THE INTEGRATION ISSUES OF SOMALI IMMIGRANTS IN SWEDEN

Experiences, Challenges and Opportunities

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the integration of the Somali immigrants in Sweden and to explore the factors that impede or help in the process. The study in particular aims at looking at how culture, identity and migration form immigrants’ integration experiences. It will further explore the communication barriers with, mainly; the government institutions from the perspective of Somalis and how removing these barriers could help improve the situation.

The thesis also discusses the theories of transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, immigration, and integration in relation to communication for development and social behaviour change.

Qualitative research methods have been selected to explore the experiences of the Somali immigrants integrate into the wider Swedish community through the use of semi-structured interviews.

The Somali immigrants have good networks among themselves in Sweden, and with home country, however they do not manage to establish a good networking with the Swedish society. The outcome of this study implies that most immigrants feel that there are communication barriers in the way to a better integration.

Through the use of qualitative research in semi-structured interviews with selected Somali immigrants from various backgrounds, the study shows that there are many issues that might help the community to integrate into Sweden and proposes some recommendations on how the situation could be improved.
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INTRODUCTION

Integration is crucial for migrants in the intention of permanent residence in a foreign country. In times of globalization and vast transnational movement, people risk crossing borders, deserts and seas for various reasons including search of safe haven, peace, security or a better life. During their journey and once they reach their final destination, they face many unanticipated challenges but they, on the other hand, come across opportunities and better chance of life. While all immigrants face these problems, Somalis have their unique situations in the host countries receiving them in respect to a long period of state failure.

Somalia is a country without functioning state since 1991, when the already weak monopoly on the use of force collapsed (Bertelsmann Stiftung, 2016). Since that time the number of refugees fleeing from the war and the number of internally displaced persons were increasing. More than two million Somalis are currently displaced by a conflict that has lasted over two decades while an estimated 1.5 million people are internally displaced in Somalia and nearly 900,000 are refugees in the near region, in Kenya, Yemen and Ethiopia (UNHCR, 2017). They flee to wherever they think they might find safety and security, risking their lives through all types of difficulties. Europe is a major target for the Somali refugees and other immigrants for different purposes. In 2012, Swedish statistics report that the Somali-born population in Sweden numbered 44,000 whilst most of the Somalis now living in Sweden arrived after 2000, but earlier in the 1980s Somalis had started to migrate to Sweden in substantial numbers (Fagioli-Ndlovu, 2015).
This thesis explores the challenges and opportunities faced by the Somali immigrants in Sweden by giving the interviewed representative participants the opportunity to explain what integration means to them, whether and how they want to become part of the local culture and society and how they undergo this process of integration in Sweden. The thesis aims to investigate integration on the basis of the core research question of examining the integration issues of Somali Immigrants in Sweden from the perspective of Somalis. The main objective of the thesis is to examine the perception of the Somali immigrants on integration, how they understand it and the challenges and the opportunities in the issue. To further dig the problem, the theories of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism are applied in connection to integration, migration and communication for social change.

Qualitative research methods are used, based on interviews conducted with selected persons, all Somalis, from diverse backgrounds, age and different periods of stay in Sweden. The research engages with and draws information from the respondents explaining their stories, experiences, understandings and implications concerning integration.
Problem Statement

The issue to be addressed through this study is the exploration of the challenges and opportunities facing the Somali Immigrants in Sweden. The study will shed light on how Somalis are integrated into the Swedish society, the problems faced during the process and the potential opportunities in pursuance of better settlement. This study will, in addition, focus on the cultural and communication aspects of the process of integration in the light of Somali perspectives.

Scope of the Research

The scope of the research will be the integration status of the Somali Immigrants in Sweden, regardless of age, education and number of years in Sweden.

Research Question

What are the integration issues of Somali Immigrants in Sweden from the perspective of Somalis?

a) What factors can support or hamper their integration in Sweden?
b) Why are Somalis slow in integration?
c) What communication barriers do Somalis face?
d) How are Swedish authorizes more attentive to transnational networks’ influence on communication processes of integration?
Research Objectives

According to the research question, the main purpose of the thesis is to examine how Somalis integrate into the larger receiving communities in Sweden. While integration might mean different to different people, the perception of the Somali immigrants, represented by the interview participants, will be given into consideration. The main research objectives are:

a. Examine the perception of the Somali immigrants in Sweden on integration.

b. Explore the factors hampering full integration from the perspective of Somali communities in Sweden.

c. Explore what communication barriers affect the process integration.

d. Analyze how transnational networks influence the process of integration.
LITERATURE REVIEW AND EXISTING RESEARCH

Integration is an important issue for any society which is diverse along lines of, ethnicity, social background, gender, religion and many other measures and without it, it is difficult to tackle many of the various social and economic challenges that we face (SIC, nd, p. 11). It is therefore a multi-dimensional process crucial for immigrants' successful inclusion and assimilation with the host society (Salat, 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, I will explore two types of literature. I will, firstly study the general literature on the concept of integration, especially on Somali Immigrants in Sweden, in the scope of this study. Secondly, I will look into the relevant theories and concepts in support of my argument under this study, such as transnationalism, and cosmopolitanism in connection with communication for social behaviour change. I will equally highlight the descriptions and definitions of certain fundamental terms for understanding this research. Finally, this section will explore the relevant literature on the integration status of the Somali Immigrants in Sweden and will, at the same time, try to contribute to the current literature in the field.

Definition of Terms

a) Immigration and Integration

The terms immigration and integration have common denominator that they complement each other. That said, immigration is defined as “A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement” (IOM) while integration is perceived as “an interactive process between migrants and the
receiving society, and a long-lasting process of inclusion and acceptance of migrants in the core institutions, relations and statuses of the receiving society” (Tineke Fokkema, 2011). It also concedes that the receiving society has much more power and prestige (Tineke Fokkema, 2011). This power influences the positive and the negative aspects of the situation. (Tineke Fokkema, 2011) argues that while to some people “becoming more integrated implies improving life chances, “to others”, “increasing integration has a negative connotation, conjuring up the image of an unwanted imposition of uniformity.” And still to others “It is simply a way of describing the established patterns of human relations in any given society (UNRISD, 1994).

Integration is a vigorous concept that requires regular monitoring and timely updating to take step with the dynamic situation of migration resulting from the various social, cultural and historical backgrounds of immigrant societies. Different countries, as such, have different integration policies to achieve a “cohesive social climate depending on the type of migration at hand or the way a society defines migration” (IOM, 2011).

In most cases, the type of immigrant determines the sort of integration to be put in place. Usually, the situation of refugees, displaced persons, economic migrants, and persons on the move for other purposes, determine the type of strategy or programmes to address their problems; yet, they might have common policy at the early stages of integration.

Nevertheless, a proper integration depends on the national policies and laws of the receiving nation, the available economic opportunities and the cultural backgrounds of
the immigrant communities, which may help or hinder their proper integration into the larger society. The Integration Policies of Sweden, periodically reviewed, ensure “equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background”. Hence, integration issues are “largely framed in terms of practical issues: jobs, housing, language learning and social benefits” (Ruben Andersson) and to provide equal opportunity for all, the aforementioned policies cover seven areas of paramount importance in Sweden’s integration strategy: faster introduction, work and entrepreneurship, schools, language proficiency/adult education, anti-discrimination measures, urban development, and basic common values – (Ruben Andersson).

Sweden, a country of immigration since 1950s, has a considerable asylum system compared with other EU countries, taking huge numbers of refugees from conflict devastated countries such as Iraq and Somalia (Ruben Andersson). In parallel with constant change and rising number of immigrants, the integration policies are also regularly reviewed and updated to fit the situation for better inclusion, participation and for equal opportunities.

Migration and integration policies which are for the Swedish society as a whole and not only on a particular migrant population are clearly separated and mandated in Sweden for two different authorities: the Ministry of Justice, where a Minister of Immigration operates on behalf of the government while integration policies are in the scope of the Ministry of Employment (Fagioli-Ndlovu, 2015). The establishment of the National Office for Integration in 1997 “completed a transition from “policies on immigration” to “policies on integration,” which are branded by a mainstreaming
approach. (Fagioli-Ndlovu, 2015).

While integration is a political priority in Sweden, integration policies are transsectorial, more responsive and evidence-based, better supported and more effective in many areas of life including employment, education, health, political participation (MIPEX, 2015). Thus, the goal of Sweden’s integration policies, which have been recognized as among the most open and liberal in the OECD countries is to “ensure equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, irrespective of their ethnic and cultural background” and it is principally outlined in terms of practical issues: jobs, housing, language learning and social benefits (Ruben Andersson).

Whereas Sweden has the best integration policy in the world, (Somalis in Malmö, 2014) the question of how far these opportunities are utilized by the Somali Immigrants will be highlighted by this study in a brief comparison with other immigrants in the country with similar background and challenges such as language, and background, which integrate better.

How do these policies affect the various immigrant communities in the country and especially, the Somali immigrants, in the critical issue of employment? Do the disadvantaged communities have any particular consideration in policy formulation? Although Sweden is said to have the lowest employment rate among OECD countries for foreign-born residents in relation to the native population, at 82 percent, two particular countries with low employment rates are Iraq and Somalia, at, respectively, 39 percent and 25 percent (Ruben Andersson). That is one of the reasons certain
groups have been particularly important in consideration for policy formulation. Integration strategies are then prioritized according to the severity of the situation and consideration of the various needs of immigrant communities. The seven fields of Sweden’s integration strategy: faster introduction, work and entrepreneurship, schools, language proficiency /adult education, anti-discrimination measures, urban development, and basic common values – reach across social, cultural and employment fields (Ruben Andersson).

But where does the problem lie in regards to the integration policies? Is it a problem of adequacy or lack of proper implementation? Where does the unique problem in the Somali society lies? If the notion that Somalis, because of being nomadic, Muslim society cannot integrate well is true, there could still be other nomadic, Muslim societies, which are integrating better. Although there could be a political will and funds might be set-aside by the government for the purpose, (Ruben Andersson), there is still large unemployment in the sector and lack of the required skills in the case of the Somali immigrants. Somali community is one of the large groups affected by these policies, which have quite some difficulties in integrating into the larger society. The argument of Marco Zoppi, through his PHD studies, supports this statement that “Somalis are oftentimes singled out in political debates about immigration and integration policies as the “least integrated” group in the entire region, or as a “burden” for public finances.” (Zoppi, 2017). One interview participant interviewed during this study and asked her views towards the Somali immigrants’ integration in Sweden said “Somali immigrants are in need of especial attention from Swedish authorities more than any other immigrant community and especial programmes
tailored to their specific needs but this does not appear to be taking place. They are, instead, blamed on falling behind in integration and in employment without giving effort to understand their problem and to support them”.

We understand from the information provided by the interviewed participants and from the policies and documents reviewed that the concept of integration is problematic in itself that it demands comprehensive analysis by involving all interested parties, considering their different views and perspectives. The targeted communities should then be part and parcel of all the decisions affecting their lives, as they are in a better position to present their problems better than anyone else.

a) Transnationalism

Many societies go into the transnational sphere, not because of their choice but because of various factors such as war, famine, poverty and political repressions and often times in search of a better life. Globalization, social media and social networks contribute to the expedition of the process from immigration to final integration and assimilation of immigrants into the host societies but what happens is that once immigrants reach their destination, they often find a situation different from what they expected: identity crises, discrimination, unaccepting societies, etc.

Transnationalism, migration, and integration are, thus, inter-related global phenomena creating social change, development and “spaces for interaction between migrants, as
individuals, and communities of origin, transit and destination, as a whole. (IOM, 2011).

While migration is defined as “A process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement” (International Organization for Migration), transnationalism is described as a “process whereby people establish and maintain socio-cultural connections across geopolitical borders that presents both opportunities and challenges”. The two theories have some similarities and connections that both of them talk about cross-border movement of people, economic benefits, and settlement. An old quote “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way” ¹ best describes the fate of different societies under the same context of study. A time in which peoples’ global movement is a major international challenge and all countries are affected by migration in one way or another, Somalis are one of the countries in the top list of migration, as they are either fleeing from unending war, conflict and insecurity or in search for a better living opportunities. They have, thus experienced in a complex social change in terms of social structure, identity and culture, which had, instead of steering to a better integration, further complicated the situation to affect positive change. They have, therefore, major integration challenges in the areas of, for instance, employment, education, information access and communication. With against a nomadic backdrop, where clan links and family structures are strong, most of Somali arrive the west without educational background as refugees and immigrants.

¹ Leo Tolstoy
b) Cosmopolitanism

Another important theory contributing to the transnational movement of the global migrants, particularly, Somali Immigrants is “Cosmopolitanism” which provides distinctive commitment that “everybody matters” and therefore “every human being has obligations to every other” (Badger). That leads to conception of responsible governments ensuring appropriate integration policies and laws for transnational societies to realize global peace and prosperity. This starts on how we define the concept in the situation of individual cosmopolitan citizens implying that all human beings are citizens in a single society and accordingly to be a cosmopolitan requires commitment to universal principles of justice and democracy and funneled by a global wisdom of unity and cohesion.

Cosmopolitanism is, in the first instance, a willingness to engage with the others who are from diverse cultural backgrounds. It is “an intellectual and aesthetic stance of openness toward divergent cultural experiences, a search for contrasts rather than uniformity, entailing relationships with to a plurality of cultures understood as distinctive entities” (Hannerz, 1990). The cosmopolitan concept of engaging with the other takes us to explore further two types of cosmopolitanism as Waldron (2000) discusses: cosmopolitanism of culture and cosmopolitan right which are connected by the relationship between culture and identity where identity has “something to do with the way we sometimes think we are entitled to present ourselves to others; the sort of non-negotiable side of our cultural preferences” (Waldron, 2000). We can deduce from this definition that societies with specific cultural practices, traditions and language are less cosmopolitan about their life; hence, cosmopolitanism demands
diversity of cultures, within and across national borders, and global movement of transnational societies. Somalis, as a homogeneous society, need longer time to integrate while cultural engagement is still strong. A good example of these types of societies, which fall below the cosmopolitan levels, are migrants, refugees and marginalized persons who are usually constrained by laws, identity, citizenship issues and other factors limiting their movement and inclusion into well established societies. Their economic and political participation is limited as they hold less universal values restricted by country-specific polices and procedures.

In spite of cultural plurality, global migration and integration of transnational communities are the main contributors to cosmopolitanism. Somalis in the diaspora, moving from traditional, cultural practices and adapting to new ways of life are in the process of integration as a transnational society. Like other immigrants, they have their own challenges and unique problems to tackle. This study will therefore explore how transnationalism and cosmopolitanism connect with immigration and integration and why they are useful for a studying Somali immigrants and those in Sweden in particular. These theories indicate that non-immigrants societies who live in more cultural and ethnically diverse environments come into contact with more diverse cultures and expected to more open to change. Somali immigrants, while maintaining their own cultures, are, in that sense expected, due to transnational migration, to be more cosmopolitan as they permanently settle, obtain citizenship and adapt to the cultures of the other societies they are living with.
c) Social Behaviour Change

Additional point to consider for this study in relation to “Communication for Development” as one of the strategies to support social integration is the social behaviour change of Communication for Development theories, as development communication involves “creating mechanisms to broaden public access to information on reforms; strengthening clients’ ability to listen to their constituencies and negotiate with stakeholders; empowering grassroots organizations to achieve a more participatory process; and undertaking communication activities that are grounded in research” (Servaes, 2008). By changing social behaviour, we mean adapting to the local cultures, respecting national laws, norms and the way of life of others for the common interest of community cohesion. This can be achieved through the Influence of change at the public or policy level and promote issues related to integration in order to achieve development and progress in a peaceful society (Mefalopulos, 2008).

Vertovec (Vertovec, 2004), emphasizes each set of transformation engages in various causes, interrelated processes and perceptible outcomes in the field of migration studies which tend to “research the nature and function of border-crossing social networks, families and households, ethnic communities and associations, power relations surrounding gender and status, religious institutions and practices, patterns of economic exchange, and political structures”. Thus social change, in migrant transnationalism can be measured by the conditions prevailing in various locations, transnational social networks and the frameworks that support them.
d) Culture, media, and communication: Somali Context

The combination of culture, media and communication play a crucial role in the integration of any society while cultural practices “reflect and define group identities, whether the group is a small subculture or a nation” (Klinenberg). Culture is also a means to understanding societies’ way of life, what they value, what they want to share with others and what reservations they have about other societies and culture. With regards to this, this study, will try to examine the correlation between culture, media and communication in particular focus on Somali immigrant communities.

We understand that culture has a great influence on social interactions of different communities, their communications and expressing their needs. Somali culture with Islamic background is, thus, a major factor as they uphold certain beliefs, values and way of life, which may detach them from the prospects of full integration with multi-ethnic and multi-cultural society in the host country. This may lead to discrimination at all levels as culture, defined as a “set of values, beliefs, and practices; and shared forms of communication” (Klinenberg) which radically changes over a long period of time but in the short term dominates the policies of integration and social inclusion when the rate of illiteracy is also very high. After more than twenty years of war and civil strife, Somalia’s once vital culture has been all but destroyed, with buildings and institutions of national cultural significance such as theatres, museums, libraries, and archives ruined and the absence of government structures to coordinate the administration of cultural property has been a key factor in the decline of the Somali
This means cultural changes are not only in the diaspora but in the home country as well.

Although Somalis are from nomadic backgrounds, they are described as having open, and strong social networks among themselves, both in the diaspora and back home, but are in the lower rank in communicating with others. How communication, culture and media are barriers to Somali community’s integration are indicated by their limited interaction with the Swedish society, difficult in finding jobs, lack of awareness to the existing opportunities and having access to information. They have instead easier connection with other immigrants. Thus, retaining their culture of origin oftentimes seems to be a barrier to adapt to a new culture and interact with the Swedish community while it would be beauty to have their culture and adapt to the new phenomena. One other major point worth noting is how media depicts Somalis in the public sphere, The media attention Somali immigrants receive is a negative compared to other groups and due to the undesirable impression of the media Somali immigrants are used to illustrate how integration is falling (imdi, 2009). Success stories are very few and are usually overshadowed by other negative and insignificant events. Media usage is also another factor of immigrant awareness of the current issues affecting lives. They are more connected to the Internet news and social media, which has more connection to the homeland, and it is in the Somali language. Though most of them watch TV, small number are able to fluently understand the Swedish language and they are unable to select relevant news channels. Newspaper readership and Radio is also in the minimal.
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section will introduce the research methodologies used in order to investigate the integration experiences, challenges and opportunities of the Somali immigrants in Sweden. Both primary and secondary data collection methods of qualitative research were used. Qualitative research is intended to “explore how people see and experience the world in new phenomena and to capture individuals’ thoughts, feelings, or interpretations of meaning and process” (Given, 2008). Qualitative methods have their own advantages and disadvantages, however, one advantage is the use of open-ended questions which give participants the opportunity to respond in their own words, rather than obliging them to select from pre-set responses, and as such, open-ended questions have the ability to evoke responses that are meaningful to the participant, unanticipated by the researcher and descriptive in nature (NATASHA MACK, 2005).

In order to narrow down the scope of the study, the main research methods applied include semi-structured questionnaires, observation, desktop research from Internet sources and course literature covering the bigger picture of the topic.

In order to comprehend and to analyse the outcome of the study, it was perceived appropriate to apply a combination of research methods that examine the integration barriers of the Somali immigrants and the various connections of integration, immigration and communication with background support of the theories of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism.
Methods for the collection of primary and secondary data that were used in this research are: 1) Semi-structured interview; and 2) Review of the existing literature. Several considerations were required to be established, prior to conducting interviews. These considerations included: identifying interviewees, designing the questions, and conducting the interviews.

a) Semi-structured interview

An interview is described as “a social interaction; an agreed commitment to offer evidence and opinion to a known set of questions.” (Roy Birch, 1996). In order to grasp the information needed in a meaningful way, I had, in particular employed “semi-structured interview” for data collection approach in which I had pre-established open-ended questions. The idea was to get as much information possible from the participants in the concerned topic of study (Given, 2008). Within the qualitative research, semi-structured interview, with pre-determined set of questions, has been selected as a proper research method for this study. The semi-structured interview is described as a “qualitative data collection strategy in which the researcher asks informants a series of predetermined but open-ended questions” (Given, 2008). In the process of the interview, the interviewer, in order to gather meaningful data from individuals or community groups for whatever purpose “must be attentive to the cultural and linguistic identities of those groups and allows their voices attitudes, and responses to be fully articulated and honestly represented in the final report” (Roy Birch, 1996).
For the purpose of this study, semi-structured interviews were conducted with eight participants from different professional and educational backgrounds, selected on the bases of age, gender, profession and period of residence in Sweden. In order to collect information regarding integration, Interviewees were also selected to reflect a broad range of social, cultural and integration backgrounds of the Somali immigrants living in Sweden.

Snowball sampling method, which is based on reference from initial participants to recommend additional participants, was used to select the interview participants dispersed throughout the country who meet the eligibility criteria for a study. Snowball sampling is selected as it is a “useful way to pursue the goals of purposive sampling in many situations where there are no lists or other obvious sources for locating members of the population of interest but it does require that the participants are likely to know others who share the characteristics that make them eligible for inclusion in the study” (Given, 2008).

All participants received written questions to respond while additional Skype/telephone conversations, which were a good choice, have been supplemented with the written interview, as Somalis are known as oral society. Participants were selected in consideration of their experiences, education, level of integration and number of years in Sweden. They had various experiences in their respective areas of work and social networks with the Swedish society as well as external networks. These methods facilitated to posit the Somali immigrant’s current circumstances and their experiences and coping mechanisms after their arrival and residence in Sweden in the perspectives of their viewpoints. Somalis are fairly conservative to provide full
information to strangers and reveal their opinion but they are more open to speak to other Somali researchers. Being Somali and speaking Somali helped me to easily interact with them during the Skype/telephone to convince them to respond to the written interview questions.

b) Review of the existing literature

Literature review of what has already been written on the topic of integration was a major basis for this study. Documents, reports, articles and relevant books were reviewed to pertinently shape the thesis and cover the overall scope of the research, addressing the research problem. The purpose of the literature review was to reveal what has already been written about the topic, to find a reliable data and to find the research gap for future study.

To use reliable data, course literature and other materials on migration, integration, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism and communication for development were selected for this study. Investigating the topic was quite challenging as integration is a broad subject and as such, selection of the best entry point was not that easy.

c) Ethical consideration

Before starting the interview, the researcher must understand the rights of the interview participants to receive sufficient information about the aims, the risks, the benefits and the outcomes of the research. It is very important to think of take ethical consideration into from the beginning and to have informed consent from the participants while conducting the research. The purpose is to avoid any potential risk
as the data involves human being. We have to, usually, ensure for the participants “that the participation is voluntary and that they are not agreeing the interview under any pressure” (Given, 2008). I had therefore obtained the full consent of the interviewees informing that their names, personal and contact details will be kept confidential and will not be disclosed without having a prior consent from them.

d) Limitations

Due to the fact the most of interview participants were in various locations, they were only reached through email, Skype, and telephone connections made through colleagues. This had foiled the opportunity to have an observation of the attitudes and the actions of the participants should the case have been direct, face-to-face, personal interview. The interview was conducted in English and Somali and therefore the answers (Somali) from participants translated back into English had to be given a good consideration in order not to compromise the quality of the interview responses provided.
RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

In this chapter, the findings from the questionnaire and the relevant literature reviewed will be presented with analysis of the key results. This analysis will respond to the research questions provided in the study and the secondary data applied for the research.

Social changes, global movement and transnational migration is moving vast that “The extensiveness, intensity and velocity of networked flows of information and resources may indeed combine to fundamentally alter the way people do things (Vertovec, 2004). These alterations are facilitated by the use of wide connections through the use of technology, human resources and financial flow. Vertovec (2004) raises questions on: What kinds of societal changes are stimulated by these connections? How deep are the changes and how long lasting (Vertovec, 2004). In this section, we will try to analyse the finding from this study in regards to how transnational networks influence the communication barriers faced by Somalis for a better and fast integration, the factors that can support or hamper their integration and why Somalis are slow in integration. The general findings including the findings from the interviews conducted with their analysis will be presented in the following sections in relation to the course literature and other existing relevant literature in the field. The aim is to explore, discuss and analyse the research questions in relation to the research topic of integration and its relevant theories.
The interview started with the question: What are your views towards the Somali immigrants’ integration in Sweden? One participant responded indicated that it is difficult for Somalis to integrate into the Swedish society easily and it takes longer time and as such, the level of integration is very low. Another participant has a given almost the same answer:

“I think Somalis do not integrate well as they are closed from the other communities. Swedish language is their main problem. Language and education are keys to proper social integration and because of this, they are very low in employment. On the other hand, they do not have adequate, marketable skills, which can help them to get their portion of the labour market”.

Other respondent, however, expressed her view towards the of integration in terms of integration policies of the host country, and social and economic issues:

“I think Somalis that come to Sweden, directly from Somalia have several difficulties. For example, Somalis were good at entrepreneurship especially women who used to start their own business with ease and small capital. However, that could not be possible in Sweden due to certain policies for registration and starting of business and tax restrictions. These are major barrier to integration in the sense that the interactions of the Somalis with others is out of place.” (Respondent 1)

Gender issues and family networks for Swedish as a developed society are not important like Somali communities where the role of women is still marginalized by a
patriarchal society. Hence it appears that women need greater support to economically establish themselves in the society, which is a good step towards financial independence, social inclusion, self-reliance and personal empowerment. Most of the interviewees have provided responses in the experiences and the process of integration in much greater details, as the following respondents show:

Respondent 2:

“My view is that Somalis cannot make integration in the short-term unless mechanisms to improve this are taken in consultation with the Somalis as major stakeholders”

Respondent 3:

“I believe that Somalis are closed society. They are not good at learning the Swedish language which is key to integration.”

Respondent 4:

“Integration is an argumentative issue. If the question is are Somalis like the western native in culture and behaviour, the answer is ‘No’. But in the case of people from failed state, from war with no applicable education and technical skills which could help them take step with society in a developed country we can say that are in the labour market.”

Respondent 7:

“Integration is a two-way process. The readiness of immigrants and the
acceptance of the host societies are crucial for good integration and once these two are matched the final goal for collective society with common interest will be achieved.”

Another question connected to the former question: Do you personally think you are integrated fully into the Swedish society or not? Was raised in the interview in order to see individual perspectives of each participant interviewed. Again, the different participants provided different responses based on the their experience and knowledge in regards to this issue.

Respondent 1

“Yes and no. Education wise yes, but tradition, culture are pretty much Somali I would say. I grew up in a very strong Somali household but my values are of course a mix between Somali and Swedish”.

Respondent 2

“I am not personally fully integrated, as I had no sufficient information apart from what I have received during the induction period”.

Nevertheless, the remaining participants they feel they are integrated up to some extent but they still have to go a long way to fully integrate into the native society. To further investigate the real challenges facing Somali immigrants to properly integrate into the wider society, the interview participants were posed to the question: What do you think are the barriers to the integration of Somalis into the Swedish system? Most of the interview participants agree on several barriers to integration, language being
the first, lack of in interaction with others, various cultural backgrounds hindering from the to adjust themselves to new cultures, high level of illiteracy especially with adults. These challenges affect all faces of their lives in regard to deviating them from the opportunities that they would take advantage in order to the right direction to development. The areas they are falling behind in integration include the labour market and the education sector. This situation leads them to economic and social marginalization with no significant contribution to the society and the economic development of the nation. To further examine these barriers, we will highland some of the responses provided by some of the participants in the following:

Respondent 1

“The Swedish society is much different from the societies in Africa. In Sweden and in the western countries the societies usually have higher education and degrees but in Somalia many do not have those opportunities and are self-taught in the business and craft industry. We know that Somalis are more successful in countries like UK. The reason? England used to have colonies in Somalia and therefore knows what Somalis are good at, and Sweden did not reach that level of understanding yet.”

Respondent 2

“I think the barrier to integration facing Somalis is cultural diversity and lower level of education.”
While we will look into each of the results with its analysis, we will indicate how the interviewees stress that “Cultural differences, low level of education and communication” are the major challenges to integration. One participant asserts that the “the biggest problem impacting the Somalis is the fact that they are from a country with no government, a failed state for close to thirty years, harbouring terrorism, social disintegration, loss of values and integration, with no education and vocational skills. Having challenges in adapting to a news environment I believe is the biggest challenges towards better social integration.”

We, at the same time, learn from these findings that Somali immigrants have great challenges in the process of integrating into the host societies. We also find that these challenges, as indicated by the interview participants, could be converted into opportunities by involving all key stakeholders and reviewing the integration policies and their implementations in a way relevant to the particular needs of the targeted communities. A close examination of transnationalism and cosmopolitanism theories and practices together with interview responses and cultural and traditional background of the Somali immigrants will contribute to mutual understanding and collaboration of all concerned parties. These findings have been divided into a number of categories where each one was discussed and analysed in the following sections:
a) Transnational Networks:

Would the use and inspiration of transnational networks contribute to a better, country specific integration? While each country has specific integration policies, utilizing the experiences of transnational networks facilitates to share experiences, and lessons, which could be applied to improve the situation of similar ethnic communities in various countries. Vertovec (2004) argues that while the widening of networks, more activities across distances, and speedier communications reflect important forms of transnationalism in themselves; they do not necessarily lead to long-lasting, structural changes in global or local societies. He emphasizes that “Migrants have historically maintained long-distance social networks, and the fact that messages or visits take shorter time does not always lead to significant alterations in structure, purpose or practice within the network (Vertovec, 2004). But why are we then interested in studying the effect of transnationalism on migrants? In this study, we are interested in only on how could transnational networks affect the overall Somali status in the diaspora and how it augments towards an enhanced integration and collaboration among themselves and promising relationship with other communities.

Somali diaspora or migrants have wide range of global networks among themselves, which connects them to home country nationals, families, friends, and relatives. They have also networks with the other Somalis in the diaspora third countries either through clan affiliation or through religion or other social issues. These networks exist for variety of purposes with a major goal of collaborating for good intention on the basis of humanitarian support to their people, especially in the time of disaster such as
drought, flooding, etc. they also contribute to the development of their home country by sending remittances to their immediate families and investing in small business.

These networks, within the host nation and across countries, can usually be easily mobilized for the said purpose, either through the use of religious leaders or through clan interest, and they are actually dismantled after the end of the purpose, however some networks last longer, especially those which have stronger base of principle and ideology. While this type of networking is strong, it defies the crucial issue of the Somali immigrants networking and making friends with the Swedish society. It is difficult not only because of language merely as the main challenge, but culture of conservatism as well is a major challenge to socialize and mingle with others.

Use of technology, and social media contribute much to make and maintain networks, but what type of networks and for what benefit? For the aim of maintaining these networks, Somalis usually use certain social media tools: Facebook, WhatsApp, and Snapchat which are mainly for simple communication and entertainment. They use it for discussions of home country local politics based or tribal issues. So, they are, in the social media, in their home country rather than being connected to their host countries. Somalis have regular contacts with their relatives and colleagues in the home country and with the other Somalis in the diaspora. They yearn to one day go back and resettle home. But this never materializes and takes throughout their lifetime thinking about it, compromising to fully settle in their new country and recognize it as their home country. The transfer of a large, regular portion of their income through money transfer to their relatives is also a burden to the saving and investment they would have made in the new country which would give them trust, hope, development and
better life and by the time that takes place, full integration could happen.

The positive aspects of these transnational Somali networks are that they contribute to the economy of their home country in a time of conflict and poor governance. Two major areas they have invested well are money remittance and telecommunication sectors. They, as well, establish NGOs, joint-venture projects and small businesses back home. Apart from some small businesses, these projects do not last long due to energy, technology, raw materials and know-how. The NGOs are usually project based and no significance in development. However, transnational Somali networks could be used for sharing information and lessons learned among themselves in tackling integration challenges and taking advantage of economic and social integration opportunities.

b) Communication Barriers
Communication is crucial in every aspect of life and without it achieving short-term and long-term objective would be difficult. Different types of communication are used for different purposes at different times usually require different sets of knowledge, skills and adaptive tools (Mefalopulos, 2008). A major finding of this research is that communication is a major barrier to the integration of the Somali immigrants in Sweden. Language and education as major communication challenges will be specifically analysed in this section.

This study finds out several reasons Somalis are in the lower rank of integration in the instance of communication. This is based on the interview participants’ indication that communication is a strong barrier to the social integration of the Somalis regardless of
other issues. Language as a means of communication plays an important role in integration and as such, this study finds that the Somali immigrants share most of these challenges with other Immigrant societies. On asking the participants interviewed whether lack of Swedish language skill is an obstacle to their interactions with the Swedish society, they have denoted that it is the biggest challenge to integrate. While, like other immigrants, free Swedish language programme (SFI) is available to all immigrants, especially during the introduction period, the result is insignificant. It is interesting to know that Somalis are far behind the required level of capacity. But what are the reasons?

I will start with the question of: do Somalis face any communication barriers with the various government institutions? That question and others in the questionnaire were opening for the crucial role of communication for removing barriers to integration. The various participants’ interviews showed different answers to that same question. The main participants who responded to the question are as follows:

Respondent 1

“Yes, there is a huge barrier I would say. The communication between the Somalis in Sweden and the government institutions can be improved from both sides. The institutions have to come out and meet the Somali communities and the Somalis have to show that they genuinely care about their new country”.

According to respondent two, Swedish language would solve major integration problems and if Somalis learn it they will be able to integrate. Otherwise he says that he does not see any communication barriers.
Respondent 3

“Yes, the first one is lack of good knowledge of the country and its laws. Language difficulty is also a main challenge. These create a fear if they make any communication with the government means disclosing their privacies and that his/her children may have been taken away by the government.

Respondent 4

“Language is the greatest challenge if the person does not have language proficiency, he/she cannot make any integration and will have difficulties in getting a job and living with other people.”

Respondent 5

“The primary challenge is that Somalis are from conflict-devastated country for almost thirty years where there is no education and technical skills. They have difficulties in learning a foreign language. Language is a key to any integration therefore the major challenge to integration is language.”

Respondent 6

“Without written and spoken Swedish they cannot understand the written papers, letters and documents from the government and the social institutions and they cannot respond back”.

Communication for Development
One-year master
15 Credits
[2018] *
Supervisor: Hugo Boothby*
One reason is that Somalis, back home, have had a high level of illiteracy that impedes them from easily adapting to the situations of host countries. We understand that it takes time to learn new language and new skills and to understand the social structure and the system of the country hence those who are qualified enough cannot even utilize opportunities in Sweden as their qualifications are not recognized and as they as well lack language skills (Ruben Andersson). Having their qualifications and capacities accepted, they would have quicker integration and would then take part in supporting the new comers or unskilled immigrants that are falling behind the system. To ensure how far these objectives are achieved, the following question was posed during the written interview: Do you think that Somalis have enough capacity (education, language, technical skills) that can help them in the Swedish labour market? The responses provided by the various participants were quite the same. We will underline some of the major responses in the following:

Respondent 1

“It depends, if the person is like me and came when they were young, I would say yes, but if someone comes at an older age it’s hard to adapt to a completely new system. Maybe there is a better way to integrate the person than to force him or her to education. For example we can provide a room for them to use the knowledge that they had from Somalia such as entrepreneurship and business skills.”

Respondent 8:

“Somalis are trying their best. They have good space in the labor market
especially in public transportation sector. However they did not reach higher levels as they are still new to this country”.

Six interview participants argued that the majority of the Somali immigrants do not have enough capacity to get their share in the labour market as most of them lack educations, skills and awareness. They believe that by investing in understanding the issue from the perspective of the Somalis could help improve the situation. One respondent stresses that the main challenge is lack of good knowledge of the society, culture, the system and the law of the land. They, furthermore, fear to approach the government agencies for help when they cannot get especial treatment to their specific cases. It takes long period of time to get their issues addressed partly due to the long process of bureaucracy in a fast moving world. This is again communication issue. Illiteracy is also a problem, the one who cannot read, cannot understand and that is the end of it.

Question 9 of the interview was: What do you do in your leisure time?

Only one respondent explained that he likes to read, watch documentaries, news, debates and have time go and visit family and to hang out with my friends when time allows. The rest of the respondents stated they have nothing particular to do apart from spending time with family and with colleagues in the coffee shops.

Instead of mingling with other people, Somalis spend their leisure time with their Somali colleagues in their particular residential areas giving no time to socialize with others. Their daily discussions are more about politics and issues in home country and they use the same for social media especially WhatsApp, Facebook and Snapchat.
Following daily news and events in TV, Radio and other media is a great challenge for following the daily events affecting their lives. The do not follow the Swedish channels which stream programme related to their situation as residents, but they are connected to Somali TV channels reporting from Somalia. Even though Sverige Radio has a Somali section, it has limited coverage, and many people have no idea of its existence.

While media could be a positive channel for communication of positive messages the mainstream media depicts negative image in their coverage of Somali communities in news stories. The international and national media characterizes Somalis as a people who cannot integrate, are social burden and lack integrity. They associate them with piracy, terror, fraud, assaults, rape, and unemployment, (OSF, 2015). This is the negative perception the wider society, other migrants and the international community receives from Somalis and in that case “their behavior was suggested to be indicative of the wider group they belonged to, while in positive stories the achievement was seen more as the result of individual effort.” (OSF, 2015).

To usually communicate with main government institutions and other social agencies, both written and oral communication are important. One of the agencies everybody has to regularly communicate is the tax Agency (Skatteverket) that is responsible for population registration, and tax issues. The Insurance Agency (Forsakringskassa), the employment (Arbetsformedlingen) have similar importance that everybody has to regularly deal with crucial issues concerning their life. Housing agencies, schools, and districts are also important.
“Information Sverige” portal has very crucial information for anyone who is new to Sweden and wants to find information about Swedish society quickly and easily. It brings all the information, in several different languages, including Somali, together in one place.

All these agencies demand regular communication and many Somali do not properly utilize these resources. When a person lacks the language capacity as well as the awareness of these agencies, he has to usually depend on interpreters and colleagues and family friends for assistance and as such their needs are never fully covered. The websites of these agencies including the migration agency provide Somali pages for the important issues. Connecting people to these pages, letting them know their existence is quite important. The daily Swedish newspapers and TVs carry huge information concerning all residents.

In addition to individual communication, a two-way communication involving all concerned agencies and people is required in this instance to make effective change. As Somali immigrants as individuals and community have difficulties in communicating with the government, the public institutions have similar challenges in communicating policies and programmes to the Somali communities therefor to Influence change at the public or policy level and promote issues related to development, advocacy communication intends to raise awareness on hot development issues, use communication methods, and media to influence specific audiences and support the intended change (Mefalopulos, 2008). The Swedish authorities, in this sense, to understand how Somalis are engaged with transnationalism in resolving their problems and combining effort to effect change.
Likewise some scholars argue that thinking and acting “transnationally” might help policymakers define transnationalism and its relationship with migration. 

“Policymakers addressing migration issues need to engage with transnationalism in conceptual and practical ways to harness the opportunities it presents and address the challenges it poses” (IOM, 2011). Perhaps, “thinking globally” and “acting locally” could play an important role in localizing the problem and the solution from policy-making to policy implementation to make an effective social change.

A good social behaviour change will, thus, take place. The opportunities to remove misinformation, reduce the information gap and eliminate ambiguity are plenty but the utilization of these tools for social behaviour change is small. Most of Somalis do not understand the system of the country however, those who are well educated with good knowledge of the system, could be used to get engaged in helping to improve the situation.

Communication problem is not only between the Somalis and the Swedish but also between the Somalis themselves. Parents and children have different ways of understanding life in Sweden, as their objectives are different. Young people are eager to integrate and find their future in Sweden while parents like their children to be like them and to get connected to the Somali culture and belong to the home country. They try influencing them to spend their time in home country, to study local culture, distant relatives and clan lineage. Children are then in-between these conflicting cultures that many of them get lost in the middle and end up as dropouts from schools and employment sector.
Due to the fact that Somalis are transnational society with active transnational networks is an indication that they are developing to more cosmopolitan in their respective host countries providing an opportunity to share information, exchange ideas of success stories and learn from their experience across borders.

c) Difficulties in employment

Somali immigrants have difficulties in utilizing available employment opportunities. Like any other community, they have to, as individuals send applications to the vacancies in the job centre but as they do not have the language skills and the work experiences required, they never receive responses from the potential employers. Facilitated by the labour office, they are sometimes asked to volunteer by attaching them to existing businesses but again due to lack of Swedish proficiency and lack the required technical skills there are few chances of getting opportunities from these companies. However, Somalis make a good progress in certain areas such working as bus and taxi drivers as these usually requires oral language skills but little written skills.

Instead of getting jobs through the Labour Office (Arbetsformedlingen), they oftentimes get through their networks and recommendations from colleagues but the chances in this situation are very small. This again goes back to the issue of communication as writing a good application and CV is a prerequisite for considering an application for an interview to employment.
The labour agency serves all job seekers in Sweden who have the legal right to work, helping in finding jobs to apply for, getting Swedish language lessons, finding a suitable training or education programme, trying out different jobs to show skills, learning about what it’s like to work and live in Sweden, finding out where in Sweden they will have the best chances of finding a job and Work experience placements for residence permit holders (arbetsformedlingen). Most Somali immigrants do not make use of these tools and information sites due to lack of awareness, prior work reference and trust.

Entrepreneurship is another important area for self-employment and getting income. There are certain countries that Somalis are creating successful small businesses. Somalis are good at entrepreneurship and starting up small business as have been witnessed in places like the USA and UK. While many Somalis quickly established their own small businesses in Minnesota, USA, for instance their counterparts in Sweden have not enjoyed the same success (Yuen, 2010). However, it is not easy to do that in Sweden due to legal requirement, policies and procedures to follow and availability of facilities and physical space.

Integration also depends on how host societies are open and receive immigrants. If Somalis feel they are welcomed they will integrate easily but if they feel they are discriminated their integration will not be easy. How the host society is historically integrated is also a main community. Unlike USA and UK were the immigrants settled for long period of time, Sweden is in a different context that it has a shorter history and experience making integration difficult. But why employment is important? We gather that economic integration is the entry to all forms of integration for all societies.
Employment is thus recognized as a crucial area of settlement. Economic integration and employment give immigrants a sense of pride, respect and dignity within the community, encouraging them to take further steps towards inclusive and sustainable development. While employment is a key to the sustenance of the people, the Somali immigrants lack the chance to economic development as they less educated that they cannot easily integrate. However to overcome this challenge, they have to endeavor to learn the Swedish language and basic technical skills, which will help them, prepare for better. The fully integrated members have to be used as a guide for helping Somalis integration by sharing their experiences. The creation of small businesses will stipulate a chance for self-employment and freedom to interact with others.

d) Cultural adaptation

Understanding culture and diversity is an important concept in studying human development of all societies. According WCCD definition, culture “ encompass everything that makes up a “way of life...referring to the way people live together, interact, compete and co-operate and thus comprises both the individual and the collective dimensions of our lives” while ‘Human Development’, on the other is described as the “ultimate purpose of development to enlarge human capabilities, expand the set of choices open to each individual and enable each person to live the life of his or her choice.” (UNRISD, 1997). Thus, culture is not a standalone concept but a combination of factors, and shared values, shaped by the interdependence of the world’s peoples in promoting cultural diversity.
We understand from these definitions that culture is a power and its power depends on how far a society is developed. While individuals and societies have the right to live the life of their choice, conflict and post-conflict societies live in the cycle of refugees, IDPs and are in incessant survival let alone development. Migrant societies, like the typical example of the Somalis in Sweden in this research, fall in that category. Vertovec (2004) construes what he calls “dual orientation.”

“Migrants adapt themselves while maintaining strong ties of sentiment, if not material exchange, with their places of origin. Sustained real time and intensive practices of transnational communication, affiliation and exchange, however, can profoundly affect manners of migrant adaptation. Now as never before, migrants can maintain and act upon particularly strong senses of connection to people, places and senses of belonging associated with their places of origin” (Vertovec, 2004).

That is perhaps the reason many migrants, instead of adapting to local cultures, have longing to return home to invest, and nowadays for political participation and government participation. (Eriksen) Indicates that it is still possible to maintain and respect local culture and at the same time integrate, using mass media to strengthen local cultures, not to weaken it, and develop migrant communities. He stresses that a culturally diverse world is “necessary to pursue political models which maintain and encourage this diversity” (Eriksen).

The concept of identity and dual citizenship come here as many migrant people find themselves different from the native citizens while equally having same citizenship.
They feel they have no equal citizenship that their citizenship can be withdrawn anytime unlike native citizens. Living under these complications puts them in a state of confusion. They see dark tunnel without light at the end at the host country, and that could be the reason they seek opportunities in the home country including high-level political participation. Currently the President and the Prime minister of Somalia are from diaspora and many people hold senior positions in the government and in the parliament.

A major point, which is essential for political participation such as national elections, is the issue of citizenship. Access to citizenship is therefore essential to enable political participation and the reassurance that comes from having nationality can also contribute to supporting broad civic participation. The hurdles to accessing citizenship were perceived by Somali participants as “an unfair punishment for Somalis for coming from a region where state institutions and infrastructure had collapsed due to civil conflict. The time taken to get citizenship (eight years) is a basis of great frustration for some Somalis (OSF, 2015). The Somali passport, ID and other documents obtained after 1991 are not recognized. This implicates that it takes 8 years to take citizenship and before that they still feel strangers, as they are not well settled. They see themselves as just refugees waiting time to return to home country.

A report by the open society emphasizes that citizens have the opportunity to influence change through political mobilisation, advocacy and campaigning on particular issues or through participation in consultation processes. Somalis felt that as a community they were often excluded, ignored and their views were not given a fair hearing, so they felt they had little influence on policies in their cities. However, there
is a strong sense of optimism, unlike older generations, that younger Somali generation would overcome some of the challenges faced by the first generation. Young people, born in Sweden or have come at young age, have better opportunities in integration but they are unfortunately influenced by what is going on in their surroundings, neighbourhoods and pressure from peer groups. The report states that:

The strength of emotional and personal ties for first-generation migrants to their country of origin is common among migrant groups and may perhaps be stronger among refugees who left their country due to fear of persecution rather than through a positive choice of planned migration (OSF, 2015).

The report states that many cases, individuals, unrelenting by memories of childhood and formative years, continued close ties with family in Somalia, combined with experiencing the challenges of adjusting to a new cultural and social environment, and retained a desire to return to Somalia. They think they belong to Somalia and concerned about the country’s welfare so their future is there and they have to be part of its reconstruction (OSF, 2015). Contrarily, those who arrived as young age always had a deeper connection to the country they had grown up in (OSF, 2015).

With regards to the integration of the Somali communities in Sweden, the interview participants explain that difficulties of integration are not in the higher level only but at communal level as well such as timely responses to appointments with the various government facilities, banking, income and tax reporting and school issues as well as political participation at all levels.

The interview participants were asked: Do you have relevant information about...
Swedish society and labor market?

One respondent states that he does not receive any information while the rest indicate that they receive no information about the Swedish society and the labour market. Two respondents described that young people who are better educated get information and are more integrated. One other respondent says that he gets enough information as he has lived most of his lifetime in Sweden. Still others indicate that they receive some information but in addition search the Internet for more information. This is not true for the educated and those who have good language communications while those with no education and no language proficiency do not have the capacity to search the information they want. This information sharing through the social media of transnational networks could be a gateway to learn from the experience and the accomplishments of the diverse Somalis in various countries. Sharing success stories by using global media in various countries will also promote the positive aspect of the Somalis and will minimize the negative image depicted regularly by the mainstream media.

e) Getting help

Now that we have discussed the integration challenges and opportunities, we will look into a question in the interview posed to all participants. The question is: Do you get enough help with integration from the Swedish governmental institutions? Most of the participants indicate that enough support is at disposal for the Somalis like any other community. However “enough help” depends on how one perceives in that particular
situation whilst intermediary support is needed in the form of translator or interpreters, which could lose the sense of connection. During the interview, participants were asked whether they get enough help with integration from the Swedish governmental institutions.

Most respondents expressed that they get some sort of help especially in the introductory period when they are new to the country even though their situations are slightly different depending on when they arrived. They all agree that they all receive assistance in learning Swedish but making use of it depends on prior individual literacy level. One respondent said, “I came to Sweden when I was a child and I did not get any particular support but instead had same treatment like the other children. This was actually good that I have felt I was not different than the other children, that I have felt I belong to multi-ethnic groups and was feeling to be part of the team without any discrimination.”

The other participants agreed that they all received equal support in learning Swedish language and some guidance from the employment agency including how to look for a job and how to write CV and applications. Beyond that, all depend on individual diligence on opportunities available in abundance should the person take the right approach and seeks guidance from all possible sources.

Concerning integration, some participants state that they get no such direct help but free Swedish language classes and social welfare support provided by the government are means to future integration into the larger community. But what other help do they need when basic living support and free language classes are provided? The
responses from the interview participants and from the other academic research go beyond this level that social knowledge; culture and more community engagement programmes are required. Social integration is a two-way approach between the Somalis and the Swedish community. It can only be encouraged through optimistic mechanism of government intervention using social networks, workshops, civil society and media for the intention of sharing information and experiences.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

During the interview, the participants had been given a variety of questions to respond to in order to find out the integration challenges, opportunities, perceptions, viewpoints and recommendations they would offer and in that process have provided various responses to the different questions asked. The research has exposed the integration challenges facing the Somali immigrants in Sweden in the perspective of the Somalis as a main focus and at the same time analyzed the opportunities at their disposal for better engagement with the other communities. In this regard, the study revealed that the current statuses of the Somali immigrants in Sweden need the attention of the policy makers. The majority of the participants indicated a perception that the Somalis are falling behind or low in integration and have the least social integration with the local people while the major challenge, according to the findings, is related to communication, transnationalism, culture adaptation and backgrounds, lack of good access to information and lack of awareness of the existing laws and policies affecting their lives.
The study responded to the research questions of: What are the integration issues of Somali Immigrants in Sweden from the perspective of Somalis? What factors can support or hamper their integration in Sweden? Why are Somalis slow in integration? What communication barriers faced by Somalis? And how do transnational networks influence communication barriers?

In order to further examine the current situation of the Somali immigrants and the way forward, the interview participants were asked about their recommendations to a better integration in regards to their experiences and knowledge.

In response to this, one participant recommends that the “Swedish politicians need to reconsider the language education system by reducing class participation hours and focus instead on practical work. More practical and less classroom education especially for low-skilled persons is more productive”. Another participant stresses that learning the language; history and Swedish culture would promote a good social integration in all areas. Other participants additionally propose for Somalis to establish professional associations such as lawyers associations, health associations, educational association, vocational association and business organizations. Two other respondents provided these responses:

“I advise Somalis to establish professional associations such as lawyers associations, social associations, health, education and business associations. These organizations will help Somalis to know their rights and obligations, to receive help in getting employed and education. If that is realized, integration will be easier and people will acquire information assisting them to integrate” (Respondent 1).
These associations would help all Somalis to understand how the country works, knowing their rights and obligations and how they would receive assistance in employment and educational opportunities. The Swedish public institutions would reassure communication between the Swedish citizens and the Somalis. People have to talk and meet to find solutions together. Also there has to be a genuine curiosity to learn more about each other. Other responded how communication could be built trust between the Somali community and the host society:

“There should be a well-planned communication scheme, built on trust, between the Somali community and the Swedish institutions. They have to talk in an open dialogue and meet to find solutions together. Also there has to be a genuine curiosity to learn more about each other.” (Respondent 8).

Once that is realized, it will be easy to get access to information and awareness that would help them to fully integrate into the society. Learning marketable technical skills, learning the Swedish language and trusting and viewing Sweden as a country of permanent residence and home country to invest in by removing the notion of being mentally connected to the home country will add value to be fully established and integrated. One participant, has, emphasized the role of language in connection with technical skills:

“To learn Swedish language better and to study various, marketable vocational skills will help them to be part of the wider society as they will able to, with confidence, express their needs and demand their rights” (Respondent 6).

Another participant stressed the importance of learning language, culture and society
in building the confidence of the immigrants to develop communication skills enabling them interact with the receiving society:

“The main opportunity is for them to study language, history and the culture of the society in this country” (Respondent 4).

The research provides recommendations on the way forward for overcoming the challenges that are currently facing the Somali immigrants in particular.

A good intervention and stakeholders engagement, participatory and advocacy communication are needed to make a positive social change. According to some of the respondents, Somalis must feel that Sweden is their home and have to try to improve their Swedish language proficiency and understand that learning new technical and vocational skills and socializing with the Swedish people in their daily interactions at workplace, schools and social events are crucial for achieving their goals.

Another important area is the access to citizenship, for those who are long-term residents, for the purpose of inclusion and integration, as this will enable Somalis to be active in political environment where they will contribute, on their part, to the political decisions towards the national interest of the nation. They will in that case have opportunities to effect change (OSF, 2015) at policy level and follow implementation of policies and programmes tailored to the needs these particular communities.

One respondent provided the following comprehensive response addressing the importance of building trust to empower people to be positively responsive to the pressing issues in integration:
“To trust this country as a place of permanent residence or as their own home country is the starting point for full integration”. This respondent indicates that integration increases trust and trust increases society’s capacity to solve their own problems making use of the available resources and opportunities (SIC, nd) (Respondent 5).

The study concludes in providing lessons to be learnt from these responses that the Swedish government, together with the Somali communities, should set plans to help Somalis to learn culture, society, laws and policies of the host country while they can still retain theirs. This should be a two way process where Swedish people will also be part of it in order to remove misconceptions about the Somalis. Media, as well, can play an important role by focusing on the success stories rather exaggerating few individual negative stories, which have, no significance to the larger Somali society.
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APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name:

Profession (Full):

Marital Status:

Sex:

Years in Sweden:

Address:

Questions

1. What are your views towards the Somali immigrants’ integration in Sweden? Somali community didn’t integrate as the other communities.
2. What do you think are the barriers to the integration of Somalis into the Swedish system? Language
3. Do you get enough help with integration from the Swedish governmental institutions? Yes
4. Do you have relevant information about Swedish society and labor market? Fairly enough.
5. Do you personally think you are integrated fully into the Swedish society or not? I think so.

6. Are there any communication barriers faced by Somalis with the various government institutions? Yes

7. What do you do in your leisure time? Sport, reading and taking time with my family.

8. Do you think that Somalis have enough capacity (education, language, technical skills) that can help them in the Swedish labor market? No, I don’t. Sweden is high technological country and Somalia is one of less developed countries. Therefore, majority of the Somalis did not have technical skills that are needed in the market.

9. What are your recommendations to a better integration? Swedish politicians need to reconsider to minimize class-education and focus practical work. More practical and less classroom education especially for low-skilled persons.