



**Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers' Perspective on the  
NGOs' Function in Terms of Labor Market Integration  
(Malmö - Sweden)**

**Case Study: Ensamkommandes Förbund**

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## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that no part of this dissertation has been submitted or accepted for any other degrees in any other institution. It contains no material previously written or /and published by any other person, except where appropriate acknowledgement is made in the form of bibliographical reference.

## **Abstract**

The Asylum seekers' integration is a vigorous and multidimensional process for which resolute effort of the both target group and the host society is inevitably entailed. Yet, the findings of this study shows that it is not easily achieved due to certain challenges which should be tackled. This research paper concisely aims to examine how the target group experience integration into the Swedish labor market. The study further seeks to explore how the target group perceives the role of NGOs and their policies adopted to integrate them into the Swedish labor market in Malmo. Through a sound analysis of the primary and secondary material, this study elucidates the NGOs' role and policies in this field. The findings discovered as a result of this inquiry, noticeably depict that the NGOs, through their different measures and diverse policies, have tried to cope with their humanitarian mission; however, the outcome have been divergent.

**Keywords:** *asylum seekers, NGOs, unaccompanied minors, labor market integration, Sweden.*

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## **List of Abbreviations**

<b>CRC</b>	Committee on the Rights of the Child
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>EEPO</b>	European Employment Policy Observation
<b>ExCom</b>	Executive Committee
<b>EU</b>	European Union
<b>NGOs</b>	Non-Governmental Organizations
<b>OECD</b>	The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
<b>UNHCR</b>	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
<b>UN</b>	United Nations

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# 1. Introduction

Despite the vast number of immigrants emigrating from their country and seeking refuge in other countries, especially European countries, their integration has remained a contested discourse among policy makers since 2015. Due to an effectual integration, immigrants' inclusion would be successfully maintained in the receiving countries. Such outstanding result hinders parallel communities to be shaped by the ethnic groups within the host societies. However, this is often not a simple case as it requires more talented measures adopted by policymakers and also contribution of certain entities such as voluntary bodies connecting the host society to the newcomers. In the light of the aforementioned, the basis of my thesis is to explore the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in integrating the asylum seekers into the Swedish labor market. Due to the absence of controlling power of the State sectors, Willetts (2006:4) claims that the NGOs, as private sectors, have a chance to discover the challenges and barriers with which the target group struggle in the process of their integration.

According to Beresnevièiûtë (2003:96), integration is a two-way process by means of which minorities turn to be part of a society. Beresnevièiûtë (ibid.) argues that active presence of the different ethnic groups and their adaptation to the host society's norms and values do not allow the heterogeneities stemming from their ethnicities at variance, to lead them to be marginalized from the community. The migrants' integration would happen if it is associated with the majorities' inclusionary measures and mutual understanding. Beresnevièiûtë (ibid.) also points out this importance that, as a consequence of successful integration, not only solidarity would be maintained between the different society members but also a cohesive community would be constructed. Beresnevièiûtë (ibid.:97) further proclaims that a sustainable and productive integration would be a key base for the ethnic groups' development and growth. Beresnevièiûtë (ibid.:98) also emphasizes that such evolution is fruit of the multi-dimensional feature of integration triggering the minorities to grow in the host society. Owing to the importance of the issue, the path of immigrants' integration needs to be alleviated by the host society through the governmental as well as non-governmental entities.

Also, considering the integration issue in a broad context, i.e., at European Union level, one perceives how the importance of immigrants' integration has been constantly emphasized. To instantiate the case, I refer to the Common Agenda presented by the Commission of the European Communities (2005:3) on the momentousness of the third-country nationals'

integration when residing in one of the European Union Member States. According to the Common Agenda set forth by the Commission (ibid.), the European Union (EU) through following an aggregated well-reasoned approach, has underlined the indispensability of the third-country nationals' integration into not only the host society but also the labor market. The Commission (ibid.) also clarifies that, by virtue of an effective integration into the host country's labor market, the desired objectives of the *Treaty of Lisbon* would be achieved. To increase the scale of protection of the vulnerable immigrants against discriminatory measures and also, creating solidarity between the minority and majority, the Commission through its legislation and putting emphasis on certain rights, has paved the ground for them to be secured in the host societies.

In this vein, the Commission gives a specific importance to enhancement of the fundamental rights and common basic Principles, especially Principles of Anti-Discrimination and its relative legislation; e.g., the Directive 2000/43/EC dated 29-June-2000 implementing the Principle of Equal Treatment between persons irrespective of their racial or ethnic origin (ibid.:4). Actually, the goal of EU's planned strategy was nothing except tackling and being successful in dealing with the structural hurdles putting the vulnerable immigrants and ethnic minorities in a weak and fragile position in the receiving countries. In order for meaningful solidarity and purposeful unanimity to be maintained among the EU members, the EU has adopted roadmap policies. In this alignment, as per the Agenda of the Commissions, European Fund for integration of the third-country nationals, as a solidarity tool, has been proposed by the European Union to its member States in order for their financial requirements for carrying out their vital mission, i.e., integrating the target group, to be met (ibid.). Moreover, according to the proclamation of UNHCR Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's Programme (2005), the Member States by virtue of the Human Rights Principles as well as their Treaty obligations may exercise the local integration in order for the international solidarity to be maintained within the EU Member States. This document indicates the noteworthiness of the target group's integration into the host society, which would, ultimately, lead to a sort of harmony within the EU members.

Integration due to its pivotal role in including the minorities into the host communities, has been of great concern to the receiving countries; however, there are still serious challenges and obstacles impeding it to emerge and function in such a way that the desired results to be achieved. As a consequence of failed integration, the researches show that the immigrants can



be subject to unrecoverable damages; e.g., mental health problems, financial problems, social tension, segregation, etc. (Sosa, et al., 2016;14-22; Klarenbeek, 2019:11). According to some scholars, the receiving countries, in certain aspects, may inevitably bear huge costs over the long term if successful integration is not shaped (Sosa, et al., 2016:14). Sosa and his associates (ibid.) believe that the costs would be generated due to growth of unemployment rate and increase of the State's debt. These scholars (ibid.:14-22) also explain that ethnic groups' unproductivity and their inactive presence in the host labor market triggers them to be financially attached to the subsidies and social assistance which is allocated to the poor social agents. Further, Sosa and his colleagues (ibid.:50) are of the opinion that inactive and slow integration and lack of immigrants' revenue leads to fiscal cost augmentation, as a consequence of which social tension would increase.

As to the NGOs, Klugman (2000:96) claims that such organizations, especially the professional ones, can have distinguished role in the societies to the extent that, sometimes, even the public policies and the government's performance may be influenced. According to Klugman (ibid.), NGOs as non-profit entities are independent of the States' influences. Depending on their various missions and activities, they are diversified in types (ibid.). NGOs in different levels of international, regional and local, are regarded as mediators between the State and society. With the presence of these bodies, which act as saviors, the unperformed jobs of the States would be carried out and, consequently, the gaps in specific fields, will be plenished and filled up (ibid.).

## **1.1. Motivation**

During my course of study, I was always so keen on investigation regarding the asylum-seekers' labor market integration. In fact, for the same reason, I opted to perform my internship course in the same field in a Non-Governmental Organization; i.e., Ensamkommandes Förbund, following which I was even more motivated to further conduct my thesis to promote my knowledge as more relevant to the point of my research questions.

## **1.2. Aim**

In this paper, firstly, I aim to merely focus on the labor market integration of unaccompanied Afghan asylum seekers who have immigrated to Sweden; secondly, to explore the target groups' standpoints on the performance of the NGOs, especially Ensamkommandes Förbund, when dealing with integrating the target group into the labor market in Malmo; thirdly, to

discover the foundations structuring the target group's perceptions toward NGOs' function; and fourthly, to find out how Ensamkommandes Förbund integrates the target group into the labor market in Malmo.

### **1.3. Research Questions**

In line with the aforementioned purposes, the following questions have been designed:

1. How is the NGOs' function understood by asylum seekers in the context of labor market integration in Malmo?
2. What are the pivotal pillars constructing the target group's perception?
3. How do the NGOs operate to integrate the asylum seekers into the labor market?

## **2. Literature Review**

In this paper, I aim to specifically focus on the vulnerable unaccompanied Afghan youths whose asylum applications were rejected by the Swedish Immigration Office. Then, after ratification of the Swedish 'Secondary School Law' in 2018, their visas were extended and, in result, they had golden opportunity to attend high school and get their diploma. After graduating from high school, their visas have been extended for another one year in order to enable them to find a job. However, this is not apparently a simple issue as they have faced many challenges. A big body of my research focuses on immigrants' inclusion into the labor market in Sweden as well as the NGOs' role in shaping the asylum seekers' integration into this field. To portray the role of the NGOs, I may refer to some researchers claiming that these organizations are considered as entities that facilitate migrants' integration into the host societies (Odorige, 2018:4; Valutis, 2013:2; Polar, 2020). Moreover, according to the report of Eurofound (2016:27), the NGOs have significant role in being the voice of vulnerable migrants in the host communities. As per the mentioned report (ibid.:29-30), these volunteer organizations have the potential to fill the gaps stemming from the host society's policies which trigger the asylum seekers' integration to be challenged and/or they face remarkable impediments in practice; e.g., in Austria, language courses are funded and provided merely for the refugees by the State; therefore, to meet the demand for such courses, the NGOs have a crucial role in helping and providing the asylum seekers with language courses for being included into the society both socially and culturally (ibid.:29-30). As per the report of European Employment Policy Observation (EEPO) (2016:19), asylum seekers confront obstacles when they lack social networks in the host countries.

According to the report of EEP's (ibid.), social networks are considered as a sturdy bridge linking the migrants to the labor market in France, Netherland, Austria, Bulgaria, and the United Kingdom. Regarding the migrants' exclusion in Swedish labor market, Englund (2002:3) states that segregation phenomenon is immensely observed in the Swedish labor market, in terms of not gender but ethnicity. Englund (ibid.) also adds that some migrants, unavoidably, turn to self-employment in order to get released from the unemployment cage. Englund (ibid.) further argues that African-born and Asian-born migrants are highly subject to discriminatory measures and have serious challenges in the Swedish labor market.

In Sweden, the NGOs such as 'Tamam' and 'Oppna Dörren', are regarded as key joints connecting the asylum seekers to different industrial sections of the labor market by means of which, the scale of their integration into the labor market have been noticeably boosted (Cetrez et al., 2020:26). Through rehabilitation schemes, the NGOs such as the Swedish 'Red Cross', play a substantial role in restoring the vulnerable target group to normal life and health via therapy (Polar, 2020:27). As per Nilsson (2020:8), there are certain NGOs, such as 'Right To Play', as an eminent Swedish NGO, which endeavors to foster inclusion of the unaccompanied youth in the labor market by making them involved with recreational and sports activities.

Further, the focal point of 'Right To Play', revolves around boosting the unaccompanied minors' self-esteem, education, language, skills and job experience in order for their chance for employment to be escalated (ibid.:8-9). To smooth the way for the target group's integration into the Swedish labor market, 'Right To Play' endeavors to establish strong relations with employers because they believe that integration is a two-way process, the both parties of which should get involved in this procedure (ibid.). Bontenbal and Lillie's Research Project (2019:2), on the ground of migrants' labor market integration, shows that the scale of services, rendered by Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), for easing the migrants' penetration into the Finnish labor market, is not remarkable and unfortunately lacks the essential efficacy. In this regard, the researchers further argue that the failure of CSOs originates from the intricate feature of the Finnish bureaucratic regulations and lack of sufficient information about those rules demanded by the migrants (ibid.).

As per Bontenbal's and Lillie's claims (ibid.:3), despite the fact that the migrants have been assisted in writing their CVs and carrier planning, or even been offered internship by some CSOs within their organization, unfortunately, these measures have not been sufficient for a

large number of asylum seekers and/or refugees to be integrated into the host labor market. In this vein, Bontenbal and Lillie (ibid.) suggest that the target group needs to be furnished with more information on the complicated rules relating to the Finnish labor market and also, the types of services provided by CSOs, of which most of the migrants are unaware.

Moreover, according to the comparative research on the first and second generation of immigrants in the countries of France, Germany and the U.K., conducted by Algan et al. (2010:27), it is evidenced that the labor market appetite for the natives is much more than the individuals holding an immigrant background. Furthermore, Dahlstedt (2015:37) claims that discriminatory measures and/or devaluation of migrants' education or job experiences puts them at unfair conditions in the receiving countries; in consequence, they have to undergo not only lower scale of employment but also unfair salaries. In this alignment, Chiswick and Miller (2009:1-2) state that the migrants inevitably face kind of mismatch due to lack of the transferability of their skills and education. In other words, the migrants have to be engaged in low level occupations which do not always accord with their level of education and/or the level of their salaries would be remarkably lower than their native peers (Dahlstedt, 2015:38).

As per the EEPO's report (2016:20), the other serious challenges causing hindrances on the asylum seekers' path toward the labor market integration, may be related to psychological and/or physical trauma which adversely affects the target group's mental and/or physical health, and as a result, they do not show interest in looking for a job. Moreover, the EEPO's report (ibid.) indicates that the dependance of the vulnerable unemployed asylum seekers on the skimpy benefits and welfare support granted by the host State, may shape the ground for these group of people to choose food and housing as their first priority. Further, according to the EEPO's report (ibid.), the employers refrain from employing the target group due to lack of housing. Therefore, as a consequence of such remarkable hurdles, the asylum seekers' segregation from the labor market will be prolonged and/or hindered.

What I have presented above, is a brief summary of some previous surveys and probes conducted in the field of asylum seekers' integration into the labor market and their challenges.

## **2.1. The Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)**

The term Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) became prevalent by the United Nations in 1945 (Willetts, 2006:3). Willetts (ibid.:4-5) while claiming that there is no specific definition for the NGO, suggests certain common pivotal features attributed to the NGOs which include: (1)they should be independent of direct control of any government; (2)they cannot be constituted as a political party; (3)they should be non-profit-making; and finally, (4) they should be neither a violent nor criminal group. Willetts (ibid.) also argues that the determining boundaries distinguishing them from the other organizations are not, sometimes, clear as crystal; i.e., despite of the fact that they should be non-profit-making bodies, but at the same time, they are allowed to create certain financial sources via their commercial activities in order to provide themselves; e.g., sales of publications and/or consultancy contracts. Willetts (ibid.:10) further explains that, based on the scope of the NGOs' activities, they can be structured as local, regional or international. According to Willetts (ibid.:15), the NGOs on the basis of their type of activities, would be categorized as either operational or campaigning. The operational NGOs achieve small-scale change directly through their projects while campaigning NGOs achieve large-scale change by influencing on the political system. The activities, in which the NGOs are engaged, are varied and include, but are not limited to, environmental, social, human rights, promoting social and political change, improving communities, protecting animal rights; etc.

With respect to the voluntary organizations' role in the public policy, some NGOs deny their involvement in such issues; however, there are some scholars such as Willetts (ibid.:18) who has another position in this regard. Willetts (ibid.), conversely, draws attention to the fact that the NGOs, should not be regarded as uncontroversial and non-political groups, yet it cannot be generalized and would differ from case to case. Interestingly, Willetts is of the opinion that NGOs, as active political bodies, indirectly, affect structure of the public policy and the social discourse (ibid.).

## **2.2. The NGOs in Sweden**

Onsander (2007:6) argues that, in Sweden, the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), which were previously known as 'Popular Movements', amongst others, include Political Organizations, Churches, Trade Unions, as well as Solidarity and Interest Groups. Onsander (ibid.) also states that the named bodies have played a remarkable role in constructing the Swedish society. According to Gyllensvärd and Sandberg (1989, cited in Onsander, 2007:6),

the 'Popular Movements', emerged with the aim of laying a groundwork, in national level, for the protest movements against the religious, economic, political and social status. Gyllensvärd and Sandberg (ibid.) declare that the 'Popular Movements' turned up during the time when most people lacked the power and opportunity to challenge the existing respective policies in Sweden. Micheletti (1995, cited in Einarsson, 2011:666) professes that Popular Movements were considered as cornerstone for Sweden to experience a democracy system in the late 1800s and early 1900s. Lundström and Wijkström (1997:6-14) argue that Popular Movements owe their distinctiveness to three remarkable elements of: (1) clarity in their administration and functions; (2) their membership availability to the social agents; (3) financially supported by the public. Wijkström (2011:32) proclaims that the notion of Popular Movements was the foundation for creation of civil society in Sweden.

Concerning the capabilities of the NGOs, the researches show that the NGOs hold the potentiality to be impressive via their operation not only in national level but also in international level; e.g., Onsander (2007:7) is of the opinion that the role of Swedish NGOs had been conspicuous on the ground of not only 'the state-owned development' cooperation at national level, but also partaking in the activities with the purpose of fortifying the development of the poor countries at international level. According to Onsander (ibid.:13), some Swedish NGOs have been significantly evolved to the extent that they have been able to cope with implementing advanced projects with their partners in developing countries. To instantiate the case I may refer to 'Diakonia', a Swedish NGO, which has had a key role in furnishing facilities for Sweden to be linked to Latin America with the purpose of help and humanitarian measures. Löfving and his associates (2021:91) argue that 'Diakonia' due to its noticeable capacities and effective function, along with its partners, has been able to challenge the public policies to the extent that the State's initiative pertaining to human rights, environmental protection, racism and exclusion was positively influenced in Peru. Although, this case may fall out of field of my paper, but I was eager to give hint of a successful Swedish NGO in a broader perspective in order for to portray the capabilities and potentials of a productive NGO, too.

At the local level, there are also certain successful NGOs that have had a noticeable role in generating harmony within the Swedish society. To instantiate the case, I can refer to 'Yalla Trappan' which is a Non-Governmental Organization located in Malmo. 'Yalla Trappan' has been established with the aim of integrating the migrant women into the labor market (Yalla Trappan, n.d.). This voluntary organization by means of creating jobs in different fields such as

Sewing Studio, Cleaning Services, Conference Services, Café and Catering Services has provided facilities for the jobless women who need to not only have effective and dynamic presence in the society but also become financially empowered and stand on their feet (Yalla Trappan, n.d.). Also, ‘Yalla Trappan’ via its invaluable measures has succeeded to have a significant role in making Malmo more socially sustainable.

### **2.3. Ensamkommandes Förbund**

The Association of Unaccompanied Minors or ‘Ensamkommandes Förbund’, which is located in Malmö, has been established in 2013 (Ensamkommandesförbund, 2022). Ensamkommandes Förbund is a Non-Governmental Organization and its target group consists of the unaccompanied young refugees and asylum-seekers, who are at the age of 16-30 (ibid.). The organization started its activities with the aim of providing certain facilities for the target group’s improvement and integration into the society (ibid.). The named NGO has provided a cozy and safe place for the migrant young individuals to hang out with each other. The target group is also provided with help for their homework; snacks; social and brief legal advice; food; cultural programs; recreational activities such as football, swimming; etc. (ibid.). ‘Ensamkommandes Förbund’ (ibid.) through offering various workshops on the topics such as health, drugs, addiction, sex, discrimination, racism, mental health, etc. conveys useful information to the target group. Moreover, the young participants are furnished with certain information on the Swedish labor market and also, they are guided and helped how to write and prepare their CV and Personal Letter (ibid.).

In the next chapters, I would like to discuss more about ‘Ensamkommandes Förbund’, as a case study, and examine its function on the ground of integrating the target group into the Swedish labor market.

## **3. Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of this paper has been built upon certain theories including (1)Social Integration Theory; (2)Social Capital Theory; (3)Discrimination Theory. The selected theories helped me (a)to elaborate how certain elements influence the integration process of the unaccompanied asylums seekers; (b)to find out what the role of NGOs are in integrating the target group into the labor market in the host society and finally; (c)to explore the nexus between organizational rules and labor market integration.

### 3.1. Social Integration Theory

Social Integration Theory was originally developed by Emile Durkheim (Berkman et al., 2000:844). Durkheim believes that the individuals are subject to robust forces applied by the social agents (LibreTexts Library, 2020). Bjerre (n.d.:4-11) respectively argues that the robust forces, suggested by Durkheim, are social powerful coercions stemming from actions and reactions which have determining impacts on the individuals' behaviors.

Moreover, the notion of 'collective consciousness', which was initiated by Durkheim (Pearce, 2005: 220), has been defined as a mutual understanding and recognition as well as the shared norms, values and beliefs by means of which social agents would be connected to each other and, consequently, social cohesion would emerge (LibreTexts Library, 2020). In this way, the minorities would find a chance to place themselves within the mainstream community and to become part of it. According to Nielsen (2005:741), solidarity will take shape in a society when expansion of the bond between social agents, reciprocal perception, recognition of values, communication and interaction among different groups come about. Nielson (ibid.) claims that this golden goal would be within reach if Durkheim's 'Collective consciousness' to be developed in the societies.

Bosswick and Heckmann (2006:2), define the concept of 'social integration' as cooperative and stable relations existing in a social system; however, they frame it as a two-way process. Bosswick and Heckmann (ibid.:9) also posit that social integration has four diverse dimensions, which are interrelated. According to Bosswick's and Heckmann's (ibid.:9-10) further clarification, the four dimensions of the integration include: (1)*structural integration* which means that the migrants have access to the rights and positions in the core institutions of the host society such as: labor market, educational system, housing system, etc.; (2)*cultural integration* refers to the fact that the migrants can enjoy the rights and positions if the host society's core cultural and social knowledge; e.g., language, is learned by them; (3)*interactive integration* implies that the new-comers are included in the relationships and social networks such as marriages, partnerships, friendships, etc.; and finally (4)*identificational integration* alludes that the migrants have a feeling of belonging to the host society.

Moreover, Cruz-Sac (2008:2) claims that social integration makes it possible for the members of the society to benefit from similar rights, opportunities as well as the services which their



peer mainstream group holds. In this vein, the minorities would be able to participate in social, economic and political life on the basis of equal rights and opportunities through which their dignity is also protected.

For my discussion, I am going to apply this theoretical framework to analyze how certain measures can have decisive role (adversely or positively) in the target group's' integration process within the Swedish labor market.

### **3.2. Social Capital Theory**

The Social Capital Theory has been presented by three different sociologists named James Coleman, Robert Putnam and Pierre Bourdieu; however, they developed the theory from different perspectives (O'Brien, & O' Fathaigh, 2005:66). When applying this theory to the case under study, one may deduce that networks can have a positive role in the labor market integration process of vulnerable target group who find themselves alone in the host country where no friend and/or no family exists to help and support them. Despite of the fact that this theory has been developed by three different sociologists, I just focus on the one initiated by Bourdieu as it is very relevant to my research case.

Coleman (1988:S100), in his Social Capital Theory, has emphasized on the importance of the social relationships between individuals. In this vein, he claims that the society members work as facilitators of actions. According to him, when the community lacks such facilitators, the society would be negatively influenced (ibid.).

According to the Social Capital Theory of Robert Putnam (1993 cited in O'Brien and O' Fathaigh, 2005:66), a dynamic collaboration within different bodies leads to a reciprocal benefit. Considering Putnam's definition of Social Capital Theory, O'Brien and O' Fathaigh (2005:66) deduce that, there are three constituent integral elements shaping Putnam's theory which include: 1)moral obligations and norms; 2)social values; 3)social networks such as family and more peculiarly voluntary associations, etc.. According to Putnam's Social Capital Theory, the role of networks, amongst others, is highly crucial in boosting the society and also easing the collaboration within parties, by means of which mutual benefit would be attainable (ibid.:67).

The Social Capital Theory of Pierre Bourdieu explicitly elucidates the reasons why under-presented groups kept to be marginalized in specific fields of the society (ibid.:68). As per Bourdieu's definition, social capital is a cluster of "the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of [...] relationships [...] which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively-owned capital" (Bourdieu, 1986:248-249). To put it another way, social capital is a collection of real or prospective resources which is attached to the stable networks enjoying a reciprocal understanding. Social capital helps not only the individuals, as a specific group members, but also the group itself to strengthen. As a result, each member would find a chance to be supported by a collective capital and benefit from the credit and merit granted by the group. The notion of 'capital' which is an important element in the theory of Bourdieu, has three subdivision which include: (1)economic; (2)social; (3)cultural. Bourdieu explains that *economic capital* refers to financial resources; *social capital* implies social relations and networks; and finally, *cultural capital* alludes to the emblematic (symbolic) wealth which is socially valuable to be owned, e.g., pictures, books and so on (O'Brien, & O' Fathaigh, 2005:69). To determine one's status in a specific area and demarcate his/her position, all of the three types of capital need to be taken into consideration (ibid.:69). In other words, the more capital, the stronger position of the social agents in the community.

Moreover, Fukuyama (1999:3) claims that existence of social capital per se cannot be imagined without relationships as it embodies in the relations which nurtures collaboration between the social agents. Social capital is regarded as a virtue for its holders and has key advantages which, amongst others, include: decline in depression risk, increase of the chance of employment (Kaplan and et al., 1987:206); hampering social isolation and also, creating solidarity (Granovetter, 1973:1378). Conrad (2007:4) further argues that, when social capital functions as 'bridging', it paves the way for individuals to enjoy a better life condition; for instance, if an employee makes friends with his boss, this type of relationship would help him, most likely, to get higher position and be promoted in the company. Also, Beresneviūtė (2003:104) posits that social capital is fruit of horizontal relations established within the individuals and groups, whose correlation has been built upon trust and social interaction in result of which, the floor would be open for the society members to actively participate in the social affairs (ibid.). Beresneviūtė (ibid.) also claims that social capital triggers the agents to get socially stronger as a consequence of which, the scale of their engagement in the social context would be promoted.

Considering the above, I believe that the Social Capital Theory of Bourdieu makes one understand how different social capitals, i.e., networks of family, friends and voluntary organizations, etc. influence one's employment status. This theory while referring to the importance of networks, clarifies how networks are considered as valuable catalyzers for the individuals' growth and progress in their path of life. As this paper is focusing on the role of NGOs in integrating the vulnerable target group into the Swedish labor market; therefore, I am going to merely concentrate on the Bourdieu' Social Capital Theory which is specifically pertaining to unprivileged migrant group in the society and the role of social networks in facilitating their pathway to social progress.

### **3.3. Discrimination Theory**

Discrimination Theory has been presented by Fibbi, Midtbøen & Simon (2021:28). Focusing on the organizational level of discrimination in their theory, these scholars (ibid.) argue that organizational rules can play a significant role in implementing discriminatory measures. The Discrimination Theory of Fibbi and her colleagues (ibid.) sheds light on the fact that certain rules governing the organizations, in terms of recruitment, affect the selection behavior of the employers. As per Discrimination Theory, the organizations (employers), at meso-level, interpret the applicants' ascriptive nature such as nationality, ethnicity, religion, etc., as 'signals' when selecting them (ibid.). By doing so, the applicants would be adversely affected by the recruiters' selective measures as they are just rejected on the basis of the so-called 'signals'. Fibbi and her colleagues (ibid.) claim that the employers, in the process of selection, do not have any information about the job seekers' productivity, knowledge, skills and merits. In other words, the 'signals' are the only bedrock for the recruiters' decision-making which triggers discrimination to be shaped at organizational level.

Moreover, Reskin (2003:2-12) proclaims that 'organizational practices' are products of 'societal mechanisms' which cause inequality via defining groups; having preferred treatments; and categorizing the social agents in an ascriptive manner. In this vein, Tilly (1998:224-225) further draws attention to the significant role of organizational dynamics under umbrella of which the in-group while holding big share of resources, endeavor to exclude the out-group, as a consequence of which 'social inequalities' would turn up. Fibbi and her colleagues (2021:28), believe that distinctions between in-groups and out-groups are used as tools in order for inequality and imbalance to be not only created but also legitimated. According to Fibbi and

her associates (ibid.), the two influential factors causing discrimination within social groups includes: (i)exploitation, which leads to unfair distribution of wages and (ii)allocating opportunities to in-group, which triggers the others (out-group) not to have access to the resources.

To be successful in penetrating into the host labor market is a driving force hindering the target group to be placed in lethal stagnation status. Attström (2007) holds that employment is considered a dynamic tool making the individuals get effectively and vigorously involved in the society. In support of his claim, Attström (ibid.) argues that discrimination in the labor market not only triggers the worthy human resources to be wasted but also jeopardizes the migrants' success in being integrated into the society. Discrimination causes minorities to be excluded from the society as their full contribution in social, educational, economic and political spheres would be greatly limited (Fibbi, Midtbøen & Simon, 2021:66). According to Goffman (1963:14), the minorities' life chances would be noticeably diminished due to discriminatory measures. Some of the costs attributed to discrimination include: 1)exclusion from the labor market; 2)poverty; 3)urban residential segregation; 4)minorities integration decrease; 5)group cleavages and intergroup conflict to be sharpened; 6)social cohesion to be threatened; 7)minority's unfavorable positioning in terms of education, housing & life satisfaction; 8)negative impacts on the marginalized group's health in terms of physical and/or psychological status (Fibbi, Midtbøen & Simon, 2021:66-68).

Considering the importance of discrimination issue and its negative effects on the disadvantaged target group, I intend to apply the Discrimination Theory to support my discussion henceforth.

## **4. Research Design & Approach**

Research design refers to the overall framework of a research based on which an investigator organizes the blueprint of the research and also, decides which approach(es) should be used in order to study the research problem (Creswell, 2014:32). As per Creswell (ibid.), there are three types of research designs which include: (a)qualitative, (b)quantitative, and (c)mixed. Respectively, Creswell (2013:69) further states that the research design should be determined in order for probing not only to be revealed as advanced research but also the inquiry to be analyzed in a proper way. Creswell (2009:30) also argues that, there are certain feasible

strategies determined for conducting qualitative research which have been suggested by other scholars; however, the approaches suggested by Creswell, includes: (1)ethnography, (2)phenomenological research, (3)case studies, (4)narrative research, and also (5)grounded theory studies.

Below, I will present the design and approach which is to be deployed in my research paper.

#### **4.1. Qualitative Research Design**

Considering the rich features of qualitative design, I will apply qualitative research design. According to Creswell (2016), qualitative design enables the researchers to avail multiple data resources such as interviews, documents, audiovisual data, etc. In addition, Creswell and Creswell (2018:41) both are of the opinion that researchers by applying qualitative design, can get a better perception of the definitions attributed to a social issue by certain people or groups.

Hence, I would like to apply inductive qualitative research design because it provides me with a profound understanding which triggers the problem to be deeply investigated.

#### **4.2. Case Study Approach**

As per Creswell (2009:30), there are certain feasible strategies determined for conducting qualitative research; however, the approaches recommended by Creswell, includes: (1)ethnography, (2)phenomenological research, (3)case studies, (4)narrative research, (5)grounded theory studies. According to Simons (2009:21), case study is an approach, through which a particular policy, system, organization, etc. is thoroughly scrutinized and comprehensively understood in the real world. According to Creswell (2013:98), a specific case, which may be an individual, a group, an organization, etc., would be precisely examined via deploying the case study approach.

Therefore, I apply single case study approach in order to provide rigorous answers to my research questions. To do so, I would like to focus on one specific NGO, Ensamkommandes Förbund, in order to find out how it functions when dealing with integrating the target group into the labor market in Malmo. And also, to respectively discover the viewpoints of the target group toward this NGO.

## 5. Methodology

To find the answers to the research questions, first my position in terms of ontology and epistemology should be determined. To do so, I present this chapter which covers the debates pertaining to my ontological and epistemological perspective.

### 5.1. Ontology

Marsh & Furlong (2010:17) argue that ontological and epistemological perspectives are both considered as pivotal elements in determining the social scientists' orientation to the issue under study. The ontological position precedes the epistemological position, as it inherently deals with the 'being' per se (ibid.:18). Moses and Knutsen (2019:199) are of the opinion that, when the researchers look at issues through the lens of constructivism, it is perceived that the investigators' ontological position revolves around this stand that the natural and social world are not the same, as the social world is constructed by history, society, thoughts and language.

Hence, holding a constructivist ontological vantage point, I intend to explore how the target group understand the role of the selected NGO when integrating them into the labor market and the pivotal factors leading to such socially constructed perceptions and also, how the NGO manages to cope with its mission in this respect.

### 5.2. Epistemology

At the second stage, after shaping the ontological position, the epistemological orientation should be taken into account and specified. According to Marsh and Furlong (2010:18), through designating a certain epistemological orientation, the researchers would find the answers to the questions: (1) what we may learn and know about the real world and (2) how the respective knowledge can be achieved. Moses and Knutsen (2019:199), profess that, at this phase, it is indispensable that one profoundly perceives the relations between different components in the context of the whole in order to achieve knowledge about the social world which is of a constructed nature.

Therefore, from an epistemological perspective, I believe that via applying semi-structured interview as a suitable method, rich and genuine knowledge would be derived from the target groups' statements about the NGO under study. Then, through interpreting the target group's

notions, the patterns of their real cognition and insight toward the NGO would be ultimately explored.

## **6. Data Collection Method & Selection of Material**

In this chapter I present the sources through which I endeavored to find the answers to the research questions. The sources of the needed data comprise the primary source and the secondary source. My primary source of material hinges on the semi-structured interviews.

According to Creswell & Creswell (2018:188), gathering data from documents is not time-consuming and can be obtained when it is opportune. Therefore, I, as a researcher, used extensive related documents as a secondary source as it was deemed to be of great help for finding exhaustive answers to the research questions and also, making it more comprehensible and tangible for the readers.

### **6.1. Semi-structured Interview Method**

To collect the needed genuine data directly from the sources of knowledge, I applied semi-structured interviews, which is one of the applicable methods to the inductive qualitative design. According to Moses & Knutsen (2019:130), interview is a tool for exploring reality. Despite of time-consuming feature of the interview method (Adams, 2015:493), some scholars argue that the researchers through applying this type of method, would be able to comprehensively delve into the participants' thoughts and explore their feelings and beliefs about a particular issue (May, 2011:130; Fedyuk & Zentai, 2018:171-5). However, the interviewees' responses may be biased (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:188). Due to the interpretative nature of the data gathered from the semi-structured interview, the interviewer would find a chance to challenge the dominant narratives on policies, regimes, operations, etc. (Fedyuk & Zentai, 2018:177-8). Some scholars believe that this method allows the researchers to elevate the voice of respondents to an impressive level (ibid.). In this way, the researchers can be the voice of individuals whose weak voice or silence springs from their vulnerability and fragile status.

Asylum seekers are categorized in a particular group of non-nationals and require special protective measures due to their sensitive situation. This group of individuals experience conditions of vulnerability, poverty and marginalization in addition to high degree of stress stemming from their displacement which significantly affect their health condition. The elements such as distance and lack of communication with families, financial difficulties, visa

insecurity (temporary visa holders), amongst others, are numbered as pivotal factors rendering the target group to be categorized as individuals in peril within the host society. According to La Spina (2021:S105), the meaning allotted to the term of vulnerability is inexplicit and debatable. Vulnerability of the asylum seekers may be caused by diverse unpredictable factors which are not under their control (ibid.:S94). In Sweden, no definition has been provided for the vulnerability of asylum seekers in the National Law. However, through certain frameworks, which have been set out by the Migration Agency, the individuals can be categorized as vulnerable subjects; e.g., the children; the individuals being subject to discrimination; the persons exposed to exploitation due to sexual orientation; the individuals suffering from serious illnesses or mental disorders, etc. (Asylum Information Data Base, 2016:52). This group of people, due to their vulnerability, will most likely be subject to marginalization which triggers them to be silent or have a weak voice in the society. Considering the aforementioned, I believe that the selected method does create a bridge between the community and the target group, in result of which the participants will find a chance to be effectively engaged with social issues. In my point of view, applying semi-structured interviews causes the target group to be pulled out from their marginalized position and be effectively projected to the host community through the chance given to them to be addressed as interviewees for sharing their comments. It has been also claimed that the interviewers' role in every part of the interview process is significant, as their footprint can be seen in data analysis as well (Fedyuk & Zental, 2018:179). Therefore, to have an effective dialogue, I applied semi-structured interview method in order for the interviewees' genuine standpoints, feelings and perception about the role of NGOs in integrating them into the Swedish labor market to be deeply disclosed.

Despite the fact that the semi-structured interview method is tremendously a time-consuming tool, it is still regarded as a suitable instrument for research when participants avoid contributing to the interviews which entails the presence of their peers; i.e., focused group interview or; when spontaneous follow-up questions are needed for further knowledge about the problem under study (Adams, 2015:493-494). Moreover, May (2011:131) suggests that the interviews should be conducted in large numbers because a single interview will just provide finite discernment of the problem. Therefore, having the aforementioned in mind and also considering my project's time curb, I ultimately opted to interview 5 participants in semi-structured pattern.

To do so, I first designed and prepared certain related questions to be posed. In this way, not only I did have a chance to learn their answers to the open-ended queries but also, I could



discover the reason(s) behind their answers via the follow-up questions, which were unplanned beforehand. In this way, the rich and detailed answers and data were accessible to me. Then in the second stage, I prepared an invitation letter, the content of which included some information on brief background of mine, the topic of the project, the research purpose, the confidentiality of the interview, and so forth. Also, at the beginning of each session, I reassured them of my duty of confidentiality to them. As per Adams (2015:493), the semi-structured interview method involves strenuous effort for many interviews to be recorded, a great deal of transcription to be prepared and finally to be scrutinized. In each session, a face-to-face interview was conducted. After recording the conversation, all the received information was carefully transcribed and sorted.

Actually, my interviews were based on give-and-take dialogue because I believed that such an approach would make them more comfortable when they were going to share their personal feelings, experiences and thoughts. Pursuing this strategy, I succeeded to establish a close and friendly relation with them, which was of great help in creating a pleasant environment for our meeting. In my point of view, the linguistic and cultural similarity between individuals play important role in sharing thoughts and feelings. This specific issue was noticeably applicable to my case as the language used for communication was Farsi/Dari.

### **6.1.1. Positionality**

In this section, I may point out to my immigration background as another influential element, by means of which I could successfully conduct my interviews. It triggered a sense of resemblance and connection to be created between me and the participants. This sort of feeling made them much more comfortable when talking to me. To instantiate the case, I may refer to certain conversations regarding the serious challenges I have had when looking for a job in Sweden. I tried to stress the fact that just like them, I have inevitably had to struggle with obstacles that have been unbearable to me as well. I also pointed out to the fact that, regardless of submitting too many job applications and enjoying a high degree of education compared to them, I have not been yet successful to find a job. Actually, this sort of dialogue enabled me to have a productive interview.

### **6.1.2. Ethical Consideration**

Ethical consideration is regarded as a key factor in any research process. Relying on this momentous principle, all of the interviewees were advised on the voluntary feature of their presence in the meeting. According to Adams (ibid.:501), interviewees should be comprehensibly informed of the confidentiality of the interview not only in the invitation letter but also, at the beginning of each interview meeting.

Hence, I assured the participants on the confidentiality issue not only through the invitation letter but also at the beginning of each session orally. However, the participants preferred their statements to be quoted covertly without mentioning their names in the paper. In result, each participant was identified by a code number in my thesis. In addition, the participants preferred the interview to be conducted in a private atmosphere and in the condition of anonymity. I also assured them of eradication of the recorded data including their personal information and also their statements after my job with the thesis is done.

### **6.1.3. Limitation**

In this study, the interviewees participating in my research included 5 unaccompanied male individuals seeking asylum in Sweden. The participants were within 20-25 age range. They were all from Afghanistan. The research was just carried out in Malmo. Lack of sufficient time triggered my research not to be conducted on a large scale, and I was compelled to set a limit on the number of my interviewees. Owing to the time limitation, I further had to focus on just one particular NGO, Ensamkommandes Förbund, as a case study. Moreover, the time curb was regarded as a substantial factor hindering me to apply more methods in conducting my research. In consequence, I was persuaded to apply only one methodological tool, the semi-structured interview, which made it possible for me to do my research in the best way within the specified time.

### **6.1.4. Validity**

According to Creswell & Miller (2000:124-130), validity is regarded as one of the virtues and assets in qualitative researches and as a scale showing whether the findings are accurate from the perspective of the researcher, the participants as well as the readers. These scholars (ibid:126) also argue that certain validation techniques such as: being engaged in a specific field for a long time; member checking (returning the data or results to the participants); triangulating

(using multiple methods and different relative data resources); etc., are used by the researchers to be assured of the accuracy and credibility of their research results. Some scholars argue that existing the element of relevance between the collected data and the problem is crucial by means of which the validity of a research would increase (Rose & Johnson, 2020:13). Therefore, when it is claimed that one specific research enjoys high validity, it means that the researcher has gained suitable answers to the research questions in a right way and in a right place. Further, the inquirer not only has used proper method(s) but also has endeavored to collect relevant information.

Given the importance of the relevance between the research questions and the gained data I endeavored to formulate proper questionnaire as a research tool, to measure the issue under study. The interviewees were carefully selected in terms of being proper samples for my study. Through applying a suitable method, I endeavored to collect the needed data. In addition, I selected related articles, books, documents and theories which were in the scope of my research. Triangulating; i.e., using multiple data sources, not only helped me to support my discussion but also made me to understand the issue under investigation in depth. All the aforementioned elements triggered the validity of my paper to be increased to some extent.

### **6.1.5. Reliability**

According to Moses & Knutsen (2019:131), it is required that the interviewer to be assured of the reliability of the collected data; i.e., the same answers should be generated for one particular query under different conditions and at different times. In other words, reliability concerns the degree of consistency in results if the test is repeated in different conditions and times.

Generalizing this idea to my case, it is deduced that the gained results cannot be reliable due to lack of broad range of data and time restriction. Besides, it may not be generalized to other cases as my research design was shaped based on only one particular single NGO, as a case study. In addition, I might totally get a different result if the number of interviewees was more and if the participants were diverse in terms of ethnicity and gender.

## 6.2. Document Analysis

Considering that the focal point of this paper is the asylum seekers' integration into the labor market and also the NGOs' policies in this respect, as a secondary source, I further endeavored to go deeply into the issue and study the respective documents. To collect the needed information, I studied the documents such as national/international organizations' reports, relative national laws, thesis, articles, books covering the issue under study. Further, taking into account the momentousness of the issue from the viewpoint of the European Union, I also studied certain legal documents and reports relating to the problem issued by the EU. All the documents not only helped me to have a deep perception on the problem but also it caused the data derived from the interviews to be analyzed in a better way.

## 7. Discussion

In this chapter, I will analyze the data derived from the interviews with the intention of exploring the participants' perspective regarding the function of Ensamkommandes Förbund in terms of labor market integration and also, the role of the mentioned NGO in this field. As stated in previous chapters, the target group immigrated to Sweden to seek asylum but their applications were rejected by the Migration Office. Yet, due to enactment of the 'Secondary School Law' (Gymnasium Lag) dated 2018, a chance was granted to the target group and, consequently, the way was paved for them to stay and continue their studies in the high schools. After graduating high school, the target group's Visas have been extended for another one year enabling them to find a job; in case of failure, they have no choice except leaving Sweden.

Based on the collected data, I discovered that the participants immigrated to Sweden due to driving influential factors such as: war, poverty, insecurity, lack of stable legal condition in the countries other than their own homeland, etc. to seek security or create a stable and better life for themselves. They have endured hardships on their challenging journey only with the hope of building a bright future for themselves under the respective protective statutes enshrined in the international laws. Pondering over the interviewees' statements, one may deduce that, despite of existing international and/or national laws and policies for integrating the target group into the host societies and shielding the vulnerable individuals in peril, there is still a need for more effective measures to be taken by not only the authorities, in macro-level, but also the private sectors in meso-level.

Taking into account that the focal center of this paper is on the labor market integration and the NGOs; therefore, the framework of my discussion would be merely limited to this scope of study. Hence, the key themes which are to be discussed in this chapter, include: (1)the challenges of the target group in the labor market and their opinion about Ensamkommandes Förbund's operation; (2)the role of Ensamkommandes Förbund in labor market integration.

## **7.1. The Challenges of the Target Group in the Labor Market and Their Opinion about Ensamkommandes Förbund's Operation**

According to the data collected from the interviews, it was discovered that all of the participants have faced problems when looking for jobs. The interviewees were unanimous in experiencing serious barriers in the process of labor market integration either at the selection process or at the time when the employment contract was to be concluded. They were of the opinion that they have not been treated fairly.

When asking the Participant 1 about the typical barriers impeding him to enter the labor market, he replied that his name is 'Arabic' due to which the Swedish employers refrain from studying his job application, consequently, he has not received any feedback from them. He also stated that he should change his name as he thought it would be a better strategy to overcome this hurdle. In this regard, Participant 1 said:

*"...you know, we are regarded as 'migrants' in Sweden. ... Actually, when the employers receive a CV, and the name of the holder of which is 'Arabic', they simply ... put it aside ... I should change my name.*

In continuation of his statements, he also points out that his previous job experience is disregarded by the employers in Sweden. He claims that all the job applicants not only should have experience of working in a company in Sweden but also, they should have a certificate 'intyg' from a Swedish institute showing that an individual is good at a specific profession. Participant 1 also stated:

*.... The employers do not recognize my previous job experience ... It is really a catastrophe! I do not know what I should do ... there is nobody to help me..."*

When interviewing with Participant 2, I discovered that his legal status has been considered as obstacle putting him in a weak position when looking for job. Owing to the fact that he was not recognized as a refugee, he could not get any help from the Swedish Employment Service Office ‘Arbetsförmedlingen’ for finding job. He further clarified that the employers financially are supported by the Employment Service Office when they hire a refugee; in result, their cost would be remarkably decreased. As a consequence, the refugees are in a rigid and powerful position comparing to asylum seekers. He also pointed out that if he was Swedish, he had no problem for finding job. Participant 2 described his situation as below:

*“They just hire the Swedish applicants or the refugees who are supported by the Employment Service Office ... the employers hire the refugees because their cost is much lower than us ... the employers are financially supported when hiring refugees ... I have only 6 months to find a suitable job”*

Talking to Participant 3, I discovered that he had succeeded to find a job in a restaurant. However, he refused to work there because his working hours and the offered salary was not as the ones offered to his peers. Participant 3 believed that the employer was going to take advantage of his vulnerable position. Participant 3 stated as follows:

*“...I found a job but at the time of concluding the employment contract, ... the scale of my salary was lower ..., my working hours was more than the other workers ... I felt that the employer somehow was to exploit me, so ... refused to work there.”*

When asking about the hurdles in integration into the labor market, Participant 4 claimed that his previous job experience has not been recognized by the Swedish employers. He also declared that the employers always need Swedish certificate evidencing that he is skilled at the job for which he has applied. He mentioned when his merits and skills are not recognized by the recruiters, it would be greatly difficult for him to find a job. Participant 4 underlined as follows:

*“...my previous job experience is not accepted by the employers .... All of them want us to have a certification ‘intyg’ ... the employment system is closed to the migrants in Sweden .... you should be so lucky to find a job.”*

Asking Participant 5 about a probable hindrance on his path of integration into the labor market, he responded that he had sent many job applications to the recruiters before, but he did not get any response from them. However, his views toward Swedish employers were different from his peers. He had a positive view of Swedish employers. He said that Swedish employers, despite of migrant recruiters, respect the laws. But the migrant employers do not follow the law and regulations; they impose discriminatory measures on the vulnerable individuals like me. He also stated that being employed by Swedish employers is not an easy job; however, networks have important role in connecting the job seekers to the recruiters. Below, is a part of his statements:

*“...now I am working ... The recruiters do not care about our applications. ... the employers holding migration background, abuse you and circumvent the laws ... but the Swedish employers are much better ... they follow the rules ... the works ... were found only by help of my Swedish acquaintances and friends (networks) ...when you have a reliable reference, then you will be offered a job, otherwise they do not hire you.”*

Wrapping the statements of the Participants 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5, it is perceived that the vulnerable target group had to undergo significant hurdles impeding their presence in the labor market, as a consequence of which their potential perforce keeps being off and no chance is given to them to be nurtured and financially developed. They all have been victims in different ways.

Referring to Discrimination Theory of Fibbi, Midtbøen & Simon (2021:28), it is realized that the employers via applying their organizational rules, make the vulnerable young individuals to be unfairly subject to their discriminatory measures. Actually, the elements such as (1)lack of recognition of the young immigrants’ productivity and competence, (2)being deprived of equal chances, (3)organizational selective behaviors has triggered them to be placed in an inadequate and unsatisfactory position. In result, the scale of their susceptibility has become amplified. Due to this unwanted situation, they have had to unavoidably go through unwelcome experiences which have adversely overshadowed their life. To point out to Goffman’s claim (1963:14) on negative effects of discriminatory treatments, one may come to realize how such unjust measures have caused the chances of interviewees 1, 2, 3, and 4 for success to noticeably decline.

Moreover, the research conducted by Fibbi and her associates (Midtbøen & Simon, 2021:87), shows that the ‘signals’ such as name, ethnicity, age, gender, etc. promote negative impacts on the selection process, in result of which anonymous CVs have been suggested in order for the data, acting as conveyors of signals which triggers discrimination, to be decreased. In result, the scale of discrimination would shrink to some extent.

As to the Participant 1, the employers while relying on the signal such as ‘Arabic name’, cause the young immigrant applicant not to be treated as same as his Swedish/European peers in the labor market. According to Bursell (2012:25-26), ignoring the job applicants based on their names is an indirect discriminatory measure. In Sweden, the holders of Middle Eastern or African names, are subject to discriminatory measures imposed by some employers Bursell (ibid.). Bursell (ibid.) further claims that, the migrants adopt ‘destigmatizing strategy’ in response to such stigmatizing action; i.e., changing their name, which is a defensive response to the stigma. In our case, it is clearly obvious that this strategy is also going to be used by the Participant 1 to save himself from such stigma leading to organizational bottleneck which prevents him to have a share in financial resources.

With regard to Participant 2, one may perceive that how unfairly certain migrants due to holding different ethnicity or even holding specific legal status face unwelcome treatments. To stand on their own feet, they have no choice to struggle with back-breaking challenges stemming from both their ethnicity and their deprivation from the support, which is merely allocated to the ‘refugees’. According to the ‘Action Plan’, i.e., a joint document of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (2018:31), certain motivating elements such as wage subsidies and placement services have been provided to the Swedish companies in order to facilitate and accelerate the process of refugees’ labor market integration. This scheme, which is known as ‘Special Package Solutions’, has been arranged with the aim of inspiring the recruiters to employ the refugees (ibid.). As we see, the target group are exempted from this plan; therefore, it has caused their labor market integration to be adversely affected. Bursell (2012:12) argues that discrimination is kind of social drawback which is imposed on the migrants by the dominant gatekeepers of the resources in the labor market. He also clarifies that ethnic discrimination happens when the recruiters prioritize the mainstream job applicants (in-groups), in terms of their ethnicity, and devalue the minorities (out-group) whose productivity has been disregarded during the selection process (ibid.). The majorities would be, consequently, the



ultimate winners in the labor market. When generating this issue to the case under study, it is deduced that the participants are also influenced by such unfavorable measures which trigger their integration to slow down.

With reference to the statements of Participant 3, the interviewee claims that exploitation has been a key factor which hampered him to be integrated into the labor market. Actually, exploitation is product of egocentric and self-regarded actions of employers who just think about their own benefit at cost of profiting from the vulnerable social agents. Lack of ethnic equality would shape the base of exploitation which is imposed on the unprivileged agents by employers in the labor market. Fibbi and her associates (Midtbøen & Simon, 2021:28) argue that exploitation causes discrimination. The status of such disadvantaged group, plainly portrays their fragile social position part of which is shaped by the opportunistic employers by offering unsecured jobs and/or low salaries.

Concerning the Participant 4, it is found out that his merits and job experiences are not recognized by the employers. He feels that his individual capital (job experience) for gaining of which he spent much time before, is of no value for the Swedish recruiters. In this regard, Bursell (2012:17) points out that most of the Swedish employers show favor to 'Swedish merits' including job experience, degrees and certificates from the Swedish academic centers. Bursell's claim (ibid:12) is regarded as a reaffirmation of Tilly's 'dynamics' (1998:224-225). According to Tilly (ibid.) 'organizational dynamics' simply and covertly plant the seeds of barriers within different ethnic groups which gives rise to imbalance in the society.

Despite of the fact that Participant 5, does not have any problem with respect to finding job, but he also reaffirms that integration into the Swedish labor market is not an easy job. He points out that applying for the jobs and sending CVs would be useless. Unlike Swedish job-seekers, it is necessary that the migrant applicants to be introduced to the potential recruiters by a Swedish reference, otherwise none of the migrants can get a good and secured job in Sweden.

When applying Durkheim's Social Integration Theory, it is deduced that the participants 1, 2, 4 due to lack of 'collective consciousness', have lost the chance of being integrated into the labor market. Absence of such driving element, is actually fruit of not recognizing the target group's merits as well as not accepting them to be included due to holding non-European name or lack of recognition of their merits. Relying on Durkheim's theory, it is apprehended that the

dominant social agents (employers) refrain from having a reciprocal perception which, as a consequence, leads the target group to be kept excluded from the labor market. Lack of 'collective consciousness' creates a sharp boundary between the majorities and the minorities in result of which 'them' and 'us' emerges.

According to the definition provided by Bosswick and Heckmann (2006:2), integration, in social context, is a two-way process in which mutual understanding and solid cooperation would be created within the majorities and minorities in a social system. Referring to the Bosswick's and Heckmann's 'interactive integration', as one of dimensions of the integration (ibid.:9), and applying it to my interview cases, it is understood that the Participants 1, 2, 3, & 4 were deprived of having an effective interaction with the majorities. They did not have a chance to be included within the community of the dominant group and lacked the opportunities to enjoy their genuine rights (right to work and right to work in an equal conditions). According to some scholars (Aiyar et al., 2016:4) lack of transferable merits and the obstacles to job search triggers slow labor market integration. Hence, a fast labor market integration which is resulted from transferable job experiences and qualifications causes the unprivileged target group to benefit from a stable situation.

Under umbrella of the social integration, from one side, the asylum seekers' talents would be turned from potential to actual status due to their active role in the society, and from the other side, social cohesion and harmonious co-existence would be nurtured in the society. When connecting the Theory of Social Integration to the cases under study, i.e., the Participants 1, 2, 3 and 4, it is understood that, due to a huge gap between them and the dominant recruiters, their process of integration inevitably remains to be postponed. However, with respect to the Participant 5, it is obvious that this lucky interviewee had a chance to be saved from the limbo of joblessness and shaky status.

## **7.2. The Role of Ensamkommandes Förbund in Labor Market Integration**

To explore the participants' views regarding the role of Ensamkommandes Förbund on labor market integration, they were questioned whether the mentioned NGO has supported them to get integrated into the labor market. The participants were also queried what kind of services have been provided for them to be included into the labor market. All the participants had

similar views in this regard. In response to the raised queries, Participant 1 stated that he was only helped to prepare his CV and Personal Letter. His answer is as follows:

*“... I learned how to write my CV and Personal Letter... they couldn't help me more... who lacks network in the host society, should be supported more ... Ensamkommandes Förbund should have connections with the employers .... and introduce us to them ...”*

The other interviewee while pointing out the same issue, added that lack of reference was a significant element hindering him to find a job. In this regard, Participant 2 said that:

*“... only helped me to prepare my CV and Personal Letter. ... the employers offer jobs to the individuals who have the Swedish references. I do not have any network ... the NGO cannot help me more ... they do not act productively”*

Participants 3, commented like Participants 1 and 2. He stated that Ensamkommandes Förbund would have been more successful in its mission if it had established effective correlations with the potential recruiters. He believed when the NGOs act as competent networks, the vulnerable migrants can be greatly supported on their path of labor market integration. He also explained that this efficacy cannot be achieved except by establishing a sound and purposeful relationship with the employers. Moreover, he believed that the NGOs should function in a way that the potential recruiters to be ensured of merits of the target group. Below, is a part of the statements of Participants 3:

*“... the NGO helped me how to write my CV and Personal Letter ... I asked them whether they know of any company or employer in need of labor, they answered me that: 'No, we don't; you yourself should find a job'... I do not have any network to help me ... In Sweden, networks have a key role ... the association should have strong connection with other employers ... they should also assure the recruiters of our skills, competence and capabilities...”*

When asking the same query from the interviewee 4, he stated that the NGO assisted him in writing his C.V., Personal Letter and also looking for employers in the Employment Service Office's Website. He was not satisfied with their operation because the rendered services were not enough for him to be helped to find a job. He also declared that lack of networks has put

him in a weak position due to which he has not succeeded to penetrate into the labor market. He further added that if he had enough money, he could have worked as a self-employer. To be deprived of money and network has caused him to be in a disadvantaged situation. According to him, the networks have vital role in preventing the unprivileged social agents 'exclusion from the labor market. Participant 4 answered as below:

*“... Ensamkommandes Förbund has helped me in writing my C.V. and Personal Letter ... but it is not enough! ... I need more help to find a job ... I am a migrant ... the NGO tells me that I myself should find a job ... I think they should act more effectively ... I have no connection ... even no money to create a job for myself ...”*

The comments of Participant 5 on the function of Ensamkommandes Förbund were similar to his peers, too. But, interestingly, unlike the Participants 1, 2, 3 and 4, he was not of the opinion that Ensamkommandes Förbund could have the capacity of establishing effective correlations with the recruiters and motivating them to employ the target group. He believed that it was a difficult job for such association to get involved in. In response, he stated that:

*The NGO could not help me to find a job except guiding me how to write my CV and Personal Letter. The jobs, which I engaged with, all were found by help of my friends and acquaintances. ... I believe that 'no network, no job' ... In my opinion, the NGOs can have more effective role in this regard ... but making relations with potential employers and connecting the jobseekers (asylum seekers) to them entails more time and hard working. It is not an easy job .... I do not think that the NGO like Ensamkommandes Förbund can manage such difficult job ...’*

The data, derived from the conducted interviews, indicates that the function of Ensamkommandes Förbund on the ground of labor market integration has not been noticeable. The association's activities have been just restricted to the preliminary projects associated with preparing C.V.s and Personal Letters. Unfortunately, for such crucial issue, which may affect every aspect of these disadvantaged individuals' life; i.e., the Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4, no serious action has been taken by the mentioned NGO and the target group has been left alone behind the closed doors of the Swedish labor market.

Giving consideration to the pivotal role of such voluntary organizations, and also considering their sensitive mission in the society, which may be voice of voiceless social agents of this type, one may perceive that Ensamkommandes Förbund has not productively functioned in this regard. Due to brief role of the NGO and their limited services in this field, the target group have to confront and struggle with exhausting challenges on their path of finding job.

When applying the Social Capital Theory of Bourdieu, it is understood that the Participants 1, 2, 3, and 4 are suffering from lack of the social capital (networks) which have a key role in easing their labor market integration. Interestingly, this issue is tangible when the theory is further applied to the case of Participant 5. When analyzing the statements of the Interviewee 5, one may come to realize how pivotal the networks' role is, since all the careers, in which he was engaged, were found by help of his friends or his acquaintances.

Referring to the notion of capital from Bourdieu's perspective, one may perceive that lack of its two subdivisions (economic capital and social capital) how deeply can affect one to be kept excluded from specific part of the society (O'Brien, & O' Fathaigh, 2005:68-69). When generalizing this idea to our case, it can be understood that Participant 4 due to being deprived of two vital assets of economic capital and social capital, has been left out with great sorrow; been trapped in an isolated world, getting out of which would not be an easy job, in result of which his vulnerability is deemed to become deeper and more heartfelt.

Here, just portraying the capabilities of certain NGOs, I would like to shortly refer to Löfving and his associates (2021:51) claiming that, the Swedish NGOs have had pivotal role in the Swedish development policies; e.g., their robust critical commentary against economic and social effects of structural policies in 1980s.

Overall, the findings are the proof affirming that the NGOs' can be capable of having a crucial and leading role in the society and also have the potential to function as saviors of the unprivileged social agents. Nonetheless, when linking this issue to our case study, and also referring to the interviewees' unfavorable experience with respect to Ensamkommandes Förbund's function, it is perceived that the NGO has not effectively functioned when dealing with the target group's labor market integration. Regretfully, Ensamkommandes Förbund has not been able to go beyond those self-determined limitations as it has bounded itself to just

initiatory measures. Hence, existence of social networks and their relative efficacious operation are both deemed to be a valuable wealth for the target group's labor market integration.

## 8. Conclusion

In summary, the basis of the argument presented in my thesis revolves around the questions regarding the unaccompanied asylum seekers' viewpoints on the function of the NGOs in the field of labor market integration in Malmo and also the NGOs' policies in integrating the target group into the labor market in the context of Ensamkommandes Förbund.

To conduct my research, I applied semi-structured interview method, the addressees of which were five unaccompanied Afghan asylum-seekers, whose asylum applications were rejected. But, under the Swedish 'Secondary School Law', they found a chance to stay in Sweden and continue their studies in the high school. After graduating from high school, their visas were extended, for a limited time, enabling them to find a job. In case of failure, they will have no choice except leaving Sweden.

The conclusion drawn from this research paper indicates that the participants have experienced serious exhausting strains due to which most of them have been hindered to be included into the Swedish labor market. The challenges, which they have had to struggle with, include lack of recognition of their merits and job experiences; having no social network; legal limitations; holding non-European name; exploitation and discrimination. Based on the data derived from the interviewees, I explored that they did not have a good opinion of the performance of Ensamkommandes Förbund on the ground of labor market integration. Surprisingly, such experiences and reflections found to be in common within all the participants. They believed that the organization could have had a more effective role in integrating them into the Swedish labor market if its operation were more impressive in a way to achieve more productivity. They also were of the opinion that Ensamkommandes Förbund could have helped the target group's hardship to be mitigated and the process of their integration to be smoother via adopting a more efficacious and supportive policy. Moreover, their comments indicated that establishing decisive relations with the potential recruiters, who are looking for manpower, could have been an effective strategy to be pursued by Ensamkommandes Förbund. According to the participants' statements, holding such policy could not only ease but also accelerate their inclusion into the labor market.

Further, looking into the issue through the lens of the applied theories of (1)Social Integration Theory, (2)Social Capital Theory and also, (3)Discrimination Theory, it would be clearly tangible that the participants have been under severe pressure due to impacts of the elements such as vulnerability, discrimination, exploitation, de-qualification and lack of recognition of their merits and also lack of social capital which all triggered their labor market integration not to be simply accomplished. Moreover, based on the investigation results, it is perceived that Ensamkommandes Förbund's function with respect to integrating the target group into the labor market, remains unimpressive due to their failure in including the target group into the labor market.

Given the brilliant capabilities and remarkable success of certain Swedish NGOs such as 'Yalla Trappan' (Yalla Trappan, n.d.; Righard, Emilsson, Jensen, 2020:31-32 ); 'Right to Play' (Nilsson, 2020:8-9); and certain civil society actors in Berlin and Brandenburg in Germany (Hillmann & Togral Koca, 2021:16) in paving the way for including the asylum seekers, via their efficacious and practical measures, into the labor market alludes to the fact that the NGOs are of the potentiality to take outstanding steps in this field. Also, one may perceive that the NGOs can help the target groups' skills and talents to be deployed and consequently, not to be marginalized in the host labor market. The mentioned NGOs well-coped with their mission through either their different smart training projects or creating occupation opportunities within their own organization or connecting the target group to the prospective employers. Also, it is well understood how their outstanding endeavors have caused the migrants' hardships to be reduced and the gates of Swedish or German labor market to be opened towards these vulnerable social agents.

Considering both the operation of the aforementioned NGOs and also the target group's unfavorable views regarding the activities of Ensamkommandes Förbund on the ground of the labor market integration, it is recommended that Ensamkommandes Förbund to go beyond its current preliminary operation (e.g., preparing CV, writing personal letter) and expand its activities through establishing constructive and effective relations with the potential employers or governmental agents. It is also suggested that this organization via analyzing the Swedish labor market's demands, decisively train this group of migrants in order for their inclusion into labor market to become much easier. It is further proposed that Ensamkommandes Förbund, through expanding its activities, create opportunities for the target group to be hired within its own organization. As a consequence of which, the target group neither would be subject to

discrimination nor they would be regarded as peripheral and insignificant individuals. By doing so, Ensamkommandes Förbund would not only make notable progress in their respective activities but also furnish the target group with more effectual services in result of which their inclusion into the Swedish labor market would be facilitated.

However, to attain a better and reliable result concerning Ensamkommandes Förbund's function in the labor market integration field, it is suggested that the number of interviewees to be increased and the asylum seekers of different genders and ethnicities to be invited in the prospective researches.



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## **List of the Interviewees**

**Participant 1:**

20 years old; male; from Afghanistan; unaccompanied asylum seeker.

**Participant 2:**

22 years old; male; from Afghanistan; unaccompanied asylum seeker.

**Participant 3:**

22 years old; male; from Afghanistan; unaccompanied asylum seeker.

**Participant 4:**

21 years old; male; from Afghanistan; unaccompanied asylum seeker.

**Participant 5:**

25 years old; male; from Afghanistan; unaccompanied asylum seeker.



## Invitation Letter

Date: March 29<sup>th</sup>, 2022

Hi,

I am studying at Malmo university and I am conducting interviews as part of my research study to explore how the role of NGOs, in the field of labor market integration, is perceived by the refugees and asylum-seekers in Malmo. As a refugee or asylum-seeker, you are in an ideal group to provide me with valuable information from your own perspective.

The interview takes around 30-45 minutes and is informal. The interviews can be conducted at Malmo University, Malmo University Library or at the office of the NGO or even, through Zoom Platform, the link of which would be sent to you in due time. I am simply trying to capture your thoughts, feelings and views on the above-mentioned subject. Your responses to the questions will be kept confidential. Each interview will be assigned a code to ensure that personal identifications are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings. Your participation will be an added value to my research as the findings may lead to greater understanding of NGOs' role in the scope of labor market integration in Malmo.

If you are willing to participate, please kindly determine a day and time that suits you and then, advise me respectively. Please do not hesitate to contact me via the below e-mail in case of raising any query in this regard. I do appreciate your kind assistance in anticipation.

Thanks!

Shahnaz Alishahbaz Pouri

[Shhnz\\_shahbazi@yahoo.com](mailto:Shhnz_shahbazi@yahoo.com)

## دعوتنامه

تاریخ: ۲۰۲۲/۰۳/۲۹

با سلام،

من در دانشگاه مالمو تحصیل می‌کنم و به عنوان بخشی از مطالعه تحقیقاتی خود مصاحبه‌هایی انجام می‌دهم تا چگونگی درک افراد پناهنده و پناه‌جو در خصوص نقش سازمانهای غیر انتفاعی در زمینه ادغام آنها در بازار کار مالمو را بررسی نمایم. به عنوان یک فرد پناهنده یا پناه‌جو، شما در زمره افرادی به شمار می‌آیید که اطلاعات ارزشمندی را از دیدگاه خودتان در این رابطه در اختیار من قرار می‌دهید.

مصاحبه بطور غیر رسمی بوده و حدود ۳۰ تا ۴۵ دقیقه طول می‌کشد. مصاحبه‌ها را می‌توان در دانشگاه مالمو یا کتابخانه دانشگاه مالمو یا در محل دفتر سازمان غیر انتفاعی انجام داد. ضمناً این مصاحبه‌ها می‌تواند در محیط زوم نیز صورت گیرد. در صورت تمایل به شرکت در مصاحبه از این طریق، لینک مربوطه در زمان مقتضی ارسال خواهد شد. من صرفاً سعی می‌کنم از افکار، احساسات و دیدگاههای شما در مورد موضوع فوق آگاه شوم. پاسخ شما به سوالات محرمانه خواهد ماند. به هر فرد مصاحبه‌شونده یک کد اختصاص داده خواهد شد تا اطمینان حاصل شود که اطلاعات شخصی فرد شرکت‌کننده در مصاحبه در زمان تجزیه و تحلیل یادداشت‌ها فاش نمی‌شود.

مشارکت شما مکمل ارزشمندی برای تحقیقات من خواهد بود زیرا یافته‌ها می‌تواند به درک بیشتر نسبت به نقش سازمان‌های نامبرده در حوزه ادغام در بازار کار مالمو منجر شود. در صورت تمایل برای شرکت در مصاحبه، لطفاً روز و ساعتی را که مناسب است مشخص نموده و به من از طریق ایمیل مذکور در ذیل، اطلاع دهید.

چنانچه پرسشی در این زمینه داشتید، خواهشمند است از طریق ایمیل با من تماس بگیرید. قبلاً از همکاری شما سپاسگزارم.

با سپاس

شهناز علی شهباز پوری

[Shhnz\\_shahbazi@yahoo.com](mailto:Shhnz_shahbazi@yahoo.com)

## Interview Consent Form

**Research Project Title:** Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers' Perspective on NGOs' Function in Terms of Labor Market Integration (Malmo - Sweden)

**Research Investigator:** Shahnaz Alishahbaz Pouri

**Study at:** Malmö University,  
Faculty of Culture and Society,  
S-205 06 Malmö, Sweden.

**Phone no.:** +46 40 665 70 00

**Education:** International Migration & Ethnic Relations

**Level:** Bachelor of Art

**Research Participant's Name:** .....

I am conducting semi-structured interviews to explore the viewpoints of the asylum seekers, toward the NGOs' function in terms of integrating the target group into the labor market in the context of Malmo. The interview will take about one hour. I do not anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the interview or withdraw from the research at any time.

I endeavor to guarantee confidentiality in the study in that no unauthorised person may have access to the material. The material is stored so that it is only accessible for the individual or individuals leading the study. In the reporting of results in the form of a degree project paper at Malmö University, the interviewees will be unidentifiable, and it will not be possible to link the results to them.

Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed as part of the above research project. Ethical procedures for academic research require that interviewees explicitly agree to being interviewed and how the information contained in their interview will be used. This consent form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation.

You would, therefore, read the accompanying information sheet and then sign this form to certify that you approve the following:

- the interview will be recorded and a transcript will be produced;
- the transcript of the interview will be analysed by the researcher;
- any summary interview content, or direct quotations from the interview, that are made available through academic publication or other academic outlets will be anonymized so that you cannot be identified, and care will be taken to ensure that other information in the interview that could identify yourself is not revealed;
- the actual recording and personal data will be destroyed after submission of the thesis;
- any variation of the conditions above will only occur with your further explicit approval.

### Quotation Agreement

I also understand that my words may be quoted directly.

(With regards to being quoted, please initial next to any of the statements that you agree with.)

	I wish to review the notes, transcripts, or other data collected during the research pertaining to my participation.
	I agree to be quoted directly.
	I agree to be quoted directly if my name is not published and a made-up name (pseudonym) is used.
	I agree that the researchers may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

By signing this form I agree that,

1. I am voluntarily taking part in this project;
2. I understand that I do not have to take part, and I can stop the interview at any time;
3. The transcribed interview or extracts from it may be used as described above;
4. I have read the information sheet;
5. I do not expect to receive any benefit or payment for my participation;
6. I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Printed Name**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Participants Signature Date**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Researchers Signature Date**

## Contact Information

This research has been reviewed and approved by Malmo University. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact:

**Name of Researcher:** Shahnaz Alishahbaz Pouri  
**E-mail:** shhnz\_shahbazi@yahoo.com

You can also contact my supervisor:

**Name of Supervisor:** Karen Vestergaard  
**E-mail:** karen.vestergaard@mau.se

## Interview Questions

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Nationality:

Marital status:

Duration of stay in Sweden:

Living status (with/without family):

Education level:

Language(s):

- 1- What is your immigrant background (asylum seeker, refugee)?
- 2- Do you have job experience? Where?
- 3- What is your employment status in Sweden?
- 4- If you are unemployed, are you looking for a job? What kind of job are you now looking for?
- 5- What kind of difficulties have you had when looking for job? (if any)
- 6- Are you financially supported? How?
- 7- If you are employed, how did you find your job? Are you satisfied with your job?
- 8- What was the effective factor helping you to find a job? (networks, language, previous experience, etc.)
- 9- To what extent (un)employment can have impact on your current life? (please elaborate)
- 10- Do you have any idea about concept of integration?
- 11- How do you assess your integration into the labor market?
- 12- What elements are effective in integrating the migrants into the labor market?
- 13- What kind of services/supports do you think that one should receive from NGOs in order for being integrated into the labor market?
- 14- What do you think about NGOs? (positive/neutral role)?
- 15- What do you suggest for improvement of NGO's services with regard to the integration into labor market?