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**Integration and Social Cohesion through Activation:  
Asian Immigrant Women in the Norwegian Labor Market**

**Master's thesis in Social Welfare and Health Policy**  
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**Abstract**

This thesis aims to explore and gain in-depth insights into the everyday lives of six Asian immigrant women based on their perspectives. Everyday life perspectives provide a new way of understanding one own's personal stories based on the language of those studied. It offers a novel approach to looking at various issues, and problems often dismissed, neglected or overlooked. It also provides a means of understanding the wider world at large. This thesis is based on semi-structured interviews with six former participants of work activation programs implemented by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and the Norwegian and Welfare Organization (NAV) in Oslo, Norway.

The work activation program is one of the integration policies established by policymakers to increase the labor market participation of those who are far away from the labor force. It is based on the "activation" principle and consists of different employment measures specifically tailored to the background and qualifications of the participants in order to meet the required standards of the Norwegian labor market.

In this thesis, I make use of the theory of social cohesion to explore the daily lives of six informants and whether work activation programs have an impact on strengthening their feelings of cohesion as seen through its three essential dimensions: social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility.

This thesis acknowledges that there are various challenges and facilitators experienced by the informants in order to improve their labor market participation and to promote social cohesion. It is illustrated by how they emphasized in their narratives, beginning from their entry into the Norwegian society, their struggles over how to take care of their families, their efforts to learn the Norwegian language, establish new social networks, and to find employment.

Based on the results, I argue that the six informants I spoke with described low integration and social cohesion in the Norwegian labor market and society. It is exemplified by how the informants highlighted what is taking place within their everyday lives and how this affects their opportunities to become active and integrated into the labor market. Hence, the policy/measure should be more detail oriented. It should give more focus on how to address the individual needs of the participants. The policy should focus on the provision of a free and intensive Norwegian language course that is accessible to everyone. Likewise, the policy should consider the qualifications and competencies of the participants and make use of them. Lastly, it should strongly encourage employers to eliminate skepticism about hiring immigrants and allow immigrants to work and make use of their educational background, competencies, and skills.

**Keywords:** integration policy, work activation programs, Asian immigrant women, social cohesion, social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility.

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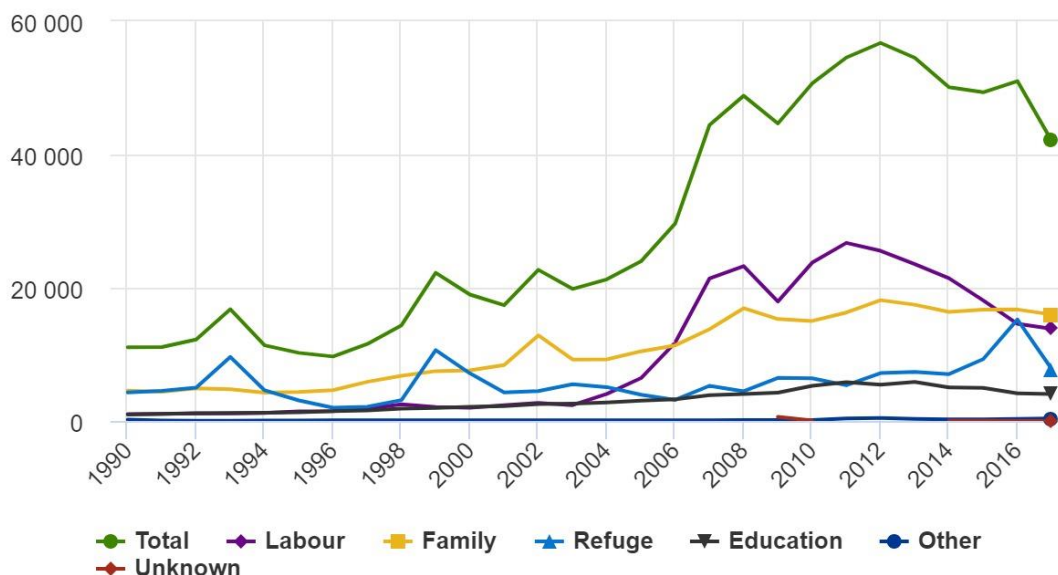
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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Immigrants in Norway

For many years, immigrants have been considered essential components of population growth in Norway. The immigrants in Norway are from a diverse background. Based on statistics published by Statistics Norway in March 2018, there are 916,625 immigrants in Norway, including those Norwegian-born to immigrant parents. Immigrants come to Norway for work, family reunification, education, and or to seek refuge because of persecution or war in their home country. Today, family reunification is the primary reason for immigration in Norway. See Figure 1.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1. Immigrations, by reason for immigration**



Source: Immigrants by reason for immigration, Statistics Norway.

The focus of this thesis is to gain in-depth knowledge about what is taking place within the lives of six Asian immigrant women. The informants came to Norway in three different ways: family reunification, the One-year Language Training Course, and the Au pair scheme. Most of the informants came to Norway through family reunification. The informants are primarily home-based women or women who have weak participation in the Norwegian labor market.

<sup>1</sup><https://www.ssb.no/en/befolkning/artikler-og-publikasjoner/many-immigrate-for-family-reasons>. (02.08.2019)



In this thesis I use semi-structured interviews with six informants who participated in work activation programs – employment measures which are implemented by the Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi) and Norwegian and Welfare Organization (NAV). The informants came from the Philippines and Thailand. They have different socio-economic backgrounds, educational backgrounds, work experience and length of stay in Norway.

## **1.2 Integration policy**

The Scandinavian countries are an attractive destination for immigrants because of their universal and democratic policies, i.e. “Scandinavian model” or the social democratic welfare model (Esping-Andersen 1990, 1999; Wiborg and Hansen 2018; 54). The Norwegian welfare model is committed to creating an equal distribution of resources and access to different opportunities, and at the same time reducing social risk (Wiborg and Hansen 2018; 54). The essential notion of this model is that everyone is entitled to equality in opportunities and chances in life.

However, individuals are different from one another in significant ways, and these differences create both opportunities and challenges. Likewise, immigrants in Norway comprise individuals with different ethnicities, backgrounds, and so on. In so doing, immigration has affected Norwegian working life and society in various ways. The impacts have been felt in different Norwegian policies in the fields of education, employment, health, language, housing, and social security. There are stakes involved within the process of integrating immigrants into Norwegian society, particularly in ensuring that immigrants may experience the same life chances as with the natives.

The Norwegian government has longstanding issues on how to integrate immigrants into the labor market and in society. Policymakers have developed and introduced numerous measures that have influenced migration. The Norwegian integration policy started quite early. In 1957, politicians passed a law, “Fremmedloven” (Cappelen and Skjerpen 2012, 36), allowing foreigners to come to Norway without a work permit and, thereby, apply for a work permit after they arrived. In the mid-1970s, policymakers put more emphasis on integration policy. They presented a document called the 1974 “White Paper” to the parliament concerning integration policy, in which the focus is on “optional inclusion policy.” In this

policy, the immigrants had a choice as to what degree they wanted to integrate into Norwegian society (OECD 2012).

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the integration policy was further enhanced, giving more emphasis to equal access to available resources and opportunities for all its residents: “equal status for all” (Meld. St. Nr. 6 (2012 – 2013, 7; OECD 2012, 147)). There was a heightened focus on the integration process for the immigrants. The government introduced mandatory conditions for the acquisition of Norwegian citizenship. The immigrants must complete 600 hours of mandatory language training, must pass the Norwegian society test and must have 7 years of residency in Norway (Midtbøen, 2015, 9). Immigrants who want to work, stay, and live in Norway must learn the Norwegian language, become taxpayers and participate in working life and society at large (Meld. St. 30 (2015-2016)).

Norwegian society is distinguished as a society with a population with high competence and high labor participation. It is also regarded as a society with a high level of income and good quality of life (Meld. St. Nr. 12 (20012-2013)). Nevertheless, there is also a significant number of the population who are outside of the labor force or are in danger of falling outside of it. For example, women from Africa and Asia fall into this category (St. Meld. Nr. 6 2012 – 2013, 7-8, 10) as employment rates were lowest for immigrants from Africa and Asia (Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009, 31; Bø 2013, 4). To address this challenge, the government has developed a coordinated and comprehensive policy with a focus on adults who have little education, weak necessary skills or limited expertise. The goal of this policy is to improve and strengthen adults’ skills, competencies and expertise to increase their opportunities for having a stable and permanent association in working life (Meld. St. Nr. 16 (2015-2016; St. Meld. Nr. 18 (2007-2008))). Participation in working life is an important arena where individuals are able to use and develop their competencies, skills, and capabilities. Such abilities are considered as being the foundation of a good life and active participation in society.

In many cases, employment provides better physical and mental health. Equally, it also provides income and better opportunities to ensure suitable conditions for children (ibid; St. Meld. Nr. 6 (2012 – 2013,7-8, 10; Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016))). Participation in working life is a

prerequisite to economic independence, gender equality, and integration into society. It may strengthen social cohesion in society (St. Meld. Nr. 6 (2012 – 2013,7-8, 10; Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016))). In order to achieve this, different government institutions, departments, organizations, communities, and even private and public sectors collaborated with each other to pursue the government's goal. They have their underlying responsibilities such as organizing, financing, and implementing different training and social services for the improvement of human capital. For instance, the Directorate of Education, Vox, Lånekassen and Nokut offers various services such as vocational training, basic skills and competencies training, and education. The IMDi implement or finance the Qualification Program (QP) and Job Opportunity Scheme. The NAV administers various work activation programs such as the QP, Labor Market Training, and so on (St. Meld. Nr. 6 (2012 – 2013,7-8, 10; Meld. St. Nr. 16 (2015-2016))).

### **1.3 Research questions**

There is a substantial volume of literature written about the integration of Asian immigrant women in Norway and why they have weak participation in the labor market. But there are few, if any, documents describing what is happening within their everyday lives and why they have weak participation in the labor market from the perspectives of those being studied. This thesis aims to contribute to this area. A daily life perspective tells us something about the nature of the world and understanding the world in which one lives. Our lives are shaped by the stories we tell; how we know and share the stories of our lives can make a difference. We express various events of our lives that emphasize weakness, pain, struggle, positivity, courage, hope, aspiration, and so on. The way we state the different circumstances of our lives defines who we are and influences the way we act and how we want other people to understand and see us. It can also tell us something about the kind of people that surround us. This perspective enables us to make our storylines about our identities, roles, relationships, and so on. We become the authors of our lives.

Likewise, the everyday life perspective provides a way to look at and understand other own lives; that is to say, we become interested and fascinated with different life situations that demonstrate success and even those in neglected situations. We show concern about life events that show isolation or oppression. We tend to be engaged and involved in finding

solutions to problems and issues of other people's lives that are often overlooked or dismissed.

This perspective also provides us with a means to understand one's own life based on one's language: words and terms. It also means that those studied constructed their personal stories using the language they wanted to define their own life experiences and life stories. They share their life stories based on how they want others to understand their lives within the contexts they themselves defined.

The focus of this thesis is to look at and understand various events or circumstances in the lives of six Asian immigrant women and to find significant events that illustrate their different life situations in Norwegian society. I hope that the findings of this thesis will be able to provide new knowledge and understanding of what is happening within the everyday lives of the informants. This thesis could be useful for the implementation of more productive work activation programs. It could also provide new information that is valuable to policymakers in improving government policies in response to issues and problems concerning Asian immigrant women as well as immigrant women in general.

Whether small or big moments, when linked together they can make a difference and can create a meaningful story of one's own life. This is a story that defines one's own identity, role, and relationships, and so on. Drawing from the everyday life perspective, I explore and gain in-depth insights of what is happening within the lives of six informants living in Norway. The first research question of my thesis is:

**Research question 1:** *What are the everyday challenges and facilitators experienced by the former participants of the work activation programs?*

The lack of integration has implications on the social situations of immigrants in the host country. Problems of integration have effects in wider society. The integration of immigrants may promote social cohesion in society. Thus, national integration policies are essential for social cohesion. Social cohesion *is the characteristic of a group or society that ensures the well-being and mobility of its members through reducing inequalities, ensuring a sense of belonging or recognition and providing equal access to opportunities and resources.* Here, I

focus on the effects of Norwegian integration policy in strengthening social cohesion, using work activation programs as an example of this measure in practice. In so doing, I explore whether the work activation programs have an impact on strengthening social cohesion. The second research question is:

**Research question 2:** *How do work activation programs impact former participants on strengthening their feeling of social cohesion?*

This thesis is narrative research based on six semi-structured interviews with six informants. The stories presented here are constructed from the informants' own language: words and terms. Use of an informant's own language facilitates a unique way of forming and creating their own stories that define their identities, roles, and relationships, and so on. They are the owners of their personal stories. The informants whose stories are presented here were clients of work activation programs implemented by the IMDi and the NAV. They are former participants of the following work activation programs:

Under the IMDi, there is a program called Job Opportunity Scheme.

Under the NAV there are three programs: Labor Market Training, Job Clubs and Work Training.

#### **1.4 Outline of the thesis**

There are six chapters in this thesis. In this chapter, I discuss the purpose and scope of this paper. In chapter two, I give background information and concepts of relevance to my thesis. In chapter three, I discuss the theory of social cohesion and related concepts such as social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility. Chapter four provides detailed methodological steps and choices made throughout the thesis. I present the findings of the thesis in chapter five using the framework of social cohesion: social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility. Finally, I discuss the results in chapter six.

#### **2. Relevant background information**

The context of the integration policy of Norway is extensive. In this following chapter I highlight relevant background information to have a better understanding of the nature of my thesis. In this chapter, I describe non-western immigrants with a focus on Asian immigrant women. I cite relevant studies regarding why this group of women has weak

participation in the labor market. I provide a brief background concerning work activation programs. I discuss the IMDi and the NAV to give a view on how the Norwegian welfare system works. Although the informants are not participants of the Introduction Program (IP) and the Qualification Program (QP), I briefly discuss these two measures because both have relevance to my thesis. Some work activation programs followed the model of the IP and the QP. Similarly, these two measures both share the same market aims as the other work activation programs in focus for this thesis – Job Opportunity Scheme, Labor Market Training, Job Clubs and Work Training.

### **2.1 Immigrants: Non-western immigrants and Asian immigrant women**

The immigrant population in Norway consists of persons with two foreign-born parents: the first-generation immigrants, and persons who are born in Norway with two parents that are born outside Norway (Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016; Henriksen 2007, 24; Papademetriou, Somerville and Sumption 2009, 3). Non-western immigrants refer to persons immigrating to Norway that came from Asia including Turkey, Africa, South and Central America and Eastern Europe (Sandnes 2005, 12; Bø 2013). Non-western immigrant women primarily live in Oslo and Akershus. They tend to have higher education than men, as women have a higher tendency to take educational courses than men (Henriksen 2007). Female immigrants make up a larger share of the population in Norway. The majority of the non-western immigrant women came to Norway through family reunification, particularly in the case of immigrant women from countries in Asia. Many women from Russia, Thailand, and the Philippines marry men with a Norwegian background (Daugstad 2006, 42; Henriksen 2007, 29).

### **2.2 Previously relevant studies**

The employment rates of immigrants are lower than the general population. There is a high unemployment rate among first-generation immigrants. Non-western immigrant women have lower incomes than western women. Immigrant women from Eastern Europe, Central and South America and Turkey have lower incomes than immigrant women from Western Europe, North America and Oceania (Sandnes 2005, 32). Employment between non-western immigrant women and men varies significantly by country of origin and duration of stay in Norway. Immigrant women from Africa and Asia have considerably lower employment rates

than Central and South America and Eastern Europe (Sandnes 2005,11; Horgen 2016; 9; Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009, 31; Bø 2013, 11-14).

The research study conducted by Dagsvik, Kornstad and Skjerpen (2010) entitled "Labor Force Participation and the Discouraged Worker Effect", revealed that the 'discouraged worker effect' created many women who are unemployed or who do not want to participate in the labor force.' This "Discouraged worker effect" is the idea in which individuals are discouraged in searching for work because of the view that their chances of finding a suitable job are meager (ibid). Women from Africa and Asia have low formal education and limited ability in Norwegian. They also are overrepresented in insecure, and poorly paid jobs (Djuve, Kavli and Hagelund 2011; Bø 2013, 7).

### **2.3 Institutional settings and work activation programs**

Norway has intensified its policy on labor market inclusion to address poverty inequality, social exclusion and promote economic independence. In 2002, the Bondevik II government issued an "Action Plan Against Poverty" (St. Meld. Nr. 6 (2002-2003)) in which the targeted groups were people who have been receiving long-term social assistance benefits, single parents, immigrants and other disadvantaged people. The "Action Plan Against Poverty" emphasized the use of activation measures as a means to increase work activity and employment among these recipient groups (St. Meld. Nr. 6 (2002-2003)). As part of the Action Plan, the government introduced Active Labor Market Activation Programs (the ALMPs) within the context of the "lower rungs" of the welfare hierarchy – in social assistance and for selected incoming immigrant groups (Gubrium and Fernandes, 2014).

The ALMPs consist of various work activation programs based on the "activation" principle including the so-called "Introduction Program (IP) and Qualification Program (QP)." Both the IP and the QP consist of a mix of individually tailored activities or measures and standardized social benefits (Gubrium and Fernandes, 2014; Lorentzen and Dahl 2005). The ALMP is a combination of policy tools that provide support and incentives for effective and active job search, promote self-sufficiency and independence from social support benefits, and increase productive and rewarding participation in society. Ordinary workplaces are used as the training and qualification arena to qualify immigrants as soon as possible for the labor

market (Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009; Lorentzen and Dahl 2005, 28-29). The ALMP or work activation program are perceived as major measures in bringing about "independence and increase the participants' chances of obtaining regular employment (Lorentzen and Dahl 2005, 28, 31). The IMDi and the NAV are two important institutions that manage and implement ALMP's or work activation programs.

### *2.3.1 Directorate of Integration and Diversity (IMDi): Introduction Program (IP)*

The IMDi was nationally established in 2006 to promote diversity through employment, integration, and participation. The IMDi works together with immigrant organizations, groups, municipalities, government agencies, and the private sectors. The responsibilities of IMDi include providing settlement assistance, the IP, Norwegian language training, and social studies and employment (IMDi 2019).

The IMDi administers the IP. The Bondevik government introduced the IP in 2004. Newly arrived immigrants with a refugee background in Norway are the target group of the IP (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014; Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016)). The participants of IP are immigrant refugees between the ages of 18 and 55. The municipality is responsible for managing the IP. However, the municipality must have an agreement made with the IMDi before the implementation of the program. Participants of the IP learn the Norwegian language and acquire knowledge about Norwegian society. The IP helps the participants in terms of how to get into further education, enhance their skills, and assists in finding employment. Its goal is to strengthen the opportunities of immigrant refugees to actively participate in the labor market and society. The IP also aims to fight against poverty and social exclusion and promote economic independence. The IP provides different rules regarding a healthy working life. It is a full-time arrangement in which the participants receive economic benefits that are also taxable. There is a reduction in the economic benefits of the participants of IP if participants do not have a valid reason for their absence (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014; Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009; Djuve, Kavli and Hagelund 2011; IMDi 2011; Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016)).

Participants are also allowed to work outside the program hours. The program lasts for 2 years and can be extended up to 3 years, if necessary. However, the participants lose their



rights and benefits of the program if they move to a different municipality before the completion of the program. They also receive a certificate of completion about the program in which they have participated within the IP. And, if not completing the course a certificate of the unfinished program within the IP (IMDi 2011; Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016)).

### *2.3.2 Norwegian and Welfare Organization (NAV): Qualification Program (QP)*

The NAV is a government institution that supervises services for employment and welfare administration. In 2006, the NAV was introduced as a collaboration of national employment, national insurance, and public social assistance into a new employment and welfare administration. NAV offices were created in all municipalities to provide a broad range of social, employment and welfare services (OECD 2012, 150; Gubrium 2009; Skjønberg 2017). One of the goals of the NAV is to help more people in employment and less dependency on social assistance benefits. The NAV is composed of two departments: (1) reception and (2) follow-up. The first department, the "reception", offers self-service and limited guidance to both job seekers and employers. The department "follow-up" offers follow-up assistance to the unemployed and the disadvantaged group of population (Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009, 45).

The NAV administers the QP. The Stoltenberg government introduced the QP in 2007 modeled explicitly after the IP. The QP was introduced nationally, but it is provided locally at local NAV offices, with NAV employees (and outside employees) providing the services (Gubrium 2009; Gubrium and Fernandes 2014). The target group of the program includes individuals who have a long-term dependency on social assistance, severely lowered working ability, physical disabilities, and mental health problems. It is created to fight against poverty and social exclusion. The program aims to improve the attachment of recipients who have complex issues and difficulties in integrating into the labor market but are considered capable of working (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014). The QP consists of various market measures such as motivational courses, training and financial subsidies (Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009, 97).

Norwegian policymakers introduced the IP and the QP as a solution to problems of unemployment and low integration (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, 13). Both the IP and the

QP are based on workability and framed around individual assessments. However, the IP is more a rights-based protocol with the original goal of cultural assimilation of a particular group – newly arrived refugee immigrants. The IP considers that its participants face challenges both in the economic and cultural sense. Therefore, the IP consists of solutions that comprise of a stipulation for "cultural indoctrination." (ibid).

In contrast, the QP allows for a full consideration of the life situations of the participants. It is provided for the individual based on the individual's need for assistance to be active in the labor force or find employment (Meld. St. 16 (2015-2016)). It focuses on finding solutions for "worklessness" – the challenge (Gubrium and Fernandes 2014, 13-14). The QP served as a "carrot" to attract the participants to enter the labor force (Gubrium 2009). The participants obtain different forms of training to improve their skills and abilities to move back into the labor force and attain a form of economic and social security. In this regard, the six informants probably have access to the QP rather than the IP. The information previously provided about the informants in this thesis is highly relevant as to why they may have access to the QP.

#### **2.4 Work activation programs: Job Opportunity Scheme, Labor Market Training, Job Clubs, Work Training**

The informants of my thesis participated in different work activation programs. Three of my informants were participants of the Job Opportunity Scheme; Initiative A: Qualification programs for stay-at-home immigrant women. One informant was a participant of Labor Market Training, and another informant participated in Job Clubs. In addition, one informant participated in Work Training.

The Job Opportunity Scheme is a state subsidy scheme managed by IMDi. IMDi collaborates with the NAV, and voluntary- and private organizations for the implementation of this scheme. It is a work activation program that is modeled after the IP. Unlike the IP, the Job Opportunity Scheme is intended for stay-at-home immigrant women and youth immigrants who need measures to qualify for education or employment. The main objective of this scheme is to provide work-related activities that will improve and increase the qualifications of immigrants who have not been active in the labor market for a long time. It was

established in 2005 with the name New Chance "Ny Sjanse," and was permanently changed to its present name Job Opportunity Scheme, "Jobbsjansen" in 2013. The scheme consists of three different initiatives: (Lerfaldet, Skutlaberg and Høgestøl 2017; Meld. St. Nr. 16 (2015-2016, 64)).

- Initiative A: Qualification Programs for stay-at-home immigrant women;
- Initiative B: More primary school level education for immigrant youth; and
- Initiative C: Extended training for participants in the Introduction Program for immigrants (ibid).

I will not further discuss Job Opportunity Scheme Initiatives B and C as they fall outside the scope of this thesis; instead, I will give more emphasis on Initiative A given my focus on the employment participation of immigrant women.

Job Opportunity Scheme: Initiative A: Qualification Program for stay-at-home immigrant women, is an employment qualification scheme which aims to qualify immigrant women for education and work. The goal of this scheme is to help improve and increase the qualification and employment of the immigrants that are outside of the labor force (Lerfaldet, Skutlaberg and Høgestøl 2017; IMDi 2017). Individuals receive economic benefits while participating in the scheme. The target group is home-based immigrant women aged from 18-55, who need necessary qualification assistance, who are not dependent on social support and who do not participate with other government programs. Newly arrived immigrants are not allowed to participate in this scheme. The scheme is individually adapted to the background and qualification of the participants. It consists of various measures such as Norwegian language training and social studies, vocational courses from NAV, and health promotion activities. The participants in the scheme can receive primary school or vocational training. The measure may take up to 2 years and can be extended by up to 1 year, if necessary. Participants who have little educational background can participate in this measure for up to 4 years. Individuals who had been involved in the IP could participate in this scheme if they were able to participate in the IP for a minimum of 2 years (Meld. St. Nr. 16 (2015-2016)).

NAV has several work activation programs targeted to individuals who need more skills,

guidance, and support before they can qualify for and compete in the labor market. The programs are different in purpose and nature. NAV employment counselors assess each client's needs to ensure which programs are most appropriate, for example, Labor Market Training, Job Clubs and Work Training.

Labor Market Training is a short-term employment measure provided by the NAV to help individuals who are seeking employment. Participants receive economic support while participating in this measure. Its main objective is to qualify individuals for vacant jobs. It usually entails short, vocational courses organized by NAV. It contains courses that often comprise a combination of theoretical and practical training. It also may include one-off pieces of training such as work practices in a company. The target group of Labor Market Training is individuals 19 years of age and over who want to receive vocational training but are not entitled to education based on the Norwegian education system. Individuals who are over 22 years of age with reduced working capacity can participate in this measure. It has also focused on helping individuals who need training and qualification to get a job or keep their current positions. (Djuve and Tronstad 2011; (Meld. St. Nr. 16 (2015-2016, 70)).

Job Clubs are also a short-term measure for individuals seeking employment. The individuals obtain support and assistance on how to orientate themselves in the job market and to become active job seekers. The Job Clubs' target group is individuals who are unemployed and aged 19 years and above, who need support and guidance in connection with searching for jobs. Individuals are given a NAV counselor after registering as a job seeker to NAV. NAV counselors work jointly with the job seekers. They receive training in writing and designing resumés as well as writing a cover letter tailored to the work descriptions. They also receive interview techniques and training on how to use their network to get a job. Job Clubs usually last for a few weeks. Participation in Job Clubs can be extended by up to 6 months depending on the participants' needs. If individuals already receive financial benefits from NAV, they still may gain economic benefits while participating in Job Clubs. If individuals do not receive financial benefits, they may apply for financial support to cover their expenditure while undertaking training. Usually, third parties or external providers who collaborated with NAV administer Job Clubs (Duell, Singh and Tergeist 2009, 51; Djuve and Tronstad 2011).

Work Training is an employment measure for an individual who needs training to perform regular tasks for a limited period and for an individual who needs a reference while seeking regular work. Individuals receive work training tasks in an ordinary workplace, but the tasks are tailored to the needs of the individual. The individual receives supervision from a NAV counselor. The individual receives economic benefits while participating in this measure. The main objective of this measure is to try out individual opportunities and potentialities in the labor market. This measure is for an individual who has inadequate work experience, who has reduced workability, and who needs work-related assistance to gain employment.<sup>2</sup>

### **3. Theoretical and conceptual background**

In this following chapter, I present the theoretical background of this thesis. I use the theory of social cohesion to both structure my interview guide and analyze my findings.

#### **3.1 Social cohesion**

The idea of social cohesion has been gaining increasing interest in economics, sociology, and politics; primarily in regard to designing related policies to address the issues and problems faced by multicultural societies. There are different perspectives and approaches on social cohesion based on theoretical, empirical and even experimental studies, which, over time, have influenced the nature and meaning of social cohesion.

The Organization for Economic Cooperation Development (OECD), the Council of Europe and the European Union all hold the view that the circumstances of "unemployment, poverty, income equality, social exclusion, and exclusion from the society" threaten social cohesion (Scheifer and Van der Noll 2016; Beauvais and Jenson 2002, 4 with reference to Sharon; Jeannotte 2002, 2). The process of globalization, global migration movements, and the development of new information and technological communication impact social cohesion (Scheifer and Van der Noll 2016). This corresponds with Jane Jenson's notion of social cohesion as a product of our times due to "paradigm shift" (Jenson 2010 4, 7).

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<https://www.nav.no/no/Person/Arbeid/Oppfolging+og+tiltak+for+a+komme+i+jobb/Tiltak+for+a+komme+i+jobb/Relatert+innhold/Arbeidstrening>. (02.19.2019).

Today, the widely used definitions of social cohesion are from the Council of Europe, from the OECD, and from Sharon Jeannotte, which is adopted by the Canadian government. The Council of Europe defines social cohesion as the “capacity of the society to ensure the well-being of its members through minimizing disparities and avoiding marginalization” (Fonseca, Lukosh and Brazier 2018, 4-5; Boucher and Samad 2013, 11; Nunn 2013, 13). The OECD defines social cohesion as the “characteristic of a group that works together to ensure the well-being of its members, fights exclusion and marginalization, fosters a sense of belonging and trust, and promotes upward mobility of its members” (Fonseca, Lukosh and Brazier 2018). Sharon Jeannotte defines social cohesion as an “ongoing process of developing a community of shared values, shared challenges and equal opportunities based on a sense of trust, reciprocity, and hope” (ibid). These three definitions of social cohesion indicate that the state has a central role in promoting and strengthening social cohesion through various integration policies and measures.

Whatever the definitions of social cohesion that exist, it is perceived that it has a profound impact on individuals, groups, communities, and society. Ensuring a high level of social cohesion equals a high level of well-being and life satisfaction. In this thesis, the definition of social cohesion is *the characteristic of a group or society that ensures the well-being and mobility of its members through reducing inequalities, ensuring a sense of belonging or recognition and providing equal access to opportunities and resources*. The participation of the informants in work activation programs may thereby increase their participation and integration in the labor market and strengthen their feeling of social cohesion. The degree of social cohesion among the informants is assessed on three essential dimensions: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks), and social mobility. Social inclusion (recognition) is examined in terms of different instances of the lives of the informants where they feel a sense of recognition, acceptance, and belonging. Social capital is conceptualized with regard to the social networks of the informants – the primary source of social or economic support. Social mobility is analyzed in connection with the informant's qualifications, employment, skills, and other life opportunities in order to improve their position or status in society.

### *3.1.1 Social inclusion (recognition)*

Social inclusion refers to situations or circumstances where individuals or groups feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition; and where individuals do not feel excluded or marginalized. Cohesiveness is created from connections based on the familiar feeling of belonging, recognition and similar values. It conforms with Regina Berger-Schmitt's first dimension of social cohesion, which is the "reduction of disparities, inequalities, and social exclusion" (Berger-Schmitt 1998, 2000, 4; Boucher and Samad 2013, 3). It is the 'glue' that holds them together (Schiefer and van der Noll 2016, 11; Berger-Schmitt 2000, 2; with reference to McCracken 1998). Individuals feel a sense of belonging and recognition as they identify themselves within the group. The individual has the willingness to participate in his or her group or community because they have a secure emotional attachment to their social and geographical entity (Schiefer and van der Noll 2016, 13-14; with reference to Kearns and Forrest 2000). It gives them a sense of security and self-worth. They feel a sense of belonging and recognition because they share common norms and values.

### *3.1.2 Social capital (social networks)*

Social capital refers to the resources an individual acquires based on network influence, relationships and support from other people. It can also refer to established social networks that enhance resilience, productivity, and social- and economic development. The conceptions of social cohesion and social capital share the notion of social networks (Schiefer and van der Noll 2016; Beauvais and Jenson 2002). Social networks refer to family, friends, and acquaintances. The role of social networks is significant for the promotion of the well-being of individuals, groups, and communities. In a sense, social networks provide the primary support system; for instance, help as a buffer in times of emergency and crisis. Cohesiveness is created based on the quality of interactions and relationships between individuals, groups, and communities, and which is rooted in shared values, norms, a sense of belonging, and solidarity (Schiefer and van der Noll 2016). Both Berger-Schmitt's and Putnam's definition of social capital cover the significance of social networks or social relationships in creating social cohesion in society "strengthening of social relations, interactions, and ties" (Berger-Schmitt 1998, 2000, 4-5; Boucher and Samad 2013, 3) and "(...) associations and connections between people—social networks which are based on

norms and trust..." (Berger-Schmitt 2000, 6; Schiefer and van der Noll 2016; Cheong et al. 2007, 29).

Social capital has different social functions: "bonding, bridging, and linking" (Cheong et al. 2007, 29-38; Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014, 17-19; Berger-Schmitt 2006, 6). Bonding social capital involves close or exclusive social ties that are important for immediate support such as family or friends. It also consists of individuals who are alike, have strong ties or trust in each other, and are members within a group or community (Cheong et al. 2007, 29-38; Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014; 17-19). Individuals can depend on other individuals in various situations. For example, one member of the family who is affected by a typhoon relies on another family member for help, support, and survival.

In contrast, bridging and linking social capital offer pathways for long-term survival, such as voluntary groups, associations, and institutions. It entails relationships between social groups and communities tied by common interests such as ethnicity, religion, and sociodemographic and socioeconomic characteristics. In this group, individuals have weak ties and trust with each other (Cheong et al. 2007, 29-38). For instance, the Norwegian language course and social studies have been introduced to help bridge the language gap between the newly arrived immigrants and Norwegian society.

### ***3.1.3 Social mobility***

Social mobility is the movement of the individual, family or group between different positions in the system of social stratification in society (Muller and Pollak 2015, 640; Nunn 2013, 21). Social mobility is strongly interrelated with the levels of equality or inequality in a society. Cohesiveness is associated with a "measure of social fairness" (Nunn 2013). It means that no one is discriminated against and all will have equal access and legal rights to different opportunities and resources within society. For instance, the individual has equal access to employment, education, healthcare or other public services. A society with a high level of cohesiveness ensures that large proportions of the population move upwards or downwards within the social hierarchy "open or fluid society" (Nunn 2013, 21). On the other hand, a low-level cohesive society is a society where large proportions of populations remain



broadly the same place in the social hierarchy throughout their lives “close or rigid society” (Ibid).

Accordingly, there are two distinct perspectives on how mobility is studied or measured: intragenerational and intergenerational mobility (Nunn 2013; Wiborg and Hansen 2009, 2018). The intragenerational mobility perspective (Nunn 2013; Muller and Pollak 2015, 640), “careerism” (Maddern 2006, 114) compares the position of individuals in a society based on the progressive movement in careers or jobs. The intergenerational mobility perspective considers individuals' family background, origin, and position as factors which influence their movement of positions in society. Most studies on social mobility take an intergenerational mobility perspective. Several studies have suggested that family background and origin influence individuals' or families' earnings, wealth and education (e.g., Wiborg and Hansen 2009, 2018; Masterkaasa 2009).

#### **4. Methodology**

As mentioned, the purpose of this thesis is to explore and gain in-depth insights into what is taking place within the everyday lives of the six informants and how work activation programs impact them in strengthening their feelings of social cohesion. In this chapter, I provide a detailed description of the methodological steps and choices made throughout the research process. I hope that throughout this process I provide transparency to the findings of my thesis. First, I discuss why I considered this thesis to be narrative research. Then, I present the selection process of my informants. Following this, I briefly explain why I chose semi-structured interviews. This is followed by a description of how I conducted the interviews and the reflections from this process. Subsequently, I describe the data collection methods such as transcribing, coding and analyzing the data. Finally, I provide information about ethical considerations in research interviews.

##### **4.1 Narrative research**

This research thesis is narrative research, and the primary source of my data is the personal stories of six informants. The stories of my informants contained interesting and meaningful information about different types of events of their lives. The vital sources of personal

stories are from “experiential data” (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998, 163) – stories are the product of meaningful descriptions of everyday reality or set of opinions about one's life.

Narrative research as social research provides an analytical approach on how the stories are told while producing coherence and giving meaning to experiences. It is the art of analyzing unique personal stories. It includes using creative ways of providing the sense of personal experiences and stories. The emphasis of this approach is on the story: conveying the relationship between the how and the what of the story; and how the storytellers engaged in constructing coherence under the conditions of telling the story. Personal stories are analyzed and are shaped based on the contents conveyed and what the individuals wanted to tell other people about their lives. Personal stories contain essential information about individuals' various unique experiences concerning their identity and social life (ibid).

Narrative research has been accepted as being a useful approach to social science investigations because of its merits based on the presentation of individual experiences and its interpretation thereof. Narrative research as social research has "heuristic value" and "significant procedural genre" (Gubrium and Holstein, 1998, 163). This approach is based on "story-in-use" in which the “practice and conditions of storytelling are the fundamentals of what proper stories should be taken” (ibid, 165). This approach is also useful to policymakers – everyday reality becomes more narratively formulated, in a sense that it "produces subjects, texts, knowledge, and authority” (Gubrium and Holstein 2012, 31 with reference to Charles Briggs 2007). It also provides a new way of seeing and understanding different versions of opinions, ideas, persons, events and even the world at large. This narrative research offers a new way of enabling individuals to express their voices and be heard. It is deeply rooted within individual experiences and circumstances which are essential sources of knowledge about daily life.

#### **4.2 The selection process of the informants**

I restricted the number of interviewees to six informants located in Oslo, as I aimed to obtain in-depth insights about the informants' everyday life experiences. I interviewed six informants who participated in different work activation programs implemented by the IMDi and NAV. The informants I interviewed were all from the Philippines and Thailand.

I used both snowball sampling (Bryman 2012) and contacts at local NAV offices as a convenient sampling technique to gather informants. One local office in Oslo was very accommodating in helping me select my informants. Two informants were recommended to me by their NAV counselor. The counselor informed them first about my thesis and then asked if they were willing to be interviewed. After they gave their consent to their counselor, their counselor gave me their contact details. Then, I contacted them and personally asked whether they were willing to participate in this thesis, and they again gave their permission. I knew the other informant from a Norwegian language course at a university in Oslo in 2011. I informed her about my thesis, and she gave her consent to participate. The other two informants were recommended to me by two of my social networks. I recruited the last informant during the day I had an interview with one of my other informants.

#### **4.3 Semi-structured interview and interview guide**

I had semi-structured interviews with the six informants in this thesis. The semi-structured qualitative interview, also known as "conversation with a purpose", is akin to everyday talk or dialog that encourages interviewees to freely give their ideas and opinions about a range of topics in a certain length of time (Byrne 2014). However, an interviewer must have an interview guide about a specific topic in advance. I had an interview guide which consisted of several questions devised according to the goals of this thesis. I designed the interview guide in a way that would help me direct the conversations toward the topics and issues I wanted to learn about from the informants. The purpose was to have smooth and open discussions while at the same time remaining focused upon the topics. The topics are grounded from the two questions in the thesis: (1) What are the everyday challenges and facilitators experienced by the former participants of the work activation programs? (2) How do work activation programs impact former participants on strengthening their feeling of social cohesion?

I designed the interview guide with a focus on three themes: social inclusion, social capital, and social mobility:

- A. Social inclusion (recognition) – my focus is to describe different sorts of circumstances in which these informants feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition.

- B. Social capital (social networks) – I aim to describe informants’ social relations; how they established social connections and the importance of having social relationships.
- C. Social mobility – my objective is to explain how the informants’ education, qualifications, competencies, and skills may help them change or improve their position in society.

The advantage of semi-structured interviews and the interview guide was the flexibility it provided during the process. I noticed that my informants felt entirely free while they talked about different issues related to the topics. I also felt comfortable asking follow-up questions to my informants about related topics that had come up during our conversations.

#### **4.4 Anonymizing of data**

Maintaining ethical principles during data analysis is imperative. I therefore created pseudonyms to protect the identity and privacy of my informants. I do not mention the informants' information such as their age and number of children so that they will not be recognized. In the transcripts, certain words or groups of words are replaced to indicate what was removed to maintain the sense and context of the information.

#### **4.5 Presentation of the participants**

I interviewed six immigrants from two countries in Southeast Asia – the Philippines and Thailand. The informants’ age ranged from 25-40 years old. All but two of my informants came to Norway through family reunification. Of the remaining two, one came to Norway through the Au pair scheme, while the other came to Norway through the One-year Language Course scheme. Any foreigner who wanted to learn the Norwegian language and culture was granted a one-year visa to stay in Norway. However, it is no longer applicable. The Norwegian Directorate of Immigration (UDI) does not grant this visa today based on the one-year “Norwegian Language and Society” program <sup>3</sup> (see [www.udi.no](http://www.udi.no) for further details). The most prolonged period of residency of my informants in Norway is 11 years while the

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<sup>3</sup><https://www.nord.no/en/studies/norwegian-language-and-society#&acd=StudyAdmissionRequirementsHeader>

shortest period of residence is 5 years. Three out of the six informants do not have children, while the other three informants have two or three children each.

One informant has a bachelor's degree and an ongoing master's degree in Norway. Three of my six informants have a bachelor's degree from their home country, whereas two informants have 2-year degree courses. Most of my informants have employment experience from their home country, while one informant had a 6-month internship. Four of my informants had work experience in Norway before participating in work activation programs, and two informants have no work experience at all. All of them have some education in the Norwegian language.

Please refer to the table below for additional information about the six informants.

*Table 1 Overview of the informants*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Ina</b>	<b>Janice</b>	<b>Vanessa</b>	<b>Nerissa</b>	<b>Eunice</b>	<b>Pam</b>
Civil status	Married	Married	Divorced	Divorced	Married	Married
Years living in Norway	11	6	6	5	6	5
Educational background		Bachelor's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	Two years	Two years	Bachelor's Degree
Work experience from home country	Account Officer	Call Center Agent	Caregiver/Nanny	Trainee in the Hotel	Trainee in the Hotel	Pharmacist
Previous work experience before participation in work activation program	Cashier, Cleaner, Canteen assistant	Spa assistant	Cashier	Cleaner	Home-based	Home-based
Work activation program	Labor Market Training	Job Clubs	Work Training (Office training)	Job Opportunity Scheme	Job Opportunity Scheme)	Job Opportunity Scheme (Kindergarten assistant, Pharmacy assistant,

						Canteen assistant)
The reason why they participated with work activation program (NAV)	Sick for a year; Wanted new opportunity; Registered as a job seeker in NAV	Dismissed from previous employment; Registered as a job seeker in NAV	Wanted '100%' full-time employment; The program was referred to her by a friend	Wanted a better job and be fluent in the Norwegian language	NAV contacted me to participate to Job Opportunity Scheme	Knew about Job Opportunity Scheme through a friend; Registered as a job seeker in NAV
How they experienced the program	Can be useful in finding internship and employment	Helpful in writing a tailored CV and cover letter; Suitable for her needs; Useful in finding employment	Good experience; The training fee is very low	Not helpful; Not suitable for me	Provide income: 7,000 Norwegian crowns/month (3 months)	Received 3,500 Norwegian crowns; Helpful in finding an internship; Helpful in learning the Norwegian language
Did informants find a job after participation in work activation program	Not applicable (NB. She was in ongoing training when I interviewed her)	Yes Kindergarten assistant	No	No	Yes Canteen assistant	Yes Canteen assistant

#### 4.6 The interview

I gave all participants a thorough orientation about the subject of anonymity and confidentiality and on how they would be portrayed in my thesis. I informed all my interviewees about their privacy; the use of a recorder and that participation was entirely voluntary – that they could withdraw anytime from the thesis without questioning the reason.

I conducted interviews in places where my informants felt comfortable and relaxed. I interviewed two informants in a coffee shop inside the shopping mall, had another two conversations in a famous fast-food store, one interview inside the library, and a meeting on the campus of a university. The interviews lasted from 60-90 minutes each. Every interview started with a small conversation to make us feel relaxed and comfortable with each other. Then, I began to ask about facts such as their age, education and so on. I followed the interview guide during the interviews. If anything was unclear, I requested further details for clarification. I also asked them follow-up questions to check if the information was correct as regards what they wanted to share with me. Likewise, some questions I asked were from the data the informants provided. I tried to repeat what they have said in order to check whether I had understood them correctly.

I communicated in Tagalog with Filipino informants who spoke the language, otherwise we communicated in Norwegian. The language barrier was present during some of the interviews. I made sure to formulate simple questions as much as possible, in such a way that they understood me as well as I understood what they were trying to convey.

#### **4.7 Reflections about the interviews**

I have different experiences from the interviews of my informants. Three of my informants spoke my language, so we decided to do the interviews using our mutual language. In contrast, I used the Norwegian language during the discussion with the other three informants. The interviews went very well, and everyone felt comfortable during the interviews. It was sufficiently relaxed that there were jokes and laughter while my informants spoke freely about their life situations and their experiences within their programs. I made sure that my informants had a positive experience during the interviews, so they were not pushed to share painful experiences.

#### **4.8 Data transcription**

The first thing I did after each interview was to transcribe the recorded spoken words of my informants into text as soon as possible. Through transcription, I was able to remember what my informants have expressed to me. I also became more familiar with the information and the informants I interviewed. I had taken notes during the interviews, although I made

sure that I was not disturbing the interview process while doing so. The records were useful during the transcription of the discussions.

It was very challenging to put the spoken words of my informants into textual form. I transcribed the dialogs word for word, including body language. Body language was important in how my informants described and expressed their thoughts with me. I did my best to put everything from the interviews into written word. I wrote the dialogs as their original language version – word for word, then translated to English. I tried the best I could to translate all transcripts to English without adding anything.

The transcription of the interviews was very time-consuming. In addition to the technical problems mentioned earlier (poor recording quality), I strove hard to transcribe the interviews with informants who had weak Norwegian language skills. It was hard to understand the words from these informants. They had difficulty pronouncing several words. They also used inappropriate words in the sentences which made it difficult to understand the meaning what they were saying. There was also small talk that proved a distraction during transcription. However, essentially, these problems and disturbances did not have an impact on my findings.

#### **4.9 Coding and analysis**

After I transcribed all the interviews, the next step was to perform a rough thematic coding based on the three themes: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility. Following this, I generated codes based on my initial interpretations of the interviews. The codes were later re-examined, organized and collated into more refined codes. The next step was the creation of mind maps. Mind mapping helped me to organize and structure the information that was relevant in providing comprehensive descriptions of the everyday lives of the informants concerning the three themes. Lastly, I created more analytical coding; I looked for narrative linkages within and between codes.

Narrative linkage – meaningful connections made by the narrative between aspects (Gubrium and Holstein 1998, 166-179). Narrative linkage is the incorporation of items to personal experiences, thus making the stories more meaningful and coherent as the stories



unfold (ibid). To illustrate this, I looked for different codes, elements or connections from the stories of the informants based on how they linked these to social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility. For example, I looked for instances where the informants described: feelings of recognition or misrecognition, improved or reduced social networks, and connections and the provision of downward or upward social mobility. What is most interesting about this approach is the way the narrator can provide significance and meaning to various experiences of the informants based on the informants' perspectives.

## **5.0 Ethical issues**

I followed the ethical guidelines produced by Norway's National Committee for Research Ethics in the Social Sciences and Humanities in the planning and conducting of this research thesis. I also gained permission from the Norwegian Social Science Data Services (NSD) to conduct this research thesis. Furthermore, the informants were given information before the actual interview was carried out. They were thoroughly informed about my research concerning the right of confidentiality, the use of sound recorder and the voluntary right to participate and withdraw from this thesis. I asked them for their written consent to join and was thoroughly informed about their participation and their portrayal in this thesis. I also told them that I would delete everything after the thesis' completion.

## **5. Presentation of the findings**

The informants whose stories are presented here were clients of work activation programs: Job Opportunity Scheme, Labor Market Training, Job Clubs and Work Training. As I put together what they described to me, I learned that the informants experienced various challenges and facilitators within their everyday lives which were related to three themes: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility. Within these themes, they spoke of different sorts of events and circumstances in their lives that are linked to their identity, role, relationships, and so on. These were principally related to childcare and family responsibilities, social relations, financial matters, employment, language skills, and education.

The findings are thematically organized using the framework of social cohesion based on its three essential dimensions: (A) social inclusion (recognition), (B) social capital (social networks) and (C) social mobility. As mentioned earlier, the definition of social cohesion in this thesis is *the characteristic of a group or society that ensures the well-being and mobility of its members through reducing inequalities, ensuring a sense of belonging or recognition and providing equal access to opportunities and resources.*

## **5.1 Challenges and Facilitators**

*What are the everyday challenges and facilitators experienced by the former participants of work activation programs?*

The informants in this thesis talked about various experiences where they described different challenges and facilitators within their everyday lives which were related to the themes: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility. The findings are presented and organized using the framework of social cohesion based on its three essential dimensions: (A) social inclusion (B) social capital and (C) social mobility. In the dimension of social Inclusion, I describe different situations concerning the informants' experiences about their feelings of a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition. In contrast, in the dimension of social capital, the focus is to describe the informants' social relations, their interactions with other people and their ties. Finally, in the dimension of social capital, I describe how the informants' educational background, qualifications, and skills help change or improve their position in society. The findings are as follows:

### **5.1.1 Social inclusion: Belonging, acceptance, and recognition**

Social inclusion refers to situations or circumstances where individuals or a group feel a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition; and where individuals do not feel excluded or marginalized. Cohesiveness is created from connections based on the familiar feeling of belonging and similar values. The connections between individuals bind them together into a group. Thus, individuals within a group feel a sense of recognition and belonging because of similar norms and values. Cohesiveness is also a characteristic of a society where society

considers how the re-settlers feel about their new environment. It includes the responsibility of the host country (the welfare system) to welcome immigrants in various ways.

Strongly emerging as a theme in the interviews, the informants described different sorts of circumstances or events in their lives, connecting these to a sense of belonging, acceptance, and recognition.

Ina was in her thirties, and she had an employment background in her home country. She came to Norway through the Au pair scheme. Ina felt a sense of comfort living in Norway. As she stated when asked about her family situation and about feeling at home:

*"My husband and I started our family here. He came under the Au pair scheme – he also worked with my previous host family... we got married here. Then, we got married in the Philippines... The kids were born in Norway... I came to Norway in 2006 under the Au pair scheme. I have been living here for 11 years... Yes, I felt at home here."*

Ina connected her sense of "feeling at home" with her established social relationships. Her husband is with her in Norway who has almost the same work experience and entry into Norway. Both share a common cultural background, and she has been here for a while (acclimation). She is describing the ingredients necessary for belonging, acceptance, and recognition in terms of shared past and experience in Norway.

Janice has been living in Norway for 6 years. She first met her husband at the church on the first Sunday after she came to Norway. Her husband is from Romania. She felt more at home and felt she belonged more in Norway than her home country. As she responded when asked about the feeling of a sense of belonging living in Norway:

*"Yes, I felt more at home in Norway than in the Philippines (laughed). My husband was shocked! He said to me "I watched other Filipinos in the church, you seemed different. You were not like them... You felt more like you belonged." I felt comfortable together with foreigners... (laughed)... I felt that my life changed socially and culturally. My life was different when I was in the Philippines. I have different priorities and opinions... about issues in society. I became open-minded."*

Janice connected her "feeling of a sense of belonging" with her established social relations: her husband who is also a foreigner and her social networks with different nationalities. Her husband and her other social relations have diverse social and cultural backgrounds. She is describing the elements for belonging, acceptance, and recognition in terms of her exposure and understanding other nationalities, cultures, and ideas.

Eunice was in her twenties, and she had an employment background in her home country. She moved to Norway through family reunification. Eunice felt a sense of isolation because of limited social relations. She did not have any social connections aside from her husband and his family when she moved to Norway. When asked about how she felt living in Norway, she replied bluntly:

*"I thought of going back to Thailand. I did not know anyone. I felt alone. My husband is my support and my best friend (laughed). He is very nice, supportive and helpful. My husband's family is also very nice and helpful. They helped me learn the Norwegian language. They tried to talk to me in Norwegian only."*

Eunice described her first meeting with her neighbor as funny because she cannot speak Norwegian and she did not speak English well. Her neighbor was her first friend she made in Norway:

*"My neighbor approached me and talked to me... it was funny because I did not speak the Norwegian language and I was not good at English... we only said "yes, yes, yes" to each other (laughed). She was nice. She comforted me... We bought food and cooked food together. She also helped me to learn the language."*

For Eunice, who has a husband, his family and has established contact with the neighbors, had a system of people around her who made her feel comfortable and that she belonged. She had people around her in her daily activities.

Pam was in her thirties, and she had an employment background in her home country. She came to Norway through family reunification. She already had a system of people around her before coming in Norway – husband and friends. These people helped her to easily adjust to a new way of life. When asked how she felt about moving to Norway, she noted:

*"I married my husband. He was from Thailand. He took a master's thesis here – Engineering... He got a job, and so I must move to Norway... We spoke our language at home, so there was no language barrier. I liked my life in Norway. I liked the weather here, not so warm. The weather in Thailand was hot, and I did not like it... Socializing was not difficult. I already knew some Thai women here..."*

For Pam, she connected her feeling of comfort to her pre-established social relations with experience in Norway and a sense of where she came from (including her husband). In a sense, her husband and her pre-established friends served as cultural interlocutors (could translate the news for her, understanding where she was at the time). She also described a feeling of comfort – comfortable with her surroundings.

#### *Social inclusion: Unexcluded and non-marginalization*

Two informants spoke of events of their lives where they felt a sense of recognition, i.e. that they are not excluded or marginalized. They emphasized this feeling of non-exclusion or non-marginalized based on their access to welfare benefits from the host country.

Ina and her husband were both from the Philippines (mentioned above). They tried their best to meet ends meet. As she stated when asked about whether she received government support:

*"We receive childcare financial benefits "barnetrygd" 970 Norwegian crowns and then "kontantstøtte" 7,500 Norwegian crowns because the youngest is not attending kindergarten. We also have various expenses, house rent, kindergarten fees, food, and so on."*

Ina connected her feeling of recognition to her access to government financial support. She felt that she rightfully received the benefits and assistance that the government provides to the members of the society (welfare benefits).

Nerissa was also in her thirties and had an employment background in her home country. She also came to Norway through family reunification. Nerissa, who was divorced, described her financial situation. When asked if she received help from the government after her divorce, she replied:

*I am divorced. My economic status is tough.... Yes, yes, I received economic support from NAV. If I did not receive from NAV, how can I stay here... "Overgangstønad" after I move away from my ex-husband."*

Nerissa also described the ingredients of feeling recognition, in such a way that she duly received the necessary support and assistance from the government during her divorce.

### **5.1.2 Social capital (social networks)**

Social capital refers to resources an individual acquires based on network influence, relationships and support from other people. It can also refer to established social networks that enhance resilience, productivity, social and economic development. Cohesiveness is viewed as a characteristic of a society dealing with social networks, social relationships, interactions with other people and ties between its members.

Another theme that strongly emerged from the interviews was that the informants talked about different sorts of social networks or social relationships, their interactions with other people and their ties, connecting these to social and economic development.

The three informants in this thesis, namely Ina, Nerissa, and Eunice, who have children, made their everyday lives different from the other three informants who did not. These three informants spoke about the significance of having social networks within their everyday lives.

Ina has a network in her husband (mentioned earlier). She felt comfortable knowing that there is someone she can trust to take care of her children while she is at school or at work (an option Nerissa may not have). As Ina described when asked about her economic situation and if she had a family living in Norway:

*"I have kids... I work 20 hours a week because I have a student visa. My husband works full time... Very difficult... The niece of my husband helped me take care of the kids. It was a big help that we have someone who looks after the kids, bring and fetch the kids from school/kindergarten, helped us prepared and cooked food."*

Ina is pursuing an education. She and her husband are trying to make ends meet, and Ina's education may be a path to higher-paid employment. She connected her feeling of comfort to her established social networks. Her husband and his family provided her support and assistance in taking care of the children as well as in performing household chores. Having someone to watch her children enables her to pursue these other goals (an option Nerissa may not have).

Nerissa pointed out how her social network (though limited) helped her find cleaning employment before her participation to Job Opportunity Scheme. When asked about her financial situation, she directly replied: *"I work as a cleaner. It was not hard to find employment as a cleaner. I got the job through a Thai woman. I am earning..."* Nerissa emphasized the importance of social networks when she described how she found employment. She also highlighted the notion of how typical it is for an immigrant to turn to people in their immigrant community. She felt a sense of belonging because she can identify herself with her Thai connection; they shared common language and culture.

Eunice (mentioned earlier) has established social relations in her husband and his family as well as with neighbors. For Eunice, her identity is focused on the home, children and learning the language. These people around her provided her a sense of comfort and contentment. She has the option of working less because she has a husband who can support their family while she is attending the language course. As Eunice stated when asked about taking the Norwegian course:

*"I took the language course, then I took a break to take care of the kids... One year... Then I retook the language course. It was not good because I must take care of the kids. Difficult. My husband helped me but not so much... He worked hard... Difficult to take care of the kids... I woke up every day at 6 in the morning... Attended the language course... After the language course I directly went home, cooked food and fetched the kids from kindergarten..."*

For Eunice, she described how her social network – namely husband, can make her daily life slightly easier. Having someone around her can make a difference. She was able to do other things, such as not having to work and attending the Norwegian language course.

Janice highlighted the importance of having social networks as she described her first employment in a spa center before participating in Job Clubs. As she stated when asked about her work experiences:

*"My first job was an assistant in a spa center in Oslo. My classmate in a language course, he was from Serbia. He recommended me to work in the spa center. I folded robes, filled slippers, prepared drinks and fruits... In the basement, there was a washing room where everyone is responsible for washing and drying the robes, towels, and so on. However, suddenly these jobs became my work... One day, I went home... there was a fire... I was dismissed from work. I tried to apply for jobs again... It was hard. I used Google Translate to write my curriculum vitae and cover letter."*

For Janice, she connected her social network to economic development – her social network was significant in finding employment. She described how hard the process of finding employment was. However, she felt more comfortable in finding employment if she had social networks and connections. She also emphasized a feeling of discrimination by describing her work environment. She felt that she was an outsider.

Vanessa was in her thirties, and she had an employment background before coming to Norway. She came to Norway through family reunification. As a wife, Vanessa experienced many struggles and hardships when she was married. She felt weak, vulnerable and lost her own identity. Religion and social networks were important in Vanessa's life. Both are the source of inspiration and motivation. She seemed satisfied with practicing her religion.

When asked about her life situation, she replied:

*"I am married once, and now I am divorced. It was hard! I had many frustrations... I am still working on moving on with my life... Sometimes I was walking without direction... I am thinking about how I can survive in Norway. My family, my friends and my "faith" were the motivations to move on with my life... without them... Life was hard!... I tried my best to overcome these... The church, hymns songs... praying... it helps me."*

For Vanessa, she connected a sense of feeling of vulnerability and loss of identity in terms of her relationship with her ex-husband. She has a religious identity and a network. She emphasized these when she described making her way in Norway. Her strong religious belief



and her social networks enable her to become stronger in facing and overcoming the challenges and struggles she experienced.

### *5.1.3 Social mobility*

Social mobility, also referred to as human capital skills, refers to the skills, capabilities, competencies, qualifications and educational background of an individual that helps improve or change the position of an individual in society. Change of position of an individual or group of individuals can be an upward or downward direction. Cohesiveness is a characteristic of a society in which every member of the society has equal chance and opportunity toward mobility through employment, income and career structure. This can be obtained through the provision of the state to ensure that everyone is not discriminated against and has equal access and legal rights to different opportunities and resources within the society, for instance, employment, education, health and other public services.

#### *Social mobility: Language skills, education, and employment*

Strongly emerging as a theme in the interviews, the informants described their language skills, education, and employment, connecting these to downward or upward mobility.

Eunice described how her language skills in Norwegian and English (as referred earlier) made it hard for her to establish social connections. As she continued to describe her life experiences, she divulged:

*"Because it is hard to speak the Norwegian language... Grammar... I gave up because it was complicated. I tried to read newspapers and watch television when I have time... I had a problem with pronunciation..."*

Eunice connected her language skills with downward mobility. She felt self-pity and loss of confidence as she struggled to learn the language. She also felt both socially excluded and with a low social status because she cannot speak the Norwegian language to any real degree.

Ina is pursuing an education (as stated earlier). She emphasized her role as a mother when she described how she managed to combine childcare and family responsibilities and being a working student. *"I work 20 hours a week because I have a student visa... It is difficult... I*

*usually see my kids during the night when I came home..."* For Ina, pursuing an education is a critical goal for her and her family. She needed to sacrifice the time spent with her family in order to achieve her goal and her family's goal. She connected her education with upward mobility. Her education may be a route to higher-paying employment and a way of improving the well-being of her family. Moreover, her education may be a way to attain a higher position within the social spectrum.

For Nerissa, language and education are significant for her. Both can help her establish social networks and can improve her economic situation and the well-being of the family. As she stated when asked about her why she enrolled in a secondary school in Oslo:

*"In Thailand, I was more comfortable with the language. We would talk and smile with each other. Establishing contact with Norwegians is hard... I have very few friends... I want to be fluent with the language and wish to have a better job – a job that is decent, good for the body... Better life... My education from Thailand is not accredited here."*

Nerissa emphasized how language hindered her from establishing social networks, particularly with local Norwegians. She connected her language skills to downward mobility as it hampered her established new social connections. Nerissa associated her education with downward mobility as her education is not recognized in Norway. She also linked her work to downward social mobility. She felt that her work is not favorable; it is making her weak, sick and vulnerable. She felt that her lack of Norwegian language skills, employment, and educational background are pulling her toward downward social mobility. In addition, she felt that she is socially excluded and has low status within the social strata.

Both Janice and Pam connected social mobility with their ability to speak the Norwegian language. It seems that they planned their social mobility as they both prioritized the language training during their first years in Norway. They also had jobs at perhaps a professional level before coming to Norway. As stated, when asked them both about their employment in their home country:

*"I worked as a Call Center Agent in the Philippines before I came to Norway – 5 years... I came to Norway through a One-year Language Course visa. Then I applied for a job seeker visa for another year... I did not apply for work. I applied at the summer school twice to learn the language – University... I did not take the "Bergen's Test". I tried to apply for work while I still had a visa... It was hard! I used Google Translate to convert my curriculum vitae and cover letter into Norwegian... My job is not related to my educational background... The first problem is that our education is not accredited here... (Interview with Janice).*

*"In Thailand, I worked as a pharmacist for 10 years. Life was good there (laughed)... Language (laughed) was the first and foremost challenge I experienced when I moved to Norway. My husband does not speak the Norwegian language... He speaks English at work. He is an engineer... We speak our language at home. Therefore, it is hard for me to learn the Norwegian language... I did not apply for jobs. I wanted to be ready... First language. So, I took a language course for 2 years – without a job. My focus was to learn the language... I did not get the job I wanted... Very difficult to apply for work." (Interview with Pam).*

The fact that these informants had work experience before coming to Norway suggested that they both have a variety of skills to offer. In Norway, the jobs they held appeared to be more insecure and lower paid jobs than the ones they held in their home country. For Janice, she felt that her employment might change her economic status. She connected this to feeling trapped to a mismatch in work and social mobility downward as her degree is not counted. In contrast, Pam referred to her husband as someone who is challenging her to learn the language. She must prioritize learning the language because she felt that she needed it in order to find employment. Both considered their educational background as a barrier because their education was not recognized, and at the same time it was making them feel that they have low social status. In addition, the kind of employment they had added to feeling of low socioeconomic status because of low income.

For Vanessa, having '100%' full-time employment will enable her to organize her daily activities. She had a '10%' employment in a big company in Oslo before participating in Work Training. As stated, when asked about her work:

*"I am working mostly in services... I worked as a cashier in a big company in Oslo... Almost 2 years. I am working 10%, but I am working like 100% physically... I am looking for 100% full-time employment. I am not choosy as to what kind of work... It is important to have full-time employment... At least I know when to work. I can plan... When I was working in [name of the company], I cannot plan my schedule. For example, I did not know what time I will start working within the week... I was mostly working at closing hours. Then, I did not know how many days I was going to work for the next week... There was a time when I did not have enough self-confidence in finding work. I had very low self-esteem... Though someone recommended me to apply for the job... I felt down! I questioned myself why I could not find work."*

Vanessa emphasized why she needed "100% full-time employment." For her, 10% employment is not favorable. She felt it made her weak and sick because she was almost working during the night. She felt that her employment controlled her daily activities as she was working on-call and had no fixed working hours. She also highlighted the difficulty of finding full-time employment when she described how the process resulted in the decline of her self-confidence. She connected employment to downward mobility as it was making her feel that she had a low socioeconomic status.

## **5.2 Work activation programs as a policy and employment measures to strengthen social cohesion**

*How do work activation programs impact former participants on strengthening their feeling of social cohesion?*

Above, I have presented different events or circumstances within the everyday lives of the informants as they connected to the themes: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility. Here, I present how their work activation programs have impacts on these themes. For instance, do the measures improve social inclusion or do the informants describe instances of misrecognition? Do they improve social capital/networks, or do they describe instances where these are reduced? Do the measures provide the means for upward social mobility or do the informants describe downward mobility?

### 5.2.1 Social inclusion: Recognition or misrecognition

Nerissa participated in the Job Opportunity Scheme because she wanted to improve her Norwegian language skills and find suitable and better work that could improve her well-being and her family. As she stated when asked about if the scheme is useful for her:

*"I did not get a job after the training... It was not suitable for me... I was not able to participate in the Norwegian Level 3 language course ... Canteen and grocery jobs are not suitable for me because I am a single mother. In canteen jobs, I must start early approximately 6 in the morning. I must start late in the grocery from 7-8 in the evening and finish around 10 in the evening... Difficult because I have kids. I must take the kids before 9 in the morning... Jobs with a shift schedule are not suitable for me."*

Nerissa, whose goal is to improve her Norwegian language skills and well-being of her family, expressed a sense of misrecognition or marginalization as she described when she was not able to participate with the language course. She felt being unrecognized as her essential needs of being a single mother were not addressed by the scheme.

Three informants: Nerissa, Pam, and Vanessa, spoke of how little the allowance or fee they received under their programs was. These three informants connected the feeling of misrecognition and marginalization with the training fee they received during their participation in their measures. They felt that their respective measures did not take into consideration their situations and their needs. As they described when asked about whether they received a fee/allowance while participating in their measures: Nerissa noted that she *"did not receive any training fee"* as she was *"not qualified"* and *"this was hard,"* given that she had children. Pam said that what she received was *"not that much,"* but *"was better than getting nothing."* Vanessa noted that the *"training fee is almost free,"* but she did not mind about it, but *"just enjoy the working experience."*

### 5.2.2 Social capital: Improve or reduce social networks

As a single parent, Nerissa is struggling to manage education, work, and family responsibilities. She was studying at a secondary school in Oslo when I interviewed her. Nerissa emphasized her role as a single mother when she described the difficulties of combining childcare responsibilities with work and why she must be slightly choosy about

the types of job she seeks. Nerissa is struggling to find a job that is suitable to her situation as a single mother. She must find a flexible job, and she can do when the children are not with her. As she described when asked about her work:

*"I like to work, but I needed someone who can take care of my kids. The cleaning job is suitable for me now. Better to work as a cleaner, very flexible. I can decide when to start."*

Nerissa lacks social networks/capital, which makes her life even more difficult. She has no back-up and even no immediate support when an emergency arises. Nerissa also must work as a cleaner to support her needs and the children. No one is available to look after her children while she is working. In this way, her lack of social networks/capital (as an unmarried woman with children and few friends, means her life is not flexible – she has no back-up and thus fewer job options). For Nerissa, her role as a single mother means she needs a job that is flexible, and which she can do when the kids are not with her. She also must consider childcare responsibilities when she makes decisions. For her, the program did not improve her social capital/social networks. She did not establish new social networks. She felt that she was an outsider (lack of social capital thereof).

Eunice was contacted by NAV to participate in the Job Opportunity Scheme. She was managing her time combining childcare and family responsibilities with the language course when I interviewed her. As she described her employment after her participation with Job Opportunity Scheme: *"I think it was unfair! I worked there first, and I worked hard. However, the boss offered the jobs to workers from Scandinavian countries."* For Eunice, she felt that her co-workers disliked her and at the same time she felt that her hard work is not acknowledged or unrecognized. She also felt a sense of both isolation and discrimination in work because her skills were misrecognized. Moreover, Eunice associated these feelings as an outsider from the group (lack of social capital/networks thereof).

Pam knew about the Job Opportunity Scheme through her friend. Therefore, she registered as a job seeker in NAV in order to participate in the scheme. Pam was taking a Norwegian language course at a university in Oslo when I interviewed her. She took the course at night as she was working in the canteen during the day. As she described when asked about her experienced the scheme:

*"The first two internships, I did not get a job... I got a job in the canteen after the third internship... The training also helped me learn the language. It enabled me to speak the Norwegian language... I can talk and interact with different people."*

Pam connected the program to social capital when she described how she finds employment and improves her Norwegian language skills. It also enhanced her social networks – a way of establishing new social connections. She felt a sense of being an insider within the group as she was able to connect with other people.

### **5.2.3 Social mobility: Upward or downward mobility**

#### **Social mobility: Job seeking competence**

Ina was sick for a year. She wanted to have a new working opportunity, so she registered as a job seeker in NAV. She wished to have a course from NAV that was related to her education background. She was attending Labor Market Training when I interviewed her. She felt the need to participate in this measure in order to become competitive in the Norwegian labor market. When asked about her perspective about the measure, she replied:

*"I learned what to do during interviews, learned how to use Super Office, WordPress, and so on. I think the training will be useful in finding an internship...The internship is like applying for a job."*

For Ina, her participation in the program would help her find employment which is related to her educational background. She emphasized this when she described the skills and experiences acquired from the program. Ina connected her experiences acquired from the program to upward social mobility. She felt that the program would be a way to find a better job and a way to move up within the social ladder.

Janice's previous employers had dismissed her (mentioned earlier). She came across NAV when she was searching for a way forward to find new employment. She had trouble finding employment, so she registered as a job seeker in NAV, and NAV offered her participation in Job Clubs. She was still working in the kindergarten when I interviewed her (employment she gained after participating in Job Clubs). As she stated when asked about her opinion about Job Clubs:

*"Yes, the training was beneficial – for me, someone did not know how to write a cover letter and curriculum vitae. In Norway, they have a different culture in terms of applying for employment. Then they push you to follow up your applications (laughs)... Then there were mock interviews – beneficial (laughs), especially I do not know how to market myself... We have a progress chart showing how many jobs we have applied for and the interviews we had. The cover letter that we made must be tailor-made to the jobs we applied... Helpful in finding employment. I gained employment after the training, in a kindergarten."*

Janice emphasized how useful the measure was when she described the skills and competencies, she acquired from Job Clubs. She connected this to mobility as she gained more confidence in finding employment. Janice also felt that it provided her the competencies and capabilities of individuals who have better social positions in society, and through this, she would be able to climb within the social spectrum.

Vanessa wanted to have "100% full-time employment". Her friend, who knew about her ordeal in finding full-time employment, recommended her to apply for the vacant position in the company in which her friend works. Instead of directly hiring Vanessa, the company told her that she would be participating under the NAV program – Work Training. She did not find employment after her involvement in the program. However, she satisfactorily described her experience of the program when asked about it:

*"They were looking for someone fluent in Norwegian, which I am not... The job was more on communication – sending e-mails, answering telephone calls, and so on. For me, it was a good experience... Good opportunity... At least I got some office experience. It was different work experience."*

Vanessa, who struggled to find full-time employment, emphasized how fluency in the Norwegian language is crucial in finding a clerical job. She connected her lack of Norwegian language skills to downward mobility. However, she stressed how she was satisfied with the work training although she did not find employment after the training. For her, the skills and experiences acquired from the training will be useful in finding a job. It also improved her confidence and self-esteem. She connected the measure to social mobility because of the thought of being equipped with the skills required within the Norwegian labor market. Thus,



she would be able to find better employment and improve her socioeconomic status. It would enable her to climb up within the social strata.

### *Social mobility: Credentials, qualifications, and employment*

As mentioned above, due to time constrictions, Nerissa was not able to participate in the Norwegian language course offered by NAV. She was very eager to learn the language because she believes that if she can speak the language fluently, she could be able to find a decent job. As she continued talking about her perception of the program, she observed:

*"But it was hard. I have two kids and am a single parent... I found a way to improve my language skills – I applied to a secondary school and got accepted. You know that if passed Norwegian level, it would be easier to find a job – 100% full-time job. I am studying there now – "vocational studies"... Begin a new life (laughed). It takes time... For me education is important... If I finish this education, I can find the right job..."*

For Nerissa, she connected her acceptance at the secondary school in Oslo to upward mobility. Education and fluency in the Norwegian language are crucial in finding better, high-paying or full-time employment, and contributing to improving the well-being of her family, and, at the same time, she felt that through this she would be able to have a better social status.

Three informants, namely Janice, Eunice, and Pam, found employment after their participation within their respective employment measures. However, their employment had different impacts on their lives. Janice felt trapped to a mismatch work and unqualified as her education background is not related to her employment. As stated:

*"Useful in finding employment. I found a job in the kindergarten... I am qualified to work in kindergarten. For example, if I quit my job now, I am not sure if I can find new employment... The kindergarten now requires kindergarten personnel with higher qualifications – with an education. A kindergarten assistant must have a kindergarten education or must have a kindergarten course or certificate... My education background is not related to my work... Education from the Philippines is not accredited..." (Interview with Janice)*

She believed that she must continue to work as a kindergarten assistant because she thought that she would not be able to find better employment as her education is not accredited in Norway. She connected this to downward mobility as it is making her feel that she has a low social status.

For Eunice, the measure helped her find internship and employment at the canteen. It was also useful in providing additional income to the family. However, she was not happy with her employment situation as she only worked on-call. As noted:

*"The first internship I did not get a job. The second internship, I got a job – a temporary job which is on call. However, I earned only 4000 crowns a month because I only worked for 3 hours a day. It also depends on how often the canteen called me to work. It was not enough... I have kids. I want 100% full-time employment." (Interview with Eunice)*

Eunice worked when the canteen called her, and it was not often. She was not satisfied with her income because it was not sufficient for her family with two children. She connected her employment and income from the canteen towards downward mobility. As a mother, she felt that she failed to help improve the economic situation and the well-being of the family. She felt that she and her family have low socioeconomic status.

*"I had a 7-month internship at the pharmacy, but was not able to get a job because I cannot work independently... I must take the additional course... I have a chance of getting a job in the canteen after an internship... I got a temporary job in the canteen after the internship... I plan to take the additional course of my Pharmacy education if I cannot get permanent employment at the canteen. However, I must get an A or B in the language to get into the course/thesis related to my education... I wanted to continue to work in the pharmacy."*

For Pam, the measure helped find internship and temporary employment at the canteen. She associated her temporary employment to downward social mobility as her work is not related to her education. She wanted to have a job which is related to her educational background. She also connected her education to downward mobility as her education was not recognized. She felt that she had low social and economic status.

## **6. Discussion**

In the preceding chapter, I presented the content of my interviews as a series of stories related to three themes: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility. My central focus is to explore whether the informants feel a sense of strengthened social cohesion: Do the informants describe instances of recognition or misrecognition? Do they describe improved social capital/networks, or do they describe instances where these are reduced? Do they describe instances of upward social mobility or do the informants describe downward mobility? The discussion is organized using the framework of social cohesion's three dimensions: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks) and social mobility.

### **6.1 Challenges and Facilitators**

The findings suggest that the informants experienced a variety of challenges and facilitators within their everyday lives. For instance, the informants may feel a sense of recognition or misrecognition; their social networks are reduced or improved, and/or mobility is still the same or a trend towards downward or upward mobility.

#### **6.1.1 Social inclusion (recognition)**

Drawing primarily on Ina, Janice, Eunice and Pam's experiences, this section explores how social relations and social support shape immigrants' feeling of social inclusion (recognition). Ina and Pam's social relations provide them with a sense of social inclusion (recognition). Both Ina and Pam have established social relations who both share their cultural and social backgrounds. They both emphasize the feeling of a sense of social inclusion (recognition) based on one's own collective identity or norms of behavior.

According to Rob Oxoby (2009), identity facilitates how individuals behave in different situations, and individuals feel a sense of inclusiveness because of shared norms of behavior. For instance, Ina's husband also shares the same work experience as her. Her husband understands her everyday situations; he could empathize with her and could relate to Ina's experiences. Her husband also provides both emotional and instrumental support, for example, by helping her with daily activities such as childcare.

On the other hand, in Pam's pre-established social relations before coming to Norway, her husband and her friends served as cultural interlocutors. Cultural interlocutors play the bridging role, "synapses" and "relays" (Toepler and Anheier 2010, 290). They also act as translators for Pam – both in the "linguistic and conceptual sense," in order to help Pam understand her present situation. Interlocutors "apply the glue that undergirds the strength of weak ties" (ibid with reference to Granovetter 1973). It has similarities with "cement" (Bruhn 2009, 34 with reference to Festinger et al. 1950) or "glue" (Scheifer and Van der Noll) that binds or holds individuals or group members together.

For Eunice and Janice, they successfully highlighted how their social relations – husband, friends and family, provide them a sense of social inclusion (recognition). Although their husband has a different cultural and social background, they feel a sense of recognition. Here, the informants emphasize social cohesion as "equivalent to good relationships" (Fonseca, Lukosch and Brazier 2018, 4-5 with reference to Braaten's definition of social cohesion), and "quality of intimate topics shared" (ibid with reference to Stokes; Bruhn 2009). Regardless of these differences, one may feel a sense of inclusion, and this is manifested in terms of attraction and bond, care and support, the way they listen to each other or show empathy, and the "quality of intimate shared topics." (ibid). Cohesiveness is maintained because of the desire of individuals to become affiliated within the group, and this is driven by influence, initiative, competence, and individuals' choice of like or dislike. Cohesiveness arises from the "outcome between culture and behavior relationship." Individuals generally act in various ways as a response to corresponding cultural influences and expectations (Berry 1997, 6 with reference to Berry, Portinga, Seagall, and Dasen 1992).

Furthermore, individuals may also feel a sense of inclusion (recognition) to access to different public services, such as health, education or other public services. Ina and Nerissa described the complexity of raising children and reorganizing gender inequality as they try to manage childcare and family responsibilities and improve the well-being of their respective families. For Ina, the welfare benefits her family received from the government such as the childcare financial support contribute to their day-to-day survival. However, for Nerissa, the welfare benefits she received are crucial to her being able to stay in Norway. It also helps provide the necessary needs of her family. Cohesiveness relates to equal access to

opportunities in society (Fonseca, Lukosh and Brazier 2018 with reference to the Council of Europe and Sharon Jeannotte and the OECD). What is emphasized here is that the state ensures the well-being of every member through providing equal access to government benefits, "minimize disparities and avoid polarization" 'without discrimination... have equal access to fundamental social and economic rights,' (Jenson 2010, 5 with reference to the Council of Europe; Meld. St. Nr. 6 (2012 – 2013, 7); OECD 2012, 147).

### *6.1.2 Social capital (social networks)*

Most of the informants highlighted social networks as their facilitators within their everyday lives. For Ina and Eunice, the role of their social networks – husband, friends, and family, is significant in how they negotiate their everyday activities. Their social networks allow these two informants to pursue other life goals. Ina pursues new educational opportunities while working and Eunice pursues a course in Norwegian. They have a support system in terms of childcare and financial support. Social networks are "network anchor" and "main social support of immigrant families" (Dominguez 2010, 68-70). Anchors represent "security, stability and strength" (ibid, 68). Unfortunately, this is an opportunity Nerissa lacks. Nerissa is a single parent who is struggling to manage childcare and family responsibilities, employment and education. For Nerissa, she exemplifies an example of an immigrant who feels isolation and loneliness; simultaneously, she also feels an outsider due to limited social networks and life opportunities. Cohesiveness is based on the "amount and strength of reciprocal positive attitudes among individuals" (Fonseca et al. 2018, 4-5 with reference to Lott and Lott) and a "form of protection, risk management and solidarity functions" (Mulunga and Yazdanifard 2014). In its simplest definition, social capital relates to individuals' sacrifices in terms of time, effort and consumption made by individuals to promote and enhance cooperation with each other (ibid).

Jane Jenson (2010, 11) cited Policy Research Initiative 2005: 1 "Family, friends and acquaintances are crucial assets... make a difference to the well-being" and Policy Research Initiative 2005: 6 "social networks may provide individuals and groups with access to resources and supports." Social networks or "fictive-kin systems" (Dominguez 2010, 71) can be considered as a replacement for the family ties lost due to immigration. They also constitute a resource: both social and economic capital for immigrants. Social capital/social

networks give individuals the option of engaging in a variety of new life opportunities. It can also provide sources of valuable services, such as job referrals and emergency assistance. For Nerissa and Janice, their social networks are significant in finding employment. Nerissa, who described instances of having minimal social networks, is struggling to find a job that is suitable to her situation as a single parent – a job that she can do when the children are not with her.

Jenson pointed out that individuals who "live and work in networks are not only healthier in others but also happier" (Jenson 2010, 16). She also suggested that "social capital is correlated with certain positive results, although causation is not established" (ibid). For instance, Vanessa experienced vulnerability and a loss of identity because of complicated relationship with her husband. As everyday life struggles and challenges confronted her, her social networks provide her inspiration and motivation to move on with life. She considers them as her shield and strength.

### *6.1.3 Social mobility*

Language is linked to social mobility. Eunice and Nerissa highlighted a lack of language skills in relation to downward social mobility. They represent the common idea about immigrants facing the challenges of language barriers. Both highlighted how significant it is for an immigrant to speak the language of a host country. Language and communication skills are essential for establishing new social networks, creating a feeling of being an insider within a group or sense of recognition, and getting a job.

Accordingly, language is a tool to climb within the social ladder – "social and economic mobilizer" (Munandar 2015, 236). For instance, an immigrant who can speak fluent Norwegian is perceived to be more educated and thus gain some degree of respect and social status. Likewise, fluency in the Norwegian language is a way to secure better and stable employment. The ability of the immigrants to speak the language of the host country affects their employability. For instance, a study by Evans (1987) found that immigrants' proficiency in speaking English affects their occupational attainment in Australia. Language proficiency provides a means of achieving one's aspirations and goals; however, a lack of these skills contributes to immobility (Moyer 2018; Munandar 2015).

The link between education and social mobility is seen in how individuals with higher educational backgrounds get higher-paid jobs and higher social status regardless of their socioeconomic status. However, this is not the case for two of the informants in this thesis. Both Janice and Pam were highly educated yet took low-wage jobs. Thus, they positioned themselves as having a low social status as their occupation is not related to their educational background. Platt (2007) found out that education affects mobility; especially those with a minority background. They have a higher risk of becoming unemployed. However, Wiborg and Hansen (2019) argued that equality in educational opportunities do not essentially lead to a more significant opportunity in the labor market and accumulation of wealth.

Employment is linked to social mobility. In this thesis, two informants highlighted how their employment is associated with downward social mobility. Nerissa and Vanessa felt that their work is making them weak, sick, and at the same time contributing to a feeling of low social status. It is attributed to the fact that immigrants usually have unstable, low-skilled, and low paid jobs (Papademetriou, Somerville and Sumption 2009; Bø 2013).

## **6.2 Work activation programs as a policy and employment measures to strengthen social cohesion**

The Norwegian government uses work activation programs – government policy and employment measures to increase employment or participation of the immigrants in the labor market and can contribute in strengthening social cohesion (St.meld.nr. 6 (2012 – 2013,7-8)). The findings suggest that work activation programs may have an impact on strengthening social cohesion among the six informants. The impacts vary depending on the different events or circumstances within the everyday lives of these informants.

### ***6.2.1 Work activation programs as social inclusion***

Several informants in this study associated work activation programs with a sense of feeling of misrecognition. Nerissa, for instance, highlighted this when she described how the program was not useful in finding employment, not suitable for her as a single parent, and did not consider her need to participate in the Norwegian language course. In so doing, she felt that the measure contributes to her feeling of a sense of exclusion and marginalization.

On the other hand, Vanessa and Pam emphasized the limited economic benefits they received while participating in their programs. It seems that work activation programs contribute to a sense of feeling of misrecognition and marginalization to these informants. These three informants believe that their programs are not individually adapted to their backgrounds and fail to address their necessary needs. Djuve and Tronstad (2011) suggest that there are instances where there was no individual plan that is tailored to the needs of the participants.

Work activation programs do not impose mandatory participation in the programs, unlike the IP and QP where participation in the program is mandatory in order to receive continued economic benefits. The participation in work activation programs is voluntary and based on the assessment of the needs of the participants for assistance and help them to be active in the labor market. Although Vanessa and Pam connected the measure to a sense of marginalization because of the limited economic benefits, they were still motivated to participate in the programs because of their usefulness. Individuals are motivated to participate in work activation programs because of the quality of the programs (Lorentzen and Dahl 2005, 29). Strøm et al. (2015) suggested that work activation programs can increase the probability of the employability of immigrants in the Norwegian labor market.

### *6.2.2 Work activation programs as social capital*

Nerissa and Eunice exemplify the roles of a family-focused mother who wants to improve the well-being of the family. While Eunice benefited from having a supportive husband who helps her with childcare and running the household, she also has network support from her friends and her husband's family. In contrast, Nerissa does not have this opportunity. Nerissa has minimal social networks, and she does not have a husband beside her who could give support in her daily activities. However, it turns out that their participation in the measure does not improve their social networks. Eunice feels that she is an outsider (lack of social networks thereof), as she described how she was not able to find full-time employment. Similarly, Nerissa's limited/lack of social networks make her life difficult as she does not have the available support system around her, and the measure does not put into consideration her situation as a single parent.



Rob Oxoby (2009, 5) cited Dayton-Johnson's model of social capital, "flow of individual investment"; these investments provide underlying individual and social benefits. Parra-Requena, Ruiz-Ortega, and Garcia-Villaverde (2012, cited by Mulunga and Yazdanifard (2014)) state that network relationships provide an avenue whereby individuals, groups or communities can explore and gain from resources offered by these relationships. In this way, individuals effectively act together with other individuals in order to pursue and achieve shared objectives. Unlike these two previous informants, Pam seems to have established new social networks and connections when she participated in the program. It was also useful for her to improve her Norwegian language skills. As she said, *"I can talk and interact with different people."*

### **6.2.3 Work activation programs as social mobility**

Before participation with their programs, Ina, Janice, and Vanessa acknowledge their lack of necessary qualifications and skills that the Norwegian labor market required. They believe that they acquired these through their participation in their respective employment measures. They attained knowledge and guidance on how to improve their ability to search for jobs. They also developed and enhanced their confidence in finding employment. The findings suggest that the informants are ready to compete with other job seekers as their qualifications and skills might meet the required requirements of the labor market. Work activation programs aim to develop and enhance the skills, qualifications, and competencies of the immigrants to increase their participation in the labor market and society (Meld. St. nr. 16 (2015-2016; St. meld. Nr. 18 (2007-2008))).

There is a majority consensus, and recent studies have shown, that state-funded work activation programs increased earnings and employment (Lorentzen and Dahl 2005, 29). Work activation programs have positive impacts on immigrants, but the effect on gaining employment is actually quite moderate (Djuve and Tronstad 2011; Kvinge and Djuve 2006). However, in this thesis, several of the informants who found employment felt that their employment does not provide a means to improving their social and economic status. Instead, they felt that it contributes more to a feeling of low social and economic status. Pam and Eunice highlighted how the measures helped them find employment. However, they felt a sense of marginalization, which contributes to their feeling of having low status. For

instance, Eunice has temporary employment which is on-call. It means that she does not work every day, and it depends on how often the canteen calls her to work. It also implies that she has very little income. Temporary employment is higher among immigrants from Africa and Asia (Bø 2013).

Immigrants from Africa and Asia are overrepresented in various jobs such as transportation, hospitality, health services, and so on (Bø 2013; Friberg and Midbøen (2009). Both Janice and Pam illustrate this situation and the general notion about immigrants with a high educational background but low-paid and low-status jobs. They also highlighted the general idea of immigrants whose educational background was not useful in finding relevant jobs as their education is not recognized within the host country. Here, they associated both their education background and employment to downward social mobility. They felt that they have low social and economic status. Friberg and Midbøen (2009) claimed that immigrants have different qualities and prevalence of education based on the educational systems of the country of origin. Here, education is emphasized as a prerequisite to obtaining better or professional jobs. However, in some cases, this is much less true, the provision of social networks and the inculcation of proper social skills and manners are also considered as means toward upward social mobility (Muller and Pollak 2015, 644 with reference to Ishida et al. 1995).

### **6.3 Summary and Conclusion**

This thesis explores the everyday lives of six informants living in Norway. As this thesis focuses on the idea of social cohesion, I have cited different perspectives and approaches on social cohesion to highlight the plurality of ways of studying and understanding social cohesion. I have tried to highlight different significant life events and experiences of the informants that cover different dimensions of social cohesion in order to better understand the notion of social cohesion. I specifically organized informants' life events based on three themes: social inclusion (recognition), social capital (social networks), and social mobility. Following this, I carefully analyzed these life events in order to produce complete stories depicting the lives of six informants in Norway. Their life stories contain different versions of opinions and ideas about their lives and which can even depict the world at large.

Evidence suggests that the informants' narratives comprise different versions of seeing the complexity of their situation in the Norwegian labor market and the society – from their entry to this society, their attempts to find ways to care for their families, and to their efforts to improve their situations and their well-being.

The first question of this thesis is to answer the question of whether the six informants experienced challenges and facilitators within their everyday lives. Pieces of evidence suggest that the lives of the informants involve both challenges and facilitators. Most of the informants consider social relations or social networks as their everyday facilitators – making their lives easier. Social relations or social networks are significant to the lives of the informants, especially in supporting them in their day-to-day survival. Having a rich social capital/network enables informants to explore life opportunities: providing the chance to become more independent, to pursue their objectives and goals in life, and to make them feel a sense of inclusion (recognition). However, these life opportunities are impossible to obtain for those informants who have minimal or lack of social capital/social networks, for example in the case of Nerissa. Nerissa has minimal social capital/social networks, which makes her life challenging. It also contributes to a feeling of a sense of misrecognition and a feeling of being an outsider (lack of social networks thereof).

Seemingly, the evidence suggests that most of the informants turn to family, friends, and acquaintances within their ethnic and immigrant communities. It has become apparent that the informants gain both a sense of inclusion and direct assistance within their kin and ethnic groups. However, how can these informants feel a sense of cohesiveness within the Norwegian labor market and in society if they rely exclusively upon their own ethnic community?

Furthermore, the pieces of evidence express that the informants consider factors of language skills, education, careers, and employment as everyday challenges – making their daily lives difficult and challenging. These following factors hinder them from establishing new social connections, from finding decent and high-paid jobs, and improving their status in Norwegian society. Most of them connected these factors to downward social mobility – for instance, Janice and Pam associated education and previous careers to downward social

mobility. Their education and previous careers were not recognized in Norway. Both informants are working in jobs which are not relevant to their education and previous careers. Katrine Fangen (2010) argued that immigrants experience greater barriers to access or participate in the labor market because of the following factors such as lack of experience, network, qualifications and language proficiency.

The Norwegian policymakers introduced work activation programs as a measure to increase the qualifications and employability of immigrants into the labor market. Work activation programs are strongly considered as significant policies that would facilitate independence and increase the probability of finding regular employment (Lorentzen and Dahl 2005, 28, 31). Women's participation and employment in the labor market may increase women's economic independence, gender equality and even strengthen social cohesion within society (St. Meld. Nr. 6 (2012 – 2013,7-8, 10)).

The second question of this thesis is to answer whether work activation programs have an impact on strengthening the feeling of social cohesion among the six informants. It appears that pieces of evidence indicate that the work activation programs have varying implications. In some way, the results conform with the goals of work activation programs. However, it seems that work activation programs contribute to a feeling of misrecognition, marginalization and even making the informants become outsiders from a group (lack of social capital thereof) instead of strengthening their feeling of social inclusion and improved social capital/social networks. There are also instances where informants describe downward mobility.

First, some informants were eager to learn the Norwegian language. For them, it is crucial to learn the Norwegian language fluently, especially if they have children. Children's growth and development usually start at home or with the person with whom the children have primary contact. Moreover, fluency in the Norwegian language is a requirement and essential in the Norwegian labor market. It seems that work activation programs do not consider the Norwegian language course to be an essential measure to increase the employability of the participants. Moreover, the cost of Norwegian language courses is prohibitive. Some informants cannot afford to cover this cost themselves. Some informants

cannot participate in the language course because of the constraints of childcare and family responsibilities. Implementing such measures would be useful if the Norwegian language course is offered, and which is readily available and suitable to the situations of the participants.

Second, the work activation programs should be principally based on "Nerissa's" needs and not of the immigrants. They should be individually customized to the needs of each participant. Nevertheless, the measure did not consider the situation and needs of the informant as a single parent who has minimal social networks. She needs a job which is flexible and which she can do if the children are not around with her. The measure should be aimed at the needs and situations of the participants appropriately. In so doing, it would be more useful because everyone has different needs. Appropriate measures can lead to better employment outcomes.

Third, the informants participated in the measures without meeting their needs and without regular employment afterward. They became long-term users of the measures without meeting the challenges of the labor market. Therefore, there is a need to acknowledge former education, careers, professional skills, and credentials in order to increase employability. This capital should be taken into consideration and use could be made of it. Hence, the measure should reduce the challenges during the hiring process. It should raise awareness of being open to giving employment opportunities to these informants. Despite some weaknesses in these informants, they have the skills, qualifications, competencies that would be valuable to a company. However, it needs to be further developed and improved. It could be enhanced through regular employment or educational offers based on former education, careers, professional skills and credentials of the participants.

Based on the pieces of evidence, I therefore, argue that the six informants I spoke with described low integration and social cohesion within the Norwegian labor market and in society. Papademetriou and his colleagues claimed that downward mobility is primarily related to four factors: language barriers, differences in educational attainment, unrecognized credentials and problems which are connected to social networks and recruitment channels (Papademetriou, Somerville and Sumption 2009, 2). Social cohesion is

“not an end but a constant shifting equilibrium and is something to be strived, nurtured, improved, and adapted” (Jenson 2010, 4, 7).

#### **6.4 Policy implications**

As I have learned from this thesis, the informants are concerned with how to become fluent in the Norwegian language, how to establish social capital/social networks, how to find decent and high-paid employment, how to improve their situations and their family, and how to integrate into Norwegian society. A possible policy implication might be to improve the quality of work activation programs, that are more tailored to the needs, situations, background, and qualifications of the participants. Another policy implication might be a focus on providing an intensive Norwegian language course which should not cost anything, and accessible to everyone who needs this measure, as fluency in a Norwegian language course is crucial in finding employment and access to higher education. The last implication of the findings of this thesis is that former education, careers, professional skills, and credentials should be taken into consideration when hiring workers with immigrant backgrounds. Qualifications and skills can be learned, and improved, while being employed.

#### **6.5 Research limitations**

This thesis is based on the perspectives of the six informants; they are the authors of the stories presented here. It gives new knowledge and understanding about the informants' experiences concerning their daily lives in Norway, and the findings are essential for Norwegian policymakers and in society. However, the information from the thesis cannot be generalized because of the limited study size. Likewise, there are communication difficulties during the research process which might influence the findings. Lastly, it was an advantage that I have an immigrant background because I was able to familiarize and understand the informants' situations; however, the disadvantage is that my background might have impacted on my findings. Having additional or related topics about this thesis would therefore be of potential interest.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1 – Invitation to Participate in Master Thesis and Consent of Letter

#### Invitation to participate in a master thesis

#### “Asian immigrant women integration into the labor market through the Work Activation Program”

##### Background and purpose

The purpose of this study is to explore the lives of Asian immigrant women and how the Work Activation Program impacted them, socially and economically. Through interviews with former participants/participants in the Work Activation Program, I would be able to collect the experiences of Asian immigrant women struggling with finding work and how they become integrated into Norwegian society. I would love to hear about your experiences.

The project is a master's degree at Oslo University College and Akershus. I want to interview women participants of the Work Activation Program, who are above the age of 25 and have been living in Norway 5 years or more, therefore ask you to participate in the project.

##### How is the interview going?

I hope you can talk to me for up to one and a half hours about your experience. The interview can be in your home, or if you prefer, somewhere else.

If you are willing to participate in the study, I would like to learn more about:

- Things that you like about in your life and things that are less pleased with and want to change.
- What is like living in Norway and the everyday challenges you are facing with, particularly the challenges you are experiencing in finding work.
- Your experiences and opinions about the Work Activation Program.
- Your opinions about what could be done to support better you and others experiencing some life challenges.

### **Participation, data security, and reporting**

I ask for permission to record the interview on audio tapes. All information you share with me will be kept confidential. When I write my report from the research, I will not provide a name or personal information about you or where you live. All collected data will be anonymized at project completion. That is, personal information will not be retained. The estimated end date of the project is 15.05.2019.

You will have the opportunity to ask questions or clarify information both before the interview begins and at any time during the interview. You can withdraw from the research at any time without having to explain why you withdraw.

If you wish to wish to attend and have questions regarding the study, please contact the master student Metuselah Henriksen on telephone number +47 93 99 42 75, or supervisor Erika Gubrium on the telephone number +47 67 23 81 23.

### **CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STUDY**

I have received both written and verbal information about the study and I am willing to participate.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Place:~ \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix 2 – Interview Guide

### Interview Guide

Research purpose: This thesis aims to explore the lives of Asian Immigrant women and how the Work Activation Program impacted them. I am interested to hear about your everyday lives, your experiences and your thoughts about your life.

Question of consent.

#### **KEEP <ON>, THEN <RECORD>**

#### **Overview of the situation**

- An overview of where they grew up and how long they lived in the area.
- An overview of their situation before they came to Norway and their current situation and how long it has been.
- Some recent changes that have occurred in the situation and what has led to these changes (for example: change in the employment situation, change in family composition, recent health situation)

#### **Challenges**

- What seems to be the most difficult in their current situation and what they do to cope with these difficulties (employment/finding job/integration in society)
- Ways the problematic situation has influenced how they feel themselves or their overall view of life
- Ideas about things they want to do but are unable to do and why (vacation, education, material good, other experiences, exercise, Etc.

#### **Opportunities for support**

- Social networking/private support:
- What kind of contact do you have with those living in the neighborhood/friends/colleagues/etc.
- To what extent they feel that their neighbors/peers acknowledge the difficulties they face

- In what degree, they feel that their partner/ children/ family members acknowledge the difficulties they face
- Experience to seek support/assistance (economic/social) from informal sources (from friends/family/children)
- Public financial support/programs/policies:
  - What kind of benefits/pensions they are eligible for and what they receive.
  - Experiences with access to security/benefits/pensions
- **Work Activation Program**
  - How did they get in touch with the Work Activation Program (NAV)
  - How well did they know about the Work Activation Program package of NAV before they started?
  - What kind of measures (training/seminars) have they been in the Work Activation Program?
  - What do they think about the training, seminars, and courses of Work Activation Program? Did it help them achieve their goals?
  - Is the Work Activation Program any useful value for them?
  - Do they feel that the program is suitable to them or do they think that another program is more suitable to them?
  - Did it help them find a job? Did they get help with what they needed help?
  - Ways, the Work Activation Program, has affected them, their children/family?
  - To what extent does the Work Activation Program package help lift their social and economic situation?

#### **View of the Work Activation Program and the future**

- Did they feel at home in Norway?
- Has their life changed? (Socially/economically)
- Do they feel strengthened/weakened or equal/integrated into the labor market and society after having participated in the Work Activation Program?
- Their thoughts on how their future will look the next months/year
- How do they look at the opportunities to influence their future?

- Do they feel that they have come closer to their goal after taking part in the Work Activation Program
- Lastly - Do they have any suggestions for how the Work Activation Program could be better?

**(PAUSE) IF NECESSARY**

**Short (background) questions**

1. Birthdate and place
2. Age
3. Civil status:
  - a. Single
  - b. Partner
  - c. Married
4. Number of children (if actual)
5. What do you do before you came to Norway
  - a. Work experience
  - b. Education
6. How long have you been living in Norway?
7. How many times did you transfer residence?
8. Other things you want to tell more about yourself

Do you have questions about something we've talked about?

Is there something you want to add?

Thank you for the interview, very exciting to listen to your experience! It is significant to me to write about what experiences people have within the Work Activation Program.

**(Stop) then move (Hold) button to off!**