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Exploring Social Inclusion of Female Immigrants Through Cricket in the South of Sweden

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my loving husband, Mohammad Abdullah, who inspired me to dream of studying abroad. Standing in this position would be impossible without his effortless physical, mental, and economic support.

As we are immigrants and cricket is a popular sport in my country, Bangladesh, he motivated me to do my thesis about immigrants and cricket. After being inspired, I have decided to write my thesis on how female immigrants are socially integrated into their new societies through cricket.

Lastly, I want to dedicate all migrants around the world facing challenges and barriers in terms of participation in sports.
Abstract

This study examines the female immigrants' experiences regarding participation in cricket in their homeland and Sweden. It contains two sections: the first part aims to assess the perceived opportunities, barriers, and challenges of playing cricket in the participants’ homeland and Sweden, and the second part focuses on the impact of playing cricket on their lives, particularly social inclusion in their new societies. Bourdieu’s theory of practices, Putnam's social capital theory, and Self-Determination theory are used as analytical tools to explore the participant's sports involvement in their homeland and host country, how playing cricket in Sweden helps them to accumulate social capital, and their psychological need regarding motivating them to engage in cricket, respectively. This study is based on qualitative semi-structured interviews with seven (07) female immigrants, aged 20-40 years, who play cricket in Sweden. The findings indicate that females with an immigrant background had experiences playing sports in their homeland, but socio-cultural, religious, and gender-related challenges and limited opportunities hindered continuity in their later lives. However, after migrating to Sweden, they rediscovered themselves to engage in cricket in a supportive environment where they faced some challenges mainly related to facilities and getting more female members as cricket is not a native sport of Sweden. They also mentioned that they do not gain any financial assistance for playing cricket in Sweden. It is evident from the study that participants have no language barriers in their team as everybody speaks English. However, participants appreciate the facilities they get from the club, such as practice matches, coaching and resources, and funding from SCF for the female development camp and Premiere League. Despite the lack of financial assistance for playing, participants are motivated to invest money, effort, and time for the positive outcome of cricket, including physical fitness, mental well-being, personal growth, social connection, and a sense of belonging.

Keywords: Social capital; Cricket; Immigrants; Social Connection; Social Inclusion; SCF; Barriers and Challenges.
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Outline of the Thesis

This thesis consists of six (06) chapters, including an **Introduction** that gives an overview of my thesis topic, aim, and purpose. **Literature Review** helps the reader learn about previous literature related to the study. **Theoretical Framework** offers the theoretical underpinnings of this study, exploring the Self-Determination Theory, Bourdieus’s Theory of Practices, and Putnam's social capital theory. **The methodology** explains the study method, sample sources, case description, data collection and analysis, ethical and social considerations, self-reflexivity, validity, and reliability. **Findings and Discussion** present the transcribed material and the core findings, further critically analyzing using the theory and previous research. **The conclusion** discusses the main results, implementation, and limitations and suggests future research.
1. Introduction

Global migration, whether forced or voluntary, is a highly intricate phenomenon with challenges and opportunities. People move for many reasons, including to pursue study abroad, reunite with family, seek employment and livelihoods, and secure a better future for their children. Others leave their countries to escape crime, violence, conflict, persecution, insecurity, discrimination, disasters, environmental degradation, and poverty (U.N., 2016). Over the last few years, the number of female immigrants, including refugees and asylum seekers, has increased worldwide. The number of international migrants has increased by 41 percent to reach 244 million from 2000 to 2015 (Creatura, 2017), and approximately half of them are women (U. N., 2015); among them, 18%, 12%, and 15% of Syrian, Afghan, and Iraqi asylum seekers, respectively (Women refugees and migrants, n.d.).

After the Second World War, Europe experienced a massive influx of refugees and asylum seekers. Sweden also experienced a positive migration flow over the past ten years. Based on information from the Swedish Migration Agency, the primary reasons for migration to Sweden are family reunification, education, employment opportunities, and political or social circumstances. The total number of refugees in 2021 is 240,854, while the number of asylum seekers in 2022 is 16,825 (Sweden Refugee Statistics 1960-2023, n.d.).

Inclusion of these newcomers with diverse socio-economic, cultural, and religious backgrounds in the system of the host countries is very challenging. In addition, resettlement can be particularly difficult for women because of their lower socio-economic status, which can make it difficult for them to access healthcare, education, and employment opportunities, as well as the cultural, social, material, and resilience factors that help people adjust and adapt (Mangrio et al., 2019).

Sports have emerged as a powerful tool for promoting social inclusion and empowerment. Integrating sports and physical activity into daily social life can provide opportunities for marginalized and underprivileged groups to interact and integrate with other social groups, contributing to social cohesion by breaking down social barriers (Fehsenfeld, 2015). In addition, participating in sports and physical activities is an effective way to improve the
well-being of refugee women and promote social integration in their new communities (Simonsen & Ryom, 2021). Sports also provide a crucial platform for migrants to initiate and rebuild their social contact with migrant and local communities (Abur, 2016; Elling et al., 2001; Maxwell & Taylor, 2010; Zacheus, 2010).

Sport and physical activity can be powerful tools for inclusion, encouraging peace, promoting human rights and health, and building a social connection between host communities and new arrivals (Ha & Lyras, 2013; Coalter, 2017). Different sports projects have been implemented throughout Western Europe based on the idea that sports participation can lead to integration. The integration of sports in Western European countries is based on the idea that civil society and democracy are interconnected (Walseth & Fasting, 2004). The sports associations are considered mini-democracies.

Sport is used worldwide to respond to social problems such as segregation, criminal activity, drug abuse, and violent offenses (Coalter, 2007b; Houlihan 1997, 2011). According to the Swedish Research Council for Sport Science (CIF), Sport is an alternative route to handle such social problems (Ekholm, 2016). Through sports, youth learn life values and social skills, which will help them resist or escape the pitfall of medications and crime, and sports can decline and forestall youth from becoming involved in criminal activity (Agergaard et al., 2016). Participating in sports alone may not bring about a significant transformation in one's life. However, a long-term sports project that focuses on personal and professional development can create a positive environment for acquiring valuable life skills, foster a sense of belonging and respect, and encourage the formation of social bonds to build bridges between individuals and communities (Coalter, 2017b).

Many refugees and asylum seekers are ethnically segregated regarding employment, housing, and education (Flensner et al., 2021) and face exclusion, lack of livelihood opportunities, and mental and physical health illnesses (Stad, M. 2013). Female youths represent a large percentage of forced migrations among refugees and asylum seekers, and they are forced to resettle in an unhealthy way; sports can play a vital role in decreasing this issue by making social connections with their peers and locals through participation (Farello et al., 2019). Additionally, through sports, migrants are exposed to the host community's values, norms, cultures, and languages (Allen et al., 2010; Spaaij & Broerse,
and their participation promotes friendships, expands social networks, and creates a sense of belonging in their new homes (Abur, 2016; Gowricharn, 2002; Makarova & Herzog, 2014).

However, research shows that migrants have a lower sports participation rate than the local population, and this is particularly evident in women, especially in organized sports settings. Krange and Strandbu (2004) surveyed young women’s sports involvement in Norway. They illustrated that 37% of young women of non-immigrant backgrounds were members of a sports club, compared to 11% of young women from an immigrant non-western country.

Internationally, several studies have focused on young women with migration experiences and their integration through sports (Alemu et al., 2021; Walseth & Fasting, 2004; Walseth, 2008; Farello et al., 2019; Ekholm et al., 2019). Nonetheless, there is a lack of research focusing specifically on girls’ and female participation in sports in Sweden. For instance, girlhood scholars overlook the importance of sports activities, while sports scholars ignore the role of girls in sports (Rönnbäck, 2015). Therefore, this study aims to understand the experiences and perspectives of female immigrants’ participation in sports, especially cricket, and how they are socially integrated in Sweden. The practical approach of this study provides valuable insights for policymakers, sports organizations, and NGOs who aim to improve social integration among immigrant communities. In addition, this thesis contributes practical knowledge in the fields of social sciences, sports, and migration studies. It suggests similar initiatives should be implemented in other multi-cultural cities to support social inclusion and gender empowerment.

Compared to other European countries, Sweden has the second-highest immigration rate despite ranking only ninth in population. Sweden has become a multi-cultural country with over 200 cultures represented by two million out of nine million. Around 100,000 people immigrate annually from various parts of the world, bringing diverse languages, religions, and cultural backgrounds (Johansson-Heinö, 2011). In addition, there are more foreign-born women than men in Sweden. As of 2019, there are 973,027 female immigrants compared to 982,542 male immigrants in Sweden (Immigration to Sweden, 2023).
The study focuses on South Sweden. According to Euro Statistics, the number of population was 1.522 million in 2019 (South Sweden, 2023), and Malmö, Lund, Karlskrona, Helsingborg, Kristianstad, and Trelleborg are the most popular and diverse cities.

Civil society plays an active role in addressing both forced and voluntary migrations in many ways in Sweden. On the other hand, the Swedish Government has a positive view of immigrants. The government takes necessary steps to integrate immigrants into the sports sector, especially in cricket, and arrange vocational training. Cricket is the world's second most popular sport, and it is growing in Sweden after an influx of immigrants from cricket-loving countries such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and many more.

As Sweden has a growing economic condition, funding from the Government is ongoing. Now, it has access to more significant financing than ever, with an investment of 1.2 M Kr. With the ICC development fund, youth cricket also got much attention in Stockholm, Malmö, and Goteborg. Seventy (70) cricket clubs are active across the country, and many are increasing in membership, and a few clubs have female cricket teams (Swedish Cricket Federation, 2023).

"Integration is a hot topic, and in Malmö right now, our under-19 team is pretty much 90 percent made up of refugees who have come here without parents," Bilal Zaigham, a batsman with the Swedish national team, told Radio Sweden (Russell, D. 2016 August 16).

Many authors agree that becoming a club member can significantly contribute to developing, maintaining, and improving social capital, such as social connections, friendships, trust, and social cohesion. Moreover, sports can significantly boost social integration, reflected in the practical governance of integration issues in particular sports clubs (Theeboom et al., 2011). It has been shown that sports programs targeting socially underprivileged groups have tremendous success when participants share common values and experience a sense of confidence and comfort. Therefore, when integrating sports programs for the socially disadvantaged in ordinary sports clubs, it is of great significance.
for sustainability that questions of social cohesion, shared values, the ascription of meaning by the target groups, and the sense of belonging are addressed (Fehsenfeld, 2015).

The importance of sports in Sweden for promoting social inclusion and integration and counteracting social exclusion and marginalization was emphasized by national government agencies after a surge in immigration rates in 2015 (Fundberg, 2017). The number of immigrants from South East Asia is increasing. The Swedish Cricket Federation (SCF) is continuously trying to engage both male and female immigrants from countries where cricket is the national sport, and integrating immigrants into cricket teams is meeting the expectations of SCF and migrants. To change their lives, the clubs of different areas under the Swedish Cricket Federation have played an active role in reducing social problems by motivating and encouraging migrant players (Refugee Cricket in Sweden, 2020).

However, it has been seen that female immigrant cricket participants are much less than males. Most Swedish research is done on sports and integration. A few studies discuss why female immigrants are not interested in sports clubs and their opportunities and challenges regarding participation in sports. To the best of my knowledge, there is no research on female immigrants and cricket in Sweden.

Therefore, this study aims to identify the opportunities, challenges, and barriers women face regarding participation in cricket and how they socially integrate in Sweden. I hope this study will help to support more projects of integration "through cricket" in different countries where female immigrants are social problems.
1.1 Research Aim and Questions

1.1.1 Research Purpose

The aim of this research is to examine the impact of cricket on female immigrants' social inclusion, focusing on understanding the challenges, barriers, facilitators, and outcomes of their participation in the sport.

1.1.2 Research Questions

- What are female immigrants' main barriers and challenges in accessing and participating in cricket in their homeland and Sweden?
- How does cricket contribute to the social integration and sense of belonging among female immigrants in Sweden?

The following chapter analyzes the existing research on the social inclusion of female immigrants and sports.
2. Previous Research

While there is a growing body of literature on the social inclusion of female immigrants through sports, existing research on the social inclusion of female immigrants in cricket is limited. This literature review provides a comprehensive overview of existing research on how sports can serve as a platform for enhancing the social integration and well-being of immigrant women in their host countries. This review identifies key themes, challenges, and potential benefits of using sports for social inclusion by analyzing and synthesizing relevant literature.

2.1 Social Inclusion Through Sports

Alemu et al. (2021) contributed to understanding informal sports settings' role in fostering social integration among immigrant women, specifically Ethiopian and Eritrean women in Switzerland. The study found that participation in these settings helped Ethiopian and Eritrean women to develop social connections, improve their language skills, and gain a sense of belonging in Swiss society. In 2019, Mohammadi conducted a qualitative case study examining a community sports initiative's potential and limitations in fostering social inclusion among newly arrived adult female asylum seekers and refugees in Germany. To analyze the link between sports and social and cultural structures, the study utilized Bourdieu's theory of practice as an analytical tool. The results indicated that the female refugees' sports habits significantly differed from their host country's and homeland's physical culture, which challenged their integration and inclusion. The study also identified several socio-cultural and structural barriers limiting women's opportunities to engage in physical activities, such as gender-based norms. In addition, Kelly (2011) critically analyzed the concept of 'sports-based social inclusion' and its effectiveness in promoting social inclusion. The author argues that while programs achieve varying degrees of 'success' concerning themes such as 'sport for all,' 'social cohesion,' a pathway to work,' and 'giving voice,' their impact on exclusionary processes is inevitably limited. The paper highlights the gendered nature of sports-based social inclusion, mainly when linked to crime reduction,
and suggests that policymakers and practitioners need to be aware of these issues when designing and implementing sports-based interventions.

However, Walseth & Fasting (2004) examined the role of sports organizations in the integration process of minority women and the consequences of multiculturalism in sports for them. The paper suggests that sports organizations need to become more culturally sensitive to attract more minority women. The authors also highlight the lack of research on this topic, particularly regarding cultural and religious barriers, racism, and the role of sports in the integration process. Similarly, Maxwell et al. (2013) investigated how organizational practices facilitate and hinder Muslim women's social inclusion in a community sports setting. The study uses a framework based on Bailey's four social inclusion dimensions to analyze social inclusion practices. The findings suggest that community sports organizations can facilitate social inclusion for Muslim women by adopting practices such as flexible dress codes, gender segregation at training, provision of female coaches and referees, culturally appropriate food and non-alcoholic beverages, opportunities to build competencies, portraying positive images of Muslim women, assistance with financial costs and transport, team building activities within the club, and building partnerships with external organizations. These practices can provide physical, social, and economic access and a sense of belonging for Muslim women who become involved with the sporting club as players, coaches, managers, and administrators. Yet, some practices that contributed to social inclusion for Muslim women resulted in social exclusion for non-Muslim women. The paper concludes that organizational practices play a crucial role in facilitating or inhibiting the social inclusion of Muslim women in community sports settings.

Nonetheless, Ekholm et al. (2019) explore how the absence of girls from ethnic and cultural minorities in sports-based interventions is perceived as a problem by community sports coaches, managers, and partners in Sweden. The paper emphasizes the importance of addressing the structural and systemic barriers that prevent girls from participating in sports and society, such as cultural norms, gender stereotypes, and socio-economic inequalities. The article suggests that gender-segregated sports activities and female role models can potentially involve girls in sports-based interventions and facilitate their social inclusion.
However, the paper highlights the need to address norms and limitations within sports activities.

Makarova & Herzog (2014) study illustrated the role of sport in integrating immigrant youth into the host society, particularly in Switzerland. The study shows that sporting activities, especially those in sports clubs, promote intercultural contacts and friendships between immigrant and national youth, leading to better social integration. The authors claim that efforts should be made to increase and facilitate immigrant youth involvement in sports clubs in the host country, with particular attention given to the needs of female immigrants. On the other hand, Walseth's (2008) study focused on empowering young women of immigrant backgrounds to build social capital and broaden their network by engaging in sporting activities. The study clearly distinguishes between the two forms of social capital, bridging and bonding. The findings indicate that participation in team sports can foster a sense of collectivity and cultivate the norm of generalized reciprocity.

2.2 Social Inclusion Through Cricket

Razack (2009) examined women's club cricket experiences in Toronto and Victoria using qualitative methods and applied post-colonial, spatial, and feminist theoretical frameworks to interpret and analyze the narratives. The study highlights challenges women face in Canadian cricket, including geographic, resource, ethnic, and racial differences and gender-based inclusions and exclusions. This paper contributes to the limited literature available on women's Cricket by examining the experiences of women's club cricket in Toronto and Victoria. Moreover, Barrett (2019) explored the connection between cricket and social inclusion in the South Asian diaspora in the United States. The concept of social citizenship is used as a theoretical framework to explore the issue of diasporic sports participation. Social citizenship refers to the idea that individuals have certain rights and responsibilities within a society, and their social and cultural context plays a significant role in shaping them. The study found that the availability of cricket opportunities and the development of dedicated spaces for cricket has created a sense of social inclusion for the South Asian population in the local area. The paper concludes that sports, specifically cricket, can be an important instrument in constructing social citizenship.
Islam (2018) demonstrated the leisure subculture of Bangladeshi immigrants in Tallinn, Estonia, and how it relates to their identity and status practices. The study argues that leisure subculture provides social cohesion and recognition of individual identity and status within the community. The paper also highlights the importance of leisure subculture for immigrants in coping with the stress of migration and achieving a sense of belonging within their community. Finally, the study provides insight into the role of social gatherings, such as cricket games, in providing opportunities for both collective and individual identity and status practices. Furthermore, Zoletto's (2012) study investigated the role of playing Cricket in public parks for young immigrants in Italy and its impact on their identity formation. The author states that participating in this cultural practice allows immigrants to gain positions and assert their identity within society, contributing to their sense of belonging. Furthermore, the study acknowledges the challenges of using cultural practices alone to promote social cohesion and highlights the need to address underlying issues of stigma and discrimination for full integration.

This literature review aimed to provide comprehensive knowledge on the role of sports in the female immigrant's integration into a new society and how organizational practice can facilitate and hinder social inclusion. Although many researchers discussed the social integration of female immigrants through sports, few studies investigated sports administrative practice and the reason behind the lack of female immigrants' participation in sports compared to male immigrants. However, expanding the research on multiculturalism and the absence of female immigrants in sports is necessary. In addition, most of the articles related to sports in general and European sports. Very few studies talk about cricket and female immigrants' social inclusion internationally. To the best of my knowledge, there is currently no research available in Sweden that explores the participation of female immigrants in cricket, even though many of these immigrants come from countries where cricket is popular. This study aims to fill this gap by analyzing the female immigrant's experiences and perspectives regarding participation in cricket in a club in the South of Sweden.
3. Theoretical Framework

Defining a conceptual framework before the data collection is a deductive approach (Jones, 2015). This study used the Self-Determination theory (SDT), Bourdieu’s theory of practice, and Putnam's Social capital Theory as analytical tools. I have chosen these three theories to better understand female immigrants' behavior and social interactions. However, it was difficult for me to relate my findings as one theory was taken from psychology and the other two from sociology. These theories bring a unique perspective on female immigrant motivation, behavior, social structures, social relationships, and community dynamics. By combining these theories, we can gain a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of how sports can promote social inclusion among female immigrants.

The Self-Determination theory (1985) has three components: autonomy, peer-adult relationships, and a sense of belonging that connects physical activity with the experiences of female immigrants. On the other hand, Bourdieu’s theory of practice (1977) enabled me to link sport with female immigrants' past and present social and cultural contexts, which influence individual choices and actions. In addition, Social capital theory (2000) helps me to understand female immigrants bonding and bridging capital in their new society through sports. Moreover, these theories helped me to understand how participation in cricket helps increase well-being and foster social inclusion of female immigrants by making social connections with their peers and locals in their new host societies.

3.1 Self-Determination Theory

In 1985, psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan established Self–Determination theory, also called the theory of motivation, which explains how people's innate psychological needs drive their behavior and how they experience well-being. Autonomy, Relatedness, and Competence are the three primary components of this theory, and human growth and development are based on the above three psychological needs (Deci & Rayan, 2000). Autonomy refers to the need to feel in control of one's life and make choices consistent with one's values and goals, whereas Relatedness refers to the need for social
connections and to feel a sense of belonging. And, Competence refers to feeling capable and effective in one's activities.

The SDT claims that individuals are motivated to meet their need for competence, autonomy, and social connectedness (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). Prioritizing fulfilling an individual's needs is crucial in driving their level of motivation. For female immigrants, participating in sports can help fulfill these needs in various ways. For example, by allowing them to choose how they want to participate in the sport, they can experience a sense of autonomy. By participating in a team sport, they can form social connections with others and experience a sense of relatedness. By developing physical and emotional skills through sports, they can experience a sense of competence. Sport incompetence, a growth mindset, the importance of autonomy and choice, and desired peer relationships support Ryan and Deci's self-determination theory (Farello et al., 2019). However, it is crucial to consider that female immigrants face many challenges that can make it difficult to experience autonomy, relatedness, and competence.

3.2 Bourdieu's Theory of Practice

Bourdieu's theory of practice (1977) allowed me to connect sports with female immigrants' social and cultural contexts. The foundation of this theory is based on three interlocking concepts: habitus, field, and capital. Bourdieu sketched a formula to understand these three fundamental concepts: \([(\text{habitus}) + (\text{capital})] + \text{field} = \text{practice}\). According to Maton (2008), practices are a product of one's habitus and position in a field, known as capital, within the current social context. Bourdieu often used the sports metaphor "feel for the game" when talking about the habitus. Bourdieu argued (1986a) that habitus is transformed by new experiences, education, and training, even though it is generally durable.

Moreover, habitus allows us to navigate social environments successfully in the right situations. Fields are a place where social agents compete to maintain and improve their positions by accumulating different types of capital (Thomson, 2008). Each field has positions and practices where people struggle and play to win. Self-exclusion and loss of self-efficacy may occur due to prolonged struggles in the field, a perceived lack of learning opportunities, and the risk of hysteresis (Spaaij et al., 2014). Thomson (2008) suggests that
practices arise from the ongoing and partial relationship between social agents' habitus and the specific social fields in which they operate. Cultural capital in sociology refers to a person's social assets, such as education, intellect, speech style, and fashion, which can promote social mobility in a stratified society. Having similar forms of cultural capital with others fosters a sense of collective identity and group position. Bourdieu's theory of practices (1986a) argued that individuals engage in different practices, such as sports, shaped by their social backgrounds and experiences. Moreover, sports may have the potential to challenge and disrupt dominant power structures that may have contributed to their displacement as immigrants.

### 3.3 The Theory of Social Capital

"Putnam's theory of social capital" was proposed by political scientist Robert D. Putnam. Many researchers and scholars have studied and discussed social capital, including Pierre Bourdieu, James Coleman, and Nan Lin, over time. Putnam's theory revolves around the concept of social capital, which refers to the collective value of social networks, trust, norms, and reciprocity within a community or society (Putnam et al., 1993). In Bowling Alone (2000), Putnam explores the decline of social capital in the United States, discussing how social networks and community engagement have diminished. Putnam argues that the lack of integration in American society has caused increased crime, decreased children's welfare, and serious public health problems. He highlights the importance of social capital in fostering trust, cooperation, and civic engagement within communities and how its erosion can negatively affect society. According to Putnam, social capital fosters cooperation, promotes civic engagement, and facilitates overall societal well-being (Putnam et al., 1993; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 2004).

Putnam (2000) identifies two primary forms of social capital: bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital refers to the connections and networks formed among people who share similar backgrounds, identities, or interests. It tends to reinforce existing social ties within homogeneous groups. Building social capital and social networks is essential for the growth and development of communities and democracies (Putnam et al., 1993;
Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 2004) and for the individual’s sense of belonging (Morrow, 2003a, b, 2004).

On the other hand, bridging social capital refers to connections and networks that span diverse groups, bridging different social, cultural, or ethnic boundaries. Putnam (2000) suggests that both forms of social capital are essential for a well-functioning society. Bonding social capital strengthens the ties within specific communities, fostering a sense of solidarity, identity, and support. Bridging social capital, on the other hand, promotes interaction and cooperation between different groups, leading to increased social integration, diversity, and a broader perspective.

Putnam and Bourdieu have different views on social capital. Putnam considers social capital as a property of communities rather than individuals' bonding and bridging social capital in sports. Putnam perceives social capital as a social glue that binds societies together and creates a collective 'we' and collective goods (Adkins, 2005). In contrast, Bourdieu's social capital comprises networks of relationships that individuals can use as a resource for class distinction (Bourdieu, 1986).

Although Putnam's work on social capital has received a lot of criticism, it is important to note that not all forms of social capital lead to positive outcomes. For instance, Etzioni (2001) has pointed out that bridging social capital may not always result in favorable results. Despite the criticisms, I will argue that Putnam's differentiation between bonding and bridging social capital is crucial to understanding the overall health of communities, civic participation, and social cohesion.

Putnam's social capital theory can be linked to the participation of female immigrants in sports in several ways. Participating in sports, including cricket, allows female immigrants to build social networks and connect with immigrants and native-born individuals. These social networks can contribute to the development of social capital by fostering trust, cooperation, and support among participants. In contrast, Sports can act as a platform for bridging social capital by bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds, including female immigrants, and providing a common ground for interaction and collaboration. Through sports participation, female immigrants can establish connections
and build relationships with people outside their immediate communities, fostering a sense of belonging and integration.

Considering Putnam's social capital theory, we can understand how female immigrants' sports participation can contribute to developing social networks, trust, empowerment, and overall social inclusion.
4. Methodology

This section outlines and discusses the research design, including sampling techniques, participant profiles, case descriptions, data collection, and analysis. Finally, relevant ethical and social considerations, validity, and reliability are presented.

4.1 Research Design

Good qualitative research is relevant, timely, significant, and interesting (Tracy, 2010). I used the qualitative research method in this study, which helped me gain an in-depth understanding of female immigrants' experiences. I chose the qualitative design because it allowed me to collect data from female immigrants through semi-structured interviews, which are then used to conclude how cricket works for social inclusion. For the selection of the participants, a purposive sampling technique was used to reach the research goal (Bryman, 2012). As a researcher, I immersed myself and interacted directly with that group to build trust and close relationships. Moreover, immersing in that environment was necessary to understand participants' behaviors and attitudes to achieve the expected results.

4.2 Case Description

The cricket club in this study is a local, non-governmental, and voluntary community sports organization established in 1993. From the beginning, the club has been actively involved in the growth and development of Swedish cricket nationally and internationally. According to the club's Facebook page and website, this is one of the most multi-cultural and multi-national cricket clubs in the South of Sweden, which provides a platform for girls and women to play cricket and show their skills. In the Swedish Sports Confederation (RF) policy programme, Idrotten Vill (2005) states- everyone should be welcome to participate in club sports at their level, regardless of ethnic origin, nationality, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, or physical and mental illness (Hertting, K., 2021). This idea is being practiced in the cricket club as everyone is open to developing their cricket in an engaging and supportive environment at their level. The club also works against cheating and doping
and an unhealthy economy, against bullying, violence, and harassment both on and off the cricket field.

The principle of the club is based on eight values- Being open to everyone, Working for Diversity, The justice ideals of sport, Always showing willingness, Joy- enthusiasm-inspiration-hope, Love of cricket, Democracy, and Economy in balance. The club has two men's teams, one ladies' team, U19 and U15, and an old boys' team. Most male players are from Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and other nationalities. In addition, girls are from 10 different countries. The club has practice matches every Saturday and Wednesday at 6.30 pm in the summer and autumn and indoor training in the winter. As the club has men's, boys and ladies' teams, they plan to create a separate team for girls with an age limit of 8 to 12, and the ideal age to start practicing cricket in a club is 8 to 12 years (Katewa, n.d.). Currently, they have 15 female players, including two under 15 girls; therefore, they want more girls to play in their club.

4.3 Sample Sources

Data is collected from a cricket club, where multi-national people get opportunities to play together and have a separate team for females where most players are Asian. The club currently has two girls and thirteen women from 10 different countries. Among them, nine are immigrant players. I have selected female immigrants between 20 and 40 years old for this study. I have taken data from those interested in participating in the semi-structured interview; the respondent participants are seven (07). The informants were from India (three), Russia (one), and Pakistan (three). Four out of seven were Muslim, two were Hindu, and one was Christian. All the participants are highly educated, and most are employed. Four participants are married, and among them, two have kids. They moved to Sweden for study, employment, and family reunions.

The participant size is small due to fewer female immigrant players, and all are not regularly present in the club. An in-depth qualitative interview was conducted with seven respondents, which resulted in a large amount of data. The credibility of the data rather than the respondent size provides a better account of qualitative research (Silverman, 2013). I have applied purposive sampling techniques for data collection. Purposive sampling is a
non-probability form of sampling, and the goal of purposive sampling is to sample participants strategically so that those sampled are relevant to the research questions (Bryman, 2012).

4.3.1 Profile of Participants

Pseudonyms are used in this study to ensure participant's anonymity.

**Interview 1**

Lisa is 34 years old and from Russia. She has been living alone in Sweden for five and a half years. She is divorced and doesn't have any children. She is doing a postdoctoral.

**Interview 2**

Ayesha is 27 years old and from Pakistan. When she was 12, she moved to Sweden with her family. She lived almost 15 years with her parents and is now living alone for four years. She is not married. She is a chemical engineer and studied in Sweden. She has been working in a pharmaceutical company for two years.

**Interview 3**

Rabeya is 26 years old and from Pakistan. She migrated to Norway with her parents. She is currently living in Sweden with her husband. She has been living here for three years. She doesn't have any children. She is working as a full-time project coordinator in Denmark.

**Interview 4**

Sima is 36 years old and from India. She has been living in Sweden with her husband for more than four years and has no kids. She is a software engineer and works for a retail company.
Interview 5

Sofia is 36 years old and from India. She has been living with her husband in Sweden for seven months. She has one boy who is nine years old. She worked in the medical field in India.

Interview 6

Maryam is 37 years old and from Pakistan. She has been living in Sweden for approximately six years. She is married and has two children. One is seven, and the other is nine years old. She has a job in a restaurant.

Interview 7

Kabita is 33 years old and from India. She has been living in Sweden for four years and eight months. She is single and works as a software developer in a company.

4.4 Data Collection

As mentioned, I conducted semi-structured interviews with female immigrants from a cricket club, and the participants were aged 20 to 40. Before performing the interviews, an interview guide was used as a part of the interview preparation to guide the discussion in the desired direction. An interview guide is needed to properly organize the questions that must be clarified to answer the research purpose. The pattern of interview questions was open-ended, providing a ground for the interviewee to express their perception accurately. This type of interview is more flexible, as the questions can be continuously readjusted to fit the answers as the discussion proceeds. Interviews become more fluid as interviewees constantly adjust their responses (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Furthermore, if misunderstandings or lack of elaboration occurs, the semi-structured interview can clarify the answers. The purpose of this research and interview needed to be adequately explained to the participants before interviewing, both in writing and verbally, so that the person is informed and prepared to answer the questions. I have written a consent paper including study purpose and interview details, which the participant read and
signed as a document. I also explained details orally for a better understanding of the participants. As an interviewer, I was on the spot to help the respondents with any questions they were unsure how to answer, and the interviewer could ask follow-up questions to get them to elaborate on their answers (Bryman, 2012). I also wrote semi-structured questionnaires to quickly look and stay on topic if I forgot the questions.

Then, the discussion began with simple, engaging questions to gain the participant's trust and go more in-depth with generative questions. Although I was initially worried about possible language barriers, this was not the case, as the participants spoke English well. The interview duration was (30 to 40) minutes, and it was less or more based on the situation. Participants selected the place and time of the discussion, and most were interested in giving data on the ground where they practice. Each interview was recorded using an audio recorder with participant consent to process the data afterward more easily. Based on these considerations, I intend to evaluate the collected data from a critical, objective point of view (Creswell & Creswell, 2018a).

4.5 Data Analysis

The recorded version was transcribed with the help of a digital tool, making the process faster and easier. According to Brinkmann & Kvale (2015), the empty words and errors in the transcribed document should be eliminated. So, all irrelevant information, such as empty words, is sorted out manually and discarded during the transcription to organize the data better. Then, the interview was processed by undertaking a 'thematic analysis,' in which all statements and data from the interview were divided into themes related to the topic of the study. I used MAXQDA (a qualitative data analysis software) to analyze collected data and manually checked the validity. As a researcher, I followed some steps to ensure that my analysis was appropriate to achieve my research objectives. First, I read the transcript several times and tried identifying similar data. After that, common data is coded from raw data into conceptual categories. Coding documents are an analytical approach where I, as a researcher, systematically mark words or paragraphs, and a specific type is coded together and assigned (Jones & Gratton, 2004). Next, I put them under relevant themes which are being coded. Then, I reviewed all the themes and put similar themes
under the final theme. Finally, the codes must be condensed into meaning, i.e., the coded text is condensed into short formulations about the essence of the interviewee's experiences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). After the coding and the thematic organization of each statement from the participants, it has become easier to relate to the theories and purpose of the study, in which the analysis can interpret the empirical data to answer the research questions better.

4.6 Ethical Considerations

In terms of minority women research, it is crucial to consider various ethical concerns. As immigrants bring their own cultures and traditions along with problems such as trauma, loss, anguish, poor health, poverty, and unemployment, all these aspects raise many ethical issues while working on migrant research (Kabranian-Melkonian, 2015). According to Silverman (2013), researchers should consider some guidelines at the beginning of the study. For instance, the participants must be fully informed, their confidentiality and anonymity must be respected, the participation must be voluntary, and the option to withdraw must always be available. In addition, harm to research participants must be avoided, and the independence and impartiality of the researcher must be apparent (Silverman, 2013). In this thesis, I used pseudonyms for the participants in the results section, and the club’s name stayed anonymous to be a more ethical study.

Different ethical considerations have been taken into account during this study. Firstly, I received ethical clearance from my supervisor in the Sport Science department at Malmö University in March 2023. Then, I took permission from the club chairman and the coach of the ladies’ team. Before the interviews, I explained the purpose of my study and described myself adequately about who I am and how the interview would be conducted. The information collected would not be used for any purpose other than my research and also not for commercial purposes. I informed them that their participation was entirely voluntary and they could withdraw anytime. I also assured them all their information would be handled with confidentiality, pseudonyms would be used to protect participants' identities, and the club’s name would be anonymous.
Moreover, the participant was notified about the meaning and length of the interview and allowed to choose the interview settings and time. Afterward, the interview was recorded with the participant's consent for more efficient data analysis. Consequently, transcription and interpretation were shared and reviewed with the participants, and the participants' opportunity to withdraw consent will persist throughout the process (Jaap Bos, 2020; Swedish Research Council, 2017).

4.7 Social Considerations

People are socially categorized in many ways, including gender, ability, class, race, ethnicity, age, and religion. Oliver's (2014) study illustrated that while sport can bring positive change, it is not a panacea for all social issues. Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge that sport has the potential to reinforce existing power structures that contribute to discrimination and inequality.

Every objective of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) Agenda 2030 has a social aspect since the economic and environmental aspects are interconnected with society. As part of the social mission, sport plays a significant role in achieving the SDGs regarding health, education, gender equality, and citizen prosperity and provides life opportunities. At the same time, the sport also has the potential to reflect undesirable values and unethical attitudes that divide societies unequally (McCullough et al., 2016). Therefore, the impact of the research must be considered from a social perspective. This study expects to clarify new perspectives on existing social barriers and the social integration process for female immigrants. Research illustrates that the social inclusion of female immigrants through sports contributes to most of the United Nations' 17 SDGs. This study emphasized the role of various barriers and challenges hindering the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), such as good health and well-being, gender equality, and more.

Few studies focus on the difference between multi-cultural and assimilative integration policies in sports. Minority women are often seen as cultural caretakers and bearers of the different ethnic groups' cultural identities (Yuval-Davis, 1997). Therefore, minority women's need for a multi-cultural integration climate in sports might be more significant than for minority men. The role of sport in promoting equity through social inclusion and
providing a vehicle for social change has been linked to social integration, social justice, active citizenship, and the development of social capital within society (Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission, 2007).

4.8 Self-Reflexivity

The importance of reflexivity in research is to honestly assess yourself and your position in relation to the study. Self-reflexivity emphasizes the importance of power relations between the researcher and the participant where the race, age, gender, class, nationality, ethnicity, education, and language of the researcher may impact the respondent (Brown, 2014). In conducting this qualitative study on the experiences of female immigrants regarding participation and access to sports, especially cricket, and their social inclusion in Sweden, it is crucial to acknowledge the role that my background and biases may have played in shaping both the research process and the interpretation of findings.

As a researcher with an academic background in sports science and a previous history of working with female immigrants, I recognized the potential influence of my experiences on this study. I have chosen this topic because I have a strong interest in it as I am also an immigrant, and I love to play cricket. Due to different socio-cultural, religious, and gender-related challenges and barriers, I did not continue it in my home country.

Additionally, I have been involved with this club since 1 September 2022 for my research and development course project and have had the opportunity to observe female immigrants for one year. I saw some practice matches and tournaments, which helped me build trust and close relationships with them. My immigrant background became an advantage. Players welcomed me, excited to contribute to a more inclusive female community. Although the interviews were conducted in English, I talked with some Indian and Pakistani participants in Hindi and Urdu, respectively, while seeing the practices and matches on the ground, which created a comfort zone among them. They were happy to know that I knew their mother tongue.

The choice of semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method is new for me as I did quantitative research in my bachelor's program. However, it was an important
learning experience to learn in-depth about the qualitative study design and data collection techniques. Conducting studies on sensitive topics and focusing on various ethical considerations was challenging. In addition, thematic analysis of the participants' narratives and theoretical analysis of the findings for the thesis was also difficult for me.

I was aware of the potential biases throughout the research process. Recognizing my inclination toward advocating for inclusive practices, I took deliberate steps to maintain neutrality during data collection and analysis. For example, I engaged in reflexive practices to mitigate outsider bias, such as acknowledging my positionality, keeping an open mind, and seeking participant feedback during the analysis and interpretation phase.

Confirmation bias is another potential concern where I may unconsciously seek information confirming my preconceived notions. To address this issue, I have adopted a systematic approach to data analysis, utilizing codes and themes derived directly from the data instead of imposing my expectations onto the findings. Peer review and discussion with classmates and seeking critical feedback from my research advisor have also helped minimize the potential for confirmation bias. Since the participants were selected from a particular sports club, their experiences may not necessarily represent those of all minority women. To address selection bias, I ensured that the selection criteria were well-defined and tried to cover all the present female players from the club.

Participants may experience social desirability bias, which could affect the accuracy of their accounts, particularly in sensitive areas such as migration experiences. To tackle this issue, I firmly emphasized the significance of transparent and sincere communication during the informed consent process. Moreover, by establishing trust through regular interactions and rapport-building, I created an atmosphere that provided a sense of security, enabling participants to share their authentic experiences confidently.

Through my study, I have gained a deeper understanding of the complex obstacles that female immigrants encounter and how cricket can aid in their social integration. This research experience has highlighted the importance of self-awareness and critical self-evaluation in mitigating bias and ensuring the integrity of qualitative research. Moving
forward, I will persist in implementing self-reflection and seeking various viewpoints to enrich my investigative endeavors.

### 4.9 Validity and Reliability

Validity is one of the strengths of qualitative research and is based on determining whether the findings are accurate from the standpoint of the researcher, the participant, or the readers of an account (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In short, Validity in qualitative research means the appropriateness of the tools, processes, and data. This study discussed a detailed description of the methodology, the researcher's role, reflections, and a detailed description of participants, which might help to ensure the study's validity. This research study does not involve any biases because all the interested members of the team were taken as research participants.

Qualitative methods are usually based upon interpretations and reflections, so the validity will be harder to ensure (Jones, 2015, pp. 189–190). On the other hand, Reliability is about whether the answers are credible and relevant (Punch, 2014). A detailed description and analysis of the interview were presented to ensure this study's reliability. Detailed field notes can improve the trustworthiness of qualitative research by using recording devices and transcribing audio files (Creswell & Poth, 2013). I believe all the information I received from the participants is reliable and valid. I believe the empirical data and the scientific sources support the conclusions.
5. Research Findings and Discussion

In this section, I aim to address the research question and achieve the research purpose. The discussion in this section is divided into two parts. The first part discusses women's perspectives on the opportunities and challenges they encountered in their homeland and Sweden regarding accessing and engaging in sports, mainly cricket. By analyzing their experiences, we can gain valuable insights into the factors that facilitate or hinder their involvement in sports. Drawing on Bourdieu's theoretical framework, I explore how these women's changing social contexts and individual dispositions influence their sports practices. Bourdieu's concept stresses understanding the evolving social fields in which individuals are positioned and the evolving habits they bring to these fields of practice to comprehend these practices effectively (Maton, 2008). Female immigrants often face challenges in adopting new cultures and environments. Immigration to a new country can be overwhelming and may lead to feelings of incompetence, mainly due to language barriers, unfamiliar norms, and cultural differences. Female immigrants often experience a sense of isolation and loneliness due to being far from their support networks and social ties. Building connections and belonging within the host community is crucial for social inclusion. The Self-Determination theory can serve as a valuable lens to understand the psychological needs of female immigrants and how fulfilling these needs can contribute to their social inclusion and overall well-being in the host country.

The second part investigates the impact of playing cricket in Sweden on female immigrants’ lives concerning various factors, including social integration, financial gain, and a sense of belonging in their new environments. Examining the impact of cricket on their lives, we can assess its potential as a tool for promoting social cohesion and cultural integration. By investigating the impact of cricket on social integration and belonging among female immigrants, this research aligns with Putnam's social capital theory, as it seeks to highlight the significance of social networks and relationships in fostering cooperation, community engagement, and a sense of collective identity. Putnam's theory suggests that social networks and relationships are valuable resources that facilitate community cooperation, trust, and collective action (Putnam et al., 1993).
PART-I

- Pre-migration and sports involvement

The primary reasons for migration to Sweden varied among the individuals. Some moved due to professional opportunities like study, better projects, and work-life balance (Lisa, Sima, Kabita). In contrast, others migrated due to family reasons, like being with their spouse (Maryam, Sofia) or parents (Rabeya, Ayesha). The migration was seen as an opportunity for personal growth and better prospects.

Participants' access to sports and cricket in their home countries varied based on cultural norms and societal factors. For instance, Lisa said, “Cricket is not popular in Russia, but we can play any sport. I played volleyball in a club and was a member of a university volleyball team.”

Three participants encountered barriers and challenges to playing cricket in their home countries. Ayesha, Maryam, and Sofia highlighted cultural, religious, and gender-related barriers hindering women's cricket engagement. These barriers included societal perceptions that discouraged girls from participating in sports.

Ayesha said, “I used to play local sports with the kids in my country, Pakistan when I was young. It was not very common for women to engage in sports, and even if they did, there were no official clubs.”

The narratives of the Mohammadi (2019) study revealed that gender-based socio-cultural constraints in the homeland limited the women’s opportunity to participate in physical activities. In Maryam and Sofia's case, gender-based socio-cultural and religious perceptions also limit their opportunities to participate in cricket.

Maryam stated, “I played cricket a lot in my home country. It's more like gully (Street) cricket than any formal cricket. I would love to join the women's cricket team in Pakistan. But it was hard in my country for a girl to play cricket because of the environment, and there is a question about women's cricket and gender differences. I also did not get so much support from the sports organization and
didn't know much about that in my homeland. So, after being 20 years old, I was more in study than playing.”

Maryam added that when she played cricket in the street, her neighbor always complained to her father about her. But her dad has supported and motivated her. She also mentioned that there is no future for women's cricket in Pakistan. But men's cricket there has a lot. They earn so much because my country is male-oriented. So, women face many challenges and barriers to playing cricket.

Sofia highlighted that she did not continue playing cricket in her homeland due to religious and cultural barriers.

“In India, I played gully cricket casually with kids in my childhood, and I was not involved in any professional cricket. There are religious and social barriers in India. In Asia, there is a perception girls can’t play. Being Muslim, there are some kinds of spiritual obstacles or barricades over there. We can’t do that in our country, but we can also do it in Sweden. Here, it’s a free country. You can do anything, whatever you want, and whatever you want to play.” (Sofia)

Sofia also mentioned the intense competition and limited opportunities for older adults to pursue sports professionally in India.

“There is organization and support of sports and cricket in India. But the competition is more, and the people are more. So, at the age of 36 or 37, you can’t get it. You have to start from 6 or 7 yrs. Then you will get the sports if you are lucky. Otherwise, you are not getting.” (Sofia)

Bourdieu’s theory of practices (1986a) posits that individuals engage and refrain from different practices, such as playing sports, influenced by their social and cultural backgrounds and experiences. By analyzing the sports habits of Sofia, Ayesha, and Maryam, it can be said they all had a strong interest in playing sports. Individuals may encounter challenges with their self-confidence and feel excluded due to various sociocultural and religious factors. Additionally, a lack of opportunities to engage in activities can lead to ongoing difficulties and a sense of limited learning potential.
Spaaij et al. (2014) have identified these barriers as potential contributors to prolonged struggles, a perceived lack of educational opportunities, and the risk of hysteresis.

Societal perceptions and cultural norms influenced the participants' participation in sports. For instance, the societal perception of women's roles and limited opportunities for older adults in cricket affected their choices and access to sports activities. The experiences of Ayesha, Maryam, and Sofia highlight how cultural, religious, and gender-related barriers within their home countries hindered their engagement in sports. These barriers reflect larger power structures and societal norms influencing individuals' choices and possibilities. Maryam's experience of gender differences and the lack of support from sports organizations exemplifies the dominant power that can constrain individuals' opportunities.

Maton (2008) posits that practices are shaped by one's habitus and position in a current social field. Their cultural capital, in the form of skills and knowledge about sports, shaped their attitudes toward and participation in sports activities. The migration to Sweden created a new social field for Ayesha, Sofia, and Maryam to continue playing cricket, where participants had to navigate different norms, opportunities, and challenges related to sports involvement.

According to Lisa, Sima, Kabita, and Rabeya, they did not face problems regarding sports participation in their homeland. Lisa did not personally face obstacles; she acknowledged the existence of racism.

“I did not face any problems regarding sports participation, but I heard people face racism regarding sports.” (Lisa)

Rabeya recognized that the experience can vary significantly based on factors like age, location, and level of involvement.

“I did not play nationally or professionally. I played gully cricket with my brothers and friends in Pakistan before moving to Norway with my parents. So, I didn't face any challenges. Because I was very young when I lived in my homeland.” (Rabeya)

Although Sima and Kabita had been involved in sports in their childhood, they did not continue because of work and study pressure after a certain age. Sima shared that she used
to play badminton casually and participated more in running races, sprinting, and javelin throwing than in cricket during her school years. Although Sima did not face any barriers related to participation in sports, she couldn't play cricket after school for various reasons such as study and work pressure. Sima also mentioned that while she wasn’t very active in India, in Sweden, she has a better work-life balance and more opportunities to plan her sports life, as everybody respects time.

Kabita also had the same experience regarding lesser involvement in sports due to her busy life. She mentioned, “Cricket is quite popular in India. There are plenty of clubs and training institutions. As a kid, I played cricket on the streets with my friends. However, it is almost impossible to play when working and living in a big city.”

Participants' decisions to continue or discontinue sports involvement were shaped by their habitus and the opportunities presented in their social field. Sima and Kabita's decisions to discontinue sports due to work and study pressures reflect the impact of economic and cultural capital on their choices. In addition, better opportunities and work-life balance in Sweden allowed them to re-engage in sports. Bourdieu's theory suggests that the interplay between habitus, cultural capital, and the opportunities provided in the new social context can contribute to individuals' integration and social inclusion through sports.

All the narratives highlight how sports habits, the field, and physical abilities are interconnected. The participants' pre-migration experiences and their involvement in sports are influenced by their habitus, which encompasses their upbringing, cultural background, and socialization. All the stories

To conclude, it can be said most participants had experience playing street cricket with brothers, friends, and cousins in their homeland when they were young. Then, some participants did not continue playing it due to social and cultural barriers, some did not continue due to cricket being less opportunity for older adults, and others due to busy lives. Subsequently, most participants discontinued playing cricket, mentioning reasons ranging from social and cultural barriers to limited opportunities for older adults within the realm of cricket. Furthermore, two individuals cited their busy lifestyles as a factor that hindered their discontinued participation. Cricket was new for only one participant as she did not
have previous experience in her homeland. She initiated her engagement in cricket after migrating to Sweden.

- **Motivating Factor for Joining a Cricket Club**

While the common theme of passion for cricket and social interaction was present in all the answers, the specific reasons for joining the cricket club varied. For instance, some joined for the opportunity to play in a competitive and well-organized team, while others sought a platform to showcase their skills and love for the sport.

  - **The Passion for Playing Cricket**

There is a common thread of passion for cricket in all the answers. Each individual expressed their love for the sport, which was a significant motivating factor in joining the cricket club. For example-

  Maryam said, “I love cricket, and I used to play cricket in my childhood. So that was the main motivation to play cricket in Sweden. And I like the environment of the cricket club.”

  Kabita mentioned, “I played cricket in India as a kid. I was looking for things to do in Sweden when I arrived here. I heard there is a women's team in Malmö. So, I joined the team and started playing for them. So, it is just the love of cricket. I enjoy playing this game.”

  - **Socializing and Meeting People**

Another motivating factor in joining the cricket club is the desire for social interaction and connecting with like-minded individuals. Many respondents mentioned joining the club to make new friends, socialize, and be part of a community of cricket enthusiasts. For instance, Lisa said, “I wanted to join the cricket club to make friends, socialize, and know new people, especially ladies, as I feel comfortable with ladies.”

The Feeling of Accomplishment

The feeling of accomplishment and satisfaction derived from playing cricket and being part of a team was a shared motivation. Some participants highlighted the joy of participating in matches and the sense of achievement it brought.

Ayesha said, “The motivation to join the club stemmed from finding it enjoyable to play cricket, participate in matches, experience a sense of accomplishment, feel a sense of duty, and build relationships with teammates.”

Joining a Top-performing Team

Sima shared that the facilities of the club and the opportunities for personal skills development motivated her to join the cricket club.

“I was attracted to join the cricket club due to its excellent facilities, high standard of coaching, and the opportunity to play with a top-performing team. Joining the club also allowed me to improve skills, be part of the ladies’ premier league, and interact with national team players who were also part of the club.” (Sima)

Showcase Participants’ Skills

Sofia strongly desired to join a club where she could show her skills that she didn’t do in her homeland, so after getting a supportive environment, she was encouraged to play cricket again in Sweden.

“The motivation to join the cricket club came from the desire to have a platform to showcase cricket skills and passion, which was not easily available in India. The supportive and encouraging environment, with coaches providing guidance and correcting techniques, made the experience fulfilling.” (Sofia)

She added that she didn’t know she was a good wicketkeeper before joining the cricket club.
Open to Beginners

As Lisa had experience playing volleyball in a club, she was looking for organized sports where she could easily engage herself in a team after migration.

“During the pandemic, I saw an advertisement on the Facebook Page that the cricket club is looking for female players who don't need previous experience.” (Lisa)

Previously Known

One respondent had previous knowledge of the cricket club, such as having met their coach or about the club's reputation, which influenced their decision to join.

Rabeya said, “I had already met my present coach and the club ladies' cricket team in Norway when they played in Norway. So, I knew there was a team in Sweden that I could join after moving here.”

Rabeya added that it's just her fondness and interest in cricket. Physical fitness and stress release are also a reason to play cricket.

Some answers mentioned a positive and supportive environment at the cricket club. In addition, they also noted that the presence of encouraging coaches and teammates contributed to their motivation to be part of the club. In contrast, physical and mental well-being and love for cricket are also reasons to play cricket in a club.

All the above factors, such as a positive and supportive environment, encouraging coaches and teammates, well-being, and a genuine love for cricket, align with Self-Determination Theory (SDT) principles. These factors contribute to individuals' motivation to be part of a cricket club by satisfying their psychological needs for relatedness, autonomy, and competence while fostering intrinsic motivation driven by personal passion and well-being. SDT helps explain how these elements influence people's decisions to engage in cricket within a club setting.
• Perceived opportunities and challenges

The participants mentioned some barriers and challenges to participating in cricket in Sweden. Inadequate facilities, such as a distant bathroom, imperfect cricket fields, and transport challenges, were common concerns.

○ Inadequate Facilities

The narratives of Lisa and Rabeya disclosed that they face challenges in terms of facilities, such as a lack of washrooms in their practice area, an imperfect cricket ground, and scheduling problems in play.

“Sometimes our facilities are not good. In our ground, we have a bathroom far away. It is difficult for us, and sometimes we need to run. The cricket field is not perfect, and we don’t have the best time to practice or play.” (Lisa)

Like Lisa and Rabeya, Sofia also mentioned similar things concerning inadequate facilities. Sofia said, “We have no washroom and must bring our water. There is no aid, changing room, food, or shed. We are struggling with those things.”

Transport and scheduling difficulties were also mentioned, with limited booking options for grounds. Transport emerged as a prominent issue, with players having to arrange their travel to matches and practices.

Rabeya said, “We have to fix our transportation to go to the match and back from the match, lunch and everything when we have one day matches with another team in Sweden.”

○ Language Barrier

Language barriers are not a significant issue for most participants, as English is widely spoken. However, they acknowledged the presence of other languages like Hindi, Urdu, and Swedish. Lisa said, “I don’t face any language barriers here as we mainly speak English. But obviously, there are some other languages, as people talk Hindi, Urdu, and
Swedish. I don’t feel uncomfortable about that. I am fine, and I ask them if I don’t understand anything, as everybody knows English.”

Additionally, Ayesha revealed that “language barriers could be an issue for immigrant players in teams where Swedish is the primary language. Fortunately, my team has no language barriers as most members speak English, creating a more inclusive environment.”

- **Gender-related challenges**

According to the responses, gender-related challenges were not a prominent issue within the cricket community in Sweden. Women's cricket was acknowledged as equally important as men's, with separate teams for both genders.

However, one participant who had prior experience umpiring in Norway mentioned facing skepticism as the only female umpire at that time.

Rabeya stated, “I was actively involved in cricket, participating as a player, umpire, coach, and even serving on the board in Norway. As a female umpire in Norway, I faced challenges initially because when I was umpiring, I was the only female umpire. People were skeptical when they saw a female referee walking in on the ground and officiating matches. However, in Sweden, where I currently play, I have not encountered any gender-related challenges yet.”

LaVoi and Baeth's (2018) study shows that women face complex and interconnected barriers, which hinder their global representation as a coach, umpires, and players in almost all sports. Therefore, the paper suggests that a feminist approach is necessary to change the male-dominated organizational structure of sports.

Within the current context in Sweden, such gender-related challenges were not prevalent. Most participants shared that they faced no socio-cultural gender-related barriers and challenges. Their challenges regarding resources and facilities are mainly because of their more minor size team and women team members' availability than the men's team. For instances-
Lisa narrated, “Sometimes we don’t have the best times for booking the ground. Because most of the time, the men's team occupies the field. We are like a second choice. The male team is prioritized due to the larger team size and more availability than the female team.”

Like Lisa, Kabita noted, “Initially, we faced a few challenges. Women's cricket is not considered as important as men's cricket. We also have fewer committed players, which increases the gap between the quality of cricket and resources ladies cricket gets here”.

Maryam stated that although men's and women's cricket teams are considered equal, women can't participate in many cricket matches like men due to their busy lives and circumference. She also said that It's not the fault of the Swedish cricket organizations.

Sima and Ayesha affirmed that they did not face any gender-related challenges. Ayesha disclosed, “Sweden is the most gender-diverse country that I know. If we had a combined team and played together, I am pretty sure that we would feel that. Men would not make us feel that, but we do feel that men can do much more than we can do, as men are biologically stronger than us. But playing on a full women's team, I don't think that's something we have felt.”

Ayesha doesn't face any barriers or challenges in participating in cricket. However, she acknowledged that people with kids and families might encounter difficulties managing their time and commitments. Similarly, Maryam said, “I face significant challenges in contributing to cricket as I have a family, a job, and study because I am a new immigrant. These commitments make it difficult for me to actively participate and engage in cricket to the extent I want.”

**Other challenges**

Sima emphasized the importance of continuous practice, seeking feedback from coaches, and being open to criticism to achieve success in cricket. She mentioned, “I have not faced any barriers to my cricket participation. However, I acknowledge the challenges of maintaining fitness and learning cricket techniques, which can be achieved through regular practice.”
The participants also highlighted the importance of increasing the team size, particularly involving teenagers and residents, to foster the growth of cricket in the country.

Kabita commented, “The challenge we face is getting more girls involved. More teenagers from local residents can help us grow cricket in this country.”

The study by Maisala-McDonnell (2020) examined the access of immigrant girls and female adolescents to sports in Helsinki. It found that these girls have fewer chances to participate in organized activities beyond home and school due to various factors such as parental influence, gender roles, girls having more home responsibilities than boys in immigrant families, and lack of priority given to their participation in hobbies. Research indicates that girls belonging to Muslim families tend to avoid club sports (RF, 2010) and instead focus on school work and "spontaneous sports" such as aerobics and walking (Fundberg, 2012; as cited in Hertting, K., 2021).

Sofia and Ayesha mentioned why female immigrants, especially new Asian and non-Asian, are not interested in playing cricket. They noted that immigrants are busy with their new lives regarding family management, employment, accommodation, etc.

“Most of the immigrants came here with their families. With the burden of that, they are living here for the money. So, they are not into it. In most Asian countries, they play cricket. Apart from Asian countries, they are not playing cricket mostly females. They are homemakers taking care of children and husbands. They don’t want to come. So, it’s a second choice.” (Sofia)

Ayesha noted that promoting the sport among immigrants can be challenging since it's not a common topic of conversation, and many immigrants are focused on building their lives in a new country.

“It's problematic that not many immigrants are interested because they are busy building their lives. This is an extracurricular activity. They don't have enough time. They are just busy with their child and husband. In addition, we come from a country where fitness may not be female-oriented. It's just for men who go to the gym, not females. Hence, nobody even thinks about, oh, that's something I could do
exactly. We should talk a bit more about it and promote it. Then people will be interested.” (Ayesha)

Sofia and Ayesha's statement aligns with the findings of Walseth and Fasting's (2004) study, which suggests that women from minority communities might not engage in sports due to sports organizations failing to cater to their cultural needs. Therefore, sports organizations should prioritize multiculturalism and promote more female participation in club sports.

○ **Financial Assistance**

None of the individuals received monetary support for their cricket activities in Sweden. They mentioned that they pay club fees to train and play.

All participants unanimously stated they had not received any financial support for their cricket activities. This absence of financial aid applies to various aspects of cricket, such as club fees, transportation costs, resources, and player payments.

Kabita stated, “We don't receive any financial assistance. “We spend our own time and money to train and play.” Maryam also said, “No Financial assistance I received. We used to play club fees and all the stuff fees. The club also helped us with the matches and sometimes resources. But we never got paid for the game.”

Lisa commented, “I pay the club fee and don’t get anything, for example, transportation fees and resources. The Swedish Cricket Federation (SCF) pays for transportation, food, and hotel rent when we have a cricket camp for ladies' development and games outside the country. They don’t provide anything when we have any game in Sweden. Sometimes coaches help from the club, and sometimes we pay independently.”

While financial assistance is not provided, the club offers resources to support players in their cricket endeavors. For example, Rabeya mentioned that playing cricket provides various opportunities and facilities. She said, “In the winter, we have two practices, and in the summer and autumn, we have one practice every week and a tournament. Playing cricket offers the opportunity to meet diverse people and participate in matches. I've had
my teammates; they're really nice. So, we're like a little family.” She added that the club provides cricket kits for players who may not have their equipment, particularly those new to the sport.

Sima also acknowledged that despite not providing financial assistance, the club offers facilities such as an indoor academy, bowling machine, and cricket ground. These resources enhance the cricketing experience and training opportunities for players.

Sima discussed that SCF occasionally sponsors certain activities for players. They offered financial support for transportation, food, and accommodation during the ladies' Premier League, the ladies' development camp, and games held outside the country. However, this type of assistance is not regular and is usually limited to specific events or tournaments.

Despite lacking financial aid, the participants demonstrated strong dedication and commitment to cricket. They expressed a willingness to invest their time, effort, and personal funds to train and play the sport they are passionate about. Their enthusiasm for cricket shines through as they continue participating in club activities and matches, even without financial incentives. There is a correlation between the socioeconomic status of immigrants and their participation in sports, with lack of funding being a barrier to entry (Zacheus et al., 2012, as cited in Maisala-McDonnell). However, my research claims that a lack of financial assistance does not prevent female immigrants who have a strong interest in cricket from participating in the sport.

While financial assistance is minimal, the players appreciate the support the clubs and the SCF provide. The existence of cricket clubs in Sweden allows them to be part of organized cricket activities and benefit from the available facilities and training resources. The occasional support from the SCF for specific events also encouraged and motivated the players.
PART-II

- Impact of playing cricket on participants

Although all the participants expressed that they did not receive any financial benefits from participating in cricket, they highlighted various non-financial benefits contributing to their overall satisfaction. These benefits include team spirit, physical fitness, mental well-being, socializing, having fun, stress relief, belonging, personal growth, confidence, and meeting people from diverse backgrounds.

  o Physical, Mental, and Social outcomes

Sofia mentioned that she is not receiving any monetary benefits or support from the club for playing cricket. However, despite the lack of financial help, she finds playing cricket valuable for physical exercise, mental relaxation, and the love of the game. Sofia also emphasized that playing cricket provides her time apart from her family, which the other respondents did not mention.

  “It’s an excellent way to release stress. I am getting my free time for myself apart from my family. I don’t like going to the gym and running. I am doing these exercises here in a fun way. Because I love cricket, whatever I do in cricket is an exercise. So, I am getting physical feet as well.” (Sofia)

These findings agree with Waardenburg et al. (2019) and Walseth & Fasting (2004) studies. They illustrated that the sports arena temporarily escapes migrants from their daily struggles and unpredictable futures as migrants face various challenges, such as unemployment, lack of affordable housing, and physical and mental illness when they migrate to a new country.

Sima found it challenging to quantify the benefits she received from playing cricket. She said playing cricket in a team gives her lots of fun, learning, confidence, a friend’s circle, and teamwork. She also underscores the role of cricket in helping her disconnect from technology and work-related devices. Playing the sport allows her to forget time and gadgets, focusing solely on the game.
“I work, and I want to be active. I work with computers, so playing cricket is part of the workout and mental stress release. I forget the clock and stop looking at my gadgets and phone when playing cricket. Only the stumps, the ball, the bat, and the game.” (Sima)

Rabeya enjoys practicing and playing games regularly, which helps her stay physically fit and socialize with different people. She considers her teammates as a second family. Ayesha also pointed out that her primary benefit from playing cricket is the sense of team spirit and belonging. Like Rabeya and Ayesha, Kabita said the same benefits she gets from playing cricket in a team.

Maryam mentioned several benefits she derives from playing cricket, including keeping her body fit, socializing, having fun, releasing stress, and enjoying the competitive spirit during matches. She also values the time spent together with her teammates.

“Cricket helps me to keep my body fit, socialize, have fun, release stress, wish to win the game during competition, and spend quality time together.” (Maryam)

All the positive outcomes they derived from playing cricket in a club support the Self-Determination Theory (1985), which states that individuals are driven to fulfill their needs for competence, autonomy, and social connectedness (Weinberg & Gould, 2019). By analyzing the participant's perspectives about the benefits of playing cricket, it can be said that their engagement in cricket is driven by their inherent psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, leading to intrinsic motivation, personal growth, social connections, and enhanced well-being. The absence of financial benefits does not diminish the value they derive from playing cricket, showcasing the powerful influence of intrinsic motivations in shaping human behavior and experiences.

All respondents emphasize the positive impact on their well-being, including physical fitness, mental relaxation, happiness, and personal growth through playing cricket, indicating high intrinsic motivation. This aligns with autonomy, as they engage in an activity that they find fulfilling and enjoyable rather than being driven solely by external rewards. Additionally, they highlight the social aspects of playing cricket, such as forming
strong bonds with teammates, feeling part of a family, and meeting people from diverse backgrounds. This sense of relatedness satisfies the psychological need for social connections. Respondents express a sense of progress, improvement, and skill development in cricket. They mention physical fitness, teamwork, and skill enhancement as benefits of playing. This reflects the need for competence, a fundamental aspect of SDT. Engaging in activities that allow individuals to feel competent can lead to greater motivation and well-being.

While the narratives don't explicitly mention financial benefits, it's notable that the participants are engaged in cricket despite not receiving monetary support. This can be seen as an example of intrinsic motivation taking precedence over external rewards. They derive value from the activity itself, which is the central theme of SDT.

To sum up, the narratives consistently mention the positive impact of playing cricket on physical and mental well-being. From stress relief to fun, these experiences contribute to overall well-being. According to the SDT theory, engaging in activities that meet one's psychological needs can increase positive emotions and better mental health. Thus, pursuing well-being becomes a crucial aspect of one's life.

○ Sense of Belonging

The narratives of Rabeya, Ayesha, Sima, Kabita, Lisa, and Maryam converge to highlight cricket's transformative impact on social inclusion and belonging in Sweden. For many, cricket resonates as a means of achieving a sense of belonging, even in a context where the sport is not nationally prominent.

Unlike football, Rabeya highlighted that cricket is not a widely recognized sport in Sweden. She specifically refers to female cricket, suggesting that her involvement mainly centers around this aspect of the sport due to its limited prevalence in the country.

Like Rabeya, Ayesha also pointed out that although cricket is not a national sport, the opportunities to play cricket here make her feel that Sweden respect diverse people's interest. She added that although cricket is not widely played in Sweden, matches and dedicated fields suggest respect for diverse sports interests. The presence of facilities
indicates a form of recognition and respect, contributing to a sense of appreciation for the country.

Sima’s perspective highlights the profound sense of belonging that comes with club membership. Being a part of a cricket team embodies commitment, camaraderie, and a strong community connection. She stated that cricket has significantly impacted her social inclusion and sense of belonging in Sweden. Playing for a club gives her a sense of responsibility and commitment, and she has made friends from various cultural backgrounds through the sport.

“When you play for your club, it feels like you belong, you are an asset to the club, and you have to play for your club, and representing a club means it's a responsibility and commitment. If you're playing for the country, that's something beyond happiness. I would say that's an ultimate goal for any cricketer.” (Sima)

Similar findings also indicate that migrants gathering in a place and playing cricket not only practice collective identity but also help them to be a part of a community, which builds a sense of belonging and gain individuality (Islam, A., 2018; Zoletto, D., 2012).

Kabita, Lisa, and Maryam collectively highlight the social connections and interactions fostered by the sport, which contribute to their sense of belonging. Kabita noted that although she knows more people through cricket in Sweden, this increased social interaction doesn't necessarily translate into a strong sense of belonging. However, her statement that cricket gives her a reason to live in Sweden implies that the sport has provided her with a purpose and connection to the country, even if the sense of complete belonging is still developing.

“I know more people through cricket in Sweden than in any other way. However, that doesn't give me a sense of belonging. It gives me a reason to live in Sweden.” (Kabita)

Lisa emphasizes that cricket is a significant part of her social life; her teammates have become her friends. This highlights how the camaraderie and relationships formed through cricket contribute to a sense of belonging within the context of the team and the sport.
“Cricket is a big part of my social life; all my teammates are my friends. Swedish society loves sports, and we play sports as well.” (Lisa)

Maryam points out that playing cricket has led to extensive conversations among the team members, allowing them to understand each other's lives. This mutual sharing and understanding fostered by cricket contribute to a sense of social inclusion and connection, integral to a broader definition of belonging. Studies on migrants and refugees suggest that a sense of belonging within homogenous and local people is essential for social integration (Ager & Strang, 2008; McMichael & Manderson, 2004; Walseth, 2006; Walseth & Fasting, 2004).

Collectively, these responses showcase how cricket serves as a conduit for social interactions, friendships, and shared experiences that contribute to varying degrees of a sense of belonging within the context of their lives in Sweden.

Social Connection

In this study, many participants said they build social connections with immigrants and local players. Maryam said, “Playing cricket in a team helps me establish social connections between local and immigrant women.”

Rabeya, Lisa, and Kabita's narratives also affirmed that they had found friends from different countries by playing cricket in a team.

“I have made new friends, and all the friends belong to various parts of the world. We learn so many things when we play together.” (Kabita)

These findings support McMichael and Manderson's (2004) study, and they claim that establishing social networks and relationships is difficult for migrant women without sports settings.

It can be said that playing cricket in a team helps them build a social connection with homogenous backgrounds and a diverse group of people, which aligns with Putnam's bridging and bonding social capital concept. According to Putnam's theory, both forms of
social capital are essential for a well-functioning society (Putnam et al., 1993; Putnam, 2000; Putnam et al., 2004).

However, Sofia said that although she established some connections with local people, she still struggles with communication and connection as she is very new in Sweden.

“I have some connections, but not many since I'm new here. I’ve only been here for five months and still struggle to connect with the locals.”

Sofia's experience highlights a potential challenge in communication due to being new to the country. This underscores Putnam's observation that social capital may take time to develop, especially when language or cultural barriers exist.

Sima emphasizes that there is no distinction between immigrants and local players in the cricket team. She views everyone as equals on the field. The team members come together, not just for the sport but also for social gatherings. She also highlights the positive impact of team sports.

“We have only a few local players, so I don't find a difference between immigrants and local people. It's just a person on the cricket. We all bind together and have social gatherings as well. We admire the skills of each other and try to develop and improve our skills, so it has always been good. Team sport never stops you; it pushes you forward and makes everybody come together because it's a team spirit that stands out and will bind everybody.” (Sima)

Sima's viewpoint about viewing everyone as equals on the cricket field and emphasizing team spirit reinforces the idea of shared identity and cooperation, aligning with Putnam's emphasis on collective action and common goals. In Putnam's view, social capital is often seen as a social adhesive that binds societies together, creating a collective "we" and collective goods in modern communities (Adkins, 2005).

The narratives showcase how team sports like cricket can significantly develop social capital among immigrant women and local players, promoting a sense of community and integration.
6. Conclusion

This study delved into the social inclusion of female immigrants through participation in cricket in the South of Sweden. By exploring the women's perspectives, including barriers, challenges, and opportunities regarding involvement in a cricket club, this research sought to contribute to a deeper understanding of their experiences. Previous studies on women's integration through organized and unorganized sports have provided a comprehensive understanding of how female immigrants integrate socially through sports in their host societies. The interpretation and analysis of the experiences of female immigrants playing cricket in a club is informed by three theoretical frameworks: Self-Determination Theory, Bourdieu's Theory of Practices, and Putnam's Social Capital Theory.

The Self-Determination Theory (1985) helped uncover the psychological needs of female immigrants regarding their participation in cricket, shedding light on their motivations and aspirations. Bourdieu’s Theory of Practices (1977) enabled us to understand participants' involvement in sports and different socio-cultural factors that influenced a participant to continue or discontinue a sport. Additionally, Putnam's Social Capital Theory (2000) allowed us to analyze the dynamics of social connections and bonding within the cricket club, demonstrating how female immigrants interacted with native and immigrant players. A qualitative research design included semi-structured interviews conducted among seven female participants who migrated from different countries, primarily from Asia.

The study shows that participants mainly migrated to Sweden for jobs, study, and family reunions. Thematic Analysis of participants' pre-migration sports involvement unveiled that most participants had the experience of playing street cricket in their childhood, except for one participant who was involved in volleyball as cricket is not popular in her country. In addition, it became evident that participants had a strong interest in cricket or other sports. Cultural, social, religious, and gender-related barriers and a lack of facilities hindered their continued engagement in sports in their homeland, which supports Bourdieu's theory of practices.
The study found that two participants stopped playing cricket due to study and work pressure, though they had access to and support from sports organizations in their home country. In contrast, one participant did not continue because of fewer opportunities for older adults and competition for joining a club. Various factors, including country of origin, culture, socioeconomic status, and gender, have a significant influence on sports participation, and these factors are closely associated with the participants' perspectives and encounters (Zacheus et al., 2012; as cited in Maisala-McDonnell, H., 2020).

After migrating to Sweden, they got a work-life balance, freedom, and a supportive environment, which helped them start playing cricket again. A similar study on female refugees and asylum seekers' participation in sports, particularly bike riding, found that the female refugees and asylum seekers were motivated to learn bike riding after migrating to Germany, where they found a supportive environment (Mohammadi, 2019).

The study highlights that most respondents were primarily motivated to join the cricket club for their interest and love of cricket, physical and mental well-being, and social interaction. In addition, some participants mentioned the positive and supportive environment at the cricket club, and the presence of encouraging coaches and teammates contributed to their motivation to be part of the club. These findings align with self-determination theory, which emphasizes the importance of autonomy, competence, and relatedness in promoting intrinsic motivation.

Despite blaming female immigrants and refugees for a lack of interest in sports in the Western context (e.g., Walseth, 2006; Taylor & Toohey, 1999), this study's findings reject negative assumptions and stereotypes. Furthermore, many girls with migrant backgrounds engage in sports due to the availability of gender-segregated activities (Amara & Henry, 2010). A case study conducted on Muslim women in Australia discovered that adopting certain practices such as gender-segregated activities, flexible dress codes, gender-segregation during training, and provision of Islamic sportswear and culturally appropriate food and beverages have facilitated physical, social, and economic access for Muslim women to participate in sporting clubs. Additionally, these practices have helped them to feel a sense of belonging in the club. (Maxwell et al., 2013). Therefore, sports organizations
need to become more culturally sensitive to attract more minority women (Walseth & Fasting, 2004).

The study revealed that participants experience various challenges, including inadequate facilities such as a lack of bathroom in the practice area, an imperfect cricket field, transportation issues for traveling to matches in different cities of Sweden, a need for greater representation of female members, etc. A study on women's cricket experiences in Canada indicates that immigrant women faced specific challenges due to geography, access to resources, ethnicity, and race, and they also experienced inclusions and exclusions based on gendered reproductions (Razack, 2009). In the case of my study, such challenges female immigrant players did not face; instead, they faced most challenges regarding limited facilities.

However, these results depict that participants did not face any language barrier, as all the team members and club staff speak English. A study on immigrant girls and female adolescents’ access to sports in Helsinki found that language is not a barrier for the players; even players with no Finnish language skills do well; football helps them improve their language skills (Maisala-McDonnell, H., 2020). Though all the participants said they had no language barriers in the team, it is evident from findings that some newly arrived are struggling to communicate with local people outside the club as they speak Swedish.

The study highlights that as female immigrants are not getting any financial assistance, they are not interested in joining the club because they are building their new lives in a new country regarding jobs, study, accommodation, etc. An investigation revealed that lack of funding prevents immigrants from participating in sports (Zacheus et al., 2012; as cited in Maisala-McDonnell, H., 2020).

Participants mentioned that despite these challenges, the availability of cricket-related opportunities such as practice matches in the summer, autumn, and winter, an ICC-level coach, an indoor academy, a bowling machine, and an inclusive environment contributed to their overall satisfaction. They also appreciate the support they get from the clubs, like offering playing kits for new players or someone who can't buy resources, and get proper training under a highly qualified coach as well as financial support from the SCF for female
development camp and a premier league like food, transportation cost, and living cost. The study highlights that the occasional support from the SCF for specific events also encouraged and motivated the players. Participants also had strong dedication, commitment, and willingness to invest their time, effort, and personal funds to train and play the sport they are passionate about. They are happy that the existence of cricket clubs in Sweden allows them to be part of organized cricket activities and benefit from the available facilities and training resources.

Beyond financial aspects, participants derived substantial non-financial benefits from their cricket involvement, including team spirit, enhanced physical fitness, mental well-being, socializing, having fun, stress relief, belonging, personal growth, confidence, and meeting people from diverse backgrounds. Some previous studies conclude that sport has the potential to significantly integrate immigrants into the host society (e.g., Alemu et al., 2021; Makarova & Herzog, 2014). This study revealed that participating in cricket in a club can socially integrate female immigrants into their host country by building social connections with immigrants and locals, aligning with Putnam’s Social Capital Theory.

This study has significant practical implications that can positively impact the immigrant community and the broader society. By spotlighting the experiences of female immigrants in cricket, it advocates for diversity and inclusivity and challenges stereotypes. Furthermore, the findings can inform policy development, encouraging sports participation, cultural exchange, and community engagement, which can positively impact social integration. Through media coverage and dissemination of the thesis findings, the broader public can become more informed about the challenges and successes of female immigrants in cricket. This increased awareness can lead to more empathy, support, and opportunities for these individuals. The research can shed light on how participating in cricket can empower female immigrants by providing them with a platform to showcase their skills and talents. In addition, the study contributes new knowledge to the field of migration studies, sports sociology, gender studies, and social integration. It adds depth to the academic understanding of how sports, particularly cricket, can impact the lives of female immigrants and influence their integration processes. This study also helps the different sports organizations, policymakers, and NGOs working with female immigrants and cricket or
want to work to tailor their program design. Finally, this study's suggestion will help researchers further research female immigrants' social inclusion and the role of cricket in their lives.

In conclusion, while financial benefits may not be readily available, the non-financial advantages of playing cricket in Sweden hold significant value for the participants. Cricket serves as a platform for personal growth, social interaction, and physical well-being, creating a supportive and enjoyable environment for individuals from diverse backgrounds to come together and share their love for the game.

6.1 Limitations and Future Research

While the study provides valuable insights, its limited sample size hinders the generalization. In this study, the sample size was limited due to the presence of a low number of female immigrant players in the chosen cricket club. The proposed future research could use an ethnographic approach to explore the process of social integration for female immigrants through long-term observations. This approach provides a detailed understanding of their experiences, interactions, and adaptations over time. One limitation of this study is that I did my analysis based on data from one cricket club, so further research could be a comparative analysis by collecting significant data through in-depth interviews from multiple cricket clubs across Sweden, which would allow us to compare the experiences of female immigrants within diverse cricket clubs in terms of social integration in Sweden. The second limitation is that this thesis only focused on female immigrants' experiences regarding participation in cricket in a club so that future research may examine female immigrants' perspectives and investigate club policies and practices. Such empirical study may offer more significant insight into understanding the impact of cricket on female immigrants' lives and organizational strategies and approaches, which can further help the government, sports organizations, and policymakers to implement that knowledge for building an inclusive society through sports. Moreover, a Cross-Cultural Comparison study could be employed to extend the scope of understanding beyond Sweden's borders. By exploring the interplay of cultural, social, and institutional factors,
this comparative analysis could provide a comprehensive perspective on how different contexts influence social inclusion outcomes.
7. References


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8. Appendix

Questions for the Participants:

A. General Questions
   ❖ Tell me a bit about yourself: Who are you?
   ❖ What motivated you to join the cricket club in Sweden?

B. Cricket and Social Inclusion
   ❖ What kinds of benefits are you getting from playing cricket?
   ❖ In what ways has your involvement in cricket contributed to your social inclusion and sense of belonging in Sweden?
   ❖ What barriers and challenges are you currently facing regarding participation in cricket?
   ❖ Have you faced any gender-related challenges or barriers within the cricket community in Sweden? Please elaborate.
   ❖ Have you received any financial assistance for playing cricket in Sweden? If yes, what type of assistance did you receive?

C. Pre-Migration life
   ❖ What were the deciding factors that motivated your migration to Sweden?
   ❖ Did you have access to any support networks or organizations related to sports or cricket in your home country? If yes, please describe.
   ❖ Did you play cricket in your home country? If yes, what barriers and challenges did you face in your home country related to playing cricket?
Information letter & declaration of consent

For participants in my master’s thesis project

I am Sania Easmin, a second-year Master's student at Malmö University, and I am currently working on my thesis. You are invited to participate in a research study on the social inclusion of female immigrants through cricket in Sweden. The study aims to contribute to understanding how female immigrants can be socially integrated through cricket in Sweden.

The data will be collected through an informal interview with a semi-structured questionnaire, and the data will be recorded using an audio recorder. The duration of data collection will be (30-40) minutes, and the language of instruction will be English. Follow-up or in-depth questions may be asked to obtain more information if necessary.

Participation is entirely voluntary, and you can withdraw from the study at any time without providing any reason, and the data may not be retained. The information collected from you will be used solely for research purposes and not for commercial or marketing purposes. The data will be processed until August 2023, after which the information will be archived. If you have any questions or concerns about the study or the information collected, please contact me (saniaeasmin05@gmail.com). You will remain anonymous, and confidentiality will be respected.

Please sign the attached consent form to indicate that you have read and understood the information provided and consent to participate in this study.

Thank you for considering participating in this study.

Name: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________ Place: ___________________________

Signature: ___________________________