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**SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND COUNSELLING FOR
UNEMPLOYED IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN HELSINKI TO
THE FINNISH LABOUR MARKET**

This is a Product Thesis in Collaboration with Diaconia Union of Helsinki Parish
Through Ecumenical Responsibility Week on 25th October 2018



ABSTRACT

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The history of Finland in as much as hosting immigrants is concerned, is quite short and has remained significantly small by international standards. However, in the recent past, this trend has changed and now the country has one fastest-growing country in terms of hosting immigrants according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). With the increase in this number, the country is continuously being faced with a major challenge of integrating immigrants into the local society and systems. Previous studies have focused on the challenges in totality ignoring the vulnerable groups. This product seeks to bridge this gap by focusing on immigrant women in Helsinki, Finland. The particular interests were the challenges they face in integrating into Finnish society. The product is more of a project conducted at an event hosted in the region that seeks to address the issue of empowering immigrant women. Thus, the project adopted a project management methodology which was considered the most suitable given that the authors were participants at the event.

The thesis product in the form of three videos and two questions answered in group discussion by participants attended the event during the ecumenical responsibility week. The first video is the speech by the representative from Finnish Trade Union focusing on educating immigrants about their work contract and rights such as salary and taxes. Second video is compilation of different organisations and some church representatives participated in the event. The third video was for Diak students (Brigita & Eunice) interviewed in audience focusing on unemployment experience and challenges as immigrant women.

The findings of the product were consistent with previous research which holds that women immigrants are vulnerable and need empowerment. Evaluation of the project was done based on the responses and opinions provided by participants and recommendations for improvement suggested. Accordingly, this product can contribute to the development of sustainable empowerment strategies for immigrant women in Helsinki.

Keywords: employment, equality, Empowerment, roles, opportunities, and support were considered for the project thesis.

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1 INTRODUCTION

The following is a thesis that is product oriented and focuses on discussing the empowerment of immigrant women through the Diaconia Parish Union of Helsinki during the ecumenical week celebrated in October 2018.

The subject of this thesis is to show how to build the capacity and integrate immigrant women to working life in Helsinki Area. Migrant women are triply disadvantaged in all employment working areas as female, foreign and often low-status workers. Regardless of their skills and qualifications, they occupy predominantly low-paid, gendered and racialized roles and as a result, are vulnerable to exploitation and deskilling (Allan, K, 2013). This thesis presents and analyses the roles of immigrant women in Helsinki areas. This thesis seeks insights into their experiences and argues for greater inclusion of the subjective voices of migrant women and nuanced explorations of their working lives as such, it challenges all working sectors problems of employment and vacancy announcements in the capital city Helsinki.

As a study drawing on a phenomenological position and discussing sensitive issues of personal identity, it employed a person-centred, participant-led methodology. This approach is favoured by scholars in fields such as mental health and psychology (Gilburt, Rose & Slade 2008), where highly personalised testimonies have informed research and policy agendas, precisely because they embody emotion, experience, agency and individual. Central to this approach are the principles of critical humanism, which pay ‘tribute to human subjectivity and creativity, showing how individuals respond to social constraints and actively assemble social worlds’ and particularly focus on ‘concrete human experiences – talk, feelings, actions’ (Plummer, 1983, 5). With so many accounts of migrant workers framed by negative media and political discourses, which reduce migrants’ lives to homogenising descriptions, it is appropriate to turn to the subjective lived experience. By humanising an individual female migrant worker in this way, the thesis provides a rich account of immigrant women’s complex post-migration experience and shifts the focus from the industry to the employee (Veijola, 2009a). It also demonstrates the capacity of one-voice research to complement traditional qualitative approaches in

developing holistic understandings of employee lived experiences (Slavnic, 2013). Here, immigrant women's testimony and artwork provide a fine-grained exposition of the complexities of their workplace experiences and interactions and reveal how their employment is both a realm of intersectional marginalisation and an opportunity for personal empowerment.

Legally, women can rely on equal treatment with male colleagues and have the right to inherit, own and manage the property (Leyenaar, 2004, 63). The Ecumenical Responsibility Week was a joint human rights campaign for all Churches in Southern Helsinki with the theme of "Righteous work" for every woman's right. According to the campaign's message, "Everyone has the right to work, free choice of workplace, fair and satisfactory working conditions and protection against unemployment" (United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 23, paragraph 1.) Some immigrant women still are afraid to work against their culture or fear their husband, and that is why in Finland everyone is equal when it comes to work issues. There are laws to govern workers like unions monitoring the wages and work precautions. That is why the event was purposely organized to make awareness and tell those immigrant women that they have right to work without fear and there are rules to protective them, and that was one way to strengthen them into force work.

2 THE AIMS, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This product aims to investigate and determine how to support unemployed immigrant women in Helsinki. It investigates the strategies that can be employed in order to ensure that immigrant women in Helsinki are economically empowered. The project specifically looks into the issues that act as a barrier towards the economic empowerment of the immigrants especially regarding employment and seeking out for new jobs. The study focuses on the hindrances that make it very difficult for immigrant women to engage in economic activities. It also looks at and explores the strategies that can be utilized in order to involve more women in economic activities. Therefore, an event was organized together with Diaconia Parish Union for immigrant women for the purpose of helping them find workplaces and get to know better their rights and various opportunities.

The following topics were raised during the process and were discussed during the event (workshop) to address the objective(s) of the project.

1. What integration methodologies and skills should immigrant women possess to enter the working life in Helsinki Area?
2. How to help to learn the basic Finnish language skills to have the minimum requirements for employment in Finland?
3. What activities should immigrant women get from local NGO's to support their integration to working life?

2.1 Background

With the increasing number of immigrants, the integration of the immigrants especially women immigrants to the Finnish society has been a challenge. The government has put in place barriers towards the unemployment benefits of the immigrants, further eliminating the immigrants economically. The women immigrants, therefore, have to compete for the available opportunities. According to Walter and Aldashev (2013, 3), the immigrant women cannot draw upon the unemployment benefits without having a clear mapped out career plan, language, and vocational training. Women employment among immigrant women is another issue of concern among Finnish women.

Diaconia planned event whose aim was to bring together the women immigrants in order to network and connect them to available opportunities in the labour market in Helsinki. The ecumenical event was organized by members of various church denominations and organizations in Southern Helsinki. All these came together for ecumenism that aimed at promoting cohesion and integration of immigrants in Finland. The churches usually come together during the ecumenical week to promote the unity of churches and religions and people of various cultural and national backgrounds.

Some of the churches and partner organizations that participate in the event include the Catholic Church, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Anglican Church of Finland, Orthodox, the Tuomasmessu, and many other denominations. Also, organizations such as Church Aid and Missions (FILANTROPIA), KETKO - youth leader from Finnish Ecumenical Council (FEC), The Central Organization of Finnish Trade

Unions (SAK), Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (DIAK), Caritas of Finland, and Young Women Christian Association (YWCA/Voimasiskot). The topics that were discussed in that event mostly focused on the economic empowerment of women. A topic such as how to set and manage a business in Finland was discussed. Also, other topics that were discussed were the legal issues that are faced by immigrants in Finland. Some of the legal discussion in the meetings includes issues to do with adoptions. Others are labour rights and the rights of women that they are guaranteed by the country's constitution. The event included women guest from Labour Union (SAK), where the labour representative also helped the immigrants learn about the country regulations and work conditions and labour rights.

The theme of the ecumenical week in 2018 was righteous work for every woman's right which was in line with the aim of Diaconia to empower women and help them integrate into the Finnish society and become productive members of the society. This is in consideration that most immigrant women work in menial jobs even though they make up an approximate of 49% worldwide in the labour force. However, despite being a considerable workforce, women earn lesser than men even in instances where they are doing similar jobs with similar responsibilities (Vastuuviikko). Most of the women who work in such jobs feel shy and fear disclosing challenges and issues that they face in the workplace. The event was set up in a manner that all women of different backgrounds can freely interact discuss and share issues as well as network for employment opportunities. During the event, men were not allowed, and even shy women are encouraged to talk in groups so that every woman had a chance to share and participate in the event.

The event was one of its kinds because it opened doors to immigrant women of all backgrounds even those who came from different religions other than Christianity. Concerning that the event was free from men and men participants, most immigrant women came and attended the event. According to Diakonia in Context (2009, 14), women also often have fewer economic and political opportunities to improve their well-being and the well-being of their families. Poverty traps women in multiple layers of discrimination and hinders their ability to claim their rights. Some of the barriers that hinder the empowerment of women are religious, cultures based and are difficult to address on places where men frequent. Some women fear their men and husbands and hence cannot participate in events organized by men but can freely participate in this kind of event because it does not admit men participants.

Many of the immigrant women come from societies and places where women do not work or engage in economic activities. Working in the outside home is usually an issue for immigrant women even when it is necessary in order to empower them and help them integrate and learn local languages. Some of the immigrant women prefer to remain indoors and work on menial jobs or not participate in the labour market. The opportunity offers the women a chance to overcome their biases and prejudices and get into the labour market. The event provided opportunities for networking, mentorships, and guidance on how to obtain employment and work outside of their home in Finland.

The rationale of this project is, therefore, to investigate and determine the barriers that the immigrant women in Finland encounter in their pursuit of employment and economic empowerment. Most of the existing studies on women have mostly founded on the plight of women in developing countries while ignoring women and minority groups in country such as Finland. The project examines characteristics

from both destination and origin countries to promote labour market integration of male and female immigrants in consideration of their individual characteristics. Widely, immigrants have higher unemployment rates than the natives as it limits their earning and social integration (Tubergen, 2006 in Fleischmann & Dronkers, 2010, 338.) The project can, therefore, help to enrich the immigrant studies and social studies with the additional information on how community-based programs can help to identify the challenges and barriers that are encountered by immigrant women in their pursuit of economic empowerment.

The other importance of this project was to identify issues of the economic or cultural that can be improved to ensure that women participate in the economic activities and the labour market more freely and effectively (Brochmann & Hagelund, 2012, 94). This means that the project explores the possibilities and issues that can enhance the participation of women in the economy. The project can enrich the body of knowledge with insights on how to empower women economically and how immigrant women can be assisted to become active participants in the economy. This is because much of the focuses on women fail to acknowledge and focus on immigrant women who have special needs. This is due to limitations of the settling in a new environment, cross-cultural adjustment problems, and legal problems and language problems among other issues (Kogan, 2007, 76). Therefore, identifying how local and native women issues can be solved is very different from how immigrant women issues can be solved. The study is also necessarily identifying the kind of activities and programs that can help the immigrant women to settle and find employment or engage in active economic activities.

Practically, the findings of this project can help immigrant women not only to settle down in the country but also to be economically empowered. The programs can help the women identify opportunities and exploit those opportunities either through employment or through entrepreneurial or business. The program could also help women to overcome immigration-related challenges such as language and cross-cultural challenges that hinder immigrant women from finding work and fully integrating into Finnish society. The program has an important topic to create awareness and empower women with an immigrant background to join the Finnish labour market.

Our experiences drove us to this project especially our work experience as women since we came and lived in Finland. Another experience is that both of us came and lived in a very multicultural environment or society where we come from. Women are undermined by society especially men to be involved in work (and women they are regarded as only housewife and child caring) and men are bread seekers. Moreover, as foreign students after graduation we are going to be job seekers again, so we thought it would be good opportunity to get experience on how it feels for foreigner women looking for a job and what are other challenges that we have not come across before and also what is new after the studies.

Involving ourselves in the project kept us in a position to be aware of what is going on when we hear different stories from other immigrant women who came to the event. We were grateful that the Diaconia Parish of Helsinki gave us this opportunity to participate in their event and be part of the planning, implementation and also write the thesis. None of their ecumenical events have touched immigrant women or foreigners' background or those who speak another language other than Finnish.

2.2 The effect of training programs on the empowerment of immigrant women in Finland

One of the training that helps the immigrants to integrate, settle and become productive members of the Finnish community is the language training. Language training is very important because it helps the migrants to communicate effectively, negotiate and form contacts and networks with the members of the local community. Didienne (2014), commented that immigrants who cannot communicate effectively become alienated because they cannot find employment or form contacts with the local community members.

As earlier identified, most of the employment opportunities in the work environment were communicated through informal networks. Only managerial jobs or jobs in the public sector that were advertised, hence most of the jobs opportunities were through referral and contacts with people. Those who were knowledgeable of the local language had the advantage of having larger networks than those who were not conversant with the Finnish language. According to Lochmann, Rapoport, and Speciale (2018), 70 % of the immigrants who received language training ended up with employment or having sustainable sources of income.

Clemens et al. (2014), noted that the language fluency especially fluency in Finnish was an added advantage to the immigrant women because it enabled them to interact with the locals easily and do their jobs with much ease. Kogan (2007, 123) also cited that, having immigrants that were conversant with the local language meant that there was increased synergy in the workplace and minimized conflicts in the

workplace due to language-based conflicts and misunderstandings. Had noted that employers had a high preference for employees conversant with the local language, especially for jobs in the service sector. The employees dealing with local customers were expected to be in a position to converse with customers effectively for enhanced customer satisfaction. In addition, most of the jobs required the immigrant to be fluent in the language hence the need for the language skills.

APolitical (2019), noted that the most immigrants' felt that language training programs were the most rewarding because it enabled them to get basic jobs before they enhanced their skills for other high paying jobs. Thomsen, Walter and Aldashev (2013, 23) agreed that immigrants who had the language skills were more likely to have a job than an immigrant who was not conversant with the language. Therefore, language training was essential for the economic empowerment of immigrant women. The language was also essential especially in some training because the training could be fully done on the local language which would alienate the immigrant from such skills. With the language skills, the immigrants could easily enroll for course in institution of higher learning and could easily integrate with other students and use the learning materials both in Finnish and the English. However, when the immigrants lacked the language skills, they were likely to be limited in their pursuit of certifications and educational certificates. The language training also helps immigrants, children, to settle and to find educational assistance from home and from their parents which enhances their training (Lochmann, Rapoport and Speciale, 2018.)

The other set of training that was identified by Clausen et al. (2009) as having an immense impact on the empowerment of the immigrant women was the skills-based

training. Most of the immigrant women had some sort of skills while others did not. However, most of the employment organizations required some form of the certification for the immigrants, which proved that they were skilled in some particular areas. Even those who were searching for menial jobs in Finland they had to have certification in the handling of perishable goods or firefighting certifications. Women that had that kind of certifications had higher chances of employment and economic empowerment compared to women who did not have the certifications (Cohen-Goldner and Eckstein, 2010.) The immigrants needed to be informed how and when to do these certifications for them to qualify for the menial jobs that required such certifications. Without the certifications, the immigrant women were likely to remain permanently unemployed due to lack of such certifications.

The other form of training was legal training. Crépon, Dejemeppe Gurgand (2005, 25), noted that immigrants needed legal training and knowledge to help them learn legal expectation and their rights. This enables the immigrants to negotiate, good work and good terms of employment, it also enables the immigrant women who may not find work to set up small scale businesses and pursue entrepreneurship. Thomsen, Walter, and Aldashev (2013, 23,) agreed that it was necessary for the immigrant women to have legal kind of training in order to help them deal with legal challenges that come with living in a new contrary that has a different set of rules than the mother country. It also enables immigrant women to navigate around the issues of discrimination practices in the workplace or other aspects of life.

Cross-cultural training is also very necessary for the empowerment of immigrant women in Finland. The cross-cultural training helps the women to integrate with the locals. Training in the local's etiquette is necessary as the cross-cultural conflict

affect the integration of the immigrants negatively (Cohen-Goldner and Eckstein, 2010.) The cross-cultural training helps the immigrant women to breach the differences in the national cultures that make it hard for people from different national cultures to integrate. The employees who are required to ensure that the organisational businesses and capabilities that the company has have cross-cultural training usually have high changes of job retention and jobs satisfaction compared to those who do not have cross-cultural training (Kogan, 2007, 110.) Cross-cultural training assists in building the social aspect of integration and enhances the connections and the networks that the immigrants have in the country.

The empowerment programs must consider empowering women to be culturally adept. This enables women to form networks with the locals and as soon as possible to be satisfied in their jobs due to lack of culture-based conflicts. Valtonen (2019, 28), indicated that one of the contributors of employment among the immigrants was cross-cultural differences that escalated into conflicts and that made the immigrants quit. The immigrants need to be made aware of differences on issues such as power duration which was likely to effects how they communicated with the empowers and seniors. Other major differences between immigrants were issues related to time orientation as some immigrants came from a culture with long term orientation while the local, national culture was short term oriented. This could be created differences on issues such as meeting deadlines and doing planning. Cross-cultural training helped immigrant women in integration by helping members to learn whom to demonstrate concern and time awareness which were some of the sources of conflict between the immigrants and the locals.

2.3 The role of religion-based institutions in the integration of immigrant women in Finland

In their book, (Kääriäinen et al. (2009, 19), stated that there are no precise statistics on the religious background of immigrants. The assumption that immigrants belong to the mainstream religious of their country of origin, however, provides some indication. Moreover, Finns are mostly positively disposed towards the freedom of practise other religious. Most of them are of the opinion that all religious groups in Finland should enjoy equal rights. Hence, religious institutions play a significant role in the integration of immigrant women. The immigrant women mostly came from diverse religious groups. Therefore, religion forms a key social-cultural point as it brings together people of different cultural backgrounds together especially when they share the same faith. It can also eliminate people of similar cultural background when they do not share similar faith. The Diaconia community of Finland has sought to use religion and further to create harmony and easy integration of the migrants by providing them with the social-cultural support necessary for the integration.

Various denominations presented an opportunity to the immigrants to form social networks and relevant social capital that is necessary for securing jobs and identifying economic opportunities in the society. Unlike other forms of cultural groups that may be discriminative to the immigrants, the religious groups tend to welcome people with whom they share one faith and belief.

Banahene & Vartio (2018), in their thesis paper, highlighted that religion presents a shared interest for forming and sustaining a community of diverse people. Therefore, the congregation and religious community help immigrant members to belong and to integrate with the local based on their shared beliefs. This enables the immigrants to

share the information and contacts to ensure that company. The other role that is provided by the religious institutions to the immigrants is social, economic support and counselling. Among the challenges encountered by the immigrants are emotional challenges that come with an inability to integrate. The religious organization provides emotional support to immigrants. The emotional support includes providing them with forums to interact and share challenges. The forum also comes with counselling support which is very necessary.

Unlike other forms of counselling the relation based counselling helped the immigrants to open up share because of the shared trust and shared beliefs between the counsellor and the immigrant. This significantly helps the immigrants to cope with stress, burnout and feat, and interaction that come with immigrations and living in a new environment. Saksela-Bergholm (2019, 31), agreed that one of the major roles played by the religious communities is psychosocial support that contributes to the mental wellbeing of the immigrants. The church or the religious opens forums that enable the immigrant to learn, share interact and integrate with other more freely and more comfortably than other environments. This helps the immigrants to cope with the challenges of a new environment by enabling them create friendships and relationship of trust that enable the immigrants to have social and emotional capital to integrate with the members of the local community.

Valtonen (2019, 29), further noted that the religious provided key contacts that enabled the members of the community to secure employment. The religious institutions provided an appropriate environment that enabled the immigrants to develop relationships with the members of the local communities as well as have the necessary strategies in place. This support helps the migrants to venture out and

seeks for jobs and training opportunities that enhance their economic empowerment and integration with the members of the local communities. They also enable the immigrants to access resources provided by the government to help immigrants to cope with, such as the unemployment benefits before the migrants find work. Therefore, religious communities provide immense support to the migrants especially vulnerable women. Valtonen (2019, 30), also argued that even for the immigrant that wanted to venture into the business the religious communities acted as their line of first support, by providing feedback about the products or services likely to be offered and providing suggestions on the improvements that can be done since it acted as the first market of the immigrants' small scale business.

2.4 Diaconia's role in assisting immigrants

Diaconia is an aspect of Christian nature and the religious principle of service. The diaconia is considered to be a basic theological way of living of the church based on Christ's mission of serving humanity instead of being served. It is on this principle that the church views its main role as serving humanity through acts of service (Nordstokke, 2009, 78). The church considers its role as witnessing through service or Diaconia. The acts of service are mostly focused on the needy members of the society especially poor and the sick and the foreigners. However, this responsibility is usually taken over by the state for instances where the country is a welfare state that takes care of its needy Finland is a welfare state and it takes care of the needy members through programs such as the employment benefit. This leaves the Diaconia community with fewer responsibilities (Finnish Ecumenical Council, 2019.) Despite this, the Diaconia has mostly focused its welfare activities on refugees and needy foreigners who need social protection and service before they are reintegrated into the community. The Diaconia community is mostly made up of volunteers who take up mission work of helping the needy community members. While the state usually takes care of the economic poverty, Kääriäinen et al (2009), noted that the Diaconia in Finland has taken the role of dealing with the social poverty which entails social exclusion of the minorities from the communities which

leave them out exposed, alone and without a social support mechanism, that can lead to mental instability. The diaconia community, therefore, strives to cater to the social needs of the needy and poor people in Finland. The other role that diaconia help women immigrant is by providing them with the desired social protection.

The diaconia role has therefore been to identify the weakest members of the society and to serve them. The problems is been worse for immigrants which may not be knowledgeable of English and Finnish especially the refugee immigrant women who come from countries such as Syria and Iraq as a result of persecution or war in the home countries without the adequate skills and capabilities to interact with the locals. Such immigrants become alienated and tend to develop psychological problems due to exclusion. The Diaconia community, therefore, has programs that are meant to help the immigrants interact and integrate with the members of the local community by providing them with the social, economic support (Kääriäinen et al. (2009, 45).

3 LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Women rights

The women rights are the human rights that are regarded as specific and entitled to the female gender. According to Bosiakoh and Tetteh (2019, 38), the women rights are concerned with the dignity and equality of women about the male gender. The women rights are considered to be distinct from the human rights because they are focused on the equal treatment of women in comparison to the male gender by providing women with equals opportunities, civil rights, voting rights, economic rights such as getting into contracts and equals pay. Aygören and Wilińska (2013, 575), noted that these rights had not been granted in all countries and women still have to fight for the recognition of these rights, the focus of the thesis is on the women rights that are reacted to equal pay.

One of the aspects that women rights advocacy has to focus on is the rights of equal pay especially to the immigrant women are usually targets of the economic exploitation due to lack of non-recognition of their academic certifications. This pushes the immigrant women into manual labor or into low paying jobs that are economically disempowering. Burbyka et al. (2017, 271), held that although countries such as Finland had robust women rights such as reproductive health rights and civil rights, the immigrant women still face economic discrimination that made it difficult for them to enjoy the economic women rights. The women were hampered by lack of adequate capital, limited assets, and factors of production and lack of the necessary skills that enable full economic participation. Bosiakoh and Tetteh (2019,

38), concurred that women rights mattered because they provided women with the legal protection against discrimination, ill payment, and unequal pay. The investigation by Linden (2014), on women rights and immigrant women noted that awareness of the women rights of the immigrants was essential to the immigrant women, the awareness that they were protected from abuse and bad work practices and discriminatory tendencies emboldened women to move out of home in search for economic opportunities such as jobs or small businesses. OECD (2019) agreed that respect for the rights of women was very important to the economic empowerment of women venues as it provided legal protection that enabled women to participate in the company. Unlike men, the women face challenges such as unequal pay, poor working conditions, and workplace harassment as well as that hinders the form of full economic participation which can only be alleviated through the enforcement of women rights. These barriers can only be overcome through the full participation in the economy (Aygören and Wilińska, 2013, 575.) The respect of women-specific such as the right to productive health and maternity leaves were instrumental in influencing women participation.

The immigrant women, however, faced challenges when it comes to the enforcement of their rights because they were not fully conversant with the constitution and they were also not conversant with the legal rights and women rights that are conferred to them by the host countries (Kassi, 2011). They also lack the legal support mostly due to ignorance about advocacy and women right groups in the host country that can assist them in instances where they are discriminated against or if they find that the rights of women have not been respected or enforced. Burbyka et al. (2017, 271), agreed that ignorance of the legal issues and legal rights of the immigrant women

made them live in fear of engaging in economic activities for fears of breaking the law or being discriminated against.

3.2 Salary Inequality

One of the significant challenges that are encountered by the immigrant women is related to lower salaries paid to women especially the immigrant women. According to EU (2018), Finland has one of the highest genders pay gaps at 18.7% as shown by the figure below which is higher than the average EU's gender pay gap 16.4%:

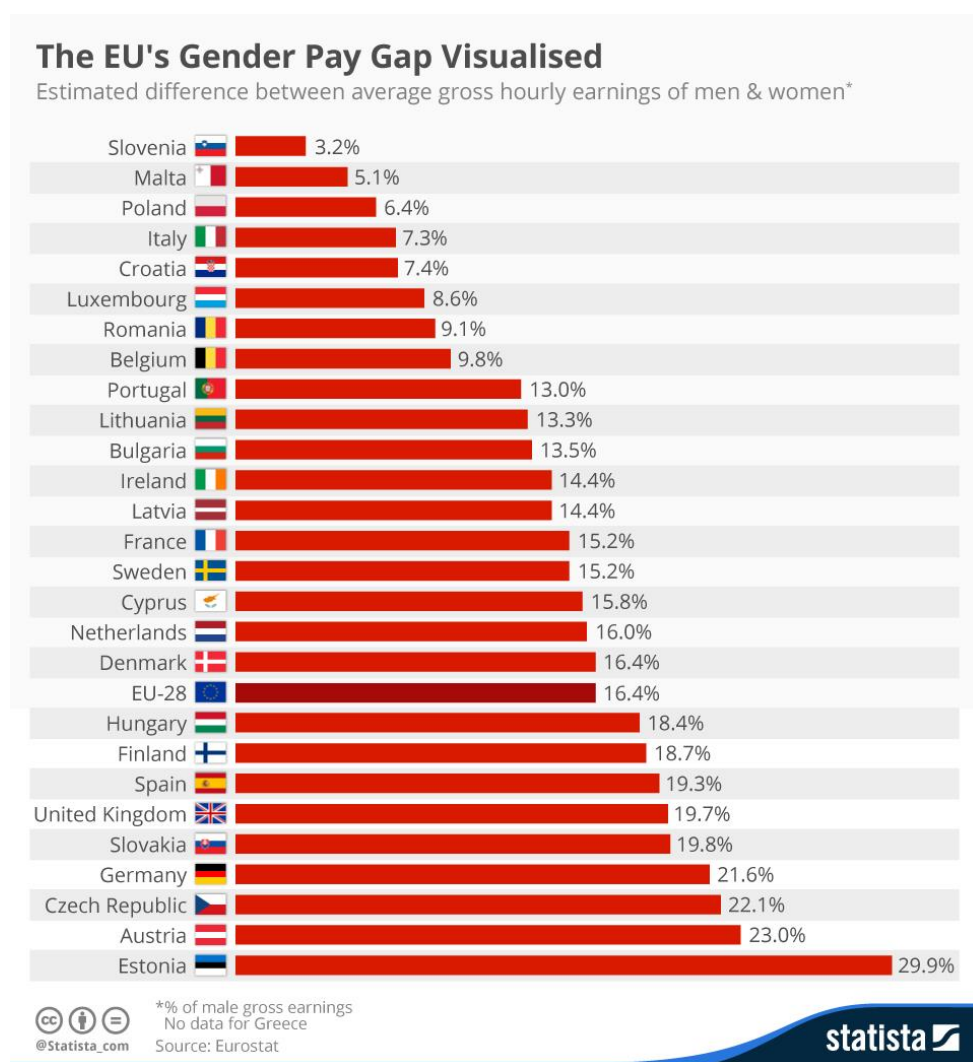


Figure 1: Gender pay gap in the EU

Source: EU (2018)

According to EU (2018), one of the major reasons for the gender pay gap among the immigrant women is the inability to communicate which hinder the immigrant women from fully exploiting their economic potential. Not most of the staff in the Finnish companies communicates in English. Most of these native staff are also not conversant with other languages hence companies find it difficult to employ a person who cannot communicate with fellow staff members or with customers (Arendt, Nielsen & Jakobsen, 2016, 75). Also, most of the jobs involve interaction with customers, and most of the customers speak in Finnish and may not be conversant with other languages such as English. This acts as a hindrance for the immigrant who is not conversant with the Finnish language finding work even when there are employment opportunities, because they cannot communicate in the local language. According to Heilbrunn, Kushnirovich and Zeltzer-Zubida (2010, 245), stated that even in employment the immigrants who have more proficiency in the Finnish language are usually paid more than the immigrants who lack proficiency in the Finnish language. Language skills are therefore essential in empowering the immigrant women to find work in Finnish companies or in the Finnish public sector where fluency in the language is very important (Kässi, 2011).

The other cause low earnings and salary inequality among immigrant women is the cross-cultural differences between the immigrant and the locals (Linden, 2014). According to Kogan (2007, 33), most immigrants experience culture shock before they adjust. Most of the immigrants take a long time to adjust and learn about the new culture which makes it difficult for them to integrate, communicate and work with the locals. These cross-cultural differences are mostly experienced by women who come from distinct background especially those that come from Muslim

countries such as Iran, Syria, Afghanistan, Sudan, and Somalia. This makes it hard for immigrant women to be employed in high paying jobs in Finland.

The other reason for poor pay and salary inequality among immigrant women mostly related to the lack of networks. According to Kogan (2007, 21), most of the jobs that are in Finland are never advertised, hence one cannot get the jobs through newspapers and websites. Companies especially the small and medium enterprises prefer to ask for referrals from people whom they know about (Constant, Kahanec and Zimmermann, 2009). This means that women without the networks may never hear it or get to know about job openings in companies because they do not have the necessary networks and referral from people who are in those companies. This negatively affects women from integrating and finding meaningful work because they did not have networks. Heilbrunn, Kushnirovich, and Zeltzer-Zubida (2010, 245), agreed that lack of networks was one of the major hindrances to the empowerment of unemployed women especially those who stayed at home and did not actively interact with people in different places and locations. This technically locked out the women from employment due to lack of networks. Although most of the immigrants usually network with other immigrants, much of the most productive networking is with the natives which are always not possible due to integration problems. Apart from church and work, other avenues of meeting with the local people for networking are limited, this excludes the immigrants or makes it hard for the immigrant women to network with the right people.

The systemic discrimination of women from employment opportunities creates inequality in salaries among immigrant women. According to Hasmath (2012, 135), the immigrant women encounter discrimination in their pursuit of employment

opportunities. The discrimination is usually subtle and not as straight forward as in many countries as Constant, and Zimmermann (2016) noted. The major form of discrimination is usually disguised either as lack of language skills or lack of Finnishness. The subtlest form of discrimination is through the credentialing where the employers fail to recognize credentials from foreign universities and other skills learned by the immigrant women from their native countries. This means that the immigrants have to downgrade their employment status and earnings for them to fit into the system. Jasinskaja-Lahti, Liebkind, and Perhoniemi (2007, 242), agreed that one of the huge problems that are encountered by the immigrants is usually the problem of credential transfer where most of the qualifications they have are not transferrable to the country. This makes it hard for them to join the labour market because they need to enrol into the Finnish education systems to regain their credentials again. This is usually demoralizing and affects most of the women immigrants negatively in their search of labour. Even those with the right skills and credential, they are usually put in work trials and long internships before they are accepted into the workplace which demoralises them and makes it hard for them to be employed (Hasmath, 2012, 139.) This kind of discrimination ensures that the women immigrants do not start at the high paying jobs which put them at a disadvantage. The company also assign immigrants temporary work for which they are usually reluctant to invest adequately in job training. The deliberate lack of employee training and lack of career development plan by the employers usually leaves the migrants at a disadvantage. The migrants usually end up working in jobs and employment that do not advance their career, and this affects their morale and willingness to work (Fleischmann & Dronkers, 2010, 337.)

Another cause of salary inequality among the immigrant women is the number of hours spent in non-labour activities. The immigrant women also have families to rise which complicates their capacity to integrate into the economy fully (Chang & Holm, 2017, 21.) These women are usually under more economic pressure and they take menial jobs and less paying jobs in order to survive and make ends meet in the country even though they could be highly qualified. In as much as they could be entitled to the unemployment benefits, the unemployment benefits are usually limited, and hence they cannot be fully relied on (Bengs et al., 2018, 106). The homecare and specifically childcare services are very expensive in Finland, and hence most of the immigrant women cannot afford these services. This means that they are forced to quit their jobs to care for their young ones which further alienate them from career advancement opportunities compared to men. To encourage women to give birth, the government provides some allowances for mothers to stay at home when they are raising the child. Norman (2015) agreed that the caregiving services are very expensive in Finland and out of reach for the ordinary immigrant women which make them reliant on government allowances. These complicate their integration into society and disempower them in terms of career growth. The women must either chose to advance their career or to raise their family. The fact that the government provides some allowance to mothers with children further induces the women (mothers) to stay at home instead of motivating them to advance their career (OECD, 2019).

3.3 The unemployment situation in Finland

Unemployment is considered as a state of joblessness or a situation where individuals who are capable of working and actively looking for work do not find

work or jobs to do. Lewis (2011, 151), agreed that unemployment is a situation where individuals with the capacity to work were not working. There were various types of unemployment the main one being cyclical unemployment which is based on demand and supply in a particular industry or sector of the economy. The win comes sectors; the demand for products or services is cyclical which creates unemployment during instances where the demand for products or services is low. Mostly this happens in agricultural sectors or in the hospitality industry where demand for products can be seasonal (Romer, 2011, 233). The other types of unemployment are the structural unemployment which is usually a mismatch between the services or skills provided by the unemployed and the types of skills required by the employers. The structural unemployment mostly occurs in instances where the demand for highly skilled employees is high while demand for a low skilled or semi-skilled employee is low. This eventually leads to unemployment. The other kind of unemployment is the frictional kind of unemployment that happens when employees are transitioning from one job to another (Lewis, 2011, 152.)

The average unemployment rate in Finland is 6.7% which is considered to be relatively high compared to the rate of unemployment in the neighbouring countries such as Norway and Sweden. Norway has an unemployment rate of 3.8% while Sweden's rate of unemployment is 6% as indicated below (Trading Economics, 2019).

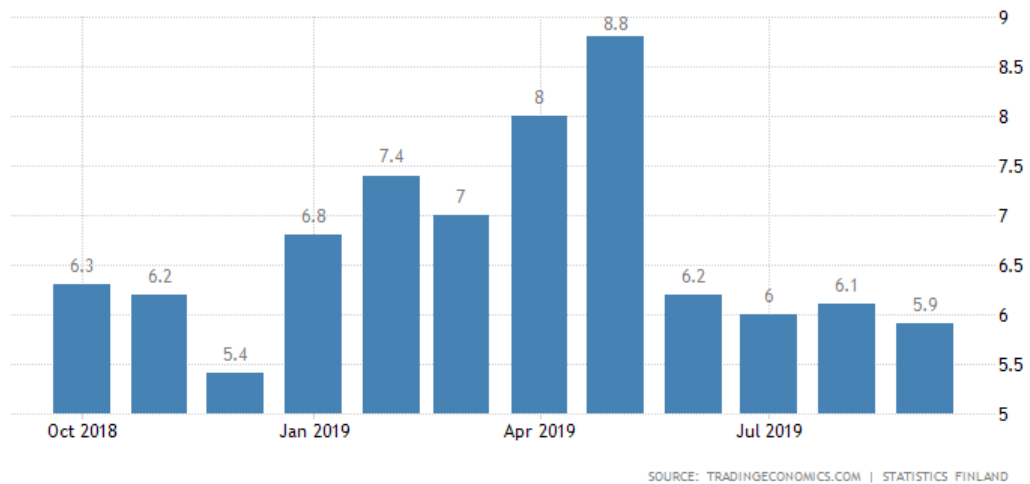


Figure 2: Extent of unemployment rate in Finland (Oct. 2018-Sept. 2019)

The unemployment in Finland is a structural problem. According to Suomi (2018), most of the jobs available require specialized training and certifications which leaves many of people especially the immigrants unemployed. Cord (2014), noted that most of the menial jobs required many certifications such as first aid certification, perishable goods certifications which lock out people from immediate employment. This increases levels of unemployment in the country. The other factors that have been highlighted for increasing the level of unemployment is the lack of requisite skills. Many employers demand university degree or diploma which leaves out people without such qualifications unemployed. Among the immigrants, the unemployment is higher because most of the employers do not recognise academic requirements from foreign countries especially non-EU countries which disadvantages the immigrants. Among the immigrants, the rate of unemployment is lower compared to the unemployed people with Finnish background as indicated by the table below (Statistics Finland, 2019, p. 1). Considering that the immigrants are a small percentage of the total population, the immigrants' unemployment can be considered to be very high in the country.

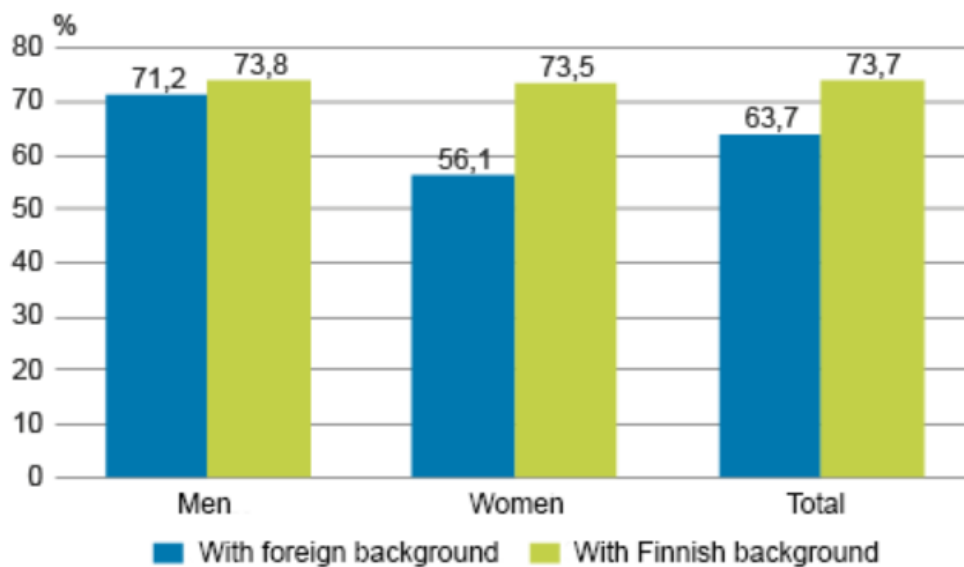


Figure 3: Employment rate by gender and origin, population aged 20 to 64 in Finland in 2014, % Source: UTH survey 2014, Statistics Finland

The lower employment rate of the population with foreign background compared with persons with Finnish background is particularly connected to the low employment of women with foreign background (56%) compared with women with Finnish background (73%) (Figure 3). The employment rate of men with foreign background was only a few percentage points lower (71%) than that of men with Finnish background (74%). The duration of living in the country is another significant explanatory factor, but the growth in employment along with the duration of living in Finland is visible most of all as increased employment for women in time. Forty per cent of women with foreign background having lived in Finland for less than five years were employed in 2014, but as many as 67 per cent of those having lived here for over ten years.

3.4 Empowerment

Empowerment can be considered as equipping individuals with the requisite capabilities, skills, and resources to enable them to act or improve their social, economic conditions. According to Didienne (2014,) empowerment is the enablement of individuals to make their own choices concerning their lives and their social, economic conditions. For individuals to make good choices, they have to access the resources, and opportunities that can enable them to make independent life choices. In the case of the immigrants, their empowerment is mostly dependent on

finding opportunities for work and sustainable employment that can guarantee them a sustainable income. The empowerment is, therefore, the act of being provided with opportunities or capacity to exploit the opportunities through the provision of resources, assets skills or training.

3.5 Programs for helping the immigrants overcome the challenges

Immigrant women face a variety of challenges and issues that make it very hard for them to be in gainful employment. These exclusions from economy disempowered them and further exclude them from economic participation (Uta, Benjamin, and Lars, 2017, 94.) To overcome the challenges some of the previous researchers have recommended strategies and programs that can help the immigrant women overcome the challenges and issues that come with immigration and settling down in the new country.

One of the programs is the training of the immigrants in the local language. Heilbrunn, Kushnirovich, and Zeltzer-Zubida (2010, 248), suggested that the training in language empowers the women immigrants to settle down and to find gainful employment even as they pursue. According to Valtonen (2019, 34), there are language proficiency program that are offered in many institutions that help the immigrants learn the local language and recover. Most importantly the ability to interact with other people who speak the language extensively helps the immigrants to overcome barriers that hinder the immigrants from.

The other strategy is to create cross-cultural training programs to help the members overcome cross-cultural to help the program adjust and interact with the locals. The cross-cultural training helps the immigrants overcome possible discrimination which comes as a result of not having etiquette and mannerism of the local. Saksela-Bergholm (2019, 23), noted that each national culture has its distinctiveness which led to cross-cultural conflicts. For instance, Saksela-Bergholm (2019, 32), argue that Finland had high levels of femininity instead of masculinity and according to the dimension of Hofstede this means that immigrant whom come from cultures that have a higher level of masculinity need to adjust themselves to suit to the expectation

of the local culture. Furthermore, women are mostly affected by cross cultural differences on issues of power distance. For instance, in women who have come from countries where the power distance is very high such as Iraq, Syria, Sudan or Somalia they find it hard to express themselves to their superiors (Valtonen, 2019, 34). The cross cultural training is necessary to enable them to speak up and stand for their rights to avoid possible discrimination that can affect their ability to earn and function as productive members of the Finnish community.

The women further require skills training in order to adjust and have gainful employment. One of the challenges that the immigrants face is admission to college which is not usually possible to due to language barriers. Therefore, assistance in getting the immigrant to learn the language and also gain admission to college and universities empowers the immigrants to gain relevant skills (Ktoridou & Nikleia, 2011, 154). Another form of assistance that can be accorded to the immigrants is the entrepreneurial based training. The training not only empowers women to be employed but can help the women to start their businesses and self-employed ventures that earn them decent income in the country. The skill-based training is very important because it provides women with alternative economic activity that they can engage in and become economically empowered (Saksela-Bergholm, 2019, 44).

3.6 Why immigrant women need support

This part investigates why it is necessary to support immigrant women in Finland. It examines why it is necessary to support the immigrant women and the kind of potential which they have in the Finnish economy. According to Sutela (2015), the immigrant women received salaries that were lower compared to immigrant men. Krutova, Lipiäinen & Koistinen (2016) noted that the women received salaries that were approximated to be 77% of the income that was earned by their male counterparts. The women also received incomes that were 62% of their Finnish counterparts. The salaries of immigrant women were also 85% of the Finish women. This demonstrated that immigrant women were economically disadvantaged and discriminated against. However, this was also attributed to the sectors that the immigrant women were working in where it was noted that most of the immigrant women were working in the care sector that was renowned for underpayment

compared with other sectors of the economy. This discrimination has got a negative effect on the immigrant communities as it entrenched huge economic disparities between the migrant and the locals (Sutela, 2015.) The other factor that created a disparity in earnings is that women who had migrated less than five years tended to have lower salaries than those who had stayed longer in the country.

A research done by Larja & Sutela (2015, 71) in 2014, found that the rate of unemployment among the immigrant women was 56% which implies that more than half of the immigrant women were unemployed. This indicated that women were not participating in the economy. They attributed this to the fact that motherhood affected women's capability to participate in the labor market. Long maternity leaves implied that the women found that their position occupied or that is they had to undergo further training for them to resume to their job positions. This discouraged many young immigrant mothers from participating in the labor market. This is justified by the fact that most of the unemployed women were found to be between the ages of 25-30 years when it was likely that they had young children. Sutela (2015), agreed that participation for the young mothers in the job market was a change for immigrant women. This is also explained by the fact that the immigrant women tend to start their families at a lower age compared to the women who have Finnish background. The immigrant women were also married early compared to the Finnish women where 26% of the immigrant women on the age of 18-29 were married while only 7% of the women with Finnish background were married at younger ages, Krutova, Lipiäinen & Koistinen (2016), noted that unlike the male immigrants who primarily migrate in search of economic opportunities such as jobs, women tend to be distracted by other social factors such as marriage and raising of children which distracts them from participating in the labour market. Therefore, the issues of raising family played significantly in hampering full participation of the immigrant women in the labour market. To bridge the economic gap most of the unemployed women started to engage in entrepreneurial activities such as setting up small and medium enterprises (SMEs). However, financial limitations in accessing capital make it hard for women to succeed in business (Sutela, 2015.)

In order to bridge the gaps among immigrant women is important to identify various capacity building activities and programs that have been done to help the immigrant women to economically empower the women. One of the activities that are being

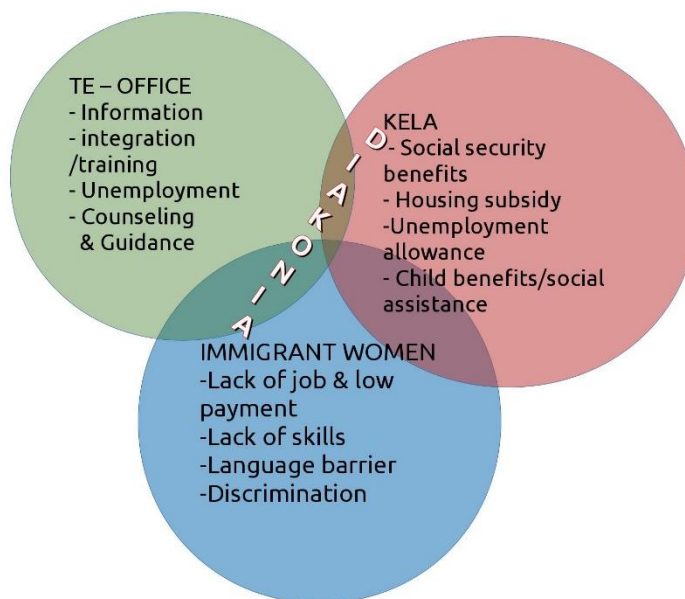
done to help the immigrant women are capacity building activities that are being done by an advocacy group and community groups such as the Diaconia community (Finnish Ecumenical Council, 2019). The capacity building done by the community through seminars and training helped the women to gain skills that can empower them to go for training. The training helps the immigrant to acquire skills that enable them to acquire employment. Other major skills are the capacity development skills that help the entrepreneurial women with the capacity to set up their own business in the country. The Diaconia community also helps the immigrants with the psychosocial support that helps the immigrant women to deal with the emotional pressure and integration challenges (Nordstokke, 2009, 61). They provide the women with the networks that help the women to cope and integrate and find employment in the country. The main merit of this Diaconia community program is that they are tailored for women; hence they provide the women with privacy during training.

3.7 Unemployment benefit

The government of Finland provides unemployment benefits to immigrants who have not yet received employment. The unemployment benefits are provided by the TE office to an immigrant with resident permits who have not found employment. The unemployment benefit is provided for 400 days or up to the time that employee finds employment so long as it does not exceed the 400 days (InfoFinland, 2019). The TE office is very instrumental in helping the immigrants find employment as it has its capacity building program such as language training that enables the migrants to learn a local language which is necessary for finding employment. The TE office also acts as a point of contact between the employers and the immigrants who want to find employment. It helps the immigrant to locate jobs that are in line with their skills and capabilities. It also helps the immigrant obtain the relevant certifications that are required to find employment. The major challenge though is for the immigrants who exceed the limit of 400 days without employment as they are left without jobs and financial support from the TE office (TE, 2019.) The main condition for immigrants is that they need to undergo vocations and skills training for them to consume receiving the unemployment benefits from the TE office. They also have to prove that they have been actively searching for employment and accept offered work or training.

The other department that helps the immigrant women is the Social Insurance Institution of Finland (KELA). The department mostly provides unemployment benefit to the immigrants and Finnish citizens who find themselves out of work. It mostly provides pensions and unemployment benefit. Unlike TE office which helps the immigrant find employment, KELA helps the already employed citizens who lose jobs or retire to have financial security during times of unemployment (InfoFinland, 2019). It provides the unemployed with social security benefits such as housing subsidy and benefit that are equivalent to the employees' previous salary. However, all the unemployed persons must register with TE office before receiving the unemployment benefits from the KELA.

The model below shows the role of the Diaconia community, TE service and the KELA office in the assistance and integration of the immigrant women. As it shows in the diagram, diaconia act as an intersection and in touch with both TE office and KELA. This means that immigrant women during their search of help and support can be directed to TE service point and Kela office, but if they cannot find support or rejected due to some reasons such as lack of documents or requirements then diaconia could be their last hope. The diaconal work of parishes is based on the principle of love for one's neighbour. Therefore, those in need of help can discuss their situation in confidence with diaconal workers, and participate in various support groups (<http://notes.evl.fi>.)



DIACONIA

- Psychological support
- Networking
- Counseling
- Financial support(coupon)
- Social protection & Inclusion of minority group

Figure 4: Model showing role of Diaconia community, in connection with KELA and TE office in assisting immigrants

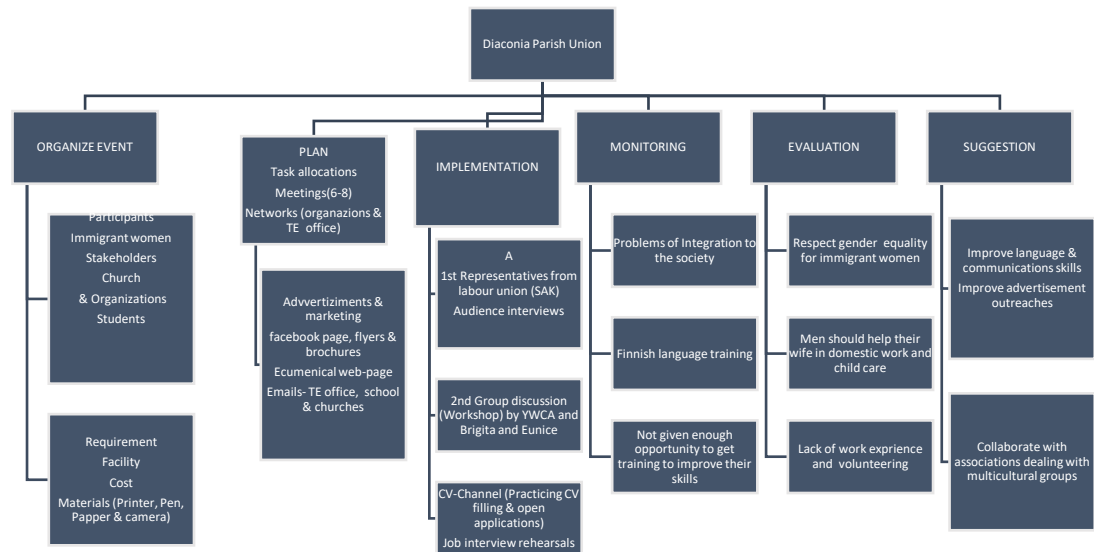
4 METHODS

Project management is the application of initiating, planning, executing, controlling, and closing the work of a team to achieve specific goals and meet specific success criteria at the specified time. Project management has final deliverables that are constrained to a finite timescale and budget.

A key factor that distinguishes project management from just 'management' is that it has this final deliverable and a finite timespan, unlike management which is an ongoing process. Because of this a project professional needs a wide range of skills; often technical skills, and certainly people management skills and good business awareness. The five phases of project management include conception and initiation, planning, execution, performance/monitoring, and project close (Association of Project Management.)

Our project includes developing and implementing a management plan for the project that leading and motivating the project delivery team. We also consider managing the risks, issues and changes on the project and monitoring progress against plan. Managing the project budget and maintaining communications with stakeholders and closing the project in a controlled fashion.

In our project management method, we used the Critical Path Method (CPM). Critical Path Method (CPM) is an algorithm for planning, managing and analyzing the timing of a project. The step-by-step CPM system helps to identify critical and non-critical tasks from projects' start to completion and prevents temporary risks. Critical tasks have a zero run-time reserve. We selected CPM Methods for the benefits of visualizing projects in a clear graphical form and identifies all critical activities that need attention.



According to Bergold and Thomas (2012, 197), the participants in this kind of project development method are mostly individuals who are not professionals since the project is conducted directly with the immediately affected persons. The project development includes the groups of marginalized persons whose views are rarely sought and so their opinions are rarely heard. The participants in the project are groups with little opportunity to assert, justify, and articulate their grievances and interests. It is the guiding principle for the project to strictly involve the persons, groups, and institutions directly affected by the project theme as well as the expected outcomes. The participation in this project method occurs in different degrees guided by the CPM model in which the control and the decisions made in the project are clarified (Bergold and Thomas, 2012, 199.)

The project development was applied in this project to investigate and determine how to empower unemployed immigrant women in Helsinki. The project sought to identify strategies that can be employed to empower the immigrant women of Helsinki economically. The participants were involved in the project to identify the barriers to economic empowerment with special emphasis on employment and seeking new jobs. The main stakeholders in this project included, Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (Suomen Ammattiliittojen Keskusjärjestö - SAK), Ketko and DIAK- Diakonia University of Applied Science. These institutions

were directly involved and affected by the project as each of them plays a major role in the economic empowerment of immigrant women in Helsinki. The marginalized group involved in the project were the immigrant women in Helsinki as they were directly affected by the topic of the project and they stand to benefit from the results of the project. The link between the stakeholder institutions and the affected marginalized group served as an investigation and presentation of social reality by the groups. Group and community meetings were used as the channels for the interpersonal communication among the different stakeholders.

5 EVALUATION OF THE EVENT

The evaluation section includes the aim, process and outcome of the project. Diaconia Parish Union of Helsinki in collaboration with other denominations planned an event which was held during the ecumenical week on October 25th, 2018. The aim was to create awareness and support women with an immigrant background to join the Finnish labour market. Therefore, immigrant women were invited to the event. The idea was also to invite female entrepreneurs to the event to tell the participants how to manage and venture into business. The idea came from few Diaconia workers who saw a need and purpose to form and how to unite all denominations in Finland (Southern Helsinki) to work together in serving the Lord; the planning was started without any cost but with good vision.

The organizers of the event were happy that this was the only year they had foreign immigrant students and women planning together an event that suits the theme of 2018 unemployed immigrant women in Finland. It was good to organize since we have had the same experience of searching job as immigrant women when we came to Finland first time. The process of this product brought the Helsinki Parish Union together with other denominations and organizations to achieve their goal and objective in supporting Immigrant women. We believed that the speech from SAK was beneficial for immigrant women and us as Diaconia students, as it targeted the women's and worker's rights in Finland. The speech includes how to approach the employers and know the work agreement and minimum starting salary when one gets employed. The discussion group was vital that it really helped the immigrant women to express themselves freely, how they needed their men or husbands to help them take care of kids or doing house chores. In doing so, immigrant women get a chance to join the labour market which is sometimes impossible in foreign countries. For the Curriculum Vitae (CV) writing and treasure map groups, many immigrants got to know how to write CV's and did some few job interviews rehearsals for future preparation. The purpose of this product was to reach the target group which was the Immigrant women living in Southern Helsinki. Immigrant women got benefits like encouragement, support information when needed in which they did not know before such as the worker's unions, the process of applying jobs, the support from home or the Finnish system.

5.1 Advertisement and marketing

The main campaign on how to reach immigrant women and girls in Helsinki was done through sending of emails to all the churches. Evangelical Lutheran church was responsible in obtaining all the contacts, putting adverts on church and school notice boards (Valma students), giving out fliers to passersby and those attending churches in order to create awareness of the event. The church also advertises on their normal church notices. Through the ecumenical Finnish page www.vastuuviikko.fi and facebook page that would have been possible to join and where all the facebook friends can like and share too many friends. Also, the Employment and Economic Development office (TE office), service providers were asked to give information to their clients who are unemployed or job seekers women coming to get services.

5.2 Meetings

There were about six meeting to plan the ecumenical responsibility week event. The first meeting of the responsibility week of Southern Helsinki Parishes started on 16th of February 2018 in which we could not attend because we were not yet informed about the event. The theme of the Ecumenical responsibility in 2018 was the rights of women and girls. With the theme covered worthy of human being work and a living wage. The campaign of the week was set in the United Nations the day around 21.10-28.10.2018.

The main debate on a theme was dilemma of free or unpaid labor which is a structural problem in Finland. The important thing is to consider the situation of immigrants, and the employment of the students. In the meeting discussions different Christian denomination was represented, a silent space for praying on behalf of the people. (Many do not know their church existence in Finland), Different ages and genders, different language's agents from different denominations, the representatives of the other religions been invited, in order to be able to find their faith. Anna Hyvärinen typed a brief description of what the

campaign was made of that year. The letter made it easier to approach the institutions and Trade unions.

The meetings and agendas on how to organize the event for 25.10.18 is summarized in table below

TIMETABLE

DATE	TIME	PLACE	TOPIC/TASKS	PARTICIPANTS
10.4.2018	14:00-16:30	Paavali Church	Introduction round of all participants, Information and marketing, choose language for flyers Finnish, Swedish & English.	All members of event committee (deacons, churches, organizations & students)
22.5.18	14.00	Paavali Church	To round up the weeks program for the events on 25.10. Event marketing brochures and see if we were heading to the right direction.	All members of the event (organization, churches & students)
9.8.2018	13:00-16:00	Paavali Church	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Student's Meeting with Tuija Samila(chairperson) - To check what could be done for the event. - planing the practical "flow" of the event. -Arranging different 	Diak students & Deacon + (Pastor Tuija Samila)

			activities.	
22.8.2018	14:00-16:30	Government Church	<p>Checking on divided Responsibility</p> <p>-checking facility and all leader's attendance.</p> <p>-Ecumenical walking organized (Jari)</p> <p>-Checking on the Stakeholders (Francis)</p>	Almost all members present, organizations & students.
9.10.2018	10:00-12:00	Alppilan Kirkko	<p>Final goal of the meeting;</p> <p>-Organize every aspect of checking, verifying and getting ready for the main day event on 25.10.2018.</p>	All members, students and churches leaders
21.10.2018	10.00	Agricolan Kirkko	-Responsible Week church service (English) and coffee	-Anglican church in Finland, Chaplaincy of St. Nicholas's (Helsinki)
21.10.2018	11.00	Andreaskyrkkan Pyhän kolminaisuuden Kirkko	<p>-Opening ceremony</p> <p>-Ecumenical Prayer walking</p>	<p>-Stefan Salonen</p> <p>-Jari Portaankorva</p>
23.10.2018	13.00	St Paul's Church	-Ecumenical Ambassadors visit	Free participation of members and others

			-Worship/church services and coffee	
24.10.2018	Whole Day	Helsinki Cathedral	UN-Day (worship)	Free and open participation
25.10.2018	8:00	Viiiki Church	Responsibility Week prayers	Some of the organizer members
25.10.2018	9:00-12:00	Cultural Center (Caisa)	Ecumenical Event day -Speech from Labour Union representative (SAK) -Group discussion CV- channel & job interview reheasal	All organizers of the event, Diak & Valma students, stakeholders and immigrant women
26.10.2018	9.00	Keulan	-Continue after event -Rights of women and girls -Spirit of the responsible week	-All members - Ambassadors(capital region) of the Ecumenical week
27.10.2018	10:00	Conference Kallio Church	Erupting of flowers	-Elina Koivisto -TuijaSamila -Free for others
28.10.2018	18.00	Ecumenical Nature	-Tuomasmessu & -Closing Ecumenical week event	-Tuija Samila -Free participation for others

5.3 Costs of the Event

Time is the resource and participation, when someone takes their time to attend the planned event for the hours set aside for it to completion was the greatest and valuable thing to the ecumenical week. Without sacrificing the time, we could not have had participants. Equality among participants meant that even though Lutheran is the giant and makes more decisions, smaller denominations would be accommodated, and decisions would be made amicably. Anyone was free to join so long as you were girls and women and who were willing to participate and be part of the responsibility week. This would enable them to meet other women and girls with different careers and ambitions. The participants contributed to making the event a success in so many ways, they were assured of covered place and the event progressed on without interruption. The planning would not have been successful without prayers. Not just prayers, but serious prayers to God to open up ways and bless the whole process and journey of the event. Persons willing to bring snacks at their cost were welcomed with some coffee although it was not in the event's budget, it was voluntary. The planners agreed to print copies on their own to ease the workload using the Church printers.

5.4 Day of the event

During the day of the event, we all converged and had a single meeting in the auditorium, where all the ecumenical participants invited for the responsibility week sat to discuss women empowerment. There was an opening prayer which was conducted by Diaconia pastor who was also acting as a chairperson. A brief introduction of the day's event was made, and guests welcomed followed by presentations. The first presentation was by a representative of the Central Organization of Finnish Trade Unions (SAK). Her speech focused on educating immigrant participants about employment contracts, wages and how taxes were deducted on salaries (more information is on Video 1. <https://youtu.be/OTg1rAHxp6U>)

The second representative was from education youth leader (KETKO), who discussed the yearly courses provided to the youth by their education and how it promote Christian unity on the national as well as on the local levels. The Education Institution serves as a meeting point where a rich diversity of Christians can gather for consultation and common prayer.

The activities of the Education institution focus on ecumenical theology and dialogue, social-ethical issues, spirituality, and common witness. These activities are targeted to Churches and Christians to help them grow stronger and deepen their unity which Jesus Christ through prayer. Though the speech was in Finnish which was the official language more information is available on Video number 2.

Ketko, Voimmasiskot, a Swedish diaconia and catholic priest. [Empowerment \(Voimasisiskot\)Video.](#)

The third presentation was an interview done for the DIAK students Brigita and Eunice that focused on employment experiences and the challenges faced by immigrants. More information is available on video [3Eunice &Bridget](#) <https://youtu.be/ynZ3bpX80XE>

As the day progressed the groups were divided into three sections; the CV'S writing, the women empowerment by Diaconia University of Applied Sciences (Diak) and Power sisters (Voimasisiskot)/Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) and Treasure search group.

5.5 Discussion group

Considering that there were three discussion groups, we only attended to our own Empowerment group which comprised of us (the Diaconia students), Brigita and Eunice with the power sisters Young Women's Association (YWCA). In this group women from different multicultural background introduced themselves, explained the reasons why they are in Finland. The majority cited studies and family ties as the main reason for moving to Finland. The power sister's coordinator started by introducing the topic and narrating how the power sisters group came into existence. Then Brigita and Eunice proceeded to talk about the day's main topic which was empowerment. We had three topics, all in Finnish language already for the

participants to discuss or otherwise give their opinion on how immigrant women can empower themselves in Finland.

The first topic was what do immigrant women need to be Improved or Changed in their lives?

The immigrant women discussed first in two small groups and then their opinions wrote on the big paper in point form. Later the authors described in full sentences. Therefore, gave views that they need equal rights as men. They claimed that during maternity leave period men too can be home longer to take care of the kids and help with the house chores. They further noted that men, especially those from migrant background, tend not to help because of the culture norms and beliefs. The women also claimed that they needed their husbands to pick up children from day cares or school.

The second topic was how do immigrant women get work in Finland?

The consideration in this was mainly the language and especially the Finnish which is officially language. It is a requirement to enable studies, going to school, to get knowledge and skills and to facilitate one in work in the competitive labor market. Language was cited to be boost qualifications especially in the work environment as it was considered to be the only way to get to know the companies that offer jobs directly after completion of studies. Migrants in general should be checking on job adverts and apply for them. One is advised to make as many applications as they can consider the high number of applicants applying for the same job to increase the chances of being employed. Always try to volunteer to get experience and new job skills. Migrant women should look for gender equality especially in the job market and especially in relation to pay. As a matter of fact, no one should be under paid based on their gender.

The third topic was not discussed, the migrant women found it hard to express themselves in Finish. That was what the things that strengthen Women's employment are?

6 DISCUSSION

Based on the views and opinions provided by the participants, it is clear that immigrant women in Finland still face a major challenge that is integrating to the society. Most of the participants' blamed the government for this failure arguing that it was ineffective in activating immigrants. As a result, immigrants are excluded from the labor markets, hence, becoming passive. This challenge is felt more by women who in relation to their male counterparts are prone to other factors. These include religion, culture and to some extent attitude. Although there was evidence of a desire from the participants to engage in economic activities, these factors prohibit them from pursuing such interests. To make matters worse, there is little effort from the government to solve this issue.

Because we have been part of the event organized by Diaconia of Helsinki Parish Union, we have realized that the government was not entirely to blame. The unemployed immigrant women also lacked initiative, information and the right skills and qualifications for formal employment. Most are housewives and the few working were engaged in low-paying menial jobs. However, there still exists a huge gap in the labor market when native and non-natives are compared. This explains the high rate of unemployment among the immigrant women. Notably, the gap was much higher among women with children than among those without. Women with children tend to remain inactive as they focus on home responsibilities. Many are forced into this state by the various incentives provided by the government to stay at home. For instance, the Child Home Care Allowance sets eligible women on a different path from those without children who may tend to seek employment actively. To them, staying home may seem financially advantageous as would be the case if they were in paid employment. Staying at home comes with a number of limitations that may have long-term consequences. These include low exposure to the national language, lack of professional networking, and deterioration of previous skills, all which limit their chances at employment in future.

6.1 Ethical Issues

Considering that we were dealing with people from different backgrounds, there were vital aspects to be considered like privacy. For instance, asking for permission to record or take pictures of the participants. The authors were aware that not everyone attending the event would be ready to show their faces on social media or any active group without permission. Thus, it was the authors' intention to observe the principles of anonymity by ensuring that the participants' names were not mentioned. They also gave their permission to take video but we thought not necessary since it is group discussion, no need to record their voices.

6.2 Challenges

Prior to conducting the project, the authors had developed a SWOT analysis based on the anticipated strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Although the project was successful, we experienced several challenges. To begin with, the project had no external sponsorship which meant that the researchers had to finance it, such as transportation, meals; some of materials like camera (use our own camera). Being students, this was a big challenge. Secondly, the process of determining the research area and a final topic was also challenging. Luckily, we arrived at the current topic through and in cooperation with our thesis supervisor. However, developing content for the final paper proved to be a hard task. The thesis is based on a single event which the researchers participated. Being participants meant that our scope of project development was limited to the sessions and activities in which we took part. Moreover, the sensitivity nature of the topic was limiting. Most of the women in attendance had difficulties in the past and therefore reluctant to open up. As a result, it took a while to convince them otherwise. In the entire process, planning was a major challenge especially when deciding on the areas to prioritize and focus. Lastly, we faced a slight challenge in editing the videos recorded at the event. Considering that we were not professionals in this field, the task had to be outsourced.

6.3 Professional Development

First, it is important to note that taking part in this project and writing this thesis has been a life-changing experience for the authors. Getting a chance to work with

individuals committed and passionate about human welfare was surely a blessing. During the process, we have had the opportunity to learn a lot about the study topic based on real life experiences. This has helped us to re-evaluate ourselves on the opinions about life and to adapt a positive and optimistic attitude of thinking. The experience has been beneficial both personally and professionally. Personally, the authors have learned about the need and importance of social connections and union. However, the project has more professional benefits. First, the authors have developed planning skills. These were crucial to ensure that the set timelines were met. In connection, we developed management skills which include time and resources management.

Being part of the event in general was the biggest lesson in as far as our professional development is concerned. Working with professionals in different fields taught us a lot. For instance, while conducting our discussion during the sessions, we learned how to be confident, patient and how to approach the topics with the participants by supporting and dividing them into small groups which make easy to handle. In addition, we learned the importance of listening, keeping an open mind about issues and problem solving. Considering that we are pursuing a career in social services, being empathetic was a critical lesson to us. More so, the importance of understanding the interpersonal differences when dealing with people. Lastly, we improved our communication skills significantly as a result of engaging with different people with different backgrounds.

6.4 Suggestions and Recommendation

If a similar event was to be implemented in future, there are a few things to take into account. First, there is the issue of language barrier which needs to be addressed before hand. Considering the event under discussion, brochures were supposed to be printed in three languages, but unfortunately ended up being only two Finnish official languages Finnish and Swedish omitting the English. Secondly advertisement was not followed up accordingly and was not widely advertised on social Medias or any church platform to compel the people into attending. This indicates that the management team need to improve in the future as the adverts got to the wrong audience (the Finnish community whereas it was meant for the immigrant women).

Some of the emails were not followed in close due to lack of time regarding that, the responsible person was having other duties to perform. The planners should have asked themselves, where the immigrant people were? And which churches they attended. As a fact immigrant have their own fellowship churches apart from the official Churches like Evangelical Lutheran Church. The TE office would have been vital but the advertisements were not pinned on their notice boards and other means of information such using the clients coming to seek services into TE office were not properly followed. Lastly, there was a change of venue which might have affected the rate of participation. Changing of venue at the last minute has reduced the number of participants, where interested participants missed for not knowing the new venue. One example, during the planning meetings we were informed that about hundred participants from TE office clients were expected but only few showed up. This was a limitation on the part of the planning committee which indicates poor communication. In future, it will be crucial to have proper communication mechanism to avoid such inconveniences.

7 CONCLUSION

Alongside the many hurdles faced by immigrants globally- language barriers, discrimination, unrecognized credentials, economic empowerment remains a challenge. This is especially to the most vulnerable groups which are the children and women. This project sought to investigate the state of immigrant women empowerment in Helsinki, Finland. The project development was conducted at a women-only event organized in the region to address the issue. Findings were that women faced more challenges in accessing economic goods when compared to their male counterparts. The challenges were influenced by religion, culture, and lack of skills, language and to some extent discrimination. Moreover, there were systemic challenges inherent in the country that hindered effective integration. Findings indicate that immigrant women lack support from the government as well as from their families. These were findings derived from the event that were consistent with goals and objectives of the project. Owing to these challenges, there is need for comprehensive policies to facilitate integration considering that the number of immigrants to the country is expected to increase in future. Although the government is implementing programs to ensure this, there is need for collaboration from a wide range of players (churches, advocacy groups, immigrants, the natives and other non-governmental bodies and association dealing with immigrants groups) to aid in formulating strategies based on broad perspectives to ensure long lasting successes. In addition, there is need to focus on the vulnerable groups (the women in particular) by empowering them to participate in economic activities.

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