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Bachelor of Social Services and Health Care  
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# **SURVIVING IN THE VACUUM WITHOUT RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

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**The Undocumented Asylum Seekers  
In the Helsinki area**

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## ABSTRACT

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Surviving in the Vacuum Without Rights and Opportunities

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The real-life challenges and daily sufferings of the undocumented asylum seekers motivated me to convince my mind to work my thesis work towards them during the exposure and experience I got while I was on my practical work at the Helsinki deaconess institute. This thesis work is comprised of the main video production (interview with the undocumented asylum seeker) and a report part.

This report part is consisted of six chapters. In this first chapter the basic issues of the undocumented asylum seekers, the motives behind this work and information and or facts about the work life organization will be discussed as well as the research questions will also be listed. In the second chapter the purpose and main goals of this thesis will be explained. The key concepts of this work, the meaning of undocumented asylum seekers, services provided by other organizations for these people will be discussed in chapter three. The next chapter deals with the idea of wellbeing, the dimensions of wellbeing and analysis in relation with these people. The fifth chapter deals with description of the process, the interview and video production, challenges faced during the process and the current situation. The last chapter discusses about the ethics applied, the role of diaconia, the professional development, evaluation and conclusion. Keywords: Human rights, Human wellbeing, Marginalization (social exclusion), Participation, Human dignity, Security, Life sustainability.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

This pioneer product-based thesis is focused on the undocumented asylum seekers living in Finland specifically in the metropolitan area, where by their daily life challenges and nightmares are investigated through a face to face interview with these undocumented asylum seekers. After the aim is clarified to them and got their consent the interview has been conducted accordingly. This phenomenon i.e. being an undocumented asylum seeker is new to Finland which has caused grievances to these people and triggered or posed a threat on the general public in connection with security, terrorism and crime.

### **1.1 Research Background and Motivation**

In recent years the number of immigrants has been increasing from time to time in Finland and or with in the Finnish society. According to Statistics Finland in 2016, some 365 000 people with foreign origin were living in Finland, representing 6.6 percent of the total population (Statistics Finland). most importantly the influx of refugees in that particular years has created a challenging situation to the Finnish authorities so as to cope with the incoming asylum seekers and services to be provided to them. Due to this fact and other pressures the authorities tend to seek or devise some ways to control immigration such as, stronger border control, enacting of new laws, increasing the rehabilitation or reintegration payments for those who return voluntarily to their home country, etc.

Following the 2016 legislation by the Finnish parliament of abolishing humanity based residence permit and a decision on rejection of the asylum applications made by the Iraqis, Afghans and Somalis on the ground of the prevalence of peace and stability in these countries; the Finnish immigration service office has declined to grant refugee status or international protection for these nationals as

well as rejection of their appeal by the administrative or high court in this country has led to the discontinuation of services at the reception centres for these people and also other asylum seekers. As a result of this they are forced to leave the reception centre and start to struggle to find a place to stay or sleep and cook and eat their food.

Requirements for issuing residence permits to asylum seekers will be tightened. The provision of the Aliens Act allowing asylum seekers to be granted a residence permit on the basis of humanitarian protection was repealed yesterday (migri, 2016). Residence permits based on humanitarian protection were a national permit category in Finland before the Act was amended. In future, residence permits on the basis of international protection will include residence permits issued under the asylum procedure or on the basis of subsidiary protection.

The Finnish Immigration Service has also issued new guidelines concerning Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia as a result of updating its assessments of the security situation in these countries. In the past few months, the security situation has gradually improved in all three countries, although it may have got worse at times for certain specific areas locally. Due to the improved security situation, it will be more difficult for applicants from these countries to be granted a residence permit on the basis of subsidiary protection (Finnish Immigration Service).

These people tend to move to the metropolitan or capital area due to the fact that majority of people with immigrant backgrounds live in these areas. Immigration has usually focused on the metropolitan area and it is estimated that foreign-speaking people in the entire metropolitan area will comprise almost one fourth of the total population in 2030 (Konttinen 2016).

Estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in Finland range from 2,000 to 10,000. Because these are "hidden" people, no one knows for sure. Authorities are concerned that their desire to stay below the radar makes them an easy target for workplace exploitation (Yle.fi).

The need for this product-based thesis is to address the real-life situations, challenges faced by these undocumented asylum seekers and seek a possible or viable solution for them with all partner and governmental organizations. The proposal was aimed to create a product-based thesis, with providing a visual product using the media of photography and videography that eventually successfully achieved. This product is connected to the professional development of the social service worker or student in such a way that its main issue or essence of the research is focusing on humanity or human rights that has a direct relationship with social works that mainly deals with human beings most importantly satisfaction and protection of human needs, rights and wellbeing. Human wellbeing in this case is the core point or issue of discussion. It will be further discussed and explained later in detail along with the wellbeing model specifically the flower model. This Flower model consists of physical, mental, social and spiritual aspects of well-being.

The study is conducted in partial cooperation with the Helsinki deaconess institute; the "unprotected project" (turvattomat hanke). This project has been working towards the undocumented asylum seekers whose asylum applications has been rejected by the Finnish Immigration service and consecutive courts and forced to leave reception centres due to termination of their services. These undocumented asylum seekers are mainly from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and some other countries.

The types of work the 'unprotected project' at the Helsinki Deaconess institute includes;

- Staging out or act as a voice for these voiceless people
- Offer a safe place to stay during the day time,
- Provide a place to cook their own food and dine in,
- Play different games with their friends, relax and relieve from their daily stress
- Facilitate to get legal advice from different voluntary legal professionals and firms

- Helping them to fill forms so as to get some social benefits from social offices including KELA
- Providing counselling, psychosocial support, etc. by applying walk along and street out-reaching methods
- Facilitate to get them free medication or health care services
- Informing and briefing clients regarding the possibility or chance of assisted voluntary return to their home country, etc.

My diaconal background and studies highly motivated me to conduct this thesis research in such a way that I can contribute my share to defend humanity and stage out my voice to the voiceless. Diaconal Ministers are consecrated for service in ministries at the intersection of church and world. Diaconal Ministers work to seek wholeness in the world and to help the people of God to live out the Gospel. They are committed to alerting the church to the needs of the world. Diaconal Ministry is a ministry of Word and Service, sharing the hope of Christ, helping where there is need, and equipping others for healing and justice in the world. Diaconal Ministers serve in and through agencies, institutions (both church related and secular), as well as traditional church programs in congregations, synods or the churchwide organization as they build bridges between the church and the world (St. Paul Lutheran Church).

### **The Diakonia of The Church**

Diakonia, or the "responsible service of the gospel by deeds and by words performed by Christians in response to the needs of people", is rooted in and modelled on Christ's service and teachings. The intimate link between the service of God and the service of humankind is said by Baptism, Eucharist and Ministry to be exemplified for the whole church by the ministry of deacons.

The Old Testament law provided a variety of ways to alleviate the sufferings of the poor, and the prophets often spoke as advocates of the widows and orphans. The early Jerusalem church practised a form of communism: those with possessions sold them to benefit those who were in need. Its own subsequent needs were met in part by diakonia from gentile churches (Acts 11:27ff.; 2 Cor. 8) (World Council of Churches).

As indicated clearly above diakonia is all about stretching a helping hand to the disadvantaged, the needy, the poor, the weak, the voiceless etc. which in turn initiated or motivated me to exercise or make it my diaconal professionalism in practice.

The data for the study has been gathered through a continuous observation at the work life organization's premise and mainly through a face to face interview with the undocumented asylum seekers which finally led to videotaping or video production and documentation as a final product of my thesis.

## **1.2 Research Questions**

The main idea of the research questions is to find the right answers for the questions and recognize their main challenges as well as hearing their opinions in addressing their problems. Below are the general research questions:

1. How the undocumented asylum seekers are dealing with their daily life challenges as well as how are they managing it?
2. From where are they getting support i.e. how they fulfil their financial, material and spiritual needs?
3. Do they have social networks or how does their social network looks like?
4. What does their wellbeing look like?

5. What feelings the undocumented asylum seekers have? What services (if any) they get from Helsinki deaconess institute?
6. What are their future dreams or life plans?

The following are specific questions forwarded or asked during their personal video interview:

1. What are the main challenges that you as an undocumented asylum seeker are facing in your day to day life?
2. Where, from whom do you get support/help when you need it? What kind of social network do you have?
3. What is your feelings (experiences?) as undocumented asylum seeker in this country? What should be done to tackle these problems?
4. What services are you getting from this organization? Are you aware of your rights in Finland? Do you get any help or support from the public health or social sector? And what are its roles in addressing your challenges or problems?
5. What are your dreams or plans about your future?

## 2. Purpose and Goal of The Study

The main purpose of this study is to show or outline the real meaning of what undocumented asylum seekers in Finland and as a new phenomenon to raise awareness about this issue and to devise a possible mechanism to tackle it; mainly of the challenges that these people are facing in their day to day life and recognize how the Helsinki Deaconess Institute(HDL) is trying to help these help-less people in many aspects.

HDL is financing this “the unprotected” project itself and from some other financing bodies like the European Union with some conditions. The costs or expenses that the organization is incurring may range from administrative cost to some operational expenditures, organizing or arranging an emergency shelter, etc. therefore out-sourcing or getting reliable partners is the main problem in addressing the challenges and extend a helping hand to the needy.

One of the main goals of this work is to take aims and ideas of the partner organization to reach to other potential organizations who would like to work in cooperation with and stage out the activities of Helsinki Deaconess Institute to the rest of the society and or community so as to deal with the challenges faced by the undocumented asylum seekers.

### **3. Theoretical Premises and Key Concepts**

The real-life partner organization is the 'unprotected project' at the Helsinki Deaconess Institute. The organization particularly the project is working towards the undocumented asylum seekers whose asylum applications has been rejected by the Finnish Immigration service and consecutive courts and forced to leave reception centres due to termination of their services. These undocumented asylum seekers are mainly from Iraq, Somalia, Afghanistan and some other countries.

#### **3.1 Key Concepts:**

The work of Helsinki Deaconess Institute the 'unprotected' project closely connected or related to protection of human rights and contributing its own share to its prevalence. Assessing the available opportunities to get their legal status or grounds to apply for residence permits for these undocumented asylum seekers such as based on employment, marriage, etc.

Accounts from the undocumented aliens surveyed demonstrate how the metaphorical views of Europe as a fortress or sieve are simplistic. On the one hand, the Fortress Europe concept essentially focuses on the role of external border controls and neglects the entry and settlement of clandestine immigrants and undocumented aliens. At the same time, border controls, deportations, mass arrests, and internment of migrants in closed centers and prisons invalidate the thesis of Europe as a sieve (Migration Policy Institute).

As indicated above this situation is becoming a serious source of concern to the European countries and the Finnish government and society as well. Even though this is a new phenomenon to Finland; the number of undocumented or denied asylum seekers is growing from time to time since the new move/ban put against

by the Finnish parliament and continued to create a point of concern in relation to security and peace within the country. These people are exposed or subject to labour exploitation, forced or voluntary recruits to terrorist organizations or groups, sex abuse, human trafficking, above all tarnishing the reputation of this country on the international arena.

Key concepts for this work include:

- Human-Rights
- Marginalization/social exclusion
- Participation
- Human dignity
- Security
- Life sustainability

### **3.2 Undocumented Asylum Seekers**

The undocumented asylum seekers are people who neither have residence permits to live on other countries other than their country of origin nor having any document showing their identity.

Estimates of the number of undocumented migrants in Finland range from 2,000 to 10,000. Because these are "hidden" people, no one knows for sure. Authorities are concerned that their desire to stay below the radar makes them an easy target for workplace exploitation (Yle.fi).

As we can see or hear from the interview video conducted with the undocumented asylum seeker; these people are facing lots of challenges in their daily life. Though they do not have the right to get any access to majority of the services there are some for these people provided by municipalities and charity groups and or non-government organizations. Below are some of these services available for these people by governmental, non-governmental and third-party organizations.

#### **Food assistance and accommodation**

If you have no money for food or no place to stay the night, you are entitled to emergency accommodation and food assistance. Emergency accommodation is organised by municipalities, parishes and some organisations.

### **Legal advice**

The Refugee Advice Centre provides free legal advice to undocumented immigrants. Advice is available at the number 045 237 7104 (Mondays 2 pm–4 pm). The advice is provided by a lawyer. You can also contact the centre by e-mail: [paperittomat@pakolaisneuvonta.fi](mailto:paperittomat@pakolaisneuvonta.fi). More information is available on the website of the Refugee Advice Centre.

### **Medical care**

If you fall ill or get injured, you are entitled to urgent medical care in public health care – for example, at a health centre or hospital. You usually need to pay the treatment costs yourself. In Helsinki, Turku, Tampere and Espoo, children and pregnant women get all the same health services as other residents. They need to pay the same treatment fees as other residents.

If you are in Finland without a residence permit, you can get medical assistance and advice from the Global Clinic. You can go to the Global Clinic even if you do not need urgent medical care. Global Clinic operates in the following cities:

- Helsinki
- Turku
- Tampere
- Oulu
- Joensuu
- Lahti

You can call or send an e-mail to the Clinic. A nurse or a doctor will answer the call. You will find the contact information on the Global Clinic website.

The services of the Global Clinic are free of charge. The Global Clinic will not report its customers to the police or other authorities. The location and opening hours of the clinic are not listed publicly (info Finland).

### **3.3 Undocumented Asylum Seekers in The Helsinki Area**

These people tend to move to the metropolitan or capital area due to the fact that majority of people with immigrant backgrounds live in these areas. Immigration has usually focused on the metropolitan area and it is estimated that foreign-speaking people in the entire metropolitan area will comprise almost one fourth of the total population in 2030 (Konttinen 2016). It is true that undocumented asylum seekers tend to move to the mega cities 'the Helsinki metropolitan area' in our case due to its vastness and relatively safe for these people not to be easily traced, the availability of some services (despite the fact that it is highly limited and restricted), getting their own people is also easy compared to other places than Helsinki, the chance to get job opportunity is much wider here than the rest of the places or towns and cities, etc.

Even though there is no clear figure or the chance of getting exact figures of the number of undocumented asylum seekers in the metropolitan area is highly challenging due to the sensitivity of the case. As estimated by experts it is more than 2000 and may not exceed 10000. There are also other service providers to these people in the Helsinki area.

## **4. Undocumented Asylum Seekers Wellbeing**

The wellbeing of the undocumented asylum seekers is said to be at risk. As human beings these people deserve to entertain their wellbeing, be it physical or intellectual (mental), social, spiritual, emotional, environmental or occupational wellbeing. Due to many instances and or reasons mainly of their legal status; these people are in a precarious condition in relation to human wellbeing.

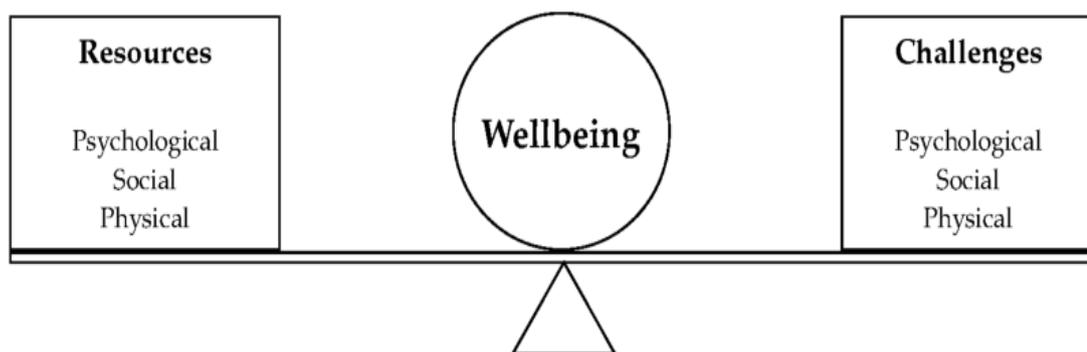
### **4.1 Defining Wellbeing**

Despite the popularity of well-being as a discussion and research topic, one final definition seems to be out of reach. The definitions in the literature agree on some common sections, for instance: the presence of positive emotions, moods, satisfactions in life and positive functioning. Well-being is a positive outcome that is meaningful for individuals as well as society, because it is based on the perception that people are functioning well in life. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016.) Debates around the concepts of well-being traditionally flourished within the philosophy of ethics, particularly around the question of how we should live, and the interest of finding happiness and satisfaction (La Placa, McNaught & Knight 2013, 116).

As early as 1948, the World Health Organization argued that well-being consists of physical, mental and social sections, and it is not merely the absence of disease (WHO 2018). In addition, researchers from various academic disciplines have examined additional aspects of well-being, for instance: economic wellbeing, development and activity, emotional well-being, life satisfaction and engaging activities and work. (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention 2016) [Banahene & Vartio, 2018].

Well-being can be divided into objective and subjective issues, and this choice of scope also influences measurement. The objective aspects of well-being are factors such as material well-being and the quality of life: the stability and level of income, the conditions of residence, access to education, quality of environment, safety and security and the opportunity to realize social and civil rights and needs (Alatartseva & Barysheva 2015, 37–38) However, Raijas (2008,1) states that objective well-being indicators are not enough for a comprehensive measurement of well-being, and studies should be conducted closer to people's experiences in everyday life. Therefore, while measuring well-being it is essential to explore how people practice their lives and manage their daily activities as well as how they feel about it.

Subjective well-being includes positive and negative evaluations about one's own well-being. These evaluations concern, for example, life satisfaction, affective reactions to life such as joy or sadness, as well as subjective experiences of career, financial well-being or moral experiences. (La Placa et.al. 2013, 117– 119.) One of the difficulties in measuring subjective well-being is that individuals may interpret and use the response categories differently. For example: If Mia says that she is “very satisfied” and Pia says that she is “satisfied,” is Mia really more satisfied than Pia? She could be, but on the other hand, Pia could be a person who rarely uses superlatives to describe herself, either when she is joyful or depressed, while Mia tends to use extremes in her self-descriptions. (Kahneman & Krueger 2006, 18).



The definition of wellbeing (Douge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012)

## 4.2 Dimensions of Wellbeing

The model of Seven Dimensions of Well-being is a wide concept with multiple dimensions to be included. Dr. Bill Hettler, co-founder of the National Wellness Institute, originally developed the model of well-being that included six dimensions of health. Later, researchers added environmental health to the model, making it a list of seven dimensions: physical, social, emotional, spiritual, intellectual, occupational, and environmental well-being as visualised in the figure 1. Each of these dimensions contributes to people's quality of life. (Green 2016.)

### Seven dimensions of wellness

Wellness is the pursuit of continued growth and balance in the seven dimensions of wellness. Many people think about "wellness" in terms of physical health only. The word invokes thoughts of nutrition, exercise, weight management, blood pressure, etc. Wellness, however, is much more than physical health. Wellness is a full integration of physical, mental and spiritual well-being. It is a complex interaction that leads to quality of life.

Wellness is commonly viewed as having seven dimensions. Each dimension contributes to our own sense of wellness or quality of life, and each affects and overlaps the others. At times one may be more prominent than others, but neglect of any one dimension for any length of time has adverse effects on overall health.

The seven dimensions of wellness or wellbeing includes:

- Physical
- Intellectual/ mental

- Social
- Spiritual
- Emotional
- Environmental
- Occupational (Grand Rapids Community College).

### **4.3 Analysis of wellbeing in relation with undocumented asylum seekers**

#### **Physical wellbeing**

The physical well-being consists of different kinds of health-improving behaviours which assist people to maintain a healthy life. Healthy nutrition, sufficient exercise, and adequate and good rest allow people to get through their tasks every day without feeling overly tired and stressed. Furthermore, avoiding the use of tobacco, drugs and excessive alcohol promotes physical well-being. In other words, physical well-being requires the ability to recognise lifestyle choices that have an impact on our well-being. If this ability is insufficient, people may cause harm to themselves with destructive lifestyle choices. It is important to have a wide enough understanding of physical well-being beyond just nutrition and exercise. Healthy physical condition also requires a sufficient amount of sleep as it is essential for recovery from the days' physical and emotional stresses. (Olson 2016.)

Being physically fit and feeling physically well often leads to the psychological benefits of enhanced self-esteem, self-control and determination. Based on earlier research findings, physical activity is linked to minor but significant positive changes in self-esteem (Biddle & Mutrie 2008). It has also been noted that physical inactivity is one of the most significant public health and social challenges (Castaneda et.al. 2012). According to a global study, physical inactivity is identified as the fourth largest risk factor in global mortality (WHO 2013 7–10.). Physical activity has been detected to be decreasing in many countries and it has been

discovered to have significant implications for the general health of the population worldwide. Strong evidence indicates that compared to less active adult men and women, individuals who are more active and participate in regular physical activity have lower rates of coronary heart disease, diabetes, hypertension, breast cancer and depression. Moreover, physical activity is an integral part of energy expenditure and thus it balances energy and is an important factor in weight control.

Studies conducted both in Europe and the United States claim that people with immigrant backgrounds move less and their exercise is less in line with the health education recommendations compared to the native population (Castaneda et al. 2012, 178). The physical well-being is not divided evenly within the immigrant population either. There are differences based on gender and country of origin. For example, the Maamu study (2012, 182) revealed that in Finland the physical activity among women with Somali backgrounds was particularly low and excess weight within the group was common. Additionally, the study indicated that Somali women practiced less exercise than Somali men and less than the entire population (Banahene & Vartio, 2018).

Physical wellbeing of the undocumented asylum seekers is a crucial issue and indispensable because of the fact that without being physically fit or alive the other issues or the question of residence permit would be meaningless, therefore one can think of and or consider the following tips for their physical wellbeing.

Tips for optimal physical wellness:

- Exercise daily
- Get adequate rest
- Use seat belts, helmets, and other protective equipment
- Learn to recognize early signs of illness
- Eat a variety of healthy foods
- Control your meal portions
- Stop smoking and protect yourself against second-hand smoke
- Use alcohol in moderation, if at all (Grand Rapids Community College).

As it is true these people are struggling with their survival. Hence their physical movement is highly restricted and subject to uncertain daily life, the issue of physical wellbeing of these undocumented asylum seekers is in a serious challenging situation. As the undocumented asylum seekers mentioned in their interview that due to the fear that they have of being hunted by law enforcements, financial constraints (in relation to transport cost), lack of social network, etc. they are forced to be confined to a certain place and they are deprived of their freedom of movement; As a result of these they are subject to loneliness and exclusion.

### **Mental wellbeing**

Mental well-being is an essential part of overall health and it is one of the most important factors affecting functional ability and other dimensions of well-being like the physical health presented above. Mental health can be considered the foundation for well-being. (WHO 2004, 12.) World Health Organisation WHO (2014) defines mental health as a state of well-being where each individual fulfils their own potential, copes with normal stress in life, can work productively and is able to contribute to his or her community. In addition, mental well-being consists of the ability to recognise and control emotions like anger, joy, stress, hope, and happiness (University of California, Riverside 2014).

Mental health problems also cause major challenges for public health. Mental health problems affect 10-20% of children and adolescents worldwide and account for a large share of the global burden of disease (Kieling, BakerHenningham, Belfer, Conti, Ertem, Omigbodun, Rohde, Srinath, Ulkuer, Rahman 2011). In addition, Aalto-Matturi (2017) reported that 35-45% of work absenteeism in developed countries is due to mental health problems and 27% of the EU's working-age population has experienced at least one mental health disorder during the last year studied.

Statistics demonstrate that the Finnish population is also suffering from a wide array of mental health problems. The number of people suffering from mental

health problems has not increased in recent years, but their severity has. In 2016, 61% of people had encountered mental health problems, 41% fatigue, and 38% depression or anxiety in their own lives or in their close circle. Additionally, 59% of school students experienced a workload which impairs their well-being. (Aalto-Matturi 2017.)

In the case of undocumented asylum seekers mental wellbeing is the other essential issue, in such a way that they are highly vulnerable to mental stress due to their legal status in the country and fear of forceful repatriation. As indicated in the interview these people are highly distressed and leading a stressful daily life and as a result their mental wellbeing is highly at stake.

Tips and suggestions for optimal intellectual wellness include:

- Take a course or workshop
- Learn (or perfect) a foreign language
- Seek out people who challenge you intellectually
- Read
- Learn to appreciate art (Grand Rapids Community College)

### **Social wellbeing**

Social well-being is the ability to relate to and connect with other people. Moreover, it embodies the ability to establish and maintain positive relationships with family members, friends and co-workers. It is vital to stay connected to people, form new relationships and participate in social activities. Additionally, social well-being includes showing respect for others, oneself and other cultures (University of Wisconsin, Stevens Point 2018).

People who are actively involved in different social activities and who rely on other people feel healthier than those with less social participation and trust. The need of proximity means that people desire to belong to groups, become accepted, and to be loved as well as to give love in return. These attributes belong to basic human needs. A distinctive feature of balanced life is belonging to several groups

of people. (Sallinen, Kandolin & Purola 2017.) Furthermore, according to Kawachi & Berkman (2001, 458) the link between social isolation and reduced psychological well-being is perceived worldwide. Indicators such as having only a few close relationships, small social networks, and low perceived adequacy of social support have all been linked to lowered mental well-being. Similar conclusions were made by Jetten, Haslam & Haslam (2010, 3–4) who noted that social isolation can have negative consequences on peoples' health and wellbeing. Significant evidence suggests that disconnecting from family, friends, and other social groups is not only extremely shocking but can have significant negative impacts on health as well. Jetten et al. study indicates that people with satisfying relationships have a 50% greater probability of coping with life challenges than those in poor relationships. Sani (2010, 21) underlines the fact that not all relationships are positive and good for health. He argues that the relationships that are based on cooperation, trust and mutual understanding, and support are relevant to well-being. (Banahene & Vartio, 2018).

Even though the scientific findings articulate that people who are actively involved in different social activities and who rely on other people feel healthier than those with less social participation and trust, the undocumented asylum seekers are involuntarily subject to loneliness due to the fact that they do not have physical movement and social network on a regular or normal basis. This fact has been raised by these undocumented asylum seekers during the interview and the observation with them.

Tips and suggestions for optimal social wellness include:

- Cultivate healthy relationships
- Get involved
- Contribute to your community
- Share your talents and skills
- Communicate your thoughts, feelings and ideas (Grand Rapids Community College).

## **Spiritual wellbeing**

Spiritual well-being, as its name says deals with the concept of spirituality, something that has been present in mankind and its communities throughout history. The word “spiritual” comes from the Latin word “spiritus” that originally meant breathing. The word is closely related to breathing as a life-sustaining force. The concept of spirituality has an extensive historical rooting. According to Karvinen (2009, 27, 29) in Finnish and other Northern indigenous cultures, a human being was understood to be “concrete soul and spirit”. This was interpreted to mean, for example, that when a human being died, the soul’s escape route from the room was kept open. Death was also traditionally linked to the end of breathing. (ibid.) Thus it is not surprising that many studies on spirituality in Finnish context, have been related to elderly care, terminal care and nursing care. Hence, spirituality can be assumed to still be an important part of well-being when approaching death. Also, Karvinen (2009, 185) argues that the concept of spiritual health should be used openly and without prejudices in the field of healthcare.

Nowadays, there is much controversy and disagreement concerning definitions over the term spirituality as well as religion. According to Koenig (2012, 2–3) the term spirituality is very similar to religion, and their definitions clearly overlap.

Religion is a multidimensional construct that includes beliefs, practices, behaviours and rituals related to the transcendent, where the transcendent is God, Allah, a Higher Power in Western religious tradition, or manifestations of Brahman, Buddha, Dao, or ultimate truth in Eastern traditions. This often involves the mystical or supernatural. Religions have specific beliefs about life after death and directives about functions in life both individually, and together with other people within a community. Spirituality is closely connected to the supernatural, the mystical, and to organized religion, although it also extends beyond organized religion. Spirituality includes both a search for the transcendent and the discovery of the transcendent. The path of spirituality leads from non-consideration, to questioning the belief, and in the event of belief ultimately to devotion, and then final surrender. (Koenig 2012, 3.)

The concept of spirituality as well as a human being are dependent on the surrounding culture. People influence culture and culture affects people. Therefore, the surrounding culture affects reactions to spirituality. The relationship between culture and spirituality can be manifested in different ways in the everyday life of people. Signs of beliefs can be seen in the social system, art, in habits like a diet, and relationships between people. (Karvinen 2009, 26– 27.)

Individuals with spiritual experiences and religious beliefs can better cope with stress and psychological challenges, and their methods to confront problems are stronger (Jafari 2010, 1480). Therefore, spirituality has been studied as a part of the human being's comprehensive well-being. For instance, a study made among heart transplant patients' evidence that spiritual commitment tends to enhance recovery from a surgery and illness. In addition, the study shows that spirituality is the power of hope and positive thinking: the heart transplant patients with spiritual commitments had higher levels of self-esteem, less anxiety, and less health worries than the control group. In general, people who worry less also have better health outcomes. The study indicated that spirituality enables people to worry less, to let go and live in the present moment. (Puchalski 2001.) According to Jafari (2010, 1481) spiritual well-being has a protective effect against stress. It also leads to a physically and mentally healthy life. Moreover, spiritual well-being leads to supportive behaviours such as less substance abuse, more physical activity, optimism as well as improvement of the individual's psychological status.

There is no doubt that spirituality or being religious has a lot to help in easing the day to day life or daily stressful situation especially in the case of undocumented asylum seekers. As it is clearly mentioned by our respondents or interviewees during our interview that; whenever they go to church they will forget every thing or the stress and focus on feeding their spirit with the words of God and after all the worship services are over there is also a big chance to meet with compatriots, getting to know new people so that it will help to create and widen their social network. As a deacon I highly recommend people with the same situation to be actively participate and church servants like deacons should give due attention in creating trust between undocumented asylum seekers, church faithful's, servants etc and encourage them to be part and parcel of the church community; in such

a way that we can help these people cope with their daily life stresses and spiritual wellbeing.

Tips and suggestions for optimal spiritual wellness:

- Explore your spiritual core
- Spend time alone/meditate regularly
- Be inquisitive and curious
- Be fully present in everything you do
- Listen with your heart and live by your principles
- Allow yourself and those around you the freedom to be who they are
- See opportunities for growth in the challenges life brings you (Grand Rapids Community College).

### **Emotional dimension**

Emotional wellness is a dynamic state that fluctuates frequently with your other six dimensions of wellness. Being emotionally well is typically defined as possessing the ability to feel and express human emotions such as happiness, sadness and anger. It means having the ability to love and be loved and achieving a sense of fulfilment in life. Emotional wellness encompasses optimism, self-esteem, self-acceptance and the ability to share feelings.

Tips for optimal emotional wellness:

- Tune-in to your thoughts and feelings
- Cultivate an optimistic attitude
- Seek and provide support
- Learn time management skills
- Practice stress management techniques
- Accept and forgive yourself (Grand Rapids Community College).

As mentioned above the emotional wellbeing is dependent up on the rest of the wellness dimensions. It is dynamic not static, fluctuating from time to time. It is simple to understand that the other wellbeing dimensions are at stake so that we can understand that their emotional wellbeing is in terrible condition.

### **Environmental wellness**

Environmental wellness is an awareness of the unstable state of the earth and the effects of your daily habits on the physical environment. It consists of maintaining a way of life that maximizes harmony with the earth and minimizes harm to the environment. It includes being involved in socially responsible activities to protect the environment.

Tips and suggestions for optimal environmental wellness:

- Stop your junk mail
- Conserve water and other resources
- Minimize chemical use
- Reduce, Reuse, Recycle
- Renew your relationship with the earth (Grand Rapids Community College).

So as to be aware of the surrounding or physical environment and take care of our planet earth and in the end succeed in the environmental wellness these undocumented asylum seekers life situations and the quest for their survival should be addressed fairly. Then after it might be easy to let them know, understand and act accordingly about the environmental wellbeing and their responsibilities.

### **Occupational dimension/wellbeing**

Occupational/Vocational wellness involves preparing and making use of your gifts, skills, and talents in order to gain purpose, happiness, and enrichment in your life. The development of occupational satisfaction and wellness is related to your attitude about your work. Achieving optimal occupational wellness allows

you to maintain a positive attitude and experience satisfaction/pleasure in your employment. Occupational wellness means successfully integrating a commitment to your occupation into a total lifestyle that is satisfying and rewarding.

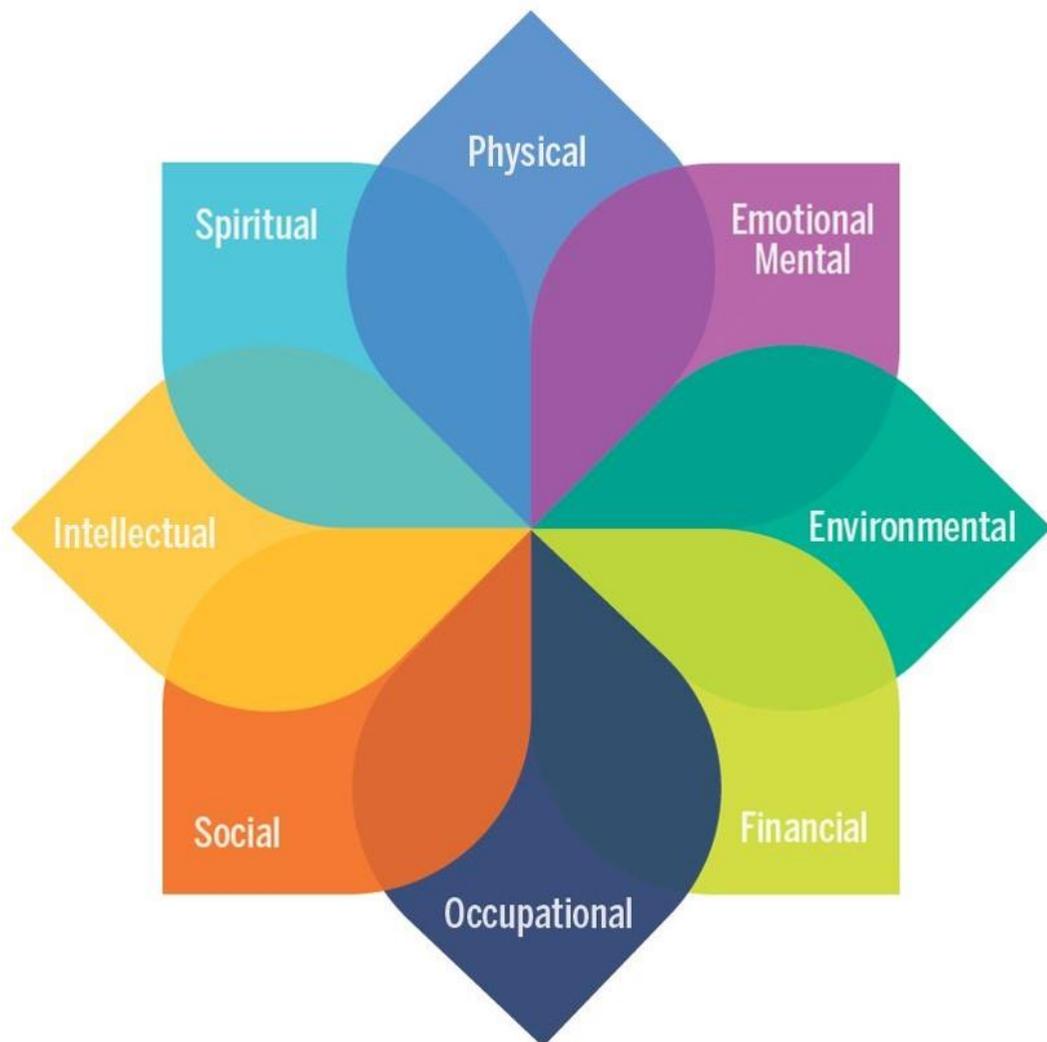
The interviewee as undocumented asylum seeker on his interview stressed that he wish to utilize his expertise and potential in this country for the common good if things are facilitated and occupational wellbeing is maintained.

Once the undocumented asylum seekers got their challenges over especially in relation to residence permits, they can easily focus on their occupational wellbeing, in such a way that they can contribute their share in the societal development at a larger extent.

Tips and suggestions for optimal occupational wellness include:

- Explore a variety of career options
- Create a vision for your future
- Choose a career that suits your personality, interests and talents
- Be open to change and learn new skills (Grand Rapids Community College).

#### 4.4 The flower model of wellbeing



University of Michigan well-being icon

## **5. Description of the process**

The process of this product-based theses consists of two main parts namely: the interview (oral interview) part and the videotaping or production of the interview part.

### **5.1 The interview**

The interview especially the oral interview has been planned to take place long time ago with the undocumented asylum seekers who are living around the Helsinki area with their friends, partners and relatives and getting some services from the Helsinki deaconess institute the 'unprotected project'. Majority of them were from Iraq and some from Afghanistan and Somalia as well as a few from Ethiopia. Due to the long beaurocratic procedures and processes to get the interview or research permit with those who gave their consent to be interviewed couldn't be available on the scheduled time which has it own negative implication on the research timing. However after a relentless effort to get another volunteers for the interview two undocumented asylum seekers were found and oral interview has been conducted separately and later it was agreed to make the videotape interview and production.

### **5.2 Video production**

As it is explained above after the oral or written interview conducted and got a consent for the videotaping, we moved to the arrangement of important inputs for

the video production. The date and time have been fixed, place of interview reserved, videotaping equipments and other stuffs arranged and the recorder or the person who videotape the interview was also fixed. In spite of the fact that the first person who was given or took the assignment of videotaping could not appear on the agreed time we were forced to use the reserve one. It really took considerably long or much time, resources and energy to complete it. Once the recording was done, editing the video was another task to be carried out in an orderly manner. For this task professional videographers and editors were involved that incurred a reasonable amount of money or cost.

Even though the videography task is highly demanding in terms of cost or money and time as well as resources, it can be said that it is a success that could bring the aim of the research to meet or reach its destination.

### **5.3 The challenges in the process**

It is natural and expectable to encounter with challenges so as to attain the goal of the research. During the process of this research I as a researcher have faced lots of challenges ranging from lack of cooperation from the work life organization's staff to lack of recording and videography materials. After I got a chance in the organization to do my internship/ practical placement place during the CEP study units time; I start to consider doing my thesis work towards these helpless people and developed the idea and proposed it with the topic 'the challenges of undocumented asylum seekers and the role of Helsinki deaconess institute'. It got the appreciation and encouragement as well as promise to cooperate from the supervisor and agreement from the to be interviewees, as a result it was proceeded to prepare the proposal and present in a thesis seminar and got accepted in autumn 2017.

Accordingly, when the process of interviewing and videotaping is to resume, there starts a problem. The section head of the work life organization started to behave

differently asking for many things and referring the issue to her superior and made the issue a big agenda. They later requested me to get a permit for research from their committee and make application for it. It was done accordingly, but still caused a delay on the whole process by asking minor and silly things to provide and make the whole process in a stalemate situation. It was later understood that the issue is sensitive and the concern of the government and other stake holders; as it is known that the issue of undocumented asylum seekers is a new phenomenon for Finland, and it doesn't seem easy for me to overcome this serious challenge. This eventually leads to seeking of assistance and help from my thesis supervisor, luckily the supervisor; the compassionate and humble Jouko Porkka was aware of the situation and stretched his supporting hand to cope with the challenges and seek for solutions. As a result, he devised a mechanism to work with our DIAK research team after advising and consulting with Dr. Marja Katisko whose contribution for the success of this research is highly indispensable. She embraced me to be one member of our research team that gave me the chance to conduct the research with the already available valid research permit successfully.

The other challenge was getting these undocumented asylum seekers within the agreed time. This was mainly due to the vulnerable daily life situation of the interviewees such as lack of confidence for their safety or in other words fear of police, lack of money to cover their transport cost, difficulty in getting contact with them due to the fact that some of them don't have fixed telephone number; as a result scheduled appointment for the interview have been cancelled several times. In addition, my personal life situation (being a father of three small kids, working loads and church and social responsibilities and commitments have been fiercely challenged me to conduct and finalise my tasks, this undebatably triggered a stressful situation on me.

Absence of prewritten materials or researches to be used as references on this particular topic was another challenge. On top of this converting of the edited videos to a compatible format and export to another disks or flash and CPU machines was another serious challenge that really consumed a considerable amount of time to configure and fix. After many days of trial with the editors and consulting

with more specialized professionals in the field the exporting process has been succeeded.

#### **5.4 Current situation**

The current situation for the undocumented asylum seekers is still uncertain and full of challenges. The proclamation is still in force that restricts the issuance of residence permits based on humanity grounds which might ease up the chance of getting it for these people and helps the high security concern of the society to calm down.

According to YLE media outlet 2% of rejected asylum seekers pose security threat, says National Bureau of Investigation (NBI). A police risk assessment of thousands of asylum seekers who have received negative asylum decisions has concluded that just over 200 present a potential danger. The investigation and intelligence arm of the Finnish police force has conducted a risk assessment of over 9,000 people who have received a negative asylum decision in Finland since the autumn of 2017.

The risk assessment was intended to pinpoint what the National Bureau of Investigation (NBI) refers to as "individuals who have the potential to commit serious crimes in Finland". This group of people will then be prioritised for deportation. Based on their intelligence information, the NBI concluded that some 200 people of the 9,000 total presented this kind of risk, as they had either been suspected of committing a crime at some point or suspected of "posing a threat to national security".

The frequency and severity of any suspected crimes was also a factor in the risk assessment. "It is determined by the whole picture, although attempted murder and assault on its own can also lead to prioritization," says the NBI's crime

inspector Ritva Elomaa. The NBI has not compiled a statistical breakdown of the offenses in question.

The report further explained regarding their whereabouts and quote it as 'Not sure of their location'. The actual number of rejected asylum seekers who made the list and are still in the country may be much smaller than 200, however, as many are believed to have left the country or been deported. The National Police Board that supervises police operations in Finland says the list of priority deportations will likely be subject to daily changes.

"We have to go through the names on the list one by one and see who has already been deported," says the Board's police inspector Mia Poutanen. The effort is further complicated by the fact that the police are rarely informed about rejected asylum seekers that choose to leave the country on their own initiative. Finnish Police try to prevent rejected asylum seekers from disappearing by interning them in detention centres until they can be deported.

"People who have committed serious crimes are usually in prison, and deportation takes place once their prison sentence has been served," Poutanen says. Some of the individuals with criminal records may have also reapplied for asylum, and international laws say they cannot be deported as long as their application is pending.

#### Deportation dependent on local police

The NBI says that when a person who is assessed to be a potential risk is identified, a case is made for his or her deportation to the police department that presides over the municipality where the person lives. These local police are ultimately responsible for carrying out the deportation, and therefore decide on when and in what order the deportations take place. Rejected asylum seekers are just part of the foreign-background population that police have decided should be

deported, however. For example, in the first half of 2018, over half of the 1,200 people the police deported from Finland were Russian and Estonian citizens.

"The way I see it, a rejected asylum seeker who has been convicted for manslaughter is on the same level as a foreigner convicted of the same crime, when it comes to deportation decisions. Our most important interest in prioritizing removals from the country is the degree of danger that is presented," says the Police Board's Poutanen.

#### Turku attack inspired assessment

The government of Finland commissioned the risk assessment of rejected asylum seekers after the Turku stabbing on 18 August 2017 that left two people dead and eight more injured. The man who received a life sentence for carrying out Finland's first-ever terrorist attack, Abderrahman Bouanane, had earlier received a negative asylum decision from the Finnish authorities (Yle).

This topic continues to be the top news head line for the tabloid medias, local news sources as well as the authorities.

Helsingin Sanomat leads with an expose of an unusual proposal to the Finnish government to expedite deportations to Iraq. HS reports that the Finnish presenter of *The Apprentice*, MP Harry Harkimo, arranged meetings for Peter Fryckman, a businessman with fraud convictions, and Saad al-Obaidi, an Iraqi who served as a general under Saddam Hussein, in an effort to move the proposal forward.

In a nutshell, the proposed deal was that Finland would purchase expensive defence products for Iraq, which would then sign an accord guaranteeing it would accept deported Iraqis. At present it only accepts those with identity papers, voluntary returnees and those convicted of crimes. Since 2015 several thousand Iraqis have had asylum claims rejected by Finland and are believed to be

undocumented migrants in the country. The Interior Ministry believes there are around 5,000 such Iraqis in Finland, and that their undocumented status makes them a security risk.

Fryckman proposed in 2016 that the procurements be made via the little-known Swedish Defence Equipment company, which has a small turnover and little track record in major projects like this. The chair of the company's board Sven Olof Kviman told HS that the units (apparently shipping containers converted to screen people for weapons) would be constructed in Iraq.

HS reckoned that the price quoted—100 million euros or a million euros per container—was around ten times more than similar products would cost if purchased elsewhere. Needless to say, Al-Obaidi and Fryckman declined to comment on the story. Foreign Minister Timo Soini, who set up a meeting after he was contacted by Harkimo, also kept schtum.

Several officials had poor memory of meetings they attended, while Defence Minister Jussi Niinistö's special advisor went to meet the pair with the Interior Ministry's head of immigration Jorma Vuorio. It was a no-frills encounter, a short meeting that got straight to the point and where 'not even water was offered', according to Vuorio. HS noted that, given its shaky foundations, the entire proposal was at least open to accusations of corruption (Yle).

This is a best example of the current situation of the undocumented asylum seekers on the eyes of the public and medias.

## **6. Discussion and conclusion**

This thesis work has paved the way for further discussion and research in our field of study. It can also be said or is believed that this work has raised a hot issue and a point of discussion within the Finnish society and professionals working towards humanity as well as medias. It is also true that the current national parliamentary election campaigns are also giving more attention towards immigration and this issue.

### **6.1 Ethics and the role of diaconia**

The main issue in relation to the reliability of this research or video filming is building up of trust with the service users. Despite the fact that this issue is very sensitive and the persons to be interviewed are in a precarious situation, it needs an intensive work to convince them that it has no harm at their status and ensure them that it doesn't cause any negative consequences on their personal life. In addition, the question of confidentiality would be the integral part of ethics on this research or video production in all sides such as the interviewee, partner organization and interviewer. Making the confidentiality of the conversations clear and promising that making the face of the interviewee unidentifiable in the video production is also in integral part of the professional ethics.

As a deacon I have to assess the spiritual condition or situation of the undocumented asylum seekers and devise a spiritual mechanism to cope with this stressful situation and look forward so that these challenges and hardships could be overcome. Applying the pastoral counseling and crisis management strategies so that the person can be relieved day by day and week by week.

## **6.2 professional development**

This thesis work from its inception to the final stage has helped me to grow professionally and to do things which I have been doing or exercising from my early childhood till date in a more organized, scientific, systematic, ethical, spiritual but inclusive, rational and fair manner. It also helped me to experience the ups and downs that a researcher could face in search of data and facts. The bureaucratic channels that requires patience and endurance has also been another area of excellence that helped me in developing my professionalism in the social work field. Though I myself is an immigrant, this long way research process showed me what the real meaning of undocumented asylum seeker is in practice beside to the theoretical explanation of the term was given and learnt during the whole study period. It has also added listening and communication skills on my personal and professional development.

## **6.3 Evaluation and conclusion**

Even though I have gone through a very challenging, time, resource and conscious consuming work; I would proudly say that it is a success. A success of striving for human rights and dignity, a success of exploring the main research questions and possible solutions for this critical issue. The person who has been willing to be interviewed gives on the video a voice for the voiceless and has shown his courage to address what is happening against the people who are like him to the rest of the society, to the professionals who are engaged on humanity and social work, etc. After I have interviewed these people, it was difficult to meet them physically except one. However, I later realized that one of them has been arrested and put in a detention center which has really touched and disturbed my mental feeling. On the other hand I couldn't get the chance to see most of these undocumented people and even couldn't contact them through their telephone; it might be due to the fact that they are either forcefully repatriated or moved to another EU

country illegally or else they hide themselves somewhere so as not to be traced or caught by law enforcement forces or police; this might also be attributable to the current crack down on the undocumented asylum seekers which directly associated with the underage girls rape cases which has highly filled the public and social medias that aggravated the public attention on them.

The video is attached with this link: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ep-rAB-MMLdM&index=40&list=WL&t=10s>

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## APPENDIX 1

Interview agreement form

**Written agreement about utilising an assignment included in a study module in research and development activity**

The name of the study module and the assignment:

Person/persons responsible:

The results will be published in a development report/research-oriented article/further development work of the project.

The purpose of the assignment and the fact that the written material will be used in the research and development work of Diak have been clarified to me. I am aware of the fact that participation is voluntary. I am also aware of the fact that my personal information will only be available to the researcher/researchers.

Date

Signature, name in capital letters, and student number of the research subject

## APPENDIX 2

Interview video time or minutes outline (table of content for the video)

- What are the main challenges that undocumented asylum seekers are facing in your area where you live? ----- at 3:20 min.
- From where and from whom do you get support or help when you need it? ----- at 15:56 min.
- What kind of social network do you have? ----- at 16:58
- What is your feeling (experiences) as an undocumented asylum seeker in this country? ----- at 19:38
- What should be done to tackle these problems in your opinion? ----- at 22: 25
- What services are you getting from this organization i.e. HDL? - ----- at 26:56
- Are you aware of your rights in Finland as undocumented asylum seeker? ----- at 27:20
- Do you get any help or support from the public health or social sector? And what are its roles in addressing your challenges ---- ----- at 28:29/29:50
- what are your dreams or plans about your future? ----- at 29:52