' labour market integration. It explores the experiences of youth with a refugee background in terms of their employment and unemployment in Finland. The study also investigates the experiences of employers at employing people with a refugee background. The more detailed research questions regarding the experiences of both youths and employers are as follows:

- What kind of educational paths have the youth had, and has their background as a refugee impacted their education and career choices?
- Through which mechanisms and persons have the youth found jobs, and how have personal networks and connections been involved in this process?
- What kinds of processes exist among the youth who are unemployed?
- What are the employers' main recruitment strategies?
- What are the barriers and key factors determining recruitment?
- What are the key factors for staying in the labour market after a successful entry?
- What kinds of experiences and particular advantages/disadvantages do employers' have/encounter through

hiring employees with a refugee background?

The analysis presented in this report is structured around these seven research questions. Data from youth, employers and other experts are used to answer these questions when feasible.

1.2. Interviewees and their selection

Qualitative interviews with youth with a refugee background and employers who have employed refugees/immigrants were conducted in Finland for this study. Additionally, other experts from various professional backgrounds were interviewed. A total of 38 interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2018, mostly in urban areas of the southern, eastern and north-western parts of Finland. Comparative regional analysis is not desired given the research questions nor feasible due to the small number of interviews conducted. However, the benefit of this regional variation is to protect the identities of the informants. In addition to the interviews, some observation has been conducted, for instance in information sessions organised both by the TE office (i.e. the public employment and business services) and as part of projects assisting asylum seekers, refugees and others with an immigrant background in finding employment in Finland.

Of the 38 interviews, 13 were conducted with youth having a refugee background, 12 with employers who have recruited refugees/immigrants and 13 with various other experts working with refugee and/or employment matters (Appendix A). All the interviews were conducted in Finnish given the participants' language preference, and the interviews lasted between 30 and 90 minutes. A follow-up interview was

optional, but only one participant requested it. Informed consent was gained from each participant in writing and/or orally. Almost all the interviews were audio recorded with the participants' permission and later transcribed. The transcriptions were anonymised; both direct and indirect personal information was removed from the interview transcriptions to protect participants' anonymity. Participants also had a chance to suggest a pseudonym to be used in this study. The participants were given a chance to review the transcriptions if they so desired. The interview scripts (Appendices B and C) were designed according to the interview methods used and the research questions of the study. This study received ethical approval from the Finnish Youth and Childhood Research Ethics Board before the data collection process commenced. The audio recordings are deleted at the end of this project, and anonymised interview data will be stored in an appropriate manner at the archive of the Migration Institute of Finland. It will not be available for other researchers due to an agreement with the participants.

The 13 *youth with a refugee* background interviewed for this study were recruited through various means, such as through organisations and personal contacts. The youth had arrived in Finland before the age of 18, with the exception of one person having been 19 years of age. Once in Finland, they had received some form of international protection (i.e. a refugee status or a residence permit on the basis of subsidiary protection or on humanitarian grounds²). Of the 13 youth, seven were men and six women. They had arrived in Finland from Iraq (N=6), Somalia (N=5) or Myanmar (Burma) (N=2). Some of them had arrived in Finland as children through resettlement with their families (i.e. as so-called quota

refugees) (N=4), some as unaccompanied asylum seekers in their teens (N=4), and others with their family as teenagers (N=5, one through family reunification with her sibling and four as so-called quota refugees) (Appendix A).

The youth had been living in Finland between 5 and 22 years at the time of the interview. They had arrived in Finland between 1992 and 2011 – four of them had arrived in the 1990s, five in the 2000s and four in 2011. The participants were employed, worked as entrepreneurs or were unemployed; only a few full-time students who were finishing their studies and already looking for employment were included in this study. At the time of the interview, the youth were between 19 and 31 years of age and all had a permanent residence permit or Finnish nationality. In this study, we do not take it for granted that these young people identify themselves or wish to be categorised as refugees. In qualitative interview-based research, it is essential to critically reflect on the issues of labelling and self-identification (Puumala & Kynsilehto 2017). Particular care has also been taken to not mention certain issues that some of the youth asked be left out of the analysis. These included, for instance, their nationality and religious background. This decision was also made given the increasing criticism levelled against the methodological nationalism by migration scholars (Näre & Holley 2015).

The 12 *employers* interviewed for this study came from various fields with the labour market and had a range of backgrounds. Some employers were approached randomly by us asking for an interview with a person from a given field of business, while others were referred to the research project by people who know they had

² In the spring 2016, a residence permit based on humanitarian grounds was removed from the Finnish Aliens Act, and it is therefore no longer a basis for international protection.

experience with hiring refugees/immigrants. The fields of business included logistics, industry, building trade, grocery stores, health care, a cleaning firm, an interpretation firm, restaurants, a family group home, a barber shop and a public transport company. The companies were small or medium sized, and many were rather new at recruiting employees with an immigrant/refugee background. The positions held by the employers interviewed for this study ranged from chief to staff manager, entrepreneur, social worker in charge, restaurant manager, managing director and service manager. Three of the employers had an immigrant background themselves (two of whom had arrived in Finland as refugees).

Three issues need to be highlighted with regards to these interviews. First, employers often either could not or did not wish to make any distinctions between employees with a refugee or an asylum seeker background or another immigrant background. Thus, we use in this report the terms immigrant, refugee and asylum seeker at times interchangeably when the legal status is not particularly relevant for the analysis. Second, as the employers were interviewed in 2016–2018, many of them associated the question of hiring people with an immigrant background with context of the post-2015 so-called “refugee crisis”. Thus, the employers often discussed the topic against the backdrop of societal situation in which the majority of discussions in the media focused on asylum seekers. Yet, many of the youth interviewed for this study had arrived in Finland as children or in their teens in the 1990s or early 2000s, and thus they no longer considered themselves refugees or immigrants. To conclude, the data collected from the youth and employers thus sheds light on the phenomenon from slightly different angles. Third, the interview

questions posed to the employers did not specifically focus on young people, but rather on their experiences with hiring people with an immigrant/refugee background in general. Thus, a more specific understanding on the part of employers regarding how to integrate immigrant youth within the labour market cannot be derived from this data.

The other 13 *experts* taking part in this study included people who could provide context to the other interviews and/or could recommend particular youth or employers for an interview. The experts included a social worker in a family group home, a project coordinator of a humanitarian organisation, an immigration expert in a project on advancing immigrant employment opportunities, the head of integration services at an employment office, the head of and adviser on skills development services at an employment office, a senior adviser on integration services at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, a volunteer coordinator for a regional association for multiculturalism, a multiculturalism expert for a regional society for social security, a project coordinator for a refugee-related NGO, an adviser on integration services at an employment office, a government counsellor in the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, a project coordinator on a project for employing immigrants and project worker on a project for employing young immigrants.

1.3. Data collection and analysis methods

The *life story interviews* with the youth were analysed using a narrative approach. Life story interviews are particularly useful when a participant’s entire life, not just some narrow aspect of it, is relevant for the

analysis. Since we investigated youth's educational and employment aspiration and experiences as part of the study, it is important to frame this analysis along their entire life history (Estola, Uitto, & Syrjälä 2017). Life story interviews can also have particular advantages for those taking part in them (Atkinson 2001). It can be meaningful to share one's life story because it provides an opportunity for young adults to reflect on their experiences as freely as possible. Yet, at times open life story interviews can require that more focused questions be asked. With the more reserved participants taking part in this study, the interviews followed more of a semi-structured format (Appendix B.).

With life story interviews, the participants can choose how to present themselves and to identify the most important events in their life (Säävälä 2009). Through the interviews, the youth can structure their past experiences in a meaningful manner and look ahead to the future. Additionally, at its best, this interview experience can strengthen their identity – lives and identities are perceived in this method to be formed through stories (Syrjälä 2001). By sharing, the youth can moreover explain matters that they struggle with, and for some, this may become a meaningful experience in reflecting on their integration process. However, if there is a clear risk of anxiety or re-traumatisation, the researcher is always responsible for directing the interview away from discussion topics that are too sensitive or else cancelling the interview. No interview needed to be cancelled in this study, but pauses were sometimes needed, and the discussion topics also had to be changed a few times due to the stress they caused the youth. Despite potentially sensitive matters, the life story interview can give young adults a platform to not only reflect on their past,

but also become excited about all the possibilities they have ahead of them.

The life story interviews with youth from a refugee background were analysed via *narrative analysis*, which focuses on particular cases and their contexts of production (Riessman 2016). Moreover, it emphasises interpreting subjective meanings presented by the participants narrating their life stories. Interviews can thus be seen as stories told to the interviewer, and several life story interviews can be analysed in a narrative manner by extracting particular themes that can run temporally through the interview, for instance as different migratory stages (Kyhä 2011). Narrative analysis is an important analysis method in many social sciences, including that of the multidisciplinary field of forced migration studies, for narratives “can tell us about how people themselves, as ‘experiencing subjects’, make sense of violence and turbulent change. From personal accounts we may also glean the diversity behind over-generalized notions of ‘the refugee experience’” (Eastmond 2007, 249). Narrative analysis can be a particularly useful method when research is conducted on refugees' journeys and integration processes (Pentikäinen 2005) and on the different “paths” that youth with a refugee background have taken (Kivijärvi 2015).

The interviews with various experts were open ended and unstructured – no set interview script was used. The interviews with a diverse sample of employers followed the basic structure of a *thematic interview*. The themes discussed with the employers included background information regarding their firm/organisation and the interviewees' position in it, their recruitment strategies, experiences at employing people with an immigrant/refugee background and plans

for the future (Appendix B.) All sensitive information that may have led to employers being identified has been removed from the stored data and publications.

These thematic interviews with the employers were analysed using qualitative *content analysis*, in which terms, phrases or actions, or wider themes are identified in the analysed document (Cope 2005). It also refers to “a relatively systematic and comprehensive summary or overview of the data set as a whole” (Wilkinson 2016, 84). All the transcribed interviews conducted and used for this report were coded using the NVivo 11 programme for computer-assisted qualitative analysis. The analysis commenced with coding and proceeded into more detailed content and/or narrative analysis.

2. Literature review

2.1. The link between integration and employment

Particularly since the increased influx of asylum seekers into Europe in 2015, the employment of immigrants and their position within the labour market has received substantial attention in public and political discussions, also in the Nordic context (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017). In Finland, the recent policies and official practices emphasise how asylum seekers ought to be employed already during the asylum process, and how the integration of refugees can best be achieved through employment. Even though “employment is one of the main foundations for successful integration of immigrants” (Heikkilä 2017), and it is one of the vital markers and means of integration (Ager & Strang 2008), it is misleading to perceive employment and integration as being synonyms.

Just as “other aspects of integration, such as language skills, housing, social belonging and political participation are often perceived as subsidiary compared to work” (Forsander 2013), some problematic aspects regarding over-emphasising access to employment as the most significant issue to mark successful the integration of refugees has been discussed in recent studies (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017; Heikkilä & Lyytinen 2019). In the following paragraphs, four challenges inherent in heavily focussing on access to labour markets as the signal of successful integration are discussed.

First, what truly matters for integration is not only immigrants’ access to the labour markets, but also, or perhaps rather, the quality of their work and the sustainability of their active labour market position

(Krutova, Lipiäinen & Koistinen 2016). A stable labour market position, feeling of well-being and being part of the larger work community are all important factors in labour market integration (Airila et al. 2013). Integration should, therefore, be investigated from a holistic perspective, where different perspectives on integration, such as work and social relations, are discussed in relation to one another (Phillimore & Goodson 2008). Thus, employment should not only be perceived as an enabler of economic integration, but immigrants can also enhance their social relationships, sense of safety, language skills and cultural understanding through work. Additionally, whereas it is imperative to recognise the right of refugees and asylum seekers to work, their international protection status should not be connected with their ability to work. Nevertheless, this is the trend that we increasingly seeing in the Nordic context (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017).

Second, integration is a two-way process (Saukkonen 2013), meaning that immigrants change the receiving societies at the same time as they integrate and adapt to these societies (Ager & Strang 2008). Subsequently, “the Nordic employers and the labour markets also need to ‘integrate’ with new employees and entrepreneurs with an immigrant background, and into the labour markets that are becoming more and more diverse” (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017, 12). Even though this is a central factor in integration, it is problematically not often recognised or reflected upon in policy discussions or research on integration. This lack of critical discussion on the receiving society’s attitudes and behaviour remains concerning since the attitudes of employers and counselling persons as well as the lack of networks are issues especially hampering the employment prospects of refugees in Finland (Kiuru & Brewis 2015).

Third, even though some researchers emphasise that integration can be achieved once refugees are in an equal position with the natives (Phillimore & Goodson 2008), this line of “immigrants vs. natives” comparisons has also been heavily criticised. In the Nordic context, researchers have increasingly argued that “we should also rethink the methods for benchmarking what counts as successful labor market integration through Nordic comparison”, since “only benchmarking against the native population, we are bound to write and rewrite a story of never ending failure” (Pyrhönen, Leinonen & Martikainen 2017, 37). Furthermore, it is essential to remember that unemployment does not automatically signal refugees’ lack of integration, and that rather than using statistical comparisons of the employment rates of natives and immigrants, it is the subjective experiences of integration that form the most important aspect of it (Heikkilä & Lyytinen 2019, 341).

Finally, refugees’ labour market integration is often seen in the current policies and programmes as something that should take place without haste and be efficient. Yet, in reality the desire by asylum seekers and refugees to quickly find employment seems to be somewhat unrealistic from both their and the receiving society’s side (Yijälä & Nyman 2015). Also, “simply activating the unemployed is not enough if there are simply no reasonable work opportunities available” (Yijälä & Luoma 2018, 28). More integration measures are called for to successfully activate refugees. Yet, academic research has demonstrated that refugees should not be suffocated with numerous and excessively intense integration measures (Belloni 2016). This type of an overpowering integration policy leads to immigrants’ further marginalisation, as they are seen solely as objects targeted with activation policies and integration measures

(McPherson 2010). Or, in other words, despite good intentions, “integration measures actually reinforce rather than redresses marginalisation and exclusion of people named as immigrants” (Kurki 2019).

To conclude, since different conceptualisations of and discourses on integration have an impact on integration policies and practices and immigrants’ integration experiences (Kirkwood, McKinlay & McVittie 2014), it is important to critically reflect on how we speak about, examine and understand integration – and the role of employment in it.

2.2. Young refugees in the labour markets

In Finland, “participation in the working life has been changed in many respects in the 2000s for young people and young adults. After the financial crisis, employment rates have decreased. ... The average job tenure for young people is usually low; the emphasis of Finnish young people’s jobs is in the short duration, also in international comparison” (Alatalo, Mähönen & Räisänen 2017, 4). Adding to this situation, people with a refugee background, particularly those from the Middle East and Africa, have the most difficult time finding employment in Finland (Larja & Sutela 2015; Busk et al. 2016; Sarvimäki 2017). Despite this fact, half of the refugees who had spent at least ten years in Finland have gained access to the labour markets (Larja & Sutela 2015). Furthermore, youth with an immigrant background (i.e. youth speaking a language other than Finnish or Swedish) who have finished primary school have six times greater risk of ending up in a NEET position (not in education, employment or training) compared to their native Finnish peers between 15 and 29 years of age. Thus, it is not surprising that 20 percent of these

marginalised immigrant youth left Finland within five years of the start of the analysis period (Myrskylä 2011, 14–15).

Refugees' labour market integration depends on a large number of factors that can be divided, broadly speaking, into three categories (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017). Firstly, there are policy factors affecting everyone's employment in general and particular policies targeted at immigrant and youth employment. Secondly, there are a number of individual social characteristics, such as gender, age, educational level, skills, country of origin, reason for migration and health-related issues, that can have an impact on refugees' employment. Thirdly, the country of destination and its economy, employment rates, place of settlement and sociocultural climate, including experiences of discrimination, racism and related wellbeing (Castaneda et al. 2015), can affect refugees' chances of having an active role in the Nordic labour markets. Other studies have recognised that particularly nationality, native language, age and gender have an impact on immigrants' employment. With regards to immigrants' age, their likelihood of finding employment in Finland starts to decrease already when they are 37 years old. Male immigrants are more likely to find employment, but after some years of living in Finland, female immigrants' chances of finding work increase more significantly (Eronen et al. 2014). Also, the cohort or the time of arrival in Finland plays a significant role in immigrants' chances of employment (Busk et al. 2016).

Thus, both macro-level structures and micro-level individual factors affect immigrant youth's lives, including that of employment. The structures of the Nordic societies, and the educational and employment services particularly, also impact how and what kinds of positions

youth with a refugee background end up in. Kivijärvi (2015) has also pointed out how current immigration policies, such as the restrictions on family reunification, force youth to give up on their educational aspirations and enter the labour markets as soon as possible. Additionally, in the various institutions youth with a refugee background are typically directed towards secondary labour markets that do not require a high level of education or skills. At times, the societal guidance youth receive can, therefore, limit their future, particularly with respect to education and employment, rather than support them in seeing the wide range of opportunities ahead of them.

Perhaps one of the best ways to conceptualise youth's life trajectories is to analyse them as "paths" that open up new opportunities for them and from which they can also divert (Kivijärvi 2015). For refugee youth, these life paths often have a transnational element to them, and such paths can be restricted by global power and border politics. Moreover, the capitalist economy, restrictions on mobility and immigration governance all impact the position immigrants have in the Nordic labour markets (Himanen & Könönen 2010). What is clear for youth with a refugee background is that their past can have an impact on their present and also their future (Kivijärvi 2015). Thus, it is important that we understand that their life in the country of origin and their travel to Finland can still impact their everyday life, including that of employment.

Immigrants (particularly refugees) and youth are often referred to as groups of people with specific issues with respect to gaining access to the labour markets. Given this fact, it has been argued (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017) that refugee youth face a double challenge based on their age and their immigrant background/legal status.

Landing a first entry-level, after-school job as a young person can be challenging, even for the native youth. Thus, youth with a refugee background may struggle with finding an entry-level job even more given their immigrant background due to the structural discrimination and racism in the labour market. However, as young people they may be successful in building relationships with native Finns and have skills at marketing themselves, which have been proven to help especially young asylum seekers in finding employment (Yijälä & Luoma 2018). It has also been shown in other studies that immigrants who arrived in Finland when they were around 20 years old or before school age have better chances of finding employment than immigrants who arrived during school age or at more than 30 years of age (Larja & Sutela 2015).

2.3. Employers' attitudes and experiences with recruiting young refugees

Previous research has been done on employers' attitudes and experiences with recruiting refugees and people with an immigrant background. However, the number of such studies has not been as great as the number of those focusing on immigrants' experiences of working life (Jaakkola 2000; Hurstfield et al. 2004, 2; Lundborg & Skedinger 2014, 3). In this literature review, there will be references to studies that focus expressly on employers' attitudes towards both their refugee and immigrant employees, since the employers interviewed for this study have also talked about such employees without necessarily making any distinction between them. Some of the following studies have been made at a local level with relatively small samples, but it is nonetheless interesting that similar issues seem to be brought out in different

studies no matter how large or small the sample sizes.

A Norwegian study entitled *The Making of Immigrant Niches in an Affluent Welfare State* (Friberg & Midtbøen 2018) shed light on the emergence of immigrant niches in Norway in two traditional working-class industries and employers' experiences with immigrant workers compared to native-born employees. *Employing Refugees: Some Organisations' Experiences* (Hurstfield et al. 2004) concentrates on employers' attitudes towards hiring refugees in the UK. Heli Sjöblom-Immala (2006) has carried out a survey in which she explores companies in Finland, in the city of Turku, to find out what sorts of attitudes exist regarding immigrants and their recruitment. A similar study, *Employer attitudes towards refugee immigrants* (Lundborg & Skedinger 2014) was conducted in Sweden with a larger sample size, and one of its aims in revealing employers' attitudes towards refugees was to "pin down where the discriminatory behavior lies" (Lundborg & Skedinger 2014, 3). The OECD and UNHCR (2016) have released an updated edition of *Migration Policy Debates*, which highlights employers' outlooks on recruiting refugees and identifies good practices in overcoming the challenges.

According to the studies, employers' attitudes are diverse regarding the hiring of refugees and immigrants. In summary, employers have had both positive and negative, or in some cases neutral, experiences with immigrant and refugee employees. According to a Swedish survey (Lundborg & Skedinger 2014, 4), employers generally have had positive attitudes towards hiring refugees, but it has also been pointed out that attitudes are heterogeneous across different sectors. Hurstfield et al. (2004, 20) confirm that employers see both positive and negative

aspects in recruiting refugees; the benefits mentioned by employers include, for example, their refugee employees' commitment and productivity as well as an increase in cultural diversity at the workplace.

In a Finnish interview study (Sjöblom-Immala 2006), the majority of employers have said that their employees with an immigrant background do not differ from their Finnish employees or that as individuals they are each different, just like everyone else. According to the same survey, a small number of employers do not consider immigrant employees to be as good as Finnish workers, but a small number also think that immigrant workers are actually even better than Finnish employees. Those employers who consider them to be better have mentioned that immigrants often have a stronger work ethic and they are more flexible compared to Finnish workers, whereas employers who think that immigrants are not as good as native-born workers justify their views by mentioning a lack of language skills, education, professional skills and cultural knowledge (Sjöblom-Immala 2006, 64). According to Friberg and Midtbøen (2018, 4), some employers may expressly prefer hiring immigrants "because they are seen as cheaper, more flexible, and more docile because they are more vulnerable and have fewer alternative options in the labor market". Other studies have shown that "employers recruiting employees do not aim at hiring 'a representative of the majority population' or 'an immigrant' – the employers' goal is to hire the best qualified candidate or a person who by developing their capabilities can get the job done" (Karinen 2011).

However, the motives for recruiting refugees or immigrants are not always related to the positive features of flexibility

of such employees, but to other factors instead. Hurstfield et al. (2014, 7) have pointed out that some employers have made a deliberate decision to recruit refugees for two primary reasons: as a response to labour shortages and as part of their "commitment to promote the diversity of the workforce". Such employers may also feel a certain level of satisfaction for being able to provide "work that allows refugees to retain their dignity and self-respect" (Hurstfield et al. 2004, 18). These findings have also been confirmed by the OECD and UNHCR (2016, 3); oftentimes, companies see the recruitment of refugees as an opportunity to benefit from a new potential labour force as they fulfil their social responsibility at the same time. However, for many employers the motive of recruiting refugees and asylum seekers is not based on the labour needs, as they "do not see an immediate business case for hiring" them, but instead on their willingness to fulfil their social responsibility and support refugees through traineeships and internships, while actual hiring has been quite limited (OECD & UNHCR 2016, 1).

Even though in many case studies employers have praised their immigrant workers' strong work ethic and diligence, many times they are only offered jobs with a low social status or otherwise less attractive types of work (Zetter & Ruaduel 2016, 16; Friberg & Midtbøen 2018, 17). As Friberg and Midtbøen (2018, 17) have mentioned in an article on the case of Norwegian working-class industries, whenever there was a need to recruit persons for positions "that required a sense of quality and product knowledge or involved responsibility for expensive technical machinery", native-born workers were preferred over immigrants.

Correspondingly, when there was a need to fill certain manual and low-status positions, employers preferred having workers with

an immigrant background. Hurstfield et al. (2004, 14) have also found out in their research that due to insufficient language skills, employers either rejected the refugee applicants or placed “them in lower skilled positions than their experience merited”.

According to the responses of a Finnish survey (Söderqvist 2005, 17), employers have not experienced any specific benefits for hiring immigrants; business activity has not developed as a result nor have they found new clients or partners with the help of their immigrant employers. Söderqvist (2005, 17) mentions that one potential explanation for this could be the fact that when immigrants are not doing jobs that correspond to their education, it is not even possible for a company to benefit fully from their work contribution. However, in some European countries steps have been taken towards taking into account the refugees’ skills and matching them with job opportunities; for example, in Norway an early assessment is made of the practical skills of the asylum seekers during the asylum process, and in Finland too it has been written into the action plan on integration that the asylum seekers’ professional skills will be assessed already at the reception centres (OECD & UNHCR 2016, 6).

When it comes to the reasons why firms either will not hire refugees or do not want to hire them any longer, several explanations have come up in the studies. Ahmad (2010) has suggested that based on existing research, we can detect five key reasons for not hiring immigrants. These include a lack of Finnish language skills, a lack of professional certificates from Finland or an ignorance of work experience from abroad, a lack of cultural experience in working in Finland, the employer’s mistrust of employees with an immigrant background and discrimination. According

to him, the main reason for high unemployment rates among immigrants has to do with structural issues, such as institutional inequality and discrimination, rather than with an individual’s lack of skills. Thus, rather than solely focusing on enhancing immigrants’ human capital, the policies and programmes should also target the structures and employers’ attitudes.

According to an assessment made in a global context by Zetter and Ruaduel (2016, 16), there is a list of reasons why employers in different countries prefer not to recruit refugees; they include an employer’s fear of breaking the law by hiring refugees and uncertainty as to whether the permits allow them to do so, bureaucracy and a fear of being stigmatised. A report by the OECD and UNHCR (2016, 1) confirms these views: it identified uncertainty among employers about the rights of refugees and asylum seekers to work and doubts about their skills and qualifications, related especially to their insufficient language skills. The study also found that public opinion, which is sceptical about hiring refugees and asylum seekers, can prevent their employment.

Hurstfield et al. (2004, 11) have also found that the challenge of checking documentation, such as permissions to stay in the country, work permits, job qualifications and references, are seen as a barrier to hiring refugees. Related to these above-mentioned challenges, the OECD and UNHCR (2016, 1) have listed some solutions to support employers in recruiting refugees. These proposals include, for example, a co-operative assessment between the employers and the public employment service of an applicant’s skills, generally more information on a refugee’s right to work, stronger co-operation between different authorities and more support “after initial work placements to ensure

long-term employability". It also proposes establishing "one-stop shops and hotlines" (OECD & UNHCR, 2016, 1) to make information more readily accessible. The last suggestion is something that emerged in a Finnish case study as well; Sjöblom-Immala (2006, 95) recommends, based on her survey, that since not all employers may have knowledge about or experience in recruiting immigrants, there should be a clear framework about the practices of hiring them and all the related information should be easily accessible from one place.

In the Finnish context, the most common reason for not hiring immigrants was that there had not been any need for an extra labour force; however, it was not clear in all cases whether employers were expressly referring to a labour force with an immigrant background or generally to the entire potential work force (Sjöblom-Immala 2006, 46). The second most common explanation given was simply that no immigrants had applied for the jobs in the first place. Söderqvist (2005, 10) confirms this finding in her study, also done in a Finnish context, by saying that one of the reasons why immigrants do not find employment is that they do not apply widely enough for different jobs. However, she also points out that these findings are in contradiction with the experiences of the immigrants themselves, as presented, for example, in the media in 2005 (Söderqvist 2005, 41).

Some companies may have experience with recruiting refugees, but they have since decided not to do so anymore. A Swedish survey (Lundborg & Skedinger 2014, 4, 18) has charted the reasons for this and found that these so-called "discouraged" firms have not been satisfied with the job performances of their refugee employees; oftentimes, they mention a lack of language skills as the reason for "lower than expected

productivity". Even though there is some variation in the responses about the disadvantages of hiring refugees in different countries, inadequate language skills seems to be one of the most common explanations that keeps recurring among employers for not hiring refugees or people with an immigrant background. The report by the OECD and UNHCR (2016, 3) also states that employers have both motivations and doubts when recruiting refugees, but often such barriers as insufficient language skills and cultural differences outweigh the possible benefits.

3. Analysis

3.1. Youths' educational paths

The youth had arrived in Finland when they were between 4 and 19 years old. Thus, their educational paths in Finland differed significantly. A few of the youth had been in preschool, Quran schools or secular schools in their home country and/or in the first country of asylum. For many, their memories of schooling in their home country or in the first country of asylum had to do with being separated by gender, a lack of food in the school and strict behavioural codes, including physical punishment by teachers if not obeying them:

My experiences in the school at the refugee camp are rather bad. But luckily, I was rather good in school. If you were bad in school, you were beaten up. I remember that well. The teacher could get angry about something small. Teachers in Finland are so nice. (Ahmed)

In [the country of origin] teachers hit you on your hands if you have not done your homework or if you are not quiet in the classroom. Or, the teacher can make you stand for one hour next to the rubbish bin on just one foot; it depends on what your teacher decides. (Azadeh)

When asked about their educational aspirations as children prior to moving to Finland, some responded by saying that they had been unable to dream while living in the refugee camp or in the conflict-ridden country of origin. Thus, having the chance to attend school in Finland also provided them with a space to dream and express educational aspirations.

Most of the youth had completed primary and upper secondary school in Finland. Those who came to Finland at pre-school age had completed all of their studies in the Finnish school system. According to previous studies, those who come to Finland at pre-school age have better chances of gaining employment than children who come at school age (Larja & Sutela 2015). Others who had arrived as teenagers had gone through preparatory education to learn the language before joining the normal educational system. For many, Finnish friends and hobbies had advanced their language skills. Many found taking time to learn the language well important for their future educational success. For instance, Pohjoinen's parents decided to keep him in kindergarten for an extra year before attending primary school to master Finnish at a sufficient level:

Then we came to Finland and I was not yet at school age, as I was six years old. Actually, I spent one extra year in kindergarten due to the joint decision of my parents and the school, or we made a decision that it is worth me staying there another year in order to learn the language and do better. And it was a good choice. (Pohjoinen)

The youth being interviewed had attained various educational levels, ranging from having completed primary school to university degrees. Several of the youth shared their experience of not having been encouraged by their teachers to pursue high school or university studies. Other research has also demonstrated that in various institutions, such as schools or the local TE office, youth with a refugee background are often directed to vocational training and the secondary labour market (Kivijärvi 2015). Leyla, who was at the time of the interview finishing her university studies at the master's degree level, narrated how her

teachers in junior high school had discouraged her from pursuing her educational dreams by labelling her as an immigrant with special educational needs that she did not agree with:

Then they [teachers] started to label me as an immigrant, and suddenly I felt like I was an immigrant. In the school, they said to me, "you are an immigrant", you are in a smaller group. But I was thinking, why do I have to be in these S-classes [Finnish for foreigners] with those who have just arrived in Finland. I had no idea why I was labelled all the time and everywhere, [with teachers] telling me to go to a smaller class and telling me that I needed more support. I was thinking, "why", as I had good grades: "why"? Well, then I started to act like that. Because they thought I was weaker and learning more slowly, I began to act accordingly. I believed what I was told... For my entire life, I have disliked those teachers who all the time told me who I am and where I belong. They have told me when I can speak and when I cannot speak, when I can perform and when I cannot...
(Leyla)

One characteristic of the youth interviewed for this study is that their educational and career paths have not been linear; rather, many of them studied something for a while and then later on made a different educational choice that they now feel content with. Thus, typically their "paths of life" take many shapes, forms, turns and detours (Kivijärvi 2015). Sometimes unexpected events in life have also impacted their education, such as having to return to their parents' country of origin as teenager, trying to be (re)united with their spouse or parents, or having to change their field of study due to mental health issues. In the

following paragraphs, three examples are given illustrating each of these unexpected events that interrupted a person's education.

First, Mohammad's life history is unique, but it clearly demonstrates the intergenerational challenges of integration. In particular, the temporal dissimilarities (Griffiths, Rogers, & Anderson 2014) between the phase of integration of parents and their children has been well documented in other contexts too. Mohammad arrived in Finland as a child together with his family. They were resettled to Finland as so-called quota refugees and he entered the Finnish education system rather quickly. After primary school, he commenced his studies at the vocational level. Yet, suddenly, without telling him the real motives for leaving Finland, Mohammed, 16 years old at that time, and his parents moved back to his parents' home country, where he had never lived before. His vocational training was disregarded, and he could not return to the school after three years of being absent. Also, since his refugee travel document had expired during his time abroad, he no longer could safely return to Finland but had to use a smuggler to return. This forced interruption and relocation had significantly harmed him and he has suffered from self-reported depression since:

I do not know how to tell you this, but we, us children, wanted to integrate better all the time. We wanted to do well all the time, but sometimes our parents prevented us. They did not want that. They feared that we would become Finnish; that we would not care for things anymore... Well, I think this moving was so wrong. Even now, I am thinking about why I did it; why did I go? I should have said no; I should have refused. But I was underage at the

time, and I had to accept and listen to them [parents]. (Mohammed)

Second, more than half of the youth interviewed had completed vocational training, while others only had a primary school education. At times, their education had been interrupted, and their educational aspirations put aside or postponed due to issues related to *family (re)unification*. This trend, often caused by the restrictions in current immigration policies, has also been documented in other studies (Kivijärvi 2015). For instance, Maria, who arrived in Finland unaccompanied when she was 14 years old, had experienced the pressures of trying to get her mother to join her in Finland. Related to this problem, she has also suffered from self-reported mental health issues. Yet, due to the costs involved in the family reunification process, which never succeeded in her case, she had worked distributing newspapers for 2.5 years. At the same time, she had been in primary school and completing vocational training. Ahmed, who had moved to Finland as a quota refugee at the age of 11, finished high school but could not pursue further education because he had to work in order to be financially able to bring his wife to Finland. He had gotten married and was working on logistics. Yet, after a few years he realised that setting up his own business would not only give him more flexibility, but also more income, so he started his own car shop.

Third, some of the youth had suffered from self-reported *mental health*³ problems at some point during their educational path. One example was provided by Sakke, a 19-year-old young man who came to Finland as an unaccompanied minor when he was a teenager, who had to alter his educational path due to depression. He explained how

the depression had affected his abilities to study:

I finished secondary school when I was 18 years old, and then I went to study ICT, electricity for one year. But then, I had these health problems [depression] and I could not continue my studies; I had to stop them. This autumn, I began training to be a youth and free-time instructor because I am a social person. This is who I am. ... I lost a few important people in [my country of origin] in the bombings and sometimes I feel upset and I miss them. ... Even now, I am depressed due to this, and I am in psychotherapy and all. But I am thankful after all, because these issues made me a strong person and shaped how I think about life. (Sakke)

Others may have had mental health issues, most commonly depression, in their family. Leyla, a 28-year-old university student, reflected back on how her mother's depression, the absence and sudden reappearance of her father, and the belittling attitude of her high school teachers had all made her educational and career path a struggle, one that she managed, however, to successfully overcome:

When we arrived in Finland, I remember that my mother just collapsed. No one could understand what was wrong with her; she was pulling off her clothes, crying and shouting that she does not want to be here, even though Finland had given us everything. I remember how for years, she blamed us [her children] for her bad feelings, for having had to flee. ... Once I started my working life, I felt the biggest challenges started because I

³ In the interview setting, health and mental health issues were self-reported to the researcher and no clinical diagnosis was shown. This does not, however, mean that the health issues would not be diagnosed.

was on my own. Others had parents who could guide them on where to study or where to look for a job; they would have had networks that could have helped you... Many of my friends said that, "mom helped, through mom's networks, mom wrote all my CVs". I felt that I was completely alone in this and there was no one to support me. I would have needed an adult to talk about my challenges and my dreams with. (Leyla)

Typically, the youth's path from education to the labour market has not been a linear one, but rather has included several phases of education, work traineeships, unemployment and employment (see Kivijärvi 2015). Even if the young interviewees have had a remarkably successful career, many stages had been involved in getting to the labour market position they had attained at the time of the interview. This is exemplified by the case of Pohjoinen, who at the age of 28 had achieved a permanent position in a field dominated by native Finnish employees. He came to Finland when he was 6 years old, and he did an extra year of kindergarten to learn Finnish language better. After compulsory schooling and some summer jobs, Pohjoinen went to high school, after which he applied to study at the university. As he was not accepted, he went to the army. After military service, he applied to a university of applied sciences and was accepted. He did not, however, feel the line of education he was pursuing was really for him. He ended up studying another field, which was more closely aligned with his dream job. While studying, Pohjoinen was doing part-time work in various fields, some related to what he was studying. Alongside all this, he set up his own small training company, which he hopes to expand one day. After graduation, he was first offered a fixed-period contract, which was soon

changed to a permanent position. Pohjoinen then got a new permanent position closer to home, and he commenced managerial studies as part of his work. Soon after, he was offered a position as a manager. Despite his stable job situation, or perhaps precisely because of it, Pohjoinen took a leave of absence for two years to work in an organisation on a project that educates asylum seekers on his field of expertise. His desire was to put his expertise to practice in another context, and he also wanted to support those who have recently arrived in Finland. Thus, the refugee background of the youth can also at times be utilised to enhance their careers and looking back on their "path" can be helpful for planning their future (Kivijärvi 2015).

Overall, regarding education, a few of the interviewees expressed a desire to still pursue further education, but for the majority their aim was to work and achieve a permanent position in the labour market. In the following section, we explore the mechanisms and persons who have assisted the youth in obtaining employment.

3.2. Mechanisms and persons assisting youth in finding employment

The young adults have found employment through various official mechanisms and personal networks. In this section, we briefly describe the ways in which they found jobs and the interviewees' experiences of these job-seeking processes. Some applied for *open vacancies* typically advertised in their field of expertise and were hired. As we saw from the case study of Pohjoinen above, he first applied for an open vacancy in his field of study and was offered a fixed-term job that was soon made into a permanent position. A few of the youth also utilised official online

employment sites when searching for jobs (i.e. mol.fi, monster.fi). Some had directly walked into companies or offices to *ask about employment*. One young man, Ahmed, had chosen to inquire about employment from a company that he knew had already hired immigrants and he was able to find a position there. Ahmed was unemployed for a year after finishing high school and getting married to an Iranian woman. According to him, unemployment was a difficult time, and even though there were some open positions, you will not be hired if you do not have work experience or certificates, unless you are willing to lie about them. Ahmed was assisted by an employment office, and he also searched for open vacancies online. At the end, when nothing else had worked out, he went directly to ask for employment from a place recommended by a friend, where they had already hired others with a migrant background, and he was hired.

The TE office (i.e. public employment and business services) has been able to assist some of the youth with writing job applications, encourage them to be more active (i.e. youth guarantee) and help them find a career that is suitable for them. Leyla, a university student who had experienced a short bout of unemployment in between educational paths, had found help offered by the TE office particularly useful. She explains:

I felt it [the TE office] really helped. I am thankful that we have created this system in which I was forced [as part of the youth guarantee] to go there and see this officer. We talked and discussed, and I told her what things I like and what are my dreams. I felt it was somehow good for me because, at the time, I did not know how to get a hold of anything in my life. After getting a job as a special needs' assistant, I started to get a lot of work

also as a substitute teacher. ... Without have had the phone call from the TE office, I may still be lying on the sofa, because I had so much responsibility for my mother and father; everywhere interpreting and explaining for them...
(Leyla)

However, many of the youth felt that the local TE office had barely or not at all helped them. They argued that the office had sent them advertisements about jobs that were irrelevant given their skills and education. For example, Miro, who was a qualified carpenter, had only received job advertisements from the TE office for car mechanics. Likewise, Telma reported that the TE office did not provide her with suitable assistance in finding a job in housekeeping and cleaning:

All the time I have been trying to find a job through the TE office too, but I have never found a job through them. You always had to go there to ask... They sent some job advertisements, but they [the jobs] were too demanding. When I tried to call, they did not answer and so I went there myself. ... They send me an email about jobs that are from the field I graduated in, but when I go and see the advertisement, they say it is too demanding for me. (Telma)

For others, the local TE office had only offered several work traineeships, no real paid jobs, and the youth would really have preferred to have a paid job. Sema, a 20-year-old part-time cashier, explained her frustration with never-ending work traineeships as follows:

Well, if I am honest, they [the TE office] have not helped me at all. Whenever I have been in a work traineeship, I have added it to my CV, but it has not benefitted me at all that I have been here in a three-month training

[period]. *It was only that I would call the TE office letting them know that I will do another traineeship here. They sent me the papers, and I write my part of it, the "employer" filled in their part. That was it. There were no attempts from their side to try to help me to find a real paid job. ... After all those traineeships, I took some time to be unemployed because I could not take one more work traineeship! I will just be at home. I was so frustrated that I was working hard but the income from the traineeship was not so good. When I felt I could continue again, I went back to it.* (Sema)

One challenge in receiving structured assistance from the local authorities is that the division of labour among the different authorities is not always so clear. Also, particularly in the TE office the officers often face pressure in terms of the time that they can allocate to one client. A multiculturalism expert (from a regional society for social security) mentioned, for example, that it should not be the responsibility of Finnish teachers to enhance employment, and the TE officers should not have to tell them how the family reunification process works. Thus, there should be more targeted counselling for immigrants. Likewise, a project worker (from a project on employing young immigrants) emphasised that what is needed in assisting young immigrants to find employment is time and flexible services, which often only a targeted project can provide. Flexible, new communication systems that enable authorities to stay in touch with the youth are also needed, such as WhatsApp.

Most of the youth interviewed have had at least one, but typically several, *work traineeships* (paid by the TE office or part of their studies). Yet, hardly anyone had been

recruited for paid positions after completing the traineeships. Exceptions can, however, be found: one of the young women had applied for training as part of her education, but instead of getting a traineeship she was immediately offered a paid job from an interpretation firm. Teija had come to Finland as a teenager through family reunification to be reunited with her sister. She has never been unemployed in her life, and she found it easy to obtain her first job in interpretation:

As part of our training to become an interpreter, we have to do work traineeships. ... I asked one Persian interpreter if her firm could take me as a trainee, as I did not really need a paid job since I was still a student. She said "yes, we need interpreters [in her language]". ... I called them first [the interpretation firm], and they said I can come as a trainee. Then, when I went there the boss told me that they would employ me immediately because I was studying to become an interpreter. I had all my certificates and he was so surprised that I had come, as they really needed an interpreter at that moment. He said to me, "why would you come as a trainee when you can be paid". ... I have always, right from the start, been overly active in going to places and putting my foot in the door to see what happens. (Teija)

A few of the youth had also found longer-term, part-time employment through *summer jobs*, which they got either through private companies or through a raffle offered by cities. Even though only a few had succeeded in this, many expressed the hope that after completing their education, they would find employment in the place where they had worked in the summer or as part of their work training.

Interviewees noted that, by far, the most successful means of finding employment was through *personal networks* and having people recommend them to potential employers. Thus, most of the youth expressed the opinion that personal connections are crucial in finding employment. Building relationships with native Finns and learning how to market oneself have been proven to enhance asylum seekers' employability in Finland (Yijälä & Luoma 2018). One young woman, Leyla, even said that "only those who know you, or [when you] know someone who can recommend you, [then they] will hire you". Yet, the persons who had assisted the youth in finding employment varied. Some had *colleagues* recommend them after doing short-term, part-time jobs or else their *teachers* in the vocational training school had recommended them. For others, it was their *friends, parents' friends* or a *social worker* in the family group home who had recommended them. One young man reported that he had also often been employed by his parents, as they had family businesses, whereas another young man had gained employment through his pastor and other members of the local *church*. It seems that without the recommendations and help from various support persons, many of the youth would have struggled in finding employment. Thus, it is important that youths with a refugee background have good contacts, in particular with native Finnish people and immigrants who have been living in Finland longer.

Essential contacts can also be found through projects assisting young people to find employment. A project worker (for a project on employing young immigrants) explained how she had become an "older sister" or a "mother" figure for some of her clients. In her work, she can encourage the youth, especially when they do not have any adults to support them. This approach to her work

can, however, sometimes be exhausting, as she becomes too emotionally involved in some of her clients' situations. Yet, according to her, there is a fine line between encouragement and pushing – there is sometimes a need to consider when a young person should give up, how long one has to keep on trying. A case in point is one person with a refugee background interviewed for this study, who had applied for approximately 300 jobs with four professional degrees received in Finland. Only once did his officer in the TE office say that there is no point in him applying for employment in Finland anymore, that maybe he should think about starting his own business. A project coordinator (for a project on employing immigrants) voiced caution about the decision to become an entrepreneur. According to him, it is important that one truly understands what it entails. Also, whereas for some entrepreneurship may be what they desire and have the skills for, others may have to start a business if they cannot find any other employment. However, according to him, we must help people with an immigrant background to find employment if they so desire. The phenomenon of forced entrepreneurship is more common than the national average among immigrant entrepreneurs in Finland (Joronen 2012).

3.3. Youths' unemployment - experiences and reasons

Only three out of the 13 young people interviewed for this study had not experienced unemployment during their lifetime. This perhaps tells us something about the "double challenge" of finding work as a youth (i.e. age) with a refugee background (i.e. immigrant background/legal status) (Gauffin & Lyytinen 2017). Two of the youth who had never been unemployed had experienced

exceptionally successful careers, and one of them had just graduated from high school and she was continuing her studies. Out of the ten youngsters who had experienced unemployment, four were unemployed at the time of the interview. None of the youth interviewed had experienced long-term unemployment (of more than 12 consecutive months). Rather, their life was characteristic of short-term, fluid episodes of not only bouts of employment or unemployment, but also of work traineeships, volunteer work and continued education. Thus, the youths' life history did often not follow a linear path from education to employment. The youth perceived that they were unable to find employment due to various reasons: insufficient or no previous work experience, interrupted education or an unwillingness to continue doing yet another work traineeship. Some also felt they lacked the social networks needed for gaining access to the Finnish labour market.

Other experts interviewed for this study also summed up what they saw as the main issues affecting why the immigrant/refugee youth find it difficult to find employment. The multiculturalism expert (from the regional society for social security) suggested that there are particular challenges that affect youth with an immigrant background despite the status of their residence permit. The issues have more to do with their other background than with their immigration status. According to the multiculturalism expert, a youth's country of origin, native language and physical appearance affect his/her chances of being hired. The largest challenges, however, have to do with employers' lack of desire to hire immigrants. The employers often explain their decisions not to hire immigrants by giving practical reasons or excuses, such as a lack of Finnish language skills or that

“customers do not like it if a black man serves them” (multiculturalism expert). Other experts also identified the issue that it is particularly difficult for people from the Middle East and Africa to find employment because their appearance is so different compared to that of the native population (government counsellor, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment). Yet, the real underlying reasons can be related to assumed cultural features, discrimination and racism.

However, according to other experts, such as the head of integration services (TE office), the reasons why youth with a refugee background may not find employment are often similar to those for Finnish youth. What matters the most, according to her, is education and professional background. Also, in the TE office they do not register their immigrant-background customers according to their immigration status, and many EU citizens and refugees can face similar challenges in finding employment. Subsequently, the TE offices do not know how many of their clients are with international protection status.

The government counsellor (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment) suggested that similar issues hinder immigrants from finding employment in the Finnish labour market. According to him, there is no culture of reception in the Finnish labour market. Particularly since the financial depression of 2008, the Finnish labour market has not been welcoming. The general public also increasingly views immigration in a negative light, and the prejudices impacting working life are the biggest single reason why immigrants struggle to find employment. Yet, the government counsellor stated that such a difficult employment situation has not always been the case. In the 1980s, when

Finland received substantial numbers of Vietnamese refugees, there was still an economic boom and the newcomers integrated relatively well into the labour market. For Somalis arriving in early 1990s, the story was already rather different, as they came during the economic depression. Now, even children born in Finland are suffering the burden of depression that began with their parents.

The periods of unemployment have been very difficult, even traumatic, for most of the youth. Many had their daily routine completely changed. During the unemployment periods, some had difficulties in getting up in the morning, and others spent a lot of time watching TV and playing video games with friends, while also searching for jobs. Others had experienced low self-esteem and self-reported depression. Leyla, who was finishing her university degree, had experienced short-term unemployment periods that had been difficult for her:

I was so ... I remember that whenever I was unemployed, I was completely depressed. I was like, I cannot, I really cannot. ... My sleeping routine was messed up, and I did not get anything out of life. I did not do anything, and I did not feel that I was important. This will not work out; I will have to move. If I do not move, I will get stuck in the place where I am. Then all the horrible old things come into my mind, and "no, no, no", that is not a good thing. This is why I moved fast quickly away from it [such a state of mind]. (Leyla)

Feelings of exclusion and self-reported depression had led to situations amongst the interviewees where they reported finding it difficult to leave the house. Therefore, having close friends and relatives to physically taking the youth out, also for job interviews, can be crucial. Yet, youth

with a refugee background, like any other young people, ought not to be in a situation where leaving house feels paralysing. The prevention of unemployment is thus key to fighting marginalisation and social exclusion.

The people working in the local TE offices did not see the situation in quite the same way as some of the youth. An adviser for integration services (TE office), for instance, declared that in their region, they do not have any unemployed youth with an immigrant background. This was because the youth are "not allowed to be unemployed" due to the principles of the youth guarantee. In theory, no young person should be in a NEET position (not in education, employment or training). Also, the head of integration services (TE office) argued that they "examine" the youth and push them to actively look for work; they invite them to come visit the office. Despite all this, a project worker (for a project employing immigrant youth) claimed that the youth guarantee does not really function so well in actuality, not even with the native Finns. According to her, the authorities do not have time to get to know the youth, and thus, they do not know the issues behind their situations. Even if there are open vacancies, no one really takes the time to think about which young person would fit there the best. The project workers also often know much more about the youth than do the TE offices. For instance, they may know that someone is unable to work and can then assist the young person in receiving medical or psychosocial help.

According to the head of integration services (TE office), the main challenges in recruiting immigrant youth have to do with marginalisation, problems with managing everyday life, mental health issues, intoxicants, the wrong groups of friends, minor offences, a lack of motivation and

staying up all night. However, in addition to this, the immigrant/refugee youth also face prejudices in the labour markets. The fact that the media is uncritically reporting that asylum-seeking men are harassing young Finnish women is, according to the head of integration services, affecting their overall chances of being employed. Unfortunate events, such as crimes committed by a very few asylum seekers, can negatively affect many immigrants' opportunities in society. Yet, after the terrorist attack in the city of Turku in August 2017, which was conducted by a young man who had sought asylum, some positive reactions were also noticed. A project coordinator (for a project on employing immigrants) explained that after the terrorist attack, he had witnessed an increase in the number of companies taking part in the project for hiring immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers. He thought that perhaps the attack had opened the eyes of employers to understand that newcomers must be better integrated within society and that work is an important aspect of successful integration.

Young people with a refugee background may, however, face more personal issues when it comes to employment. Another project worker (for a project on employing young immigrants) explained that immigrant youth can face various challenges. Their expectations may be too high, and thus, they are unwilling to do other jobs besides the one they most desire. Many of her clients are in a NEET position (not in education, employment or training), and they may not even know what residence permit they have and how to apply for its continuation. Moreover, the lack of a willingness to learn Finnish well enough and constant worry about family members are often related challenges. Young men and women with a refugee background may also face mental health issues, which can get worse in Finland, particularly with a

prolonged asylum process. Some immigrant youth also struggle with homelessness, which can sometimes be the result of their undocumented position. According to the project coordinator, the youth have a great responsibility for helping their families, and only those who know where their parents are can really study.

Often the youth also do not have high educational ambitions, even if their parents may have such ambitions for them – the youth typically wish to commence working quickly after completing their compulsory schooling. Another project coordinator (from a refugee-related organisation) also emphasised feeling frustrated at reading in the media that immigrants come to Finland and then they do not work, when the reality is that they often want to work more than others do. A strong motivation to work was also highlighted by an adviser from integration services (TE office), who explained that the native Finnish youth, with whom she had worked for several decades, are much more difficult clients. Her young clients with an immigrant background in contrast are motivated, and they are eager to start their vocational training and find employment.

3.4. Employers' main recruitment strategies

The employers mentioned using numerous recruitment methods. The most common channels they reported using are *employment agencies* and *practical trainings* and *work trials* through educational institutes and the TE office. One employer (in the building trade) noted that due to labour shortages, it has been a necessity to change recruiting practices to find a new work force, and this has required a proactive search for potential employees through different channels. When asked if

they had always recruited refugees and people with immigrant background, the same employer answered as follows:

No, now we have clearly changed that, and in our recruiting practices the principle is that the one who does the job will be hired, and they are not Finns at the moment. So, I would say that I am more critical of the Finnish people than of immigrants because, at the moment, the ones who do the job are from somewhere else. (Building trade)

Several employers also had some experience working with different *projects* that aim to find employment for immigrants (building trade, cleaning firm, restaurant, health care). Other recruitment methods that the employers mentioned were *employment websites* (industry), a company's own *webpage* and *noticeboards* (grocery store), *work trials* (grocery store, interpretation firm, restaurant, industry) *apprenticeship training* (family group home), *job advertisements* (family group home, restaurant), *temporary posts* that often lead to employment (industry), *traineeships* that give one the qualifications needed for job (public transport company) and *employees' own networks* (cleaning firm, industry, building trade). The service manager of a cleaning firm specified why using personnel's own networks is such a good recruiting method for them:

When we have a good employee in our company who recommends someone he/she knows, it makes it so much easier for us to hire that person than if we recruited someone through employment agencies or the TE office... When you get recommendations for someone from your own personnel, it makes recruiting so much more intimate and their cultural communities, if we are talking about people with an immigrant background,

when one helps a friend to get a job, this person will never betray the one who helped him/her. They respect the work and do it according to the rules and instructions. (Cleaning firm)

3.5. Barriers and key factors determining the recruitment of refugees

When it comes to the factors that determine recruitment, the main barriers that employers mentioned were either related to skills that immigrants lack or some cultural features. These factors relate to immigrants' human capital, and they have been the subject of focus in other studies, but they cannot explain everything, and more focus needs to be placed on structural discrimination and employers' potentially unequal recruitment practices (Ahmad 2010). The most common reason for not hiring a refugee/immigrant was *insufficient language skills*, since many employers interviewed for this study required at least some knowledge of the Finnish language (grocery store, health care, industry, restaurants, logistics). Even though all the employers emphasised the importance of knowing Finnish and said that it was one of the most important requirements when recruiting new personnel, the later comments of few of them implied that it is not always necessarily so. The representative of a logistics firm said that knowing English would be enough for certain tasks, and a staff manager from industry and a restaurant manager also said that they have hired employees who do not speak Finnish:

But we have hired a person to [work in] the factory when we have known that there is another employee there who speaks the same mother tongue as this person in question, so we do not

see it as a problem because this other person knows both the foreign language and the Finnish language and can therefore teach others how to do the job. (Industry)

However, such employers were in the minority, and especially in customer service work it is still considered essential to know Finnish:

I think one must know Finnish in Finland. I am not ready to change this, and I think those who come here, whether they are refugees or immigrants, it would also be for their own good to learn the language of this country. (Grocery store)

One must know Finnish in order to be able to work in Finland. So, we have a lot of these people who are highly educated. There are lawyers, doctors. People from any field, graduated coders from the IT field. But they do not get a job because they do not know Finnish. (Cleaning firm)

Some employers also emphasised that even though it is important to know the language, they do not expect perfect fluency in Finnish:

I do not care whether you can write Finnish or not. I am just interested in how brave you are in speaking Finnish and how well you can manage in normal everyday situations. (Restaurant)

And if one is working in a grocery store and someone asks where the ketchup is, the response must be in Finnish, even if it is not perfect; it is just important that one understands the question and, as I said, it does not have to be perfect, but one must understand speech, normal everyday speech. (Grocery store)

The lack of language skills seems to indeed be a challenge that has come up in several other studies done in different countries as one of the most common explanations for not recruiting refugees in the first place or for no longer hiring them (Hurstfield et al. 2014, 14; Lundborg & Skedinger 2014, 18; OECD & UNHCR 2016, 4). In a study done in a Finnish context, Yijälä and Luoma (2018) found that there are not many work places in Finland where knowing English would be enough, and it has been pointed out by employers that even if it was enough in some places, there is a risk that the immigrant employee would be left outside the work community without a knowledge of the Finnish language. The challenge, however, is the fact that even though Finnish is needed and required in working life, there are not many courses that aim at providing advanced knowledge of the Finnish language. The authors also suggest that there should be more flexibility in language requirements so that a competent workforce would not go unused (Yijälä & Luoma 2018, 156).

Lack of work experience was mentioned by three employers (health care, immigrant barber shop, immigrant restaurant). However, not in all places is it a requirement to have previous work experience; one employer (cleaning firm) even said that “the less experience the better”. Three employers also mentioned that sometimes they have not hired a person after the probationary period if the person has turned out to be unsuitable for the work, has not learned how to do the job or if their language skills have not been good enough (immigrant restaurant, health care, cleaning firm):

And in some cases, the interview goes well and the Finnish language skills seem to be good enough, but sometimes when one starts working we notice that

the language skills are not good enough after all, which is a threat to patient safety and of course we cannot continue working with this person.

(Health care)

It is worth noting that the language requirement is not the same in all fields. An employer from the health care sector said that even if a person's language skills are not good enough for working in a hospital, there might be other options that they could recommend to some of their applicants:

And oftentimes we guide them to work somewhere else, for example with elderly people or something, because even though the language is also important there, it is not the same as it is here. We have critically ill people and challenging patients and all the equipment and systems and all, and therefore the language skills must also be on a higher level than with the elderly. Of course, they must be understood as well, but really it is possible to manage there with less language skills, and if there are some older people with dementia, it is a good opportunity to practice simple Finnish [laughs briefly] and improve it little by little. So, we have guided some applicants elsewhere because that would be a good way for them to get a job and improve their language skills by working, because it [knowledge of the Finnish language] does not get any better by staying at home. (Health care)

Cultural factors, such as wearing a hijab and attending prayer times during the working day, have also turned out to be barriers that have prevented the recruitment of workers with a refugee/immigrant background, but only two employers specifically mentioned these reasons (grocery store, restaurant):

Well, a few years ago a girl came in wearing a hijab, and I asked her about it, and she said that it is not going anywhere; then I said that according to the instructions of the chain, every employee must wear the same uniform. Nowadays, the situation might have changed; we could turn a blind eye to it and make a decision on a case-by-case basis. I actually have an idea that I may have seen someone wearing a hijab and there was even the logo of the store printed on it. (Grocery store)

One fellow came to ask for a job and said right away that he/she has prayer times at certain hours and that he/she needs to go to the city centre in order to attend these prayer times. But that was during the busy time in the restaurant, so I could not allow it. When it is busy, you cannot just go away. (Restaurant)

However, employers did not always see such cultural differences only as barriers, but as something to talk about and negotiate. The same restaurant manager continued by saying that it is important to be able to talk about cultural differences, such as one's desire to wear a hijab:

I remember when I saw her there, and I immediately asked her if it was a key issue, could it be different. But hey, if the person is ready to talk about it, we must also have the courage to ask about it... (Restaurant)

In some cases, the employers have had to give up on some requirements in order to find a new labour force. Especially in fields that suffer from labour shortages, it is the working life that had to change and adjust to new situations, not so much the employees. As the managing director of a building trade firm said:

We used to require knowledge of the Finnish language, and later we decided that English was enough, but now, at a moment when we are suffering from labour shortages, we have even given up on that and now some employees only know Russian; and we have hired a foreman who speaks Russian, Estonian and Finnish, so that is how it goes now; there is no longer a required knowledge of languages either.
(Building trade)

When asked whether the employers knew of other companies in the same field that had not recruited refugees or immigrants and for what reasons, at least one employer knew of some examples based on conversations with other colleagues (cleaning firm). Reasons such as *employers' insufficient language skills* (older generations of owners; cleaning firm, building trade), *trust issues* (without any specific reasons), *trouble complying with the timetables* and *lack of hygiene* were mentioned as well as *employers' inability to see that we are all human beings* regardless of nationality. This is how the employer described the situation:

Trust issues were one reason brought out [in the conversation], but there were no concrete explanations as to why. ... Maybe they lack the understanding that we are all human beings and not just "Finnish people" or "foreigners". But we are all human beings after all, and that does not change only because you are of a different colour or speak another language. ... If the work shift starts at 7PM and a Finnish person comes in at quarter to seven and the other person [with an immigrant background] comes in at five to seven, but is also wearing the working clothes at seven, then there is no difference as whether it

is five minutes or fifteen minutes, so long as they are both wearing the working clothes when the shift begins... But I would say that for the most part, it is about these people's fear of new things, of new people. And the lack of language skills... And if we are talking about companies that are smaller than us, lots of times there is this attitude of no foreigners. And when I have talked to friends and colleagues and asked them, why not foreigners, their response is that they cannot work [well]. And when I ask how they train them to do the job, the most common response is that the employers themselves lack the language skills, so they cannot communicate in English, even though there are web pages and all kinds of translation papers helping to familiarise someone with English. But maybe it is just that the owners of a small company are still working themselves and they are quite old, and therefore they see a person with an immigrant background as something unwanted in their company. (Cleaning firm)

Another employer (restaurant) presumed that some employers may be hesitant to hire immigrants if they do *not know their backgrounds* and also that *wearing a hijab* might be a problem for some employers. The same employer also mentioned that the *attitude of the management* is a key factor when recruiting new personnel; if the managers of an enterprise have a bias towards refugees or people with an immigrant background, that can be seen in recruitment choices as well:

And I would like to add that the reason why many companies do not hire immigrants is that it has something to do with the managers of the company.

They must give the green light to this thing. (Restaurant)

Key factors determining recruiting are numerous, yet there is variety in the requirements between different fields. The employers interviewed for this study mentioned again the importance of *language skills* (logistics, grocery store, health care, restaurants, interpretation firm), *specific qualities* needed for the job (building trade), *previous working experience* (building trade, grocery store, health care, restaurants, immigrant barber), *required qualifications* to do the job, i.e. having the proper education and certificates (health care, public transport company, family group home, restaurants, industry), and *cultural comprehension* (immigrant interpretation firm). However, not all the factors were related to an applicant's abilities; in some fields, *labour shortages* determine the recruitment processes (health care, building trade, public transport company), and one employer (building trade) highlighted the fact that anyone who is willing to do the job is seen as a potential employee: *"I think that is how it is nowadays, and the one who works the hardest and is willing to do the job should do it"* (Building trade).

Several employers also emphasised that *background does not matter* as long as the applicant is suitable for the job and is the "right person" for the job; the work community as such does not always require a certain education or working experience (logistics, grocery store, cleaning firm, restaurants, industry). As expressed by some of the employers:

I could also say that when we are recruiting through an employment agency, we are not searching for Finnish employees or foreign employees, we are simply searching for employees. And when we find a suitable

person, it does not matter whether that person is from Finland or somewhere else, it is all the same. (Cleaning firm)

We actually have one slogan only, and that is that "we hire the best ones". That does not sort out the nationalities or anything. (Industry)

Just like I said, almost anyone can fulfil our criteria; as long as you are suitable for the team, somehow an extrovert, enthusiastic to work and having some kind of [laugh briefly] language skills, then it is always possible to get recruited. (Logistics)

Some employers also mentioned that the reason for hiring immigrants is that they *want to give them a chance* (immigrant interpretation firm, building trade, immigrant restaurant), and they believe that immigrants *bring value* to the company (family group home):

I would like to give employment to those who otherwise would not get a job, especially since there is enough work in this field and we can provide a permanent job, and that is why I have been searching for them and have actively tried different channels... (Building trade)

Well, it [hiring refugees] is one of our principles, since we are working with refugees. It kind of brings value and increases the understanding of Finnish employees about this [type of] work. But our employees with a refugee background have been in the country for longer and they have overcome their traumatic past. Newcomers we cannot hire, as they first have to process their past. (Family group home)

3.6. Staying in the labour market after a successful entry

When asking the employers about the key factors for staying in the labour market after a successful entry, the answers were not very multitudinous; the most common answer was simply that *when the job is done well* it is already proof that the person has the right qualifications for the job (logistics, building trade, grocery store, family group home, restaurant). One employer (immigrant interpretation firm) emphasised that in order to stay in the labour market, one of the most important things is *to have faith in oneself*. Another employer (restaurant) said to recommend good employees to other employers, which may help them to stay in the labour market in the future:

And then there was this fellow whom I considered a really good waiter. I mean, really good. So, I have recommended this person to other restaurants, I have said [to them] "hire this person, he/she does a good job and is hardworking". So, this is what we do too. I guess no one was left unemployed from those who worked here.
(Restaurant)

But when the employers were asked whether they had any proposals for the future so that it would be easier to hire refugees or immigrants, many ideas came up in the interviews and many of the answers can be understood as factors that also would help refugees and immigrants both to get into the labour market in the first place and to stay there after a successful entry. One of the most common answers was again related to *language*; employers wished that there were more resources for language training because that would be a key to both entering the labour market and integrating with Finnish society

(logistics, grocery store, health care, immigrant restaurant):

It is again the language skills that is just the main thing and something worth concentrating on. Government funds should be invested in language training, since that is the key to happiness. (Grocery store)

That would just be a win-win situation for all if there was more of an available work force, but now we just have to reject some people because their language skills are not good enough; I see it as the major issue at the moment when recruiting new personnel.
(Logistics)

A need for more language training has been highlighted in other studies as well, as has the importance of acquiring a work-specific vocabulary (Hurstfield et al. 2004, 21; OECD & UNHCR 2016, 7). The importance of language for labour market integration was also brought up in several interviews with various experts. For instance, a volunteer coordinator (with a regional association for multiculturalism) argued that since Finland is a highly work-oriented society, work is seen as the main means to participating in society. Thus, according to him, immigrant integration is typically perceived to include two main aspects: work and language (i.e. Finnish or Swedish, the other official language of Finland, not English). The volunteer coordinator, however, suggested that in Finland we have become somewhat blind to other aspects of integration, such as participation, because we only focus on work and language.

Some employers also suggested that integration courses should concentrate more on informing refugees/immigrants about workplace practices (OECD & UNHCR 2016, 7). Related to this, some employers interviewed for this study also suggested

the need for additional *traineeships* and *courses* on Finnish work culture and society, for example more information about collective labour agreements and Finnish working methods (restaurant, public transport company). Several employers also advocated that it would be a good idea to facilitate the meetings of employers and potential employees, for example through *open recruiting events*, since in some fields finding a new labour force has been a challenge (building trade, restaurant). This is something that has been mentioned in another Finnish survey as well; Sjöblom-Immala (2006, 94) found that what most hinders the employment prospects of immigrants is that the potential employers and employees do not meet each other, and therefore, the immigrants do not have a chance to show their potential.

The representative from health care services pointed out that there should be more *individual career guidance* that would take into account both labour shortages (i.e. what are the fields where a new labour force is needed) and individual factors (i.e. what are the strengths and hopes of a person about one's future career):

They think that everyone is good at nursing there [laughs briefly], and that it is a suitable profession and people are needed in that field. Well, I think that when we are speaking of licensed practical nurses versus registered nurses, the problem is that in our organisation there is more work for registered nurses than for licensed practical nurses, and it is becoming more and more that way. We do not have that much of a need for licensed practical nurses, and therefore, I think they should be guided to study becoming registered nurses because [finding] employment would be much easier for them and that is how the

world is nowadays; in the health care field, higher education is required and that is why we no longer have that many positions for licensed practical nurses... I think it is an unfortunate tendency to guide so many people to lower education studies when it is already clear that many do not find employment... It is always the same; when the Nokia factories were shut down, people were encouraged to become licensed practical nurses, even if they were not even suitable for that and now it is the same with immigrants [laughs briefly]; it should rather be about finding out what their passion is and what they want to do. I feel like the supervisors of the studies often think in a very narrow-minded way about all the opportunities available. There is so much more out there. There are options and all kinds of interesting things... It is a bit the same here; I do not think that many supervisors of studies or other people for that matter know what kind of tasks we have here. It so easy to think that in a hospital there is a doctor and there is a nurse, and it is easy to say that someone should go and study nursing because there is work in a hospital, even though there is so much more to do in hospitals and all those opportunities are not necessarily well known. (Health care)

The same employer from the health care unit also wished that it would be easier for doctors to prove their professional qualifications in Finland, since they have already graduated in medicine in their country of origin and have probably already a long work history behind them. When asked what should be done politically so that hiring refugees or people with an immigrant background would be easier, one employer wished in general that the *bureaucracy was lightened*, because

currently the paperwork uses up way too many resources (cleaning firm):

Lighten the bureaucracy. Meaning that having a work permit should be easier without any unnecessary bureaucracy. When asylum is granted, having a work permit should be flexible and easy, not means-tested, because now it is not working. For example, in [name of the province] the cleaners do not get work permits, and when you ask why, the response is that there are already so many available workers. Well, where is that workforce then? (Cleaning firm)

Bureaucracy was sometimes associated with residence permits and the related permissions to work. A project coordinator (for a project on employing immigrants) pointed out how sometimes employees with an immigrant background do not know that they have received a negative decision on their residence permit or asylum application, as it can take a relatively long time to receive this information. There should be a system that would inform the employer more quickly, as they are the ones responsible for making sure that they only employ people with the legal right to work in Finland. Receiving this information on time from the Finnish Immigration Service was described as challenging. Another bureaucratic challenge is obtaining a residence permit based on work after having sought asylum. According to the project coordinator, like many other experts, most of the asylum seekers constitute a potential work force that Finland urgently needs. Yet, Finland is missing out on this potential, as it has been made almost impossible to receive a work-based residence permit. Moreover, many experts suggest that asylum seekers should be employed right from the start after they arrive in Finland. Then, social benefits

would not be needed to the extent that they are now.

When it comes to internships and traineeships, one of the employers said that there should be more *paid internships* to maintain the work motivation of the trainees (restaurant), whereas another employer pointed out that if there are no suitable applicants for some traineeships, it is better not to organise them since that would only be a waste of resources (public transport company). At least two employers said that it would be *more rewarding to work than to stay at home* doing nothing (immigrant restaurant, cleaning firm). There was also a suggestion that refugees who suffer from *traumatic experiences* should be able to get *professional help and support* right from the beginning after arriving in the country (immigrant restaurant).

At the governmental level, the Finnish integration law and policy is also an important matter to reflect on when it comes to not only immigrants' access to, but also staying in, the labour markets. In two of the expert interviews conducted at the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, labour market participation issues were discussed mostly at the national policy level. The senior adviser (integration services) pointed out how Finnish Integration Law has changed for the better over time. Whereas the 1999 law focused only on immigrants who were of working age and able to work, the amended law from 2010 includes everyone, including those who cannot work or are not working at the moment. Also, even though at the national level employment and unemployment are measurements of integration, there are other significant aspects that are considered of value to immigrants' integration into Finnish society. These include, among other things, their health, housing and education.

Moreover, since the increased number of asylum seekers arriving to Finland in 2015, the political discussions on integration have changed. First, according to the senior adviser (integration services), the entire integration process has recently been thought through and developed. Services are smoother than before because the government sees that every day spent in the “wrong place” costs too much. However, from the immigrants’ viewpoint, the integration path must be logical and motivating. Second, the senior adviser noted that immigrants’ integration has previously been in the political margins, but that since 2015 the situation has evolved. Integration matters are now receiving much more political attention and resources. This may be partly due to the fact that the current government is focused on growth and vitality – prior to this, asylum seekers were perceived as clients of social services, whereas now their skills and capacity are emphasised. Despite all this, the new national integration programme was delayed until September 2016, because the two main government parties always had to negotiate with the “Finns Party”, which is known for its anti-immigration politics. Moreover, the new national integration programme includes two primary focus areas: the Finnish government wants to enhance employment-based immigration and it wants to calculate the costs of hosting the asylum seekers (government counsellor, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment).

This uncertainty regarding integration matters at the national political level has been evident for a long time, explained the government counsellor (Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment). In Finland, integration matters were originally placed in the hands of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, because immigrant integration was something that no ministry

understood. Then, in 1996, integration matters were shifted to the Ministry of Employment. This was not due to the importance of employment to the integration process, but rather to issues related to the ministries’ personnel. In 2008, the Ministry of Employment was shut down. Then, the discussion on integration was shifted towards the realm of internal security and police matters. The minister of the interior received political support on his treatment of immigration as a security and police issue. Integration matters were again moved in 2009, this time to the Ministry of the Interior, where such matters remained until 2011. After that, integration matters were explicitly related to the issue of employment, and they were again placed under the direction of the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment. Again, apparently no other ministry was willing to take the lead on integration matters. A relatively small Centre of Expertise in Immigrant Integration was launched by the ministry in 2014. Yet, during the season of Lauri Ihalainen’s tenure, until the year 2015, integration matters were treated separately from other issues handled by the ministry. Again, since 2015 and under the direction of Minister Lindström (True Finns), employment has been high on the political agenda with respect to integration matters, stated the government counsellor.

3.7. Experiences, advantages and disadvantages of hiring refugees

In general, all the employers stated that they had been very pleased with their refugee/immigrant employees. *Particular advantages* they mentioned were their *diligence* and *strong motivation* (logistics, building trade, grocery store, immigrant interpretation firm, restaurant), *commitment* and *strong work ethic* (grocery store, industry, restaurants). Here are some

of the employers' experiences with and thoughts on their refugee/immigrant employees:

They are hardworking and highly motivated; they do not complain much. It is quite clear that we Finnish people are used to having it all good, and the Finnish employees who come here learn quickly to complain about anything and everything, whereas these people with a foreign background are just pleased to have a job.
(Logistics)

Their willingness to work and how they, well let's just say that a person can do miracles when there is enough will, and I have seen what one tiny step or some guidance in right direction can do, ... how far it can carry [someone].
(Interpretation firm)

I think in some cases these refugees outcompete the Finns in recruitment situations. It is their attitude, it is so good, and their attitude makes them "super humans". Not all the Finns have such an attitude, they [refugees/immigrants] are ready to do anything. (Restaurant)

Their commitment is tremendous, and their work ethic is often stronger than our native population's. (Grocery store)

Some similar attitudes were expressed in a Norwegian case study as well (Friberg and Midtbøen 2018, 15–16); oftentimes, the employers compared their workers with an immigrant background and the native-born Norwegians, saying that immigrants are hard-working, they have a stronger work ethic and they are more flexible compared to the native workers, who employers often seen as being lazy and lacking all the good qualities that the immigrants had. It should,

however, be kept in mind that sometimes employees with an immigrant background feel that they must always be healthy and available. Yet, in reality they may suffer from trauma or other issues, but they are too afraid to reveal this to their employers due to the fear of losing their job (head and adviser of skills development services, TE office).

In some workplaces, the immigrant employees may *share the same cultural background* and *mother tongue* as clients, which was also mentioned as an advantage by two employers (family group home, health care).

And now that we are having immigrant clients as well, for example in the delivery ward there are a lot of clients with an immigrant background, it is a benefit if we have employees who share the same mother tongue with our clients, so that we do not need to call up an interpreter. (Health care)

A few employers said that their employees with an immigrant background *do not complain* as much as the Finnish employees do (logistics, grocery store, industry, immigrant restaurant). Likewise, *flexibility* was one of the positive features that several employers mentioned, and couple of employers (health care, public transport company) specified this by saying that the immigrants' flexibility in working during the Finnish holidays, for example during the Christmas season, made it easier to plan work schedules. However, not only did the employers talk about the positive features of their immigrant employees, but also the advantages that they brought to the company. Several employers mentioned that they *enliven the workplace* (building trade, health care, restaurant, logistics, grocery store), have *new points of views* and *promote cultural exchange* within the work community (health care, cleaning firm,

family group home, restaurant). Some of these above-mentioned advantages are almost identical with the findings from another Finnish survey (Sjöblom-Immala 2006, 89), where employers said that the positive effects of having employees with an immigrant background are, for example, that they enliven the workplace, that they bring language skills and cultural knowledge, and that they are diligent in their work.

I would say that in this company, we are all interested in other people and other cultures and we have had interesting conversations; for example, when we have been waxing the floors at night time... We have some deeply religious people working here, they are Muslims who study the Quran... and some really interesting aspects have come out of the conversations, and we compare Christianity and Islam or Hinduism or something else, and we have had really good conversations. And not once have we been in a situation where it was not okay to speak. One thing we make clear in the job interviews is that everyone has a right to believe in whatever one wants to believe in, but it is not allowed to impose those opinions on other people. These are personal rights, and it has worked well here, never have we been in a situation where someone would say to another person that "you should believe in this" or "you should be a Christian" or anything like that. It has worked on balance and everything has gone surprisingly well. (Cleaning firm)

Others mentioned that immigrant employees *bring their professional skills* just like everyone else (health care), and especially during the labour shortages their *work contribution has been valuable* (building trade). Several employers told that

having immigrant or refugee employees *creates a positive image of their company* and they simply *bring value* to the workplace (logistics, cleaning firm, family group home). Some of these findings tally with the ones presented in a study done by Hurstfield et al. (2004, 7), in which it was found that for some employers in the UK, it is a part of their recruitment strategy to hire refugees: the two main reasons for such a strategy were, on the one hand, labour shortages and on the other hand, their desire to promote diversity in their work community:

We want to be open-minded because we are an international enterprise, and we would look quite reserved to outsiders if we only had certain types of people working here. For us, it only enriches [the workplace] all the more if we have people from different cultures here. (Logistics)

Immigrant employees may also have *valuable contacts with immigrant communities*, which was considered a benefit by one company (family group home). Other advantages that the employers mentioned were *honesty* (restaurant), *politeness* (public transport company), *diverse language skills* (industry), *good manual labour skills* (building trade) and a *good personality* (health care, restaurant). Almost all the employers said that they are going to hire immigrant or refugee employees in the future as well. Some of them said that background does not matter, and they are going to recruit suitable applicants regardless of nationality, whereas for other employers it seemed to be an intrinsic value to have people with different backgrounds.

All kinds of people belong to our work community and I think that is a positive thing. And they are hardworking. Sometimes I wished that

these Finnish people would learn from them, their [refugees/immigrants] attitude is just right. (Restaurant)

The only employer who said he/she would not to hire employees with an immigrant background was an employer from a barber shop, an entrepreneur himself with a refugee background. He explained his views by saying that the next time he hires someone, it is going to be a Finnish employee because he wants to break down the barriers and show people that immigrants and Finnish people can work together. Related to this, another immigrant employer (interpretation firm) also had similar ideas about how Finnish people, too, should learn to integrate with this changing society, which is not a homogeneous community.

I consider myself as someone who helps the Finns integrate. I help the Finns integrate to this new society, in other words, it is our society as well; it is mine and my family's, for example. I live here, so it is no longer just a white Finland, but it is more like a grey Finland now. (Interpretation firm)

When it comes to *disadvantages*, employers mentioned factors such as a *lack of Finnish language skills* (logistics, public transport company, health care, industry, restaurant) and certain *cultural differences* (building trade, family group home, restaurant). *Different working methods* were also seen as a challenge (building trade, cleaning firm, restaurant), and in some cases they were related expressly to cultural differences. As the managing director in the building trade said:

Sometimes we have challenges because the Finnish culture and working methods differ from their own culture, but usually they learn to do things in the Finnish way... In Finland, people

work on their own initiative and there is this mentality of doing it "come hell or high water", but in their culture there is more hierarchy and more authorities, and only when someone tells you to do something, do you do it. But when they turn their back on you, nothing happens. So, to learn to do things on one's own initiative would be important. But it is also important to ask if there are any doubts... Often we get employees who are really good workmen, but they should learn to take the initiative more... (Building trade)

Employers from the restaurant sector and a public transport company were somewhat on common ground with the managing director from the building trade. They said that their immigrant employees' *work ethic* has not always been very good or that they are not always familiar with Finnish work practices. The restaurant manager with an immigrant background mentioned as an example that sometimes their employers assume that they can have a day off for almost any reason; if their baby has been crying the whole night, the father may want to stay at home, even if the mother is at home too with the baby, or if there is a party coming up, some employees think it is a good reason for not coming to work. The managing director of the public transport company said that they have also had situations where some of their employees take a day off, for example in order to accompany their wife somewhere and be an interpreter for her, and then they wonder why they do not get paid for that day. Another restaurant manager said that not all the employees understand that they must come to work at a certain time according to the work schedule, or that sometimes it is necessary to be flexible and stay a little longer if there are still clients in the restaurant. The same employer also wished that, expressly for these reasons, there was

a course about Finnish working methods for those employees who come from somewhere else. It is interesting that some of the employers who shared their experiences with their employees lacking a strong work ethic are same employers who had also praised their immigrant employees' strong work ethic earlier. There is not necessarily any contradiction between their comments, but it is presumable that these employers may have had specific individuals in mind when they talked about their employees; so when they are asked about their negative experiences, they probably talk about their experiences with one specific employee with whom they had challenges, and, correspondingly, they do the same when talking about their positive experiences. One employer (building trade) said that sometimes employees' excessive consumption of alcohol had been a problem as well as the *interrelations between some certain ethnic groups*, which was also mentioned by another employer (public transport company). *Cultural features* such as praying and wearing a hijab were mentioned as challenges by two employers (grocery store, restaurant):

The cleaning firm that works here, with their employees we have had a situation where these fellows suddenly throw their rugs down on the washroom floor at a certain time and start to "yodel". In this case, we have made an agreement that they need to go to their own dressing room, meant for the cleaning staff, and not do it here in the middle of the day while we have customers here. That we cannot accept; but we have reached a consensus on this. I think in the future, when they build new commercial centres, there must be prayer rooms and all, but so far, we have managed to resolve this issue by agreeing on where they need

to perform their rituals. (Grocery store)

Two employers also said that they have had challenging situations when they have been accused of *racism* either after giving negative feedback on a job performance or for not hiring a person with an immigrant background (industry, health care). In a few workplaces, some of these above-mentioned problems have either been solved already or there have been experiments in order to find solutions. For example, in the health care unit language training has been organised sometimes in the workplace during the working day:

We have had experiments in which a language trainer came here to the hospital and stood with the immigrant employee in the operating room [laughs briefly] helping with the language the whole time, and [the person] was kind of teaching the language on the job... So the idea is not to go and sit in a classroom, but to learn the language at the same time as one is working, because that is what it is all about: the necessary language skills needed on the job and how well you can manage when you are having a conversation with the patient and how well you understand what your colleagues are saying. (Health care)

Likewise, according to the report by the OECD and UNHCR (2016, 4), some employers see the benefits of on-the-job language learning and consider it as an effective method to learn the language, and they also think that "initially limited language skills should not be a reason to avoid hiring asylum seekers and refugees". They reported not always seeing cultural differences as challenges, but also as an opportunity to view, for example, conventional working methods from a new point of view:

And then there are things that Finnish people would do differently only because they are Finnish, and people from somewhere else would do the same thing in another way because of their own cultural background. So, sometimes we have been in situations where we need to negotiate, but usually we find good solutions after asking, should we do it like this because we are in Finland, or should we do it the other way just because it is not normally done like this in Finland?
(Family group home)

Sometimes solutions to different problems have emerged as time has gone by and experiences with multiculturalism have increased:

I suppose that way back, we have had all these questions about what to do when someone wants to wear a hijab and someone wants to pray and whatever during the workday, but we do not really have these questions anymore. We have made instructions already years ago about how to proceed if someone wants to wear a hijab, and we actually have hijabs for them, so it is not an issue anymore. We have dealt with these things already before. (Health care)

As experiences with multiculturalism increase, there is a chance to share such expertise and those experiences with companies that have not acquired knowledge about how to deal with multicultural issues yet:

I actually received a question from [a large company new to recruiting refugees/immigrants] that has recruited a lot of new personnel recently, and now they have confronted the same issue and they asked, "how have you solved these things? We have

stringent hygiene requirements and they want to wear hijabs"; and then they realised that maybe they should ask us, who work in the health care field, because maybe we could help. And since we had ready-made instructions about these things, I was like "yeah, sure, for us there is no problem at all". (Health care)

This issue has been discussed in other studies as well. Sjöblom-Immala (2006, 95) confirms in her study that in the case of a potential labour shortage, companies that already have some experience with recruiting immigrants have the advantage over firms that do not. Those with experience have much more knowledge about recruiting practices, and possibly some problems related to multiculturalism have also been solved already in the work community. Moreover, the adviser from skills development services (TE office) reported that employers have different attitudes, for instance if Turku is compared to Helsinki. According to him, in Turku one needs to know the Finnish language and there are more prejudices, whereas in Helsinki, the capital city of Finland, such prejudices are less because there are more immigrants and they have been there longer.

Even though some challenges do not always get resolved, the challenges do not necessarily pose an insurmountable barrier for all employers:

Last summer, I had an employee who did not understand what I was saying; this person did not know any Finnish or English, but only his/her own language and he/she would always respond to me "all right". But nothing happened. And every time this person said "all right" I knew that nothing was understood... I wanted to keep him/her; I wanted this person to go

forward with this task... I kept him/her until the end; it was a fixed-term contract. I kept this person because he/she learned something, I am sure that he/she learned some Finnish language and also some Finnish working methods, and so on. Even though I almost lost my mind sometimes [laughs]. (Restaurant)

The employers also mentioned disadvantages that were not directly related to their immigrant or refugee employees, but rather to other, external factors that had turned out to be challenges either before or after recruitment. For one employer, the biggest challenge was *to even find employees* in the first place (building trade), while two employers said that *bureaucracy* makes recruiting immigrants more difficult than it should be (cleaning firm, immigrant interpretation firm). As the entrepreneur from the interpretation firm described his experiences when asked about whether he had faced any challenges when recruiting refugees:

The decisions of the authorities are torpedoed by other authorities. Someone says that you need to do these things if you want to be a Finnish person or if you want to go forward with your life in Finland. You do as they say, but then another authority comes there and says that you cannot do this, and the other one says that you must do that. And the actions of the authorities in the banks is one thing, internet banking services have already turned into a cliché... Another thing is the immigration office; they say you should get a job, but they require you to have the salary of a doctor in order to bring your family here, or they say you need to work, but then they say that you need to have Finnish nationality, so what do you do? They

take away your chances to have power over your own life... (Interpretation firm)

The employer from the health care services also pointed out that especially for doctors who come from outside the EU as refugees and without certificates, the *process of proving themselves to be qualified to practice medicine is extremely long and hard* and they are often left alone with this process. The above-mentioned points were mainly pre-recruitment challenges, whereas the following matters challenges faced after the recruitment phase. One employer (public transport company) mentioned that sometimes there were challenges in *customer situations* and referred to racism and prejudices that their immigrant employees encounter in their work on the part of the clients. In some cases, *other employees' attitudes* towards the immigrant employees might have been quite negative (building trade, health care, cleaning firm), even if, according to the employers, they never really led to actual conflicts in the work communities. The managing director from the building trade mentioned that some of their Finnish employees have quit their jobs partly because they have hired so many immigrant employees there. Likewise, every now and then some of their Finnish employees may beforehand make some stereotyped comments about immigrants, but once the immigrants start to do the job, such prejudices are often dispelled. The staff manager from the health care field told about their experiences in the work unit:

And I am sure that there are all kinds of thoughts and things going on here, but maybe those people in the work communities who think in negative way about employees with a refugee background keep their ideas to themselves [laughs briefly], so they [the tensions] are not visible here in

everyday life. And we have a policy of zero tolerance for indiscreet behaviour, so if someone acts like that towards some immigrant employee, we would intervene in the situation... (Health care)

Some employers also mentioned the challenges that their immigrant employees may have had to overcome because of their background or history. For example, the representative of a family group home said that their employees with an immigrant background may sometimes be *burdened with more work* for speaking the same language as their (non-Finnish-speaking) clients. In other words, their young clients may more easily confide in workers who speak the same native language as they do themselves, and this may sometimes be a burden to the employees. Two employers also brought out the fact that refugees may have had quite *traumatic experiences* in their past and be constantly worried about their family and friends who were left behind, which may have an effect on their wellbeing and job performance (public transport company, immigrant restaurant). Discrimination towards immigrants in the labour market is quite challenging to verify in surveys, although its existence has been demonstrated in several field experiments (Lundborg & Skedinger 2014, 14). Even though discrimination did not come up explicitly in the interviews and in the employers' own attitudes, it did come to light in the comments of two employers: the service manager of a cleaning firm knew other companies in the same field that had not hired immigrants due to prejudice and the owner of the barber shop had his own experiences to share about discriminatory behaviour. He explained that he had applied for 300 jobs without getting any work, even though he was educated and had the right qualifications for the jobs. Eventually, his only chance to find employment was to start

his own business as a barber. For some immigrants, self-employment is, indeed, the only way to find employment (Forsander 2013, 226). As the interviewee in question said, the emergence of immigrant enterprises does not necessarily mean that all immigrants want to have their own businesses, but rather because it is the only way for them to avoid unemployment.

4. Conclusions

Refugee youths' *educational paths* differ significantly, in particular due to their age at the time of arrival in Finland. Taking sufficient time to learn the Finnish language well enough has been important for their educational success. Most the young people interviewed for this study have completed their primary and upper secondary schooling in Finland. The youth have various educational attainments, ranging from having completed primary school to higher education degrees and diplomas. Several of them share the experience of not having been encouraged by their teachers or others to pursue further education. Typically, the youths' educational and career paths have not been linear; instead, many of them have later on found the educational choice they felt content with. Other events in life have impacted their education as well, such as having to return to their parents' country of origin as a teenager, trying to be (re)united with their spouse or parents, or having to change their field of studies due to self-reported mental health issues.

The youth have *found employment through various mechanisms and personal networks*. Some have applied for open vacancies in their field of expertise and been hired. A few of the youth had also utilised official online employment sites when searching for jobs. Some had directly walked into companies or offices to ask for employment. The TE office (i.e. the public employment and business services) has been able to assist some of the youth in their job seeking efforts. However, many of the youth felt that the local TE office had barely or not at all helped them. The youth interviewed for this study have had at least one, but typically several, work traineeships (paid by the TE office or as part of their studies). Yet, hardly anyone had been recruited for paid positions after the

traineeships. Personal networks and connections seem to be key to successful entry into the Finnish labour market. These have included, among other things, teachers, colleagues, friends, parents' friends, social workers and the church. Some of the interviewees elaborated that without such networks, they would not have been able to find employment.

None of the youth had experienced long-term *unemployment*. Rather, their life was characteristic of short-term, fluid episodes of not only employment or unemployment, but also work traineeships, volunteer work and education. The youth perceived that they were unable to find employment due to various reasons, such as insufficient work experience, interrupted education, unrewarding traineeships or a lack of social networks. The periods of unemployment have been difficult, even traumatic, for the youth. Many had their daily routine completely changed. Others had experienced low self-esteem and self-reported depression, which had led to social exclusion.

The *employers' recruitment strategies* were numerous. However, they did not note any specific differences between hiring refugees or native-born workers. The recruitment methods vary to some extent in different companies, yet the most common method for all the employers was to recruit new personnel through employment agencies and using the services of a local TE office. Especially companies that have suffered from labour shortages have found it necessary to change the recruitment strategies and be more proactive to find a potential new labour force. However, several employers still found it quite challenging to find new employees in the first place, and the problem seems to be that the employers and the employees do not an easy way of meeting each other. For some

employers, the bureaucracy of hiring refugees was one of the biggest challenges.

The *factors determining recruitment* vary in different sectors, and even though almost all the employers considered language skills important, in reality the importance of such skills is not the same in all places. For example, health care units have strict requirements for a certain education and good language skills, including a knowledge of the professional vocabulary, whereas in the building trade or in a factory it is not that essential to have any a certain education, previous working experience or Finnish language skills. Many employers emphasised the importance of a good personality over formal competence and said that the background of an employee does not matter so long as the person is suitable to the work community. For some employers, recruiting refugees/immigrants was also an inherent value in and of itself. The barriers determining recruitment were often related to language skills, and for most of the employers it was the main reason for not hiring refugees or immigrants. Especially in customer service work, it is considered important to be able to communicate in Finnish; in most cases, employers did not see it as an option to learn the language while working, but rather expected the employee to have already acquired some knowledge of the Finnish language. Sometimes cultural features have also prevented the recruitment of refugees; for example, in some places attending prayer times during the working day and wearing a hijab have been barriers to recruitment. However, in other cases the requirements have changed over the years due to labour shortages and simply because the world has changed; a knowledge of certain languages may no longer be as important, nor is wearing a hijab seen as a problem either. Since all the employers had reportedly mostly had good

experiences with hiring refugees and positive attitude towards them, no discriminatory behaviour was expressed in their answers. However, discrimination was brought out indirectly in the responses of two employers; one knew some examples of other companies in the same field that had not hired refugees or immigrants, while the other one, an entrepreneur with a refugee background, had some personal experiences of discrimination after applying for jobs for so long that eventually he felt his only chance of finding employment was to start his own business.

When employers were asked about the *key factors that support staying in the labour market* after a successful entry, the most common answer was simply that when the employees do a good job, it will help them stay in the labour market. But when the question was taken a little further, and the employers were asked about their ideas on how to make recruiting refugees easier, the responses were more varied, though many of the employers said that familiarising the refugees with Finnish working methods and society and putting more effort into language training would help the refugees to both find employment and to stay in the labour market in the future.

The employers had mostly had *positive experiences* with their refugee and immigrant employees. In particular, they highlighted their employees' diligence, motivation, strong work ethic, commitment and cultural knowledge, especially in those fields where the clients also have an immigrant background. Many employers also appreciated the cultural exchange and liveliness that their employees with an immigrant background brought to the workplace. Some of the *negative experiences* were related to the same themes as the positive ones: in some cases, the employers were rather disappointed in their

employees' work ethic and working methods and viewed the cultural differences as a challenge. The major obstacle was a lack of language skills, which was mentioned by almost all the employers. However, many employers also emphasised the fact that their refugee/immigrant employees are all individuals, just like everybody else, and each individual has her/his own strengths and weaknesses. Seeing the employees as individuals could also explain why some of the employers' comments seemed to contradict one another somewhat; on the one hand, they embraced their refugee/immigrant employees' work ethic and diligence, but then on the other some of the same employers were also disappointed in the work performance of certain refugee employees. For companies that already have a lot of experience with multicultural issues, some of the challenges had already been resolved by the time of the interviews, and such companies have also had an opportunity to share their experiences and knowledge with other companies with less familiarity in the subject.

Overall, the findings of this report demonstrate that not only are the backgrounds of employees becoming more diverse, but also the Finnish labour market is slowly adapting to such changes. Even if the pressure is still largely on the refugees and other immigrants to integrate with the labour market, there are also encouraging signals about how the Finnish labour market and employers are "integrating" and adapting to the new employees – some of whom may have received international protection from Finland. These findings are promising because Finland needs more employees, including those with an asylum seeking and refugee background, and in order to succeed, labour market integration has to be a truly two-way process: both refugees and the Finnish labour market

need to adapt and find common ways to "integrate".

5. References

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6. Appendix

A. Tables of interviewees

Youth		
Pseudonym	Education and employment/unemployment	Date of the interview
<i>Arrived with their family through resettlement as children</i>		
Pohjoinen	University of applied sciences degree, employed, no previous unemployment	8.7.2016
Mohammed	Vocational school degree, employed, previous unemployment periods	26.7.2016
Leyla	BA, MA student/volunteer work, previous unemployment periods	3.11.2016
Sema	High school diploma, employed, previous unemployment periods	27.7.2016
<i>Arrived as unaccompanied teenagers</i>		
Maria	Completed primary school, unemployed, previous employment periods	8.7.2016, 12.10.2016
Jeyte	Vocational school degree, unemployed, previous work traineeships	2.9.2016
Sakke	Vocational school student, work traineeships and previous unemployment periods	24.11.2016
Dahir	Vocational school student, previous work traineeships and employment periods	9.2.2017
<i>Arrived with family as teenagers</i>		
Ahmed	High school diploma, entrepreneur, previous unemployment periods	4.7.2016
Telma	Vocational school degree, unemployed, previous employment periods	16.11.2016
Azadeh	High school diploma, university of applied sciences student, no unemployment periods	17.11.2016
Miro	Vocational school degree, employed, previous unemployment periods	17.11.2016
Teija	University of applied sciences degree, employed, no unemployment periods	10.2.2017

Employers		
Line of business	Title	Date of the interview
Interpretation firm & restaurants	Entrepreneur with immigrant background	25.10.2016
Family group home	Social worker in charge	26.10.2016
Cleaning firm	Service manager	13.12.2017
Restaurant	Restaurant manager	19.12.2017
Logistics	Chief	3.1.2018
Building trade	Managing director	10.1.2018
Grocery store	Managing director	10.1.2018
Public transport company	Managing director	25.1.2018
Health care	Staff manager	26.1.2018
Industry	Staff manager	16.2.2018
Restaurant	Restaurant manager with immigrant background	13.9.2018
Barber shop	Barber with immigrant background	15.9.2018

Other experts		
Line of expertise	Title	Date of the interview
Recruitment company for temporary work	Immigration expert	2016
Humanitarian organisation	Project coordinator	27.1.2016
Family group home	Social worker	6.5.2016
Public employment and business services	Head of integration services	7.7.2016
Public employment and business services	Head & adviser of skills development services	18.8.2016
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment, Integration Services	Senior adviser	1.9.2016

Regional association for multiculturalism	Volunteer coordinator	25.10.2016
Regional society for Social Security	Multiculturalism expert	25.10.2016
Refugee-related organisation	Project coordinator	25.10.2016
Public employment and business services	Adviser for integration services	23.11.2016
Project on employing immigrants	Project coordinator	12.10.2017
Project on employing young immigrants	Project worker	19.10.2017
Ministry of Economic Affairs and Employment	Government counsellor	30.11.2017

B. Interview script for youth

1. Starting the interview

- How would you describe yourself; who are you?
- Could you tell me your life story, i.e. the events and experiences that have been important to you? You can start at any point and use as much time to tell me your life story as you like.

2. Education in Finland

- Could you tell me about your experiences in school/education in Finland?
- What is your best and your worst study experience? Could you tell me about them?
- Have your studies in your home country and during your travel to Finland affected your studies in Finland?

3. Employment and finding work in Finland

- Could you tell me about your employment and your work experiences in Finland? (*Map the chronological periods of employment*)
- What kinds of experiences have you had regarding finding work? How have you found your current and previous jobs?
- Have the employment services or any other official actor assisted you in finding work? If they have, how did you experience that assistance?
- Could you tell me about the different jobs you have had and your experiences related to them?
- How do you feel about going to your current job and being there? Could you share with me how a normal day at work is for you?
- Can you trust your employees and your colleagues (of Finnish or other

nationality)? Could you provide me with a few examples of this (mis)trust?

4. Unemployment in Finland

- Have you been unemployed in Finland? (*Map the chronological periods of unemployment*)
- If you have been unemployed, what kinds of experiences did you have during that time?
- How was your everyday life during unemployment?

5. General integration in Finland

- Do you remember the time when you first arrived in Finland? What sort of experiences and feelings do you associate with that memory?
- Do you feel that you are integrated in Finland? (And your family?)

6. Coming of age in Finland

- What changed when you became 18 years old, and how did you experience these changes?
- Could you tell me, what things are easier and what are more difficult now that you are more than 18 years old?
- Have your childhood/youth experiences in your country of origin and/or during travel impacted your youth/adulthood in Finland?

7. Moving to Finland

- How did you/your family make the decision to leave your country of origin?
- Could you tell me about your travel/journey from your country of origin to Finland?
- Did you study and/or work during your travel time? If you did, could you tell me about that?

8. Country of origin

- Could you tell me about your life in your country of origin? What do you remember about that time?
- How was your time in primary school/high school/other education in your country of origin/during your travel?
- Did you have dreams or plans regarding studying while you were still in your country of origin?
- Did you work and/or were you unemployed in your country of origin? If so, could you tell me about these experiences?
- Did you have dreams about employment while you were still living in your country of origin?
- What was your family's reaction to your educational/employment desires and plans?

9. Future

- What plans do you have for the future? Could you share with me, how do you think your life is going to be in 10 years' time?
- What plans do you currently have for your education and employment?
- How do you think that your experiences in life so far affect your future?

10. Ending the interview

- Do you have anything to share with me that have not discussed yet, but you would like to tell me? Or do you have any questions for me?
- How do you feel about this interview? How did you feel about discussing these issues with me?

11. Background information, if not already covered

- First name? Age? Nationality? Education? Employment/profession? Marital status? Time in Finland?

C. Interview scrip for the employers

1. Background information

- The field of business, size, administration, history, characteristics of the employees (e.g. number of immigrants and main nationalities)
- Interviewee's position, employment history in this company, etc.

2. Recruitment strategies

- What are the most important factors that impact who you employ?
- Have you recruited immigrants (i.e. non-native Finns)? Do you know whether or not some of your employees have a refugee/international protection background? Are any asylum seekers?
- Have you had refugees/asylum seekers as trainees/interns/volunteers? How about asylum seekers?
- Have you received any official support to hire them (e.g. pay subsidy)?
- If you have hired people with a refugee background, why have you done so?
- If you have not yet hired people with a refugee background, what are the reasons? Have you had refugees applying for your open vacancies?

3. Experiences with recruiting refugees

- What kinds of experiences have you had regarding hiring refugees?

- From which countries are they from, and how old are they?
- What have been the most important positive aspects of employing people with a refugee background?
- What have been the main challenges in employing refugees?
- How are people with a refugee background found their place in their work community? Have other employees included them as part of the work community?
- Has the work community somehow enhanced refugees' integration (e.g. language training)?
- How are your employees with a refugee background? How are they as members of the work community?
- In your expertise, what are the main issues that advance refugees' access to and staying in the labour market?
- Do you think that employment can somehow enhance refugees' integration into Finnish society? If so, how?

4. Plans for the future

- Are you going to hire people with a refugee background in the future? Why/why not?
- What kind of a role have your employees with a refugee background played in the success of your business/organisation?

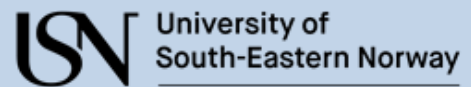
About the project Coming of Age in Exile (CAGE)

CAGE is a research project based on collaboration between five leading research institutions in the Nordic countries; the Danish Research Centre for Migration, Ethnicity and Health, University of Copenhagen, Denmark; Migration Institute of Finland, Finland; Norwegian Centre for Violence and Traumatic Stress Studies and University College of Southeast Norway, Norway; and Centre for Health Equity Studies, Stockholm University and University of Gothenburg, Sweden.

CAGE brings together a pan-Nordic, multidisciplinary team of leading scholars and research students to shed light on some of our time's most pressing social challenges related to the societal integration of young refugees. CAGE will provide analyses and insights to inform policy and practice related to health, education and employment among young refugees arriving in the Nordic countries and beyond. CAGE is funded by the Nordic Research Council (NordForsk).

CAGE was developed within the "Nordic Network for Research on Refugee Children" and its sister network "Nordic Network for Research Cooperation on Unaccompanied Refugee Minors".

You can read more about CAGE at www.cage.ku.dk



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