

**PARTICIPATION OF IMMIGRANT GIRLS IN DECISION-
MAKING PROCESSES IN EASTERN HELSINKI**

The case of Ruuti

Electa Akinyi Kamara

Thesis, Spring 2018

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

Diak, Helsinki

Degree Programme in Social Services

Bachelor of Social Services

ABSTRACT

Kamara, Electa Akinyi. Participation of immigrant girls in decision making processes in Eastern Helsinki. The case of Ruuti. Helsinki, Spring 2018. 43 p., 6 appendices. Diaconia University of Applied Sciences, Degree Programme in Social Services – Focus in community development. Bachelor of Social Services.

The study investigates the participation of immigrant girls 13 – 17 years–old’s in decision making processes in Eastern Helsinki, the case of Ruuti. The study was done in collaboration with Helsingin Nuorten Naisten Kristillinen Yhdistys - Debora project. Specifically, the study wanted to answer questions regarding how they participated, at what levels and what factors hindered or supported their participation. The study reviewed previous literature on gender and children participation. Qualitative methods were used for data collection and analysis. Telephone interviews and personal interviews were conducted to nine (9) out of ten (10) respondents.

The study gives insight on the participation of immigrant girls, and the levels at which they participate in Ruuti. The few who participate in Ruuti have the opportunity to participate meaningfully where they are able to engage directly with decision makers or indirectly through representation. Other girls participated at the assigned but informed and the consulted and informed levels. They took part in already planned activities but were reluctant to participate in the initial phases.

There is very low participation of immigrant girls in Ruuti. Moreover, issues of lack of sufficient information, apathy and socialization hinder their participation while on the other hand there is great need for role models and improve work with families. Meaningful participation leads to greater citizen engagement and fosters cohesion.

Keywords: Community development; Gender equality; Partnership; Empowerment; Immigration.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	1
Contents	2
1 introduction	4
1.2 Significance of the Study.....	6
1.3 Problem statement	7
1.4 Purpose of study	9
2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS	11
2.1 Community development.....	11
2.2 Gender equality	11
2.3 Partnership	12
2.4 Empowerment.....	13
2.5 Immigration	13
4 PARTICIPATION	15
4.1 Children’s participation.....	16
4.3 Ruuti	20
5 METHODOLOGY	22
5.1 Research methods and process	22
5.2 Data collection	22
5.3 Thesis process	23
5.5 Limitations of the research	25
5.6 Ethics of research	25
5.8 Data Analysis.....	26
6 Findings.....	27
6.1 Immigrant girls' participation in Ruuti	27
6.2 Levels of participation	28
6.3 Challenges to participation	30
6.4 Factors promoting participation.....	31
6.5 Ruuti in Vuosaari	33
6.6 Helsinki City strategy 2017 – 2021.....	34

6 SUMMARIES OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION	35
7.2 Recommendations	38
7.3 Conclusion	39
REFERENCES	40
APPENDIX 1: Participant Information Leaflet	44
APPENDIX 2: Consent Form.....	46
APPENDIX 3: Interview schedule for Youth workers	47
APPENDIX 4: Interview schedule for girls 13 – 17-year old's	48
APPENDIX 5: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.....	49
APPENDIX 6: Helsinki City Strategy 2017 – 2021-.....	51

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explains the current situation in regards to immigrants living in eastern Helsinki and the significance of this study in relation to this group of people. The study investigates the participation of immigrant girls in decision making processes in Eastern Helsinki. This study is in line with the United Nations Entity on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UNwomen) goal of strengthening young women's leadership. Investing in women's leadership requires a lifecycle approach to strengthening and supporting girls' leadership, adolescent girls' leadership, young women's leadership, and women's leadership. We know that investing in young women's leadership will not only change the trajectory of their future, but that of their communities as well (UNWomen.)

There are several previous studies on the participation of women, youth and children but not much has been done on the participation of immigrant girls in decision making process in Helsinki given the existing platform for participation – Ruuti. Immigrant girls are vulnerable triple times due to their age, sex and ethnic background, this means that they have unique needs and there is a high possibilities of them not participating in decision making processes. The representation of immigrant girls in decision making is very limited due to the fact that adults hold the position of power and control over the children. Many adults do not listen to the children, and the situation is sometimes different between boys and girls. There is a great chance that boys will be given a break earlier in life towards their autonomy and independence than the girls. Depending on the cultural dynamics girls are considered weak and vulnerable hence the tendency of parents to be over protective of the adolescent girls.

1.1 Foreigners in Helsinki

Before considering the participation of immigrant girls in eastern Helsinki in Ruuti it is important to note what the statistics say about the distribution of immigrants living in these parts and what the future holds. At the beginning of 2016, as much as 28 per cent of the population with a foreign mother tongue in Helsinki lived in the Eastern Major

District, where more than every fifth resident spoke a language other than Finnish, Swedish or Sami as their mother tongue. More than 30 per cent of the population living in the sub-district level in Meri-Rastila, Kallahti, Kurkimäki and Itäkeskus had a foreign mother tongue (Statistics 2017, 14.) Eastern Helsinki is very special in this study because of the concentration of immigrant families living in this area. According to the urban facts (Statistics 2017, 9), the population with a foreign mother tongue has a younger age structure than Finnish-, Sami- and Swedish-speaking population. The share of under 16-year old's, 18 per cent, was somewhat higher among foreign-language speakers than in population with a national mother tongue (14 per cent.) Note that these numbers do not include asylum seekers who are waiting for decisions and other undocumented immigrants.

Consequently, by 2030, depending on the number of asylum seekers in the coming years, the number of population with a foreign mother tongue in Helsinki is estimated to grow to about 23 per cent of the total population. In 2030 every fourth child aged 0–15 years and more than every fourth person of working age would have a foreign mother tongue (Statistics 2017, 6.). In reference to the numbers portrayed by the statistics it is therefore right to project that the population of immigrants is expected to increase in the next few years thus the need to pay attention to this group of people who form a significant part of the population and will eventually shape and influence decision making in Helsinki in the near future. It is in this backdrop that this study done in collaboration with Helsingin Nuorten Naisten Kristillinen Yhdistys (HNNKY). - Debora project sought to investigate the participation of immigrant girls living in Eastern Helsinki in decision making processes with special focus on Ruuti.

Moving from one's home country to a new country is very stressful for many families. Many are separated from loved ones and are removed from their support network of relative's family and friends. Immigrants who are forced to leave their homes feel a sense of loss of place and even control of their own lives, they feel disoriented in this new place. Coupled with the new culture and language, the pressure to conform to the new way of life without losing their identity is very strong especially among adolescents. It is therefore important that their views and experiences are listened to and shared so that services and policies should address their issues. This can only be possible when they participate in these processes.

The active and meaningful participation of all residents of Helsinki in the decision-making processes will ensure that the needs of different groups will be addressed by sound policies and service provision. This will also act as a catalyst to integration by increasing the sense of belonging and promoting social cohesion and empowered communities

1.2 Significance of the Study

Professionals in social work and social services in Finland are involved in working with immigrants and their families. The past few years has seen the influx of refugees in the country as a result of the war in their home countries, this unexpected number has put a lot of pressure to social services which were already burdened due to the budget cuts. It is, therefore, important to initiate and strengthen programs and interventions that will promote integration and participation of vulnerable groups. This research will be a stepping stone in identifying best practices and also gaps that need to be filled. Respecting the rights and choices of the youth is one of the cornerstones of youth work which supports their self-realization but at the same time focus is on promoting positive attitudes.

Community work targets different interests and covers diverse groups of people including immigrant girls. Community work aims at harnessing community resources to solve community problems and also build the capacity of the community members to be able to plan and take action towards social change. Its goal is for a sustainable community with effective, efficient and accessible local services. In order to achieve this, the active and meaningful participation of every member of the community is crucial. This can be done by identifying the vulnerable groups, building their capacity to participate and bringing them on board for social action in this case the immigrant girls who are more disadvantaged. Immigrant girls are important stakeholders of any community they reside in. They are equally affected by policies and decisions made at political level hence their contributions are valid.

Undoubtedly, understanding the factors that affect the participation of immigrant girls will lead to initiation of targeted interventions. Programs will be able to use available resources and ensure the participation of all the vulnerable groups to avoid marginaliza-

tion and exclusion. Immigrant girls are a very vulnerable group who need special attention, their participation is very key in their integration in the communities they live in and also in maintaining social cohesion and promoting gender equality. Kabeer (2003) emphasizes on the need to pay more attention to women's role in the productive economy so as to reduce gender inequalities by giving a voice to the women hence increasing their power to influence change (Kabeer 2003, 209). Efforts toward gender equality are therefore vital in reducing their vulnerability, enhancing their participation in decision making processes and providing quality and gendered services to both men and women.

1.3 Problem statement

Young people's community participation is a complex issue which varies not only with a child's developing motivations and capacities, but also according to the particular family and cultural context (Hart 1992, 6). There are wide variations within and between different cultures but one common thing is that boys are more favored in many cultures than girls. The social differences between men and women are deeply rooted in every culture, and are learned. Majority of the people are born either male or female but are socialized to become men and women according to the expectations of their given communities, this refers the immigrant girls who came to Finland from their countries of origin. On the other hand, girls with immigrant background born in Finland can still be socialized differently, this notion is supported by Gimpel et al (2003, 8) that individuals of different ethnic backgrounds have different socialization experiences, even within the same general setting, is so well grounded in previous research that it hardly needs to be justified.

It is evident in volumes of previous work that certain attributes of a person's identity and personal history shape the likelihood that he or she will participate in politics (Gimpel et al 2003, 8). Many immigrant girls come from diverse religious and cultural background which value boys over girls. It is in this respect that boys are socialized differently from the girls in many with the boys prepared for more powerful roles which include leadership and decision making.

It is however, important not to overlook the fact that in most communities' men are associated with power and control over economic resources and are the key decision makers from household level through to the international level. The gender roles influence decision making, distribution of resources, and even service provision thus restricting women's contributions towards development further aggravating their unequal status in the society. There are tendencies in families that the adults overlook or ignore the children's capabilities especially girls in making decisions. This in the long run leads to the failure to nurture and teach the girls into becoming active citizens, they eventually fall short of the skills and experience needed in the process. This makes it difficult for them to compete fairly with their male counterparts who have honed and polished their skills over time through practice. The "gender gap" in opinions actually increases with increased political knowledge. This suggests that many women's lower levels of political knowledge may be preventing them from representing their own policy interests as well as they might wish to do (Tolleson-Rinehart and Jyl 2005, 20.) Many girls are expected to learn caring and household role from their mothers, they do not engage in political talks, thus limiting their knowledge of the political atmosphere.

Young immigrant girls face a lot of challenges which are associated to gender, age, identity and cultural issues which hinder them from realizing their rights and may lead to their exclusion from the mainstream society. This includes being exposed to a series of stressors that form part of the migration experience and acculturation process. These stressors have the potential of resulting in mental health problems and adjustment difficulties in the absence of protective factors and sources of support and resources (Esquivel et al 2010, 11.)

This is why it is important that their voice is heard and this can be achieved through their participation in the decisions being made. Adolescent immigrant girls might experience loneliness and lack a sense of belonging, not having much in common with her peers means that she will struggle to cope and adapt, discrimination which affects her self-esteem. They feel limited and powerless as a minority group which can sometimes be intimidating. Immigrant girls put a lot of effort for them to be accepted amongst their peers while at the same time struggling with conflicting and confusing norms and values from the new culture.

Participation by children in Finland is supported by law. However, according to a policy review on child and youth participation in Finland, the ‘formal’ structures ensure that child participation very much involves a ‘top-down’ approach, where activities are pre-planned, instead of a ‘bottom-up’ approach. Children themselves are not involved in the development of participation methods, and new methods are not sufficiently tried. There is a need for new instruments and tools to improve the participation of children and young people in all aspects of life and society (Council of Europe 2011, 7 – 8.)

Political systems throughout history have shown a drift towards extremes when populations are under political, economic or social pressure, and women’s rights should be used as a way of finding common ground, rather than as a political weapon. Democratization involves listening to a broad cross-section of society, rather than imposing and dictating policies (Al-Sabah 2013, 199 – 200.) A person who is well informed is empowered to participate in decision-making which is not the case with the majority of immigrant girls whether they are born in Finland or came from their home countries. In advancing gender equality, the participation and representation of women and girls in all decision-making processes and civic engagement is fundamental, hence Gimpel et al (2003, 8) reminds us that certain attributes of a person’s identity and personal history shape the likelihood that he or she will participate in politics and that they will not become interested in politics within a vacuum

One of the basic principles of immigrant inclusion and integration policy established by the Council of the European Union states that the participation of in the democratic process and the formulation of intergrating policies and measures, especially at the local level, supports their integration. The council of the European Union also emphasizes on the need promote the fundamental human rights of immigrants which include participation in decision making (Masten et al 2012, 23.)

1.4 Purpose of study

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the participation of immigrant girls in decision-making process in Eastern Helsinki. The study determines how immigrant girls

participate in decision making and the factors affecting their participation. Their participation is supported by international conventions of which Finland is a signatory and national laws in Finland.

According to Child welfare Act (No. 417/2007; amendments up to 1292/2013 included), on the involvement of the child: Chapter 4 section 20, the child's wishes and views must be ascertained and they must be taken into account in a way that is appropriate for the child's age and level of development. It also states that children of twelve years of age or more must be reserved an opportunity to express their views in a child welfare case concerning them. Section 21 allows a child to exercise his /her right to be heard.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989), supports the participation of children through various articles 12 – 15. State parties are charged with the responsibility of ensuring that children's rights are protected and promoted. This include their right to be able to form and express their views without any discrimination. State parties should also be able to provide an environment where their freedom of expression, conscience and thought are not violated. Children also have the right to seek and obtain information regardless of the frontiers and also allowed to associate and assemble. The voice of the children should be heard and their views taken into consideration.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989.) This research seeks to identify the trends for the participation of immigrant girls in Eastern Helsinki in the decisions being made at the city level in line with the UNCRC.

The research questions are as follows:

1. How and at what levels do immigrant girls participate in decision making in Ruuti?
2. What factors hinder/promote their participation in decision making processes?

2 DEFINITIONS OF KEY CONCEPTS

In this chapter key terms are defined and explained. This chapter also highlights the importance of participation of children in decision making processes and outlines the model used for young people's participation in Helsinki

2.1 Community development

This study is geared towards promoting social justice and equality which are the drivers of community development. The purpose of community development is to build resilient communities which foster equality, justice, social cohesion and respect for human rights. Community development is comprised of many actions, as well as actors who may not recognize the local impact of their choices (Johnson, et al 2015, xxxvii). It targets all the stakeholders who include the public and private sectors, the civil society and the members of the community to foster development by improving service delivery, policies and participation by all. The focus is on the vulnerable groups who are empowered so as to enable them to participate meaningfully in community action. Community development links grassroots' efforts to national synergy. Community development uses participatory methods in empowering communities through their groups and networks to take action and it uses collaborative methods like networking and partnerships. It promotes social justice, advocacy and participation. Therefore, community development means that bringing all on board, this includes immigrant girls by empowering them to be able to overcome their challenges and be positioned to effectively and meaningfully participate in community action.

2.2 Gender equality

The United Nations Sustainable development goal five aims at achieving gender equality and empowerment of women which is not only a fundamental human right, but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world. Providing women and

girls with equal access to education, health care, decent work, and representation in political and economic decision-making processes will fuel sustainable economies and benefit societies and humanity at large (United Nations.)

Gender equality can be defined as a situation where men and women enjoy the same status and have equal opportunities of enjoying their full human rights and are able to contribute positively to development. It plays a central role in the promoting democracy and human rights, hence the need for the full participation of women and girls in political decision-making processes. The social differences between men and women are deeply rooted in every culture, they are passed from one generation to the other. There are great gender differences, particularly the subordination of women and girls at all levels both in private and public spheres. Many immigrants come from patriarchal societies where men wield the power and control over resources and are the key decision makers from household level through to the national level. This thesis is important in shedding light on the participation of immigrant girls given the platform that has already been set for them to participate.

2.3 Partnership

Race and Bennett cites Thomson (2001) by defining partnership as the rights of service users to be seen as experts in their own lives hence the need for them to be involved in the planning, development and delivery of services and policies (Jones & Walker 2011, 164). It involves doing things with (rather than to or for) people. It has three levels: interpersonal interactions, multidisciplinary and user involvement. To bring about effective meaningful and long lasting positive changes it is essential that people work together in a spirit of partnership (Thompson 2011, 220). Partnerships increases information sharing between and reduces duplication of activities or programs. This is very important in building networks and coalitions which eventually leads to informing policies to ensure integrated and improved services. All State and non-state actors working with the youth and children in service delivery and policy formulation should be able to share information about this special group. Collaboration with other stakeholders who include the local communities to identify pool resources will lead to targeted initiatives which will play a

vital role in addressing the issues affecting specifically immigrant girls amongst other initiatives.

2.4 Empowerment

Empowerment is defined by Thompson (2011) as the recognition of power imbalances in human relationships and social and political structures and the right of service users to gain greater control in their own lives (Jones & Walker 2011, 164). It is the process of becoming stronger and being able to make informed decisions thereby taking control of one's life and claim for their rights from duty bearers. This can happen in various ways and at various levels, but they all have in common a commitment to supporting individuals, families, groups and communities in making their own decisions, solving their own problems and meeting their own needs as far as possible (Thompson 2011, 85.) Empowered individuals are able to negotiate and claim their rights, they have the ability to influence decisions and policies made at different levels. Immigrant girls face a variety of challenges which hinder them from participating in decision making processes. Empowerment gives them the ability to build their self-esteem, self-worth and also a sense of belonging which will then increase their chances of participation because they will be able to articulate their issues and engage effectively with decision makers and make their voice heard.

2.5 Immigration

According to the International Organization for Migration; immigration can be defined as a process by which non-nationals move into a country for the purpose of settlement (IOM). This movement of people can either be forced or voluntary. An immigrant girl can be defined in this context as a girl aged 13 – 17 years old whose one or both parents are not natives of Finland. Some of the girls interviewed were born in Finland while the others moved to Finland from their country of origin for various reasons. The study involves first and second generation girls residing in Eastern Helsinki. Many immigrants face discrimination and don't feel like they belong to the mainstream society homes and sometimes finds it challenging to adapt to the new country, language and culture while at

the same time trying not to lose their identity. The concept of participation especially for immigrant girls could be a new and strange thing.

4 PARTICIPATION

Participation can be defined as the involvement of people in decisions and issues affecting them. Participation ensures that a wide range of skills, ideas, and knowledge is brought on board and mostly linked to decision making. Participation by all which is a core value in community development means that the hidden voices and issues are heard, shared and brought out in the open for action geared towards change. Participation by young people means ensuring that they have a voice and the opportunity to have a positive impact on the ways decisions are made (Sapin 2009, 139). The level of participation depends on their confidence, knowledge, and skills. It is increasingly becoming recognized that that age like race and gender is a social division _ a significant factor in the allocation of power, status, life chances, and social roles and so on. A person's age will often be a factor that plays a part in shaping his or her social location and the responses of other social actors (Thompson 2011, 110.) All participation is not equal— encouraging citizens to contribute knowledge about how a policy will affect their community at the onset of a decision-making process is quite different from allowing citizens to respond to policies already determined (Simmons 2007, 6) According to Young as cited by Simmons, a policy or decision can only be considered just when “it has been arrived at by a public which has truly promoted the free expression of all needs and points of view. (Simmons 2007, 7)

Arguably, individuals participate in different stages and different levels because decision-making is a process. The levels at which they participate also determines their influence in the final decisions made. Participation promotes dignity and enhances the self-esteem of the people involved. It creates a sense of belonging. Provides new information, ideas, and skills which promotes innovation and contributes to sound, effective and efficient community solutions.

4.1 Children's participation

According to UNICEF 2003, child participation must be authentic and meaningful. It must start with children and young people themselves, on their own terms, within their own realities and in pursuit of their own visions, dreams, hopes and concerns. Most of all, authentic and meaningful child participation requires a radical shift in adult thinking and behavior – from an exclusionary to inclusionary approach to children and their capabilities (Percy-smith and Thomas 2010,33.) UNICEF has also set up principles to ensure children's meaningful participation which include:

Children must understand what the project or the process is about, what it is for and their role within it.

Power relations and decision making structures must be transparent

Children should be involved from the earliest possible stage of any initiative.

All children should be treated with equal respect regardless of their age, situation, ethnicity, abilities or other factors.

Ground rules should be established with all the children at the beginning.

Participation should be voluntary and children should be allowed to leave at any stage.

Children are entitled to respect for their views and experience.

(Lansdown 2001, 9 -10.)

In her article on 'Children's participation in citizenship and government', Austin (2010), states that fostering children's capacity to be active citizens includes supporting their participation in political processes at local, national and international levels. In so doing, children are able to identify their own concerns, find potential solutions, and engage in the development of legislation and policies that will affect their lives (Percy-Smith & Thomas, 2010. 245.)

The right to participation of immigrant girls is enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child; they have to be seen as active social actors who have the right to be heard in matters affecting them. Article 12 of the UNCRC is normally associated with fair hearing, its function being to give the child a voice and modestly to challenge the image of the child as a passive object of other people's decisions. It also states 'that the views of the child (must be) given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child (Smyth 2014, 98, 106.)

Children as active citizens also act as agents of change and can influence change if the adults don't interfere with their participation. It is during their participation that they are able to learn the process, develop leadership skills and become better decision makers as adults. Their views are very important and valid and should not be ignored. Immigrant children often have a conflict with their identity but participation helps them develop their self-esteem and promotes their sense of belonging

4.2 The ladder of participation

Arguably, individuals participate in different stages and different levels because decision-making is a process. The levels at which they participate also determines their influence in the final decisions made. Sherry Arnstein, (1969) described a "ladder of citizen participation" that showed participation ranging from high to low. (Arnstein 1969, 217). The ladders has eight rungs which are classified as nonparticipation, tokenism and citizen power as the highest levels of participation. Please see Figure 1. Ladder of citizen participation.

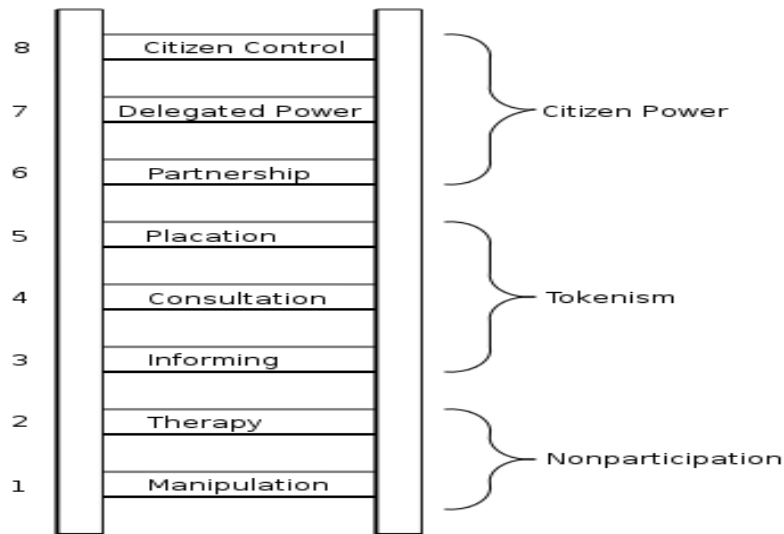


Figure 1. Ladder of citizen participation (Arnstein 1969)

Because participation involves different groups of people, it would be unrealistic to generalize participation. Arnstein's ladder gives the guideline on the different degrees of participation but has limitations which does not address different groups of people. She notes that each group encompasses a host of divergent points of view, significant cleavages, competing vested interests, and splintered subgroups (Arnstein 1969, 217). The ladders of citizen participation can be used as a framework to formulate and put into consideration the different needs of the different groups of people. It is in this regard that Hart (1992) came up with the ladder of children participation, please see Figure 2, below.

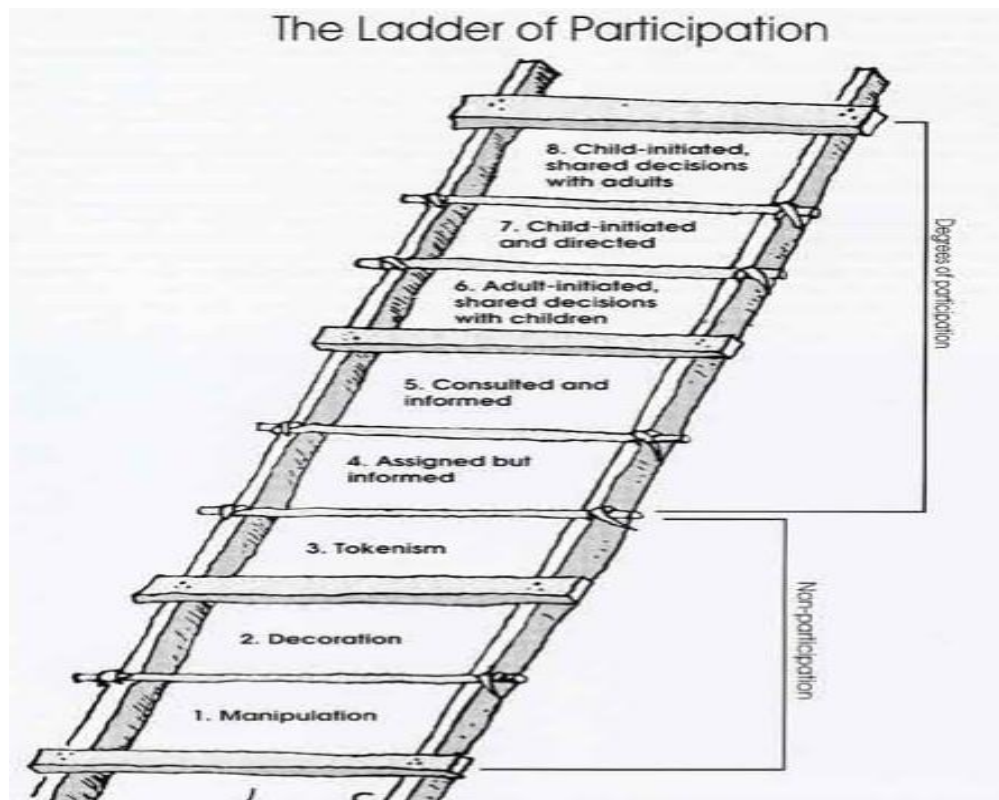


Figure 2. The ladder of participation (Hart 1992)

Hart (1992, 9) explains the participation of children in the different levels as shown in the ladder. He classifies the three lower rungs of manipulation, decoration and tokenism as non-participation. In these three lower levels, the children are the least listened to and are deemed incompetent to handle issues by adults. Adults use children just as a show to push for certain agenda claiming that it has been inspired by the children while at the same time their opinion of the children is sought or needed. In manipulation children can be used by adults to push for certain policies or issues even though they don't have any understanding of the matter. Decoration, which is the second rung on the ladder, refers to children being used to decorate an occasion through song and dances and in many other ways. This is different from manipulation because the adults don't pretend that the issue has been inspired by children. Tokenism on the other hand is used here to describe those instances in which children are apparently given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about the subject or the style of communicating it, and little or no opportunity to formulate their own opinions.

The other levels of participation are considered genuine but the degree of participation varies from one level to the other. Hart (1992, 11 - 14) continues to explain the four different rungs. In the fourth rung, that is, assigned but informed is where the children understand the intentions of the project and they play a meaningful role. Even though they volunteer for the project they understand who made the decisions for their participation and why. Consulted and informed – in the fifth rung the project is designed and run by adults but the children understand the process and their opinions are treated seriously. In the child initiated and directed level, the children can initiate something during their play and even carry out complex projects while the adults play the directing role. At the top of the ladder, child initiated, shared decisions with adults' level the children initiate and partake in the decision-making process together with adults. They are fully involved and the role of the adults is to guide and support them in the process and not dictate what should or should not happen.

4.3 Ruuti

Ruuti is a participation system for the young people of Helsinki which is primarily aimed at the young people of Helsinki between the ages of 13 – 17 was initiated in 2011. Ruuti consists of all the activities where young people or young people's groups aim to make Helsinki a better city. In many municipalities in Finland the youth are represented by youth councils which mainly consist of few youths who are already active in that municipality and therefore, might discourage vulnerable groups from participating. However, in Helsinki the teenagers are given a platform to practice their democratic rights through voting and representation in the Ruuti Core group. The young people also take part in the budgeting process and are encouraged to come up with initiatives that will be beneficial to the young people in Helsinki. Unlike youth councils, Ruuti ensures that participation of all the young people in Helsinki are free and not necessarily limited to the traditional channels of decision-making.

Ruuti as a system is based on supporting young people's groups. Ruuti also helps the decision-makers, officials and other agents in the city to listen to young people in matters concerning them. Every year, events are organized where decision-makers and young people, on their own terms, negotiate the issues chosen by the young people themselves.

The core group also acts as a link between the decision-makers and the young people of Helsinki. Furthermore, the core group takes the ideas developed in the Ruuti.net website and by the activity groups forward in cooperation with the decision-makers of the city of Helsinki.

The Ruuti core group consist of 20 elected young people drawn from Helsinki. The elections are held annually and young people aged 13 – 17 years – old participate in this process. The core group works together with the youth department of Helsinki City to ensure that Ruuti achieves its objective of improving the lives of the youth in Helsinki. They hold consultative meetings with different policy makers and stakeholder and make sure that their agenda is listened to and acted upon. This is a very good learning process for the young people in participatory budgeting and for they are able to prioritize important issues concerning them and have a sense of ownership of the city. In Ruutibudgetti the teenagers have a say how the money can be used for, they come up with initiatives and they are well able to how some of their initiatives were funded and how much was entailed. The administrators always consult the core group on what they think about some ideas. every young person has the opportunity to post their ideas on the website which are therefore forwarded to the decision makers.

5 METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes the data collection methods used, the process of data collection and analysis and the limitations of the research. The research reached nine (9) out of ten (10) participants who included youth workers and immigrant girls living in Eastern Helsinki. This number was targeted because of the depth of information that is received through the interviews. The youth workers perspective is very important in this matter because of their proximity and their role in mobilizing young people to participate

5.1 Research methods and process

The study targeted to reach ten respondents but was able to reach nine. Those interviewed included four youth workers and five girls with immigrant background. The study employed the review of literature on participation of women, youth and children. The study focused on immigrant girls as the target group and also youth workers who worked with immigrant girls in Eastern Helsinki. The study used qualitative methods in data collection which included key informant interviews and simple observation. Qualitative research has as its goal an understanding of the nature of phenomena, Participant observation is just one of a number of methods that are employed to achieve this kind of understanding. Other qualitative methods include structured and semi-structured interviewing, pure observation, and the collection and analysis of texts (DeWalt & DeWalt 2010, 13.) The interviews were carried out through telephone and also face to face. The study was flexible in that alternative methods were revised after facing challenges and also taking into consideration the views and suggestions of the respondents.

5.2 Data collection

The research intended to use focus group discussion as one of the methods of data collection; it was to involve a specifically selected group of five girls who participate in Debora project after school activities. This was not possible did not happen because of unwillingness to participate and withdrawal of respondents. Data was finally gathered

from nine (9) respondents was specifically from interviews which included two (2) telephone interviews and 7 personal interviews. Simple observation method was also used to gather relevant information. Non-verbal information was collected and was also used very useful in the analysis process. These different methods enabled the gathering of information from people of diverse backgrounds and varying perspectives. This was made possible by respondents who included girls and youth workers from different cultural and religious backgrounds.

During the interviews, it was easy to clarify and elaborate on the purpose of the research. The interviews were very flexible in nature whereby in-depth and probing questions were asked thus getting more information. The researcher was able to get more information. The questions asked were mainly open ended. The methods used made it easier to explore, and compare experiences on either participation or non-participation, thus providing insight into the problem making it possible to explain circumstances. The researcher took notes during the interviews and in some instances the interviews were recorded but with the permission from the respondents. All respondents were informed in advance of the purpose and goal for the study.

The study has some participatory aspects to it even though it cannot be considered wholly participatory. For instance, the girls were targeted and involved as active contributors to the findings of this study. The findings of this research will be shared to organizations of interest which include the collaborating organization (HNNKY) and Helsinki city among others. The study focuses on empowerment by emphasizing on participation of Immigrant girls in decision making processes.

5.3 Thesis process

The research process commenced in the spring of 2017. This is when an idea was conceived and research questions formulated which the study sought to answer. The research aimed at investigating the participation of immigrant girls in decision making processes in Eastern Helsinki. It is important to note that the language for the thesis was English even though Finnish was used by some respondent which was then translated to English with the help of an interpreter. In the figure below the research process progress is shown step by step.

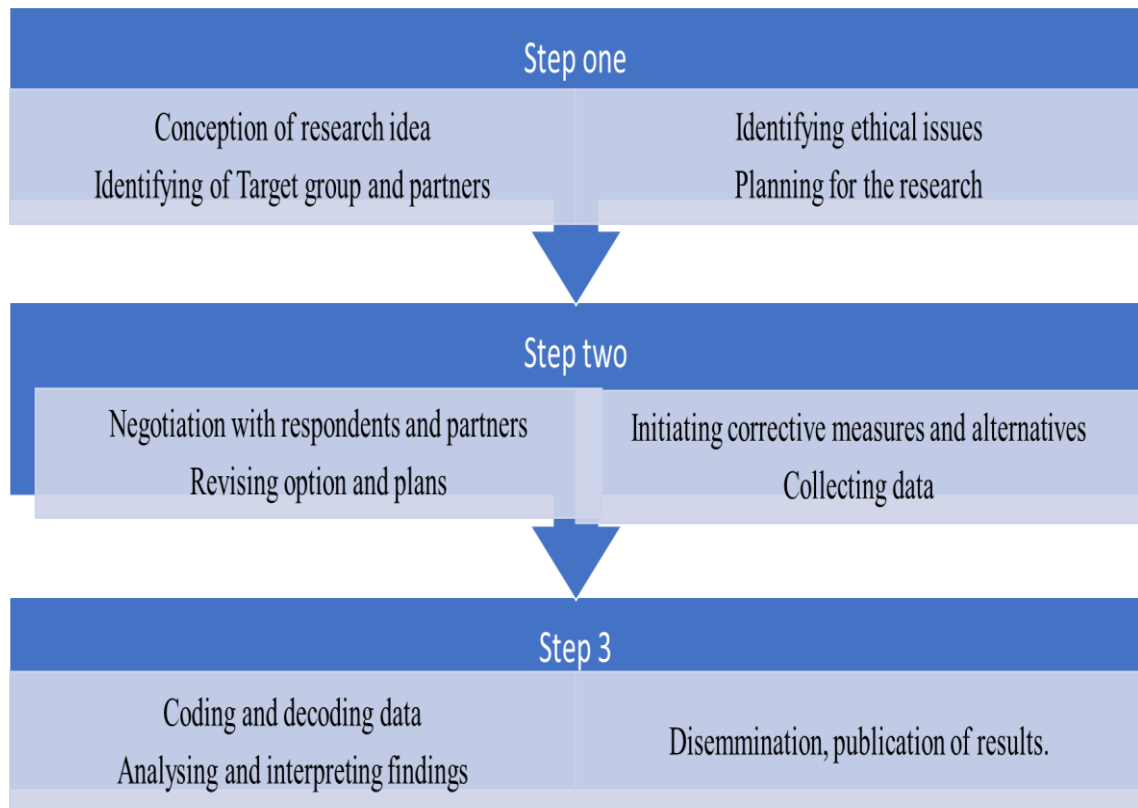


FIGURE 2: Thesis Process

5.4 Research design

This study used human judgment hence its reliability and validity are questionable. Reliability is the extent to which measurements are repeatable –when different persons perform the measurements, on different occasions, under different conditions, with supposedly alternative instruments which measure the same thing. Validity on the other hand is concerned with the meaningfulness of research components. When researchers measure behaviors, they are concerned with whether they are measuring what they intended to measure (Drost 2011, 105 & 114.) However, to ensure that the results of this study are consistent and genuine, I had to ensure that the study was able to measure what it was supposed to measure, and that the research questions have been answered.

During the design and structure, the study took into consideration all the steps required in conducting a scientific research and also the use of valid instruments in the data collection procedure to ensure that the results are credible.

5.5 Limitations of the research

The study had several challenges which included the lack of cooperation from some of the participants. Some of the girls were shy to participate in the interviews and even those willing to take part could not be able to do so because their parents did not complete the consent forms. Language proved to be problematic since many were not comfortable speaking in English. The language of the study could have scared some of the respondents away due to their inability to express themselves fully in English. To improve participation, it would have been better to enlist the use of an interpreter for the interview and even the negotiations with the respondents from the start. The target number could not be reached because some of the participants withdrew at the last moment. Many interviews could not take place at the allocated time due to one reason or the other. Some were postponed leading to the dragging of the data collection process taking longer than it was anticipated while in some cases the respondents failed to show up for the interviews.

5.6 Ethics of research

Ethical research involves getting informed consent of those you are going to interview, question, observe or take materials from and also involves reaching agreements about the uses of this data and how it will be reported and disseminated (Bell 2004, 39.)

Permission was sought from a senior staff member of the working life organization partnering in the research for access to the children. The parents/guardians were required to read the information leaflet, see Appendix 1 and sign the consent form see Appendix 2, were used to seek permission from the parents after negotiating consent with the children. The target group involved underage girls whose opinions and experiences are key to this study. In addition to the information leaflets, the negotiations included clarifying issues in the research which ensured that informed consent was given

The information received is treated confidentially and all the respondents are anonymous. Recordings and transcribed data were destroyed after use to safeguard the anonymity of

the respondents. The results of the research are published in a fair and correct manner after which it shall be disseminated to all interested parties involved in the study. Lastly the whole research process was supervised by qualified researchers.

5.8 Data Analysis

The data collected was analyzed by answering the research questions and also the identification of common patterns within the responses given through the interviews, and using the ladder of participation to determine how and at what levels they participate in decision making processes. Qualitative content analysis tends to be more subjective and less explicit about the processes by which interpretation of the target material occurs. The emphasis is on meaning rather than on quantification (Brewerton and Millward 2001, 155.) Recorded information from the interviews was transcribed and labelled after which each transcription read as a separate document. A total of fourteen pages was transcribed out of as a result of nine interviews conducted with each interview lasting between fifteen to thirty minutes. In the process of reading the documents relevant phrases, sentences and even concepts were coded. Interestingly new information was also labeled and used in interpreting of the results. The different themes were then compared and categorized into groups after which connections between them and the different rungs in the ladder of children's participation.

6 FINDINGS

In this chapter the results of the research are presented and interpreted. The study targeted to reach ten (10) respondent of which nine (9) were interviewed, they included four (4) youth workers and five (5) girls with immigrant background aged between 13 – 17 years. The youth workers were coded as Y1, Y2, Y3 and Y4 while the girls were coded YG1, YG2, YG3, YG4 and YG5. Please see interview schedules Appendices 3 and 4.

6.1 Immigrant girls' participation in Ruuti

Three (3) out of five (5) girls had heard about Ruuti because they had received letters inviting them to participate. While two (2) were not aware of Ruuti.

When asked if they participated in Ruuti, only one (1) out of five (5) girls participated in Ruuti while four (4) did not participate. This means that they do not vote, contend for position or even participate in activities planned in the youth houses.

I have heard about Ruuti, I have received their letter in the past three (3) years but I just do not participate. (YG1)

It was somewhat challenging for two (2) out of four (4) youth workers to say about the participation of immigrant girls.

It is difficult to say about their participation in Ruuti. (Y2)

I do not know much about Ruuti, so I do not know who participates or not.
(Y1)

6.2 Levels of participation

In Helsinki, Ruuti is itself a platform where immigrant girls together with other teenagers can be partakers in the processes of the decisions being made in Helsinki city. At the same time, they participate in activities aimed at empowering them to participate. This interpretation is not judgmental of initiatives targeting girls and young people, but just to help us think on what is genuine participation. Please see table below for levels of participation

Table 1. Levels of participation

Levels of participation	Explanation and responses
Child initiated shared decisions with adults	<p>The initiatives are made by young people are forwarded to Ruuti core group who then have consultations sessions with decision makers. Here they share decision making as equals with adults which gives them firsthand experience with the formalities of entailed decision making.</p> <p>If the young people have an idea they create an initiative and send to Ruuti and who then send it to the relevant authority. The core group works with the different departments in the Helsinki city who consult them about the initiatives to be taken. (Y4)</p> <p>In Ruuti budgetti the youth are able to see how their initiatives are being implemented. They learn about planning and prioritizing of needs and also how much money is used. This information can be accessed by all the young people. (YG4)</p>

Child initiated and directed	When the young people initiate and implement some activities in their local areas, the responsible youth workers are always there to offer support to them.
Adult initiate, shared decisions with children	The idea of Ruuti was probably an initiative of adults who are trying to promote young people participation. Meanwhile young people are using the platform to participate and engage with the decision makers.
Consulted and informed	<p>The girls are involved during the planning of activities and their ideas are put into consideration.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">There is lack of interest in planning. It like the girls are used to decisions being made for them. (Y2)</p>
Assigned but informed	On many occasions teenagers are asked to give ideas and also give feedback for activities which were already in the pipeline.
<p>Manipulation, Decoration and Tokenism</p> <p>(Non – participation)</p>	<p>In instances where teenagers only went to youth houses to participate in activities as users.</p> <p>Young people are expected to be participate in Ruuti when there is no prior preparation for them to do so making them ineffective of even campaigning or voting.</p>

6.3 Challenges to participation

Three (3) respondents Y1, Y3, Y4 and YG4 felt that parents do not trust their girls' capacity to let them participate in anything outside the home or school and are being overly protective of their children.

Ruuti organizes many activities like camps trips are organized many parents do not allow their girls to participate because they boys are also going. (Y4)

In the Ruuti page the pictures of those vying for positions and those that are eventually elected to the core group are displayed on the website and in public spaces. Some parents do not like that their children's photos will be on public display. (YG4)

Eight (8) out of nine (9) respondents agreed that many immigrant girls were not nurtured into decision making roles which were perceived as the responsibility of adults.

Some of them is like in the family they are not taught about participation. Even in schools where they have opportunities to participate, they do not participate in either students' councils or as support. They are always taught to do the basic things and nothing much. (Y2)

Immigrant girls are not only discriminated based on gender but also their age and the fact that they are not considered natives of this country even though some of them were born here still they feel like outsiders. Four (4) out of five (5) girls felt that they stand no chance in being elected even if they were interested.

Why should I participate? It is a Finnish affair, even if I vie for a position they will not vote for me so why should I trouble myself with things that do not concern me. (YG2)

Language skills and lack of sufficient information about Ruuti and its benefits is also a challenge as noted by seven (7) out of nine (9) respondents.

My parents do not like reading letters written in Finnish, I sometimes read it for them. They are always so tired from working long hours and have no time for anything more other than paying bills and fending for our family. (YG3)

Ruuti is like a hard concept for some girls to understand, it involves so much and sometimes the girls think that they are being tricked into doing something bad. Nobody trusts the politicians and it is the same for the girls. (Y3)

Seven (7) out of nine (9) respondents mentioned issues related to low self-esteem, lack of role models and apathy contributed to the non-participation of immigrant girls in decision making processes

It is always adults talking to us about Ruuti, we always have adults tell us things everyday of our lives until we have lost interest. Why cannot those young people who participate in Ruuti come to schools and speak to us about it? Maybe it can be interesting. (YG3)

It takes courage to participate in Ruuti. (YG4)

We have a passive generation of young people who think that they cannot influence anything. They always thinking that someone somewhere will always take care of things. (Y4)

6.4 Factors promoting participation

All the nine (9) respondents agreed that parents play an important role in influencing the participation of girls. Family members who are active in participating in community activities motivate and act as role models for the girls.

Some of the girls who participate have some models from home where their parents participate in voting and other community processes. (Y1)

There are examples of girls whose mothers are very active in their respective communities and the girls are also active in their participation. (Y2)

My parents are not involved and neither do they vote nor participate in any political processes, why should I participate? (YG1)

My father was an active member of the community, I saw him participate and it motivated me to participate. I was in the student council and also

acted as a support student. My father encouraged and pushed me to participate. Girls need someone to support and push them to participate. (Y2)

Many immigrant girls focus on academic excellence and their path is very clear before them about where she is going therefore they do not see the need to participate in any other thing. (Y2)

Talking to parents always helped because they need reassurance that the youth worker will take care of their children, it is all about building trust. (Y4)

Six (6) out of Nine (9) respondents mentioned that friends play an important role in influencing their peers to participate in Ruuti.

I participate in Ruuti because my friend was here and I asked her about the advantages and benefits of participating. (YG4)

Five (5) out of nine (9) of the respondents noted that immigrant girls like to identify with their role models who inspire them to participate.

When she I saw one girl with a hijab in Ruuti core group I saw myself and was motivated to participate.

I have not seen anyone looking like me in any of the important positions, how do people like me fit in there? (YG5)

We need more role models for the girls. (Y2)

The youth workers' strategies and working methods in their local areas affect their effectiveness in reaching out to the young people, this was mentioned by five (5) out of nine (9) respondents.

Face to face discussions with the youth workers and their support in the Ruuti process was vital in ensuring my participation. (YG4)

We have personal contact with the young people, we visit schools to speak about Ruuti and have a good rapport with the young people in our local area. (Y3)

6.5 Ruuti in Vuosaari

As part of the findings from the research, participation of immigrant girls and other young people in Ruuti, Vuosaari commanded a great presence. This a story about Vuosaari area as gathered from the interviews conducted. Vuosaari nuorisotyön yksikkö is made up of Kallahti and Merirastila and one model house. There is also a special teaching group called Jopo working in schools by assisting a group of teenagers that have difficulty in learning while at the same time participating in different working places and learning about different jobs.

Mostly it is the boys who usually use the youth houses compared to the girls. Specific activities are held for the girls like have specific activity for the girls like girls' night then more girls will participate because it is girls only affair. Small group activities increased the possibility of girls participating due to the large number of girls attending compared to other events when it's a mixed group. In addition, there is a girl's room set aside for the girls who mostly like to be in their own room.

The youth workers work as a team in their local area in strategizing and planning how to mobilize young people to participate and also sharing information. The youth workers cultivate personal contact with the youth and their families in their local area. They parents are also involved in some activities in the youth centers. Cultural sensitivity and supporting with language challenges faced by immigrant girls and their parents, the youth workers go an extra mile to ensure that they are fully understood thus building trust amongst the girls and their parents.

A lot is done by the youth workers who mobilize the youth to participate in Ruuti. Working with schools in one of the ways they use to reach out to the young people. They engage the young people directly in schools and sometimes through their teachers. Even though Ruuti informs about the voting process through its webpages, the youth workers distribute fliers and use their social media platform to share the information and mobilize for participation in Ruuti. A majority of the young people are in schools making it a key player in mobilization and creating awareness about Ruuti. Support is given to the youth who want to participate in the voting process.

In Vuosaari there are members the core group who include the only two girls who have immigrant background amongst others. Vuosaari has the highest voting rate compared to the other parts of Helsinki. The Vuosaari region had 13 candidates out of 75 in the whole of Helsinki meaning that every sixth person came from Vuosaari. In the just concluded Ruuti core group elections there was only one girl with immigrant background elected and she hails from Vuosaari. During my time at Debora, the issue of Ruuti was discussed where the girls did not have any idea about it but after which one of them was interested and vied as a candidate.

6.6 Helsinki City strategy 2017 – 2021

It was noted that the new city strategy, see Appendix 6, will affect Ruuti positively because it emphasizes on strengthening youth empowerment and participation. The strategy aims at strengthening partnerships with relevant stakeholders to launch an extensive and comprehensive project to find systemic solutions to the challenge of disaffected youth. The project will especially look at exclusion across generations, and on that basis, introduce new ways of breaking the cycle of exclusion (Helsinki city)

Furthermore, the strategy will strengthen Ruuti because it aims at ensuring that young people can be proud of Helsinki as their home and feel a sense of belonging by being able to influence decisions made at the city level. By providing targeted services the city will reach out and address issues affecting vulnerable groups who include immigrant girls by empowering and building their capacity to participate in civic engagement.

6 SUMMARIES OF FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter discusses the summary of findings presented in the previous chapter, recommendations and conclusions. Even though some of the girls failed to see the importance of participation in decision making and how it has an impact on their lives, it was interesting to hear them express their opinions and reiterating that they would like to see more women participate in politics.

7.1 Discussion

Annually, young people between the age 13 – 17 living in Helsinki receive an invitation letter to participate in Ruuti. Despite the fact that majority of the girls do not participate, it is a major step of informing them about Ruuti and inviting them to participate. According to the ladder of children's participation by Hart 1992, as shown in Figure 1, many immigrant girls participate in the assigned but informed and the consulted and informed levels as explained in Table 1. For the girls who gets a chance to participate in the voting process and those who eventually get elected are participating at a higher level which means that they become part of the decisions being made either directly or by representation.

The three lower rungs as shown in Figure 1 include manipulation, decoration and tokenism which are regarded as non-participation. This is evidenced by the fact that majority of the immigrant girls do not even read the letters sent to them from Ruuti and are not guided on what is expected of them concerning their participation. They lack the right information which might be very important in rousing their interest in participating. Even though all young people targeted received these letters, the number of immigrant girls participating is still very low. It was also noted with concern that the problem to participation is not unique to immigrant girls as it was acknowledged by some of the youth workers that it is a challenge with this age group and with the advent of information and technology many prefer socializing online rather than using traditional methods. There is amongst this group of people who view decision-making as a difficult process and that is in the domain of adults and none of their business.

Information about participation in Ruuti is available in youth centers all over Helsinki, most immigrant girls do not use the services of youth houses which means that they will not have the opportunity to get the sufficient information about the possibility of them participating in Ruuti. The youth houses are frequented mostly by boys and many immigrant girls shy away from this place due to religious, cultural or even self-esteem issues. Given the amount of information available in these centers, the tricky part is how many young people actually get this information. Schools was noted as an avenue where the youth workers and core group members can participate more often in school events and reach out to more parents and teenagers.

Friends play an important role in participation and also parents' attitude towards participation impacts greatly on their children's perception of the same. It was noted that there is a sense of belonging whereby those who participated only did so after being influenced with their friends. Teenagers are greatly influenced by their peers, thereby going to places their friends frequent. Being a teenager is a very confusing time in the lives of the girls, and they are in need of role models, mentors and coaches to support them during this time and be an example to them.

Information technology should be maximized to increase awareness on Ruuti. Teenagers all over Helsinki have access to internet, social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat are mostly used by teenagers. It is therefore imperative that the youth workers ensure that all the youth in their area get relevant information by using effective strategies and methods that are appealing to the teenagers to mobilize create awareness about the benefits of civic engagement

Planning is an important stage in decision making, immigrant girls participated well in activities organized for them but the majority were reluctant to plan. In the Ruuti core group the young people engage directly with decision makers of Helsinki and share decision making with adults. This is the highest level of participation but only few immigrant girls participate. Second highest is the adult initiated shared decisions with children level please see Figure 1 where those that participate in the voting process are also making their voices heard by choosing those who will represent them. A majority of the young people in Ruuti participate in organized activities and in the voting process, in order to

bring more immigrant girls on board, attitudes and behaviors towards participation needs to be addressed through education and empowerment programs to build their self-esteem. It was interesting to hear the different perspectives of the youth workers had Finnish background and those who had immigrant background. Some of the respondent understood the implications of the cultural aspect on the girls' participation while others generalized the issue of non-participation not knowing that they might be leaving out important pointers to the problem. Finally, power is key in participation, it is therefore important to ask ourselves the question, what can we do to give more power to the immigrant girls so as to promote their participation?

This issue of participation of women in decision making is very vital in any context. In Finland there is a lot of progress when it comes to their participation. The level playing ground is fair for women in Finland even though there is still challenges with the involvement of immigrant women. In the last municipal elections, a majority of immigrant women who were eligible to vote did not participate because of apathy. This is a really worrying trend because immigrant girls look up to adults as an example and their parents have a bigger influence in their attitudes and behaviors. It is therefore important to tackle the problem of participation of women from the onset when they are still being socialized into their roles by targeting girls with relevant initiatives that will address the underlying factors behind non – participation. The Finnish children are expected and taught to be independent earlier in life and are involved in making decision which is not the case with other families because of cultural and religious beliefs which affect their socialization into adult roles. As one African adage states it clearly that one can only fold or bend fish while it is still fresh, because when it is dry, then it becomes difficult to fold, it will break. Norms, values and beliefs are still being taught to the girls and by the time they are grown women it is deeply rooted and have formed opinions and therefore, difficult to change. According to my previous experience working with women and girls, I noted that girls who are nurtured into decision making and leadership roles at an earlier age improves their chances of making informed decisions about their lives and helps break the cycle of non-participation as they grow into adult women.

7.2 Recommendations

Interventions targeting teenage girls and their families should be initiated to enhancing their participation will play a great role in motivating the girls and cultivating a sense of belonging where families will support girls' participation. There is need to develop new strategies of reaching the girls and especially their families.

The role of NGOs and civil society in Ruuti working with immigrant girls should be broadened. Ruuti should work with all youth organizations in Helsinki to increase awareness of their activities and their presence. Youth organizations should be charged with the responsibility of mobilizing and empowering youth to participate in Ruuti all year round.

It is important for youth organizations to form network and build coalitions with like-minded actors for information sharing, referrals and avoid duplication of activities by complimenting each other's activities and addressing the gaps in interventions. Partnerships with other relevant stakeholders and actors is important in pooling of resources towards addressing issues affecting teenage girls and also ensuring smooth referrals.

Empower Immigrant girls to deal with issues of self-esteem. Adults need to realize participation is something for everyone and feeling empowered is a very good feeling. Teachers, and other people working with the youth should realize the importance of their influence. Increase engagement of schools and participating in school events. Ruuti can use this opportunity to reach parents and teenagers with information about its activities

There is need to create new systems and new ways of youth participating other than the voting system which is old fashioned. Young people should be allowed to initiate ways that they want to participate. Improvement of information technology by employing more experts. The use of social media in marketing and mobilizing for Ruuti will enhance participation of immigrant girls since most of them are always online.

Youth organizations should work with more immigrant women in order to appeal and reach out to the girls. Immigrant women, acting as role models should be at the forefront

in this campaign and in engaging the girls. Mentorship and coaching programs for immigrant girls should be initiated. Former or current core group leaders should be charged with the responsibility of reaching other youths by organizing school activities in their areas where they can be able to share their experiences and even campaign. Young people need to hear from their peers who are participating in Ruuti. The concept Ruuti should be used more often and advertise it more so that the young people can be able to associate with it and understand what it entails.

7.3 Conclusion

Participation of women in Finland in decision making processes is way ahead of many countries in the world. There are policies supporting the same put in place but the participation of immigrant women is still wanting due to apathy and lack of information on the benefits of participating. To empower future women there is need to address this issue of participation with the girls during this important stage their lives when they are being socialized into roles. Targeted interventions tailor-made for special groups will be able to address unique needs affecting immigrant girls. Generalization might lead to some of the issues unaddressed hence leading to exclusion of certain groups. Political decisions affect all of us, hence the need to participate in processes that will influence these important decisions.

Lastly, immigrant girl's participation in decision making processes is vital in contributing to the realization of fundamental universal human rights, it also plays an important role in their integration into the mainstream society and in promoting cohesion and stability which is important in any progressive society. This thesis will shed more light on the issues affecting the participation of this special group in decision making processes and also learn from best practices to improve future programming and prevent exclusion. Maybe it is time to rethink participation, Can access be qualified as participation?

REFERENCES

- A Council of Europe Policy Review, 2011. Child and Youth Participation in Finland. Council of Europe. F-67075 Strasbourg Cedex. <https://rm.coe.int/coerm-publiccommonsearchservices/displaydctmcontent?documentid=090000168046c47e> accessed on 22.4.2017
- Al-Sabah, M. and Tarius I, B. 2013. Edited. Gender and politics in Kuwait. Proquest eBook central, created from Diak on 2017-04-13
- Arnstein S. 1969. AIP Journal. [www.historyofsocialwork.org/1969_ENG_Ladderofparticipation/1969, % 20Arnstein, % 20ladder % 20of % 20participation, % 20original % 20text % 20OCR % 20C.pdf](http://www.historyofsocialwork.org/1969_ENG_Ladderofparticipation/1969,%20Arnstein,%20ladder%20of%20participation,%20original%20text%20OCR%20C.pdf). Accessed on 29.01.2018
- Bell J. 2004. Doing your Research Project: A guide for first-time researchers in education and social science, 3rd Edition. Open University Press, McGraw-Hill Education, McGraw-Hill House, Shoppenhangers Road Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 2QL United Kingdom.
- Brewerton, P. M. and Millward I. 2001. Organizational Research Methods: A Guide for Students and Researchers, Sage Publications, Proquest Ebook Central. Created from Diak on 2017-09-16
- Dewalt, K. M. and Dewalt B.R. 2010. Edited. Participant Observation. Altamira Press. Proquest Ebook Central, Created from Diak on 2017-04-22
- Drost, E. 2011. Validity and Reliability in Social Science Research. Education Research and Perspectives. 38. 105-124. California State University, Los Angeles. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/261473819_Validity_and_Reliability_in_Social_Science_Research [accessed Jan 08 2018].
- Esquivel, Giselle B., et al. 2010. Culturally Sensitive Narrative Interventions for Immigrant Children and Adolescents, UPA. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/diak/detail.action?docID=616412>. Created from Diak on 2018-01-28
- Gimpel, James G., et al. 2003. Cultivating Democracy: Civic Environments and Political Socialization in America, Brookings Institution Press. ProQuest Ebook

Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/diak/detail.action?docID=3004390>.

Created from Diak on 2018-01-26

Hart R. 1992. Children's Participation: from Tokenism to Citizenship. UNICEF International Child Development Center, Spedale Degli Innocenti Florence, Italy
https://www.unicef-irc.org/publications/pdf/childrens_participation.pdf.

Accessed on 16.9.2017

Horschelmann K. and Van Blerk I. 2012. Children, Youth and the City. Routledge 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon Xx14 4rn.

International Organization for Migration, n.d. Key migration terms.
<https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms#immigration> accessed on

30.10.2017.

Johnson, Michael P., et al. Decision Science Housing and Community Development: Localized and Evidence-Based Responses to Distressed Housing and Blighted Communities, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2015. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/diak/detail.action?docID=4040279>

Created from Diak on 2017-12-31

Jones P. and Walker G. 2011. Children's Rights in Practice Edited. Sage Publications Limited. 1 Oliver's Yard, 55 City Road Londoney1 1SP.

Kabeer N. 2003. Gender Mainstreaming in Poverty Eradication and the Millennium Development Goals: A Handbook for Policy Makers and Stakeholders. Ottawa, Ca: IDRC. Proquest Ebrary. Web. 30 .01.2017.

Lansdown G. 2001. Promoting children's participation in democratic decision-making. UNICEF Innocenti Research Center, Florence, Italy

Masten, A.S., et al. 2012. Edited. Realizing the potential of immigrant youth. Cambridge University Press.32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013 – 2473, USA

- Michele S. W. 2007. *Participation and Power: Civic Discourse in Environmental Policy Decisions*, State University of New York Press. Proquest Ebook Central, Created from Diak on 2017-10-04
- Ministry of Social Affairs and Health. Child Welfare Act (no. 417/2007; Amendments up to 1292/2013 included) Finland <http://www.finlex.fi/en/laki/kaanokset/2007/en20070417.pdf> accessed 23.4.2017
- Percy-Smith B. and Thomas N. 2010. Edited. *Handbook of Children and Young People's Participation: Perspectives from theory and practice*. Routledge. 2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon, Ox14 4rM
- Sapin K. 2009. *Essential Skills for Youth Work Practice*. Sage Publications. London
- Statistics 2017: 2. Population with foreign background in Helsinki 2016. Helsinki City Urban Facts. https://www.hel.fi/hel2/tietokeskus/julkaisut/pdf/17_01_16_Tilastoja_2_Hiekkavuo.pdf Accessed on 19.11.2017
- The Most Functional City in the World: Helsinki City Strategy 2017–2021. City of Helsinki. <https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/strategy/strategy/city-strategy/#luku1> Accessed on 06.01.2018
- Thomas P. 2011. *Youth, Multiculturalism and Community Cohesion*. Palgrave Macmillan Hampshire United Kingdom.
- Thompson N. 2011. *Promoting Equality: Working with Diversity and Difference*. Third Edition. Palgrave Macmillan Hampshire RG 21 6XS.
- Tisdall K, Davis J. and Hill M. 2006. Edited. *Children, young people and social Inclusion: participation for what?* Policy press. ProQuest eBook central, created from Diak on 2017-09-15
- Tolleson-Rinehart S., and Jyl J. J. 2005. *Gender and American Politics: Women, Men and the Political Process*, Taylor and Francis, 2005. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/diak/detail.action?docID=4693201>. Created from Diak on 2018-01-28

United Nations Human Rights office of the High Commissioner. Convention on Rights of the Child 1989. [Http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx). Printed and filed by the author. Accessed on 23.04.2017

United Nations. Sustainable development goals. 2015. <http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/> Accessed on 06.01.2018.

United Nations, Entity on Gender Equality and the empowerment of women. n.d. <http://www.unwomen.org/en/what-we-do/youth/strengthening-young-women-leadership> Accessed on 28.01.2018

APPENDIX 1: PARTICIPANT INFORMATION LEAFLET

You have been invited to participate in a research study titled, ” *Participation of immigrant girls in decision-making processes in Eastern Helsinki*” targeting girls 13 – 17 years old. The study will be done in collaboration with Helsingin Nuorten Naisten Kristillinen Yhdistys - Debora project. This research is part of a Bachelors of Social Services Thesis at Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

The main purpose of the study is to investigate the participation of immigrant girls in decision-making processes in Eastern Helsinki with focus on Ruuti which is a participation system for the young people of Helsinki. Ruuti works together with the Youth department to ensure that young people have access to decision-making. The study aims at determining how immigrant girls participate in Ruuti, at what levels and the factors promoting or hindering their participation. I would like to interview you on your views and experiences. I would like to ask questions about what it is like for you, your thoughts about this Ruuti, your feelings as well as situations, events, places and people connected with girls’ participation in decision making processes.

Before you decide whether to take part in the study it is important that you understand what the research is for and what you will be asked to do. Please take time to read the following information and discuss it with others if you wish. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to take part you will be given this information sheet to keep and also expected to sign a consent form which should be returned to the researcher. You can change your mind at any time and withdraw from the study without giving a reason. You have been chosen because you participate in Debora- Hanke after school activities at SOma SOppi. The study will involve up to 10 participants, who will all be interviewed separately. The interview will take approximately 15 minutes at SOma SOppi. There will also be a focus group discussion thereafter.

The information gained from this research will be used to make recommendations for best practice and will offer insights into the experiences of immigrant girls and participation of women in general. The results of the study may also lead onto further studies on Participation of women and girls. The interview will be recorded on audio tape and then transcribed onto a computer. The audio tapes will be stored in a locked secure place at all

times and the computer data will be protected from intrusion. The audio tapes will be destroyed at the end of the study. Your response will be treated with full confidentiality and anyone who takes part in the research will be identified only by code numbers or false names. You can request a copy of the interview transcript if you wish. The interviews will be analyzed by me using a computer package. At the end of the research I will write a report and the results will be published and presented in a Thesis publication seminar. The thesis will also be published in Theseus which has an open access. The research participants will remain anonymous in the publications ensuring confidentiality. This study has been reviewed and approved by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you need further information

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

Electa Akinyi Kamara

Diaconia University of Applied Sciences

Bachelors in social services.

APPENDIX 2: CONSENT FORM

**CONSENT FORM TO BE COMPLETED BY YOUNG PERSON AND
PARENT/GUARDIAN*****PART A TO BE COMPLETED BY THE YOUNG PERSON.***

I agree to take part in the study on “**The participation of immigrant girls in decision making processes in Eastern Helsinki**”, and would like to take part in

- a group discussion
- an individual interview

I have read and understood the accompanying letter and information leaflet. I know what the study is about and the part I will be involved in. I know that I do not have to answer all of the questions and that I can decide not to continue at any time.

Name _____

Signature _____

Age _____

PART B TO BE COMPLETED BY THE PARENT/GUARDIAN

I have read and understood the accompanying letter and information leaflet and give permission for the child (named above) to be included.

Name _____

Relationship to child _____

Signature _____

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR YOUTH WORKERS

1. What is your name and your position?
2. Tell me about your experience working with immigrant girls?
3. What is your general view about their participation in decision making?
4. How do they participate in RUUTI?
5. What are your views about their participation in RUUTI?
6. At what levels do they participate?
7. What are the challenges faced by immigrant girls that hinder their participation?
8. What motivates them to participate?
9. What needs to be done to improve their participation?

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR GIRLS 13 – 17-YEAR OLD'S

1. What is your name and how long have you lived in Finland?
2. Are you aware of RUUTI?
3. How do you participate in RUUTI?
4. What is your opinion about girl's participation in decision making?
5. What challenges do you face when participating?
6. Why do you think it is difficult for other immigrant girls to participate in RUUTI?
7. What motivates you to participate?
8. What kind of support do immigrant girls need to improve their participation?

APPENDIX 5: UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

**Adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by General Assembly
resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989
entry into force 2 September 1990, in accordance with article 49**

Article 12

1. States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.
2. For this purpose, the child shall in particular be provided the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child, either directly, or through a representative or an appropriate body, in a manner consistent with the procedural rules of national law.

Article 13

1. The child shall have the right to freedom of expression; this right shall include freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art, or through any other media of the child's choice.
2. The exercise of this right may be subject to certain restrictions, but these shall only be such as are provided by law and are necessary:
 - (a) For respect of the rights or reputations of others; or
 - (b) For the protection of national security or of public order (ordre public), or of public health or morals.

Article 14

1. States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.

2. States Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and, when applicable, legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 15

1. States Parties recognize the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly.

2. No restrictions may be placed on the exercise of these rights other than those imposed in conformity with the law and which are necessary in a democratic society in the interests of national security or public safety, public order (*ordre public*), the protection of public health or morals or the protection of the rights and freedoms of others.

APPENDICES 6: HELSINKI CITY STRATEGY 2017 – 2021-

We support every young person and prevent social exclusion

The vicious circle of exclusion from, especially, education and employment is one of the most serious problems of our society today and a worrying consequence of a social polarization that is accentuated in metropolises. It is important to alleviate this problem – both from a human and an economic perspective and in view of promoting safety, comfort and business interests.

Together with relevant partners, Helsinki will launch an extensive and comprehensive project to find systemic solutions to the challenge of disaffected youth. The project will especially look at exclusion across generations, and on that basis, introduce new ways of breaking the cycle of exclusion. People who are difficult to employ or have a limited work capacity will be helped with finding employment. Special attention will be paid to the fact that the proportion of young people not working or studying is clearly larger among those whose mother-tongue is another than Finnish or Swedish. The Ohjaamo (Navigator) -model will continue.

In Helsinki, the chain of public services for children and adolescents is strengthened at the basic level, namely in the local maternity and child health clinic, the day care center, family counselling, school health care, school, youth work, health services and child protection. A condition for equal and good life for everyone is high-quality mother and child health, day care, schools and leisure services across the city. Helsinki will, when needed, apply positive discrimination. Education for those in need of special support is provided by organizing appropriate facilities for the hospital school.

The objective of the City of Helsinki is that every child and adolescent has a hobby, that young people believe in Helsinki as their future home and that they are able to influence matters in Helsinki.

Reducing inequality extends farther than to just children and adolescents in Helsinki. Also among those residents that are of working age or older, the city seeks to identify groups of individuals of vital importance for the prevention of exclusion, and to tailor individual and better service concepts for them. The idea is to reach out to residents needing help and support at an earlier stage – particularly those who need much support or care. Efforts will be made to find such individuals and to prevent loneliness. Socioeconomic and local differences in health and wellbeing will be reduced using methods based on research and effectiveness. Welfare differences and differentiation are monitored, and measures to deal with them are put in place, to be followed up at city level.

To create opportunities for equality to be realized, the city ensures that its facilities are easy and safe to use for educational, civic participation and cultural activities. Temporary use of public spaces and empty premises for cultural and civic activities will be facilitated, and the city will seek to promote the use also of other underused premises than just those owned by the city. The Oodi central library and the Bunkkeri sports facilities in Jätkäsaari will be carried out in a way that does not jeopardize local services.

Helsinki promotes the mental health, activeness and substance-free life of its residents and, in accordance with its program for the care of the elderly, strengthens the autonomy and participation of elderly people. Helsinki actively fights homelessness.

Helsinki residents are employed in jobs that match their skills, training and talents. The city's measures and services to promote employment are especially directed towards those groups where participation in the labour market is lowest. The city underlines investment in education, employment and inclusion for second-generation immigrants, in particular. Qualifications that immigrants have acquired in their country of origin are identified and acknowledged flexibly, and the skills of immigrants are, whenever possible, put to the labour market's disposal. Entrepreneurship is encouraged as one way of finding employment.

<https://www.hel.fi/helsinki/en/administration/strategy/strategy/city-strategy/>