



Master of Arts
in European Studies

Challenges and Solutions:
CSOs' Support for
Ukrainian Refugees in Labor Market Integration
in Sweden

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Abstract

In this thesis, I discuss the difficulties Ukrainian refugees face in accessing and integrating into the Swedish labor market, the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Sweden with regard to the labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees, and the policy hindrance and CSOs' limitation in achieving their goal for Ukrainian refugees. This thesis gathers qualitative data using semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian refugees, CSO and municipality representatives, followed by a thematic analysis of the data. The results of the analysis show that the difficulties that Ukrainian refugees face in their new country are related to both a lack of human capital—such as knowledge of the language, education, and work experience—and a lack of social capital—such as connections to the local population and Ukrainian communities. The shortage of both types of capital can result in poor mental conditions, making it difficult for refugees to look for employment and integrate into the local labor market. To cope with the issues, CSOs provide a range of activities and services that cater to the needs of refugees by adopting flexible and tailored approaches. The potential for refugee integration in the labor market, however, is also negatively impacted by unfavorable policies and legislation in terms of employment support and refugees' legal status, as well as the restrictive nature of CSOs' experiences and know-how.

Keywords: Ukrainian refugees, Civil society organizations (CSOs), Labor market integration, Human and social capital, Semi-structured interviews.

Abbreviations:

CSO: Civil Society Organization

TPD: Temporary Protection Directive

EU: European Union

OECD: Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development

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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of the large-scale aggression of Russia against Ukraine on 24th of February 2022, nearly 4 million refugees registered for temporary protection in the EU, including Sweden.¹ According to demographic data published by Statista, around 52,000 refugees from Ukraine arrived in Sweden through the EU Temporary Protection Directive (TPD) until February 2023.² These new arrivals, who are granted temporary protection status, have the right to work in Sweden, but face various challenges in accessing and integrating into the labor market. Labor market integration is crucial not only for the refugees' economic survival and independence but also for further enhancing their skills to reconstruct Ukraine when they wish to return.³ However, the case of Sweden tackling the influx of Ukrainian refugees and their integration challenges is not the only case, similar situations are also happening throughout Europe. A report from OECD also poses the overall problems that Ukrainians face in the labor market in Europe. The report shows that, except for English, only few Ukrainian refugees are identified with a good level of other non-Slavic language skills. In relation to working skills, the study indicates that a lack of language hampers the possibility of fully utilizing their skill potential in the labor market.⁴ Notwithstanding the fact presented by OECD, that a substantial number of Ukrainian refugees have found jobs in Europe, there are still highly visible problems in job skills mismatching and overqualification in the labor market.⁵ Therefore, the challenges of labor market integration are not merely a particular problem happening in Sweden, but the challenges emerge across Europe as well.

Sweden is one of the EU member states, so it is bound by the TPD. Although the TPD establishes baseline requirements, it also gives member states the authority to set higher levels of protection with the directive's requirements, while taking into consideration their own national conditions and policies.⁶ In terms of the right to enter the Swedish labor

¹ European Council, "Refugee inflow from Ukraine."

² Statista, "Number of asylum applicants from refugees from Ukraine."

³ OECD, "What we know about the skills and early labor market outcomes."

⁴ OECD, "What we know about the skills and early labor market outcomes."

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ SIEPS, "Temporary Protection for Ukrainians in the EU: A Brief Introduction."

market, Sweden gives Ukrainian refugees the right to work immediately after they are granted a residence permit and also recommends registering at the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen) for job-seeking support.⁷ However, unlike other European countries that provide basic introduction programs, such as language studies, work-related education and training, which is fundamental for preparing refugees for socioeconomic integration, no particular integration measures are provided by the Swedish government, only a community education online course provided by the Swedish Migration Agency.⁸ For Swedish language training, Sweden did not provide the state-funded language course, Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), for Ukrainian refugees at a national level until recently, as the government announced new funding for municipalities to provide SFI for Ukrainian refugees.⁹ Instead, Folkuniversitetet, a civil society organization in Sweden, offers both language courses and work-related education.¹⁰ Fortunately, Folkuniversitetet is not the only civil society organization that helps refugees, several CSOs funded by European Social Fund (ESF) under the “Care” project have provided diverse labor market integration courses for Ukrainian refugees.¹¹ A study from Nordregio shows that only 16% of the unemployed found a job through a formal channel, such as Arbetsförmedlingen. In contrast, around 70% eventually found work via informal channels, such as networks provided by civil society in Sweden.¹² A previous study also indicates that CSOs play an important role in supporting refugees and immigrants in their entry into the labor market.¹³ Therefore, by presenting the CSOs’ attempt to fill in the governmental gap, I would like to discover what are the roles of CSOs acting in the labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees and whether CSOs can manage the governmental gap.

Overall, the influx of Ukrainian refugees to Europe poses significant challenges to the integration of refugees into European societies, including the labor market. Sweden’s

⁷ Arbetsförmedlingen, “Are you from Ukraine and looking for work?”

⁸ Nordic Council of Ministers, “Implementation of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine.”

⁹ Radio Sweden, “Government to fund SFI classes for Ukrainian refugees.”

¹⁰ Nordic Council of Ministers, “Implementation of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine.”

¹¹ Svenska ESF-rådet, “Care.”

¹² Nordregio, “Policies and measures for speeding up labor market integration.”

¹³ Numerato, Čada and Hořeni, “CSOs and labor market integration,” 83.

experience with Ukrainian refugees highlights the crucial role that CSOs play in supporting the integration process when government support is limited. The situation in Sweden is just one example of what is happening throughout Europe, and it demonstrates the need for a coordinated and comprehensive approach to refugee integration across the EU. This potentially reflects the EU's commitment to providing protection to those fleeing conflict and persecution, but also poses significant challenges to the economic integration of refugees into European societies.

1.1 Research Questions

Studying the current phenomenon of Ukrainian refugees' labor market integration into the host country with the mediation from CSOs is of interest to my research. Through a review of existing literature, it has been identified that no prior research has been conducted on the specific topic in Sweden, thus signifying a research gap in the field.

My thesis aims to explore the challenges and opportunities of labor market integration for Ukrainian refugees in Sweden, associated with the efforts of CSOs in the process. Based on the existing scholarship and analysis of semi-structured interviews with Ukrainian refugees and CSO representatives, the paper presents the challenges of labor market integration for Ukrainian refugees and the ways in which CSOs are involved, how they support refugees in tackling the challenges, and what are the limits of their empowerment. Specifically, the paper addresses the following research questions:

(1) What are the challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in accessing and integrating into the labor market in Sweden?

(2) What are the roles of CSOs in accessing and integrating Ukrainian refugees into the labor market in Sweden and how can CSOs achieve these roles?

(3) What are the limits and hindrances for CSOs in integrating Ukrainian refugees into the labor market?

1.2 Concept Definition and Delimitation

There are a variety of concepts used in this paper. Some of the ideas can be connected to various theoretical viewpoints. Thus, to assure coherent comprehension of the following reading, this chapter will define the terms “refugees”, “civil society organization,” and “labor market integration”.

1.2.1 Refugees

Based on the book *Key Concepts in Migration*, refugees are defined as “migrants who have left their countries and request international protection on account of persecution, war or other factors that put their lives at risk”. Thus, because of substantial disturbance in refugees’ current circumstances, refugees have experienced violence or at least the threat of it.¹⁴ In this thesis, I will merely study Ukrainian refugees who came to Sweden due to the Russian aggression on Ukraine in 2022, and who have experiences of CSOs from the day they arrived in Sweden.

1.2.2 Civil Society Organization

A civil society organization is a group of individuals that operates independently of government authorities and works to serve the general interest through a democratic process. They play a mediating role between public authorities and citizens and are recognized by the European Union as an important component of good governance.¹⁵ These organizations include social actors such as trade unions, employers’ groups, non-governmental organizations, and grassroots organizations such as youth and family groups.¹⁶ In this research, I study CSOs that provide support for Ukrainian refugees willing to integrate into the labor market in Sweden.

1.2.3 Labor Market Integration

According to the source from Migration and Home Affairs from the European Commission, labor market integration is defined as the degree to which migrants will utilize their

¹⁴ Bartram, V. Poros, and Monforte, *Key Concepts in Migration*, 107.

¹⁵ European Commission, “Civil society: European Commission announces new funding opportunities.”

¹⁶ European Union, “Civil society organization.”

abilities and reach their economic potential in order to participate in the labor market on an equal footing with citizens of EU Member States.¹⁷ Labor market integration is also one of the crucial aspects of assisting refugees in integrating to the host society.¹⁸ In Sweden, labor market policy seeks to ensure that all able-bodied individuals have access to employment opportunities, meanwhile, seeking to establish stability and transitional opportunities in the labor market.¹⁹ In the following chapter, a more detailed definition and explanation of the labor market integration of refugees, and how CSOs influence the process of integration will be presented.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis aims to use the example of Sweden to shed light on the general challenges faced by Ukrainian refugees in Europe. Also, the thesis presents the role of Swedish CSOs in the process of helping Ukrainian refugees. By presenting the Swedish CSO as an example, the thesis also takes into account the European context of labor market integration of refugees under CSOs' actions.

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research questions and the definition and delimitation of refugees, CSOs, and labor market integration. Chapter 2 provides a review of the previous research on labor market integration of refugees and civil society engagement. Chapter 3 presents the background of the general reception of Ukrainian refugees in the Swedish labor market and CSOs in Sweden. Chapter 4 offers the theoretical framework which includes the concept of human capital and social capital and their applications in migration studies. Chapter 5 introduces the research methods and data, my approach to the analysis, and the consideration of the validity, reliability, and ethical issues. Chapter 6 analyzes the data and presents the challenges of Ukrainian refugees in labor market integration, illustrates different assistance provided by CSOs, the hindrance of policies, and the limitation of CSOs. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings, reflects on the limitations, and sheds light on future research and policymaking.

¹⁷ European Commission, "Labor market integration."

¹⁸ European Parliament, "Labor market integration of asylum-seekers and refugees."

¹⁹ Government offices of Sweden, "Labor market."

2. Previous Research

This chapter aims to provide an overview of the previous research on the labor market integration of refugees and how CSOs influence the integration process.

2.1 Barriers to Labor Market Integration for Refugees

The issue of refugees and their integration into host societies has been a topic of interest for academics. Labor market integration of refugees is an important aspect of their integration to host societies since employment is refugees' main source of income to make a living.²⁰ This section aims to provide an overview of existing research on the labor market integration of refugees by presenting the external challenges and refugees' internal factors that hinder the integration into host societies' labor market.

2.1.1 The External Obstacles

Many scholars highlight the external barriers and difficulties that refugees face in integrating into the labor market: precarious legal status, difficulties in human capital transfer, and labor market discrimination. Subsequent paragraphs are dedicated to the individual explanation of each difficulty.

Previous findings discover that the refugees' precarious and temporary legal status inhibits a successful labor market integration which increases the uncertainty of job-seeking situations for refugees. Khan-Gökkaya and Mösko (2020) highlight that all refugees in Germany are prohibited from working for the first three months and their choices to participate in the labor market are determined by their residency status after three months; however, their access to language courses and vocational trainings depends on their legal status.²¹ Barbiano di Belgiojoso (2019) argues that because of the temporary status the migrants have in the host country, they prioritize increasing their income, regardless of their occupational status and their social standing in the host country.²² Dustmann et al. (2017) also feature on the negative effect the temporary legal status might bring to the

²⁰ OECD/European Union, "Immigrant skills and labour market integration," 63.

²¹ Khan-Gökkaya and Mösko, "Labor Market Integration of Refugee," 106.

²² Barbiano di Belgiojoso, "The Occupational (Im)Mobility of Migrants in Italy," 1574.

refugees. Due to the unpredictable situation in their home countries and temporary legal protection in the host countries, refugees tend to have less motivation in developing the human capital particular to the host country, such as learning the official languages, which will slowly make their way to the labor market in jeopardy.²³

Another barrier that scholars find is the difficulties in the transferability of human capital of refugees. Schultz (1961) describes the attributes of an individual, such as knowledge, experience, training, etc., that contribute to that person's capacity to benefit society and the economy are referred to as human capital.²⁴ Chiswick et al. (2003) state that refugees have low adaptability in working in the host country if they left the country without planning. Among the refugees, skilled professionals such as lawyers, judges, and military officers from the country of origin are less likely to transfer their human capital internationally since they did not plan the leaving and have little choice of which countries to go to.²⁵ Rooth and Ekberg (2006) compare refugees to economic migrants, in that they have higher chances to learn and develop suitable human capital for the labor market of the host country before they leave the country of origin, since they can choose the destination countries autonomously and equip themselves with the labor market information, which refugees do not possess.²⁶

The last challenge is labor market discrimination of the host countries towards refugees. According to Fossati and Liechti (2020), being refugees already places them at the end of the hiring queue owing to their disadvantaged situation of human and social capital compared to other migrants' groups in the host country's labor market.²⁷ Vogiazides and Mondani (2018) find that the Middle Eastern and North African refugees are less likely to seek the first job than European refugees in Sweden.²⁸ Liebig and Tronstad (2018) turn their attention to gender-based discrimination. They highlight that refugee women have particularly low employment rates due to challenges such as low education, lack of

²³ Dustmann et al, "On the Economics and Politics of Refugee Migration," 529-530.

²⁴ Schultz, "Investment in Human Capital," 9.

²⁵ Chiswick, Lee, and Miller, "Patterns of Immigrant Occupational Attainment in a Longitudinal Survey," 51.

²⁶ Rooth and Ekberg, "Occupational Mobility for Immigrants in Sweden," 60.

²⁷ Fossati and Liechti, "Integrating Refugees through Active labor Market Policy," 604.

²⁸ Vogiazides and Mondani, "A Geographical Path to Integration?" 39.

language knowledge, family obligations, childbearing and so on.²⁹

2.1.2 The Internal Obstacles

The internal factors of refugees that hinder their labor market integration are also discussed by numerous scholars. In general, the refugees' own obstructions are the lack of human capital and social networks in the host country and traumatic personal experiences. Each of the obstructions will be discussed in detail in the paragraphs that follow.

Zwysen (2019) emphasizes the significance of human capital in the host country, notably comparable work or education credentials, and language abilities. The outcomes of acquiring human capital enhance migrants' productivity, which raises their chances of landing better positions.³⁰ Dustmann (2002) focuses on language capital particularly and finds out that a small share of refugees have a good knowledge of other host countries' languages, but the language proficiency of the host country is crucial to the labor market integration for temporary migrants.³¹ According to a study by De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010), refugees who have a host country's education have the potential to enhance economic integration and have a positive effect on economic outcomes.³² They also suggest that having prior employment experience in the host country is essential for refugees integrating into the labor market, increasing refugees' chances of remaining in their current job position or facilitating refugees to climb up the occupational ladder.³³ However, due to the fact that refugees are displaced migrants who usually did not prepare for acquiring the host country's human capital, investing in refugees' human capital, such as training in the host country's language and providing work-related knowledge in the host country, is crucial for refugees to integrate into the labor market and strengthen the economy of their host country.

Social capital is another factor that refugees are short of upon their arrival but can

²⁹ Liebig and Tronstad, "Triple Disadvantage?" 24-30.

³⁰ Zwysen, "Different Patterns of Labor Market Integration," 66.

³¹ Dustmann, "Temporary Migration, Human Capital, and Language Fluency of Migrants," 297.

³² De Vroome and Van Tubergen, "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands," 378.

³³ *Ibid*, 397.

empower the labor market integration of refugees. Cheung and Phillimore (2013) find out that access to employment is negatively impacted by the absence of social networks. Gericke et al. (2018) shift the study focus to investigate how different types of social capital impact the early stage of refugees' labor market integration process. They suggest both bonding social capital (refugees contact friends or acquaintances with the same nationality or ethnic background) and bridging social capital (refugees contact friends or acquaintances with different nationality or ethnic backgrounds) are both quintessential for refugees accessing the labor market.³⁴ De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010) add to this point that due to the fact that natives from the host countries have been staying and exploring for a longer period of time, some of whom are also better educated and better employed, this makes bridging social capital particularly important to refugees due to its ability to create a shortcut to navigate and obtain careers.³⁵

Last but not least is the general well-being of refugees. Mental health, in particular, is an inner factor determining refugees' performance in the labor market. Mottaghi (2018) stresses the significance of mental health. She explains that refugees are traumatized by the conflict and war where they might develop or still experience mental health issues after being relocated to the host country. Without immediate identification and treatment, refugees suffer from emotional stress, leading to a poor physical condition that results in low productivity and low motivation in seeking a job or working.³⁶

The external obstacles and internal barriers are not separately affecting refugees' integration process, they also correlate and interact with one another. From the study of Collini (2022), investigating unfavorable policy frameworks regarding immigrants' regularization procedure, the migrants are much easier to access the low-skilled jobs generated by occupational segregation, resulting in discrimination, low motivation in improving human capital, or being stuck in the limbo of only getting informal and unstable

³⁴ Gericke et al., "How Do Refugees Use Their Social Capital for Successful Labor Market Integration?" 52-54.

³⁵ De Vroome and Van Tubergen, "The Employment Experience of Refugees in the Netherlands," 380.

³⁶ Mottaghi, "Investing in Refugees: Building Human Capital," 34.

employment.³⁷

2.2 Civil Society Engagement

In terms of the CSOs' relation to labor market integration, Numerato et al. (2023) highlight that CSOs play an active role in labor market integration by assisting refugees in their labor market entry, developing their linguistic and professional skills, and assisting them in resolving tough social, economic, and mental situations. They perform a wide range of services and extend the state's integration policies for the integration of the labor market.³⁸ When it comes to what exact measures that CSOs can provide, Bagavos and Kourachanis (2022) summarize that language courses, job skill development training, and employability programs are the majority of the integration services that CSOs offer.³⁹ Numerato et al. (2023) explain why CSOs are able to integrate refugees into the labor market in the host country efficiently. First, CSOs are supported by state policies and funding materially and financially. Secondly, CSOs also extract resources and funding from national and international CSOs. These relations build reciprocal networks among themselves. Besides the support from external powers, the nature of CSOs also needs to be addressed. Numerato et al. (2023) illustrate that CSOs are more flexible and less bureaucratic since they operate independently of the control of the government and the private sector. Besides, CSOs can be highly personalized to solve refugees' specific problems and understand their personal needs. This personalized approach benefits refugees' psychological state and boosts their confidence in seeking jobs.⁴⁰ Thus, with the advantages of external support and internal quality, CSOs are well-positioned to contribute to the development of the labor market.

In recent research, academics have meticulously investigated the boundaries of CSOs. According to Numerato et al. (2023), external intervention from governmental policies and restrictions on state funding can hamper the collaboration within the CSOs and hinder the

³⁷ Collini, "The Role of Civil Society Organisations," 898.

³⁸ Numerato, Čada and Hořeni, "CSOs and labor market integration," 83.

³⁹ Bagavos and Kourachanis, "CSOs and labor Market Integration for Refugees," 896.

⁴⁰ Numerato, Čada and Hořeni, "CSOs and labor market integration," 86-90.

contribution of CSOs to labor market integration goals.⁴¹ Additionally, since CSOs receive national funding, the agenda and the scope of their offered services might be affected by the funders' opinions. When CSOs are sponsored by government funding, they may be utilized as a tool for tracking and surveillance of the migrant communities, as demonstrated by Numerato et al.(2023).⁴² In addition to the external barriers, the internal hurdles inside civil society organizations are also listed in the research of Numerato et al. (2023) CSOs might only prioritize giving professional assistance to refugees but neglect the engagement of refugees in day-to-day interactions, which can result in excluding and othering towards the refugee communities. Additionally, not all CSOs can provide flawless and comprehensive services since some may lack specialized expertise and know-how.⁴³

3. Background

This chapter presents an overview of the situation of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden. Specifically, the chapter discusses the integration measures that are in place for Ukrainian refugees, the experiences of Ukrainian refugees in the Swedish labor market, the role of CSOs in supporting refugees in Sweden, and the EU supporting channel for CSOs.

3.1 The Response of Europe

Since the war, the great majority of Ukrainian people settled temporarily in EU member states neighboring Ukraine, and around 52,325 Ukrainian people decided to move on further to Sweden seeking humanitarian help.⁴⁴ There is also a significant gap in the imbalanced population of Ukrainian women and men refugees in Sweden and Europe due to the rules from the Ukrainian government that men between 18 and 60 years old cannot leave Ukraine. The number of registered female refugees is more than double compared to male refugees in Sweden.⁴⁶

The European Union swiftly responded to the Russian invasion of Ukraine and sought

⁴¹ Ibid, 91.

⁴² Ibid, 92-93.

⁴³ Ibid, 96-96.

⁴⁴ SIEPS, "The Ukrainian Refugee Situation."

⁴⁵ UNHCR, "Ukraine refugee situation."

⁴⁶ SSRN, "Migrants from Ukraine and Belarus."

ways to allocate war-affected people from Ukraine. On the same day when the aggression began, the European Council held a meeting where leaders of the European Union affirmed their unwavering support for Ukraine and its people and asked the European Commission to offer emergency measures. The TPD implementation was suggested by the European Commission on March 3rd, 2022.⁴⁷ The goal was to enable EU Member States to respond swiftly to the needs of those seeking emergency protection and prevent massive allocation of displaced people from overloading national asylum systems.⁴⁸ At the policy level, the directive applies to three categories: Ukrainian citizens who have lived in Ukraine; Persons with residence permits as a refugee or have subsidiary protection status in Ukraine; and Persons who are accompanying family members of the above two categories.⁴⁹ Those who have fled the war are eligible for temporary protection from the European Union for a period of one year, which can also be extended for up to three years. However, it is not known what will take place when the temporary protection period ends.⁵⁰ In response to the Ukrainian crisis, the Swedish government has received Ukrainians in accordance with the EU directive on Temporary Protection.⁵¹ A person who has been granted a temporary residence permit in Sweden has the right to get help with accommodation, the right to urgent health care, the right to have education for children, the right to work, and certain financial support.⁵²

However, several questions have emerged in terms of Ukrainian refugees' future in Sweden. Compared to other Nordic countries, such as Denmark, Finland, and Norway, government integration introductory programs are not available in Sweden. For instance, Ukrainian refugees don't have access to the introductory language courses in Swedish for immigrants (SFI), and other vocational adult education is not available for refugees from Ukraine. The Swedish Migration Agency has introduced a community education course, but it is only available online. Furthermore, in terms of financial assistance, the Ukrainian refugees

⁴⁷ SIEPS, "The Ukrainian Refugee Situation."

⁴⁸ European Parliament, "Temporary Protection Directive."

⁴⁹ Migrationsverket, "Information regarding the situation in Ukraine."

⁵⁰ NordForsk, "Ukrainian refugees and the Nordics."

⁵¹ Nordic Council of Ministers, "Implementation of temporary protection for refugees from Ukraine."

⁵² Migrationsverket, "Ukraine."

receive a daily allowance of about 71 SEK per adult per day without meals and 24 SEK per adult per day with meals, ranking the lowest among the Nordic countries.⁵³ Even though refugees from Ukraine have the right to work immediately after they are granted a temporary residence permit, no labor market integration measures have been designed for refugees. For accessing health care, only urgent primary health care and dental care are provided to Ukrainian refugees. Unlike people with refugee status or subsidiary protection status in Sweden, Ukrainian refugees' temporary protection status is renewed every year so that they cannot register in the Swedish Population Registration and do not receive a personal identity number (personnummer). However, a personal identity number in Sweden is often needed in everyday life and not having one makes integration more difficult.⁵⁴ Considering all the listed situations above, if the refugees from Ukraine can only receive help at the national level, they will only be able to stay in Sweden for a short period and might continue a turbulent and unstable living situation even away from the war area. In general, Sweden is lacking measures to promote integration for refugees from Ukraine at a national level, compared to other Nordic countries.⁵⁵

3.2 Ukrainian Refugees in Swedish Labor Market

This section explains what the demographic characteristics of current Ukrainian refugees is, and what is the job situation for the previous Ukrainian refugees in Sweden from the historical view.

The existing reports show that the Ukrainian general mobilization curtails most males aged 18 to 60 from leaving the country. Consequently, most women with children and some elderly people, but very few men of working age, have fled from Ukraine. Consequently, at least 70 percent of adults are female, and more than one-third of refugees are children in all host countries.⁵⁶ In terms of education level, current data shows that a great proportion of Ukrainian refugees, compared to other refugee groups, have a university education, and are

⁵³ Nordic Council of Ministers, "Nordic countries."

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ OECD, "The potential contribution of Ukrainian refugees."

also more highly educated than the general Ukrainian population. Two-thirds of Ukrainian refugees have a college or university education, with the majority holding a master's degree or higher, according to online data collected by the OECD in several EU countries. Approximately one-ninth of the refugees reported having completed vocational education and training programs. Only a very few of the respondents (around 8 percent) had only completed secondary school.⁵⁷ Therefore, the general demographic picture of Ukrainian refugees is mostly women of working age who have high education levels.

In the case of Sweden, it is certainly not the first time that Sweden has received refugees and immigrants from Ukraine. According to sources from Statistics Sweden (SCB), the number of refugees and immigrants from Ukraine increased almost every year until the pandemic year 2020. The number of Ukrainians in Sweden has increased from 1200 people at the end of 1999 to 12,900 in 2021. According to the investigation from SCB, 89 percent of Ukrainians are in the range of working age until the end of 2021.⁵⁸ Consistent with the above source from OECD, researchers find that those who previously came from Ukraine are well integrated into the Swedish labor market. They are involved in different types of service companies, also companies that focus on agriculture and manufacturing, which can contribute to those who just came to Sweden in February of 2022 by using their social network.⁵⁹ In the context of Europe, before the 2022 Russian invasion, by the end of 2020, 1.35 million Ukrainians held valid residence permits in EU countries, making them the third largest group of third-country nationals in the EU, as reported by the OECD.⁶⁰ Many refugees have family or friends already living in EU countries who can help them settle in and look for employment, and this enormous Ukrainian diaspora can be an invaluable resource for the current refugees. Even if the refugees do not know anyone personally who is living abroad, they can still rely on the social network of their compatriots.⁶¹

⁵⁷ OECD, "What we know about the skills and early labor market outcomes of refugees from Ukraine."

⁵⁸ SCB, "Liten grupp ukrainare i Sverige före kriget."

⁵⁹ SSRN, "Migrants from Ukraine and Belarus Living in Sweden Before the War."

⁶⁰ OECD, "The potential contribution of Ukrainian refugees."

⁶¹ Ibid.

3.3 CSOs in Sweden

CSOs in Sweden were actively involved in voicing the rights of the diversity of ethnic and religious groups. In 1975, Sweden adopted an official policy of multiculturalism, which included respecting ethnic and religious diversity as demonstrated by minority cultural associations. Continuing the norm of being multicultural and open-minded, CSOs in Sweden demonstrate a high level of civic engagement.⁶² Swedish government recognizes the crucial role of civil society in the implementation of introduction and integration programs. In 2010, the government introduced a policy specifically focused on involving CSOs in the provision of social services. Recently, an agreement was reached between the government and the CSOs, emphasizing the significant role of civil society in promoting integration efforts.⁶³ Several sources have also indicated that CSOs, such as the Red Cross, refugee councils, local congregations, and sports clubs, have played a vital role in promoting the inclusion of newcomers to Sweden, without which it would not have been possible.⁶⁴ When the so-called migrant crisis hit Europe in 2015, the participation of civil society in the integration and reception of asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden intensified. The government's official report identifies two primary categories of civil society engagement: immediate assistance to asylum seekers upon arrival by providing clothing, food, drinks, medicines, transportation, and temporary accommodation; and facilitating integration through language training and study groups that introduce asylum seekers to Swedish society. The government also provided grants to CSOs to facilitate and support.⁶⁵

Since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, CSOs in Sweden acted instantly to support those fleeing Ukraine. One of the examples is through developing an online platform "A Safe Start in Sweden". The platform offers secure temporary housing and assistance in communicating with public authorities for refugees who have recently arrived from

⁶² Nordic Council of Ministers, "Learning to live in a new Country."

⁶³ Osanami Törngren, Öberg and Righard, "The role of civil society," 15-16.

⁶⁴ Nordic Council of Ministers, "Civil society and integration."

⁶⁵ Nordic Council of Ministers, "Implementation."

Ukraine, during their initial integration phase in Sweden.⁶⁶ While state-funded courses like “Swedish from day one”, which is provided by adult education organizations like Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (ABF) are also available to Ukrainian refugees.⁶⁷ Besides state-funded programs, CSOs in Sweden can also seek funding from European Social Fund (ESF) if they plan to take initiatives for helping Ukrainian refugees’ social and economic integration. For instance, Folkuniversitetet has launched a program named “Work for Ukrainians” for free in multiple locations throughout Sweden. The program offers individual coaching, skills assessment, language training, skills improvement and validation, and assistance in finding suitable employment opportunities for participants.⁶⁸ Therefore, CSOs are using various funding sources by designing and implementing activities and services in developing refugees’ language skills and working knowledge of the Swedish labor market.

3.4 The EU Aid

The European dimension, in the study of Ukrainian refugees’ way to the labor market in Sweden, is significant as it highlights the role of the European Union in addressing social and economic challenges in member states. The European Social Fund (ESF)⁶⁹, which is Europe’s main instrument for supporting jobs, investing in human capital, and ensuring fairer job opportunities for all EU citizens, is actively supporting Sweden’s efforts to help Ukrainian refugees find work and become socially involved.⁷⁰

The Swedish ESF Council’s called for SEK 435 million for funding local actors in helping Ukrainian refugees in June 2022. This initiative is called “Care”, which demonstrates the EU’s efforts to support the member states in addressing social and economic needs of vulnerable groups. The “Care” supported 38 projects overall for Ukrainian refugees in Sweden to acquire new skills, better access to training and job opportunities, and in becoming more socially involved. Because “Care” has brought changes and positive

⁶⁶ European Union, “Sweden civil society.”

⁶⁷ Nordic Council of Ministers, “Implementation.”

⁶⁸ Folkuniversitetet, “Work for Ukrainians.”

⁶⁹ European Commission, “European Social Fund.”

⁷⁰ Ibid.

effects to support Ukrainian refugees, the Swedish ESF Council called for “Care 2” from December 2022 to involve more organizations to contribute to Ukrainian refugees being employed in the Swedish labor market.⁷¹

Furthermore, both calls include local, regional, and national participation, highlighting the EU’s commitment to promoting development and cohesion at all levels. The call is open to organizations from civil society, state authorities, regions, municipalities, companies, or other actors with opportunities to reach the target group, emphasizing the EU’s efforts to support collaboration among different stakeholders to address complex social and economic challenges.⁷² Two of the CSOs that were interviewed for this study are part of the Care 2 calls, funded by the European social fund.

4. Theoretical Framework

This chapter focuses on contemporary theoretical ideas of “capital” in migration studies. This is the ground for my analysis presented in Chapter 6. The first section provides the notion of capital and two forms of capital: human capital and social capital. This part is followed by presenting their applications in migration studies. These two capitals form a theoretical framework to investigate the challenges Ukrainian refugees are facing, how they tackle those challenges, and what kinds of help are provided by CSOs. Lastly, a conclusion with the main points from this chapter is indicated, in addition to an explanation of how the theoretical ideas are relevant and helpful for my study.

4.1 The Notions and Forms of Capital

The concept of capital from Karl Marx is influential. He criticizes capital as a social relation of exploitation.⁷³ Pierre Bourdieu, on the other hand, extends the notion of capital from Marxism’s economic angle to cultural and symbolic perspectives.⁷⁴ In his essay *The Forms of Capital*, Pierre Bourdieu defines capital as “accumulated labor”. This

⁷¹ Svenska ESF, “Fortsatta insatser till flyktingar från Ukraina.”

⁷² Svenska ESF, “2022/00552 - Care 2.”

⁷³ Desan, “Does Bourdieu “Extend” Marx’s Concept of Capital?” 201.

⁷⁴ Ibid, 199.

“accumulated labor” can be “materialized” or “embodied”. He suggests “... when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (1986).⁷⁵ This means capitals are valuable resources that can be used by people to gain advantages and influence within society. Besides the economic capital, Bourdieu also presents cultural capital and social capital.⁷⁶ In the following sections, both human and social capital are introduced in a broad sense.

4.1.1 Human Capital and Social Capital

The notion of human capital should be traced back to Adam Smith. He indicates “The acquisition of ... talents during ... education, study, or apprenticeship, costs a real expense, which is capital in [a] person. Those talents [are] part of his fortune [and] likewise that of society”.⁷⁷ The notion of human capital was widely used and studied during the 1950s to 1960s with the research of Theodore Schultz and Gary Becker.⁷⁸ Human capital, as described by Theodore Schultz (1961), consists of individual inherent qualities, such as knowledge, experience, and training, which contribute to personal capacity of benefiting the society and economy.⁷⁹ Schultz’s great contribution to human capital is that he includes human capital in the generalizations of capital concepts for the first time.⁸⁰ Schultz further studies the means of human capital formation, the investment in education, and the contribution of education to economic growth.⁸¹ In addition to Schultz’s contribution, Gary S. Becker systematically extends a microscopic analysis of human capital to a wide scope of human behavior and interaction.⁸² Becker stresses the accumulation of investing in education and training: “Education and training are the most important investment in human capital” (1993).⁸³ He examines the role of education and

⁷⁵ Bourdieu, “The Forms of Capital,” 241.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 242.

⁷⁷ Goldin, “Human Capital,” 55.

⁷⁸ Becker, “Foreword by Gary S. Becker,” xiii.

⁷⁹ Schultz, “Investment in Human Capital,” 9.

⁸⁰ Bowman, “On Theodore W. Schultz’s Contributions to Economics.” 86.

⁸¹ Ibid, P92.

⁸² Krasniqi, “The Importance of Investment in Human Capital: Becker, Schultz and Heckman,” 5.

⁸³ Gary S. Becker, *Human Capital*, 17.

training in influencing differences in salaries across workers.⁸⁴

In terms of social capital, it is essential to acknowledge Pierre Bourdieu's achievement in defining social capital. Bourdieu divides the forms of capital into economic, cultural, and social capital, focusing on the distinction and interaction between each capital.⁸⁵ As for social capital, he defines it as an "aggregate of the actual or potential resources". These "resources" are linked to "networks of institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (1986).⁸⁶ Nan Lin (2004) puts forward the theory of social capital through the study of social networks. In his book *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action*, Lin defines the notion of social capital as "investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace".⁸⁷ He suggests that social networks and relationships can be valuable resources for individuals in accessing employment opportunities and integrating into the labor market. In contrast with the concept of human capital, Lin includes the accumulation of resources that can also be emerging from interactions with others.⁸⁸ Robert D. Putman classifies bonding and bridging social capital based on the interactions with homogeneous or heterogeneous groups. He suggests bonding is the process of forging connections with like-minded individuals. It exists in a relatively homogeneous internal network. In contrast, bridging is interactions between heterogeneous groups, where people share different values and norms.⁸⁹

Both human capital and social capital are instrumental in analyzing refugees' struggles in language, work experience and skills, education and building networks when they displace to a host country. However, both capitals are interrelated and can influence one another. Coleman (1988) examines the role of social capital as an influence on the development of human capital.⁹⁰ For this reason, the analysis of this thesis adopts these two capitals in illustrating how CSOs help Ukrainian refugees in accessing and integrating into the

⁸⁴ Ibid, 19.

⁸⁵ Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital," 242.

⁸⁶ Ibid, 248.

⁸⁷ Lin, *Social Capital*, 19.

⁸⁸ Ibid, 19.

⁸⁹ Warren, "Bad Social Capital," 133.

⁹⁰ Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital," 95.

Swedish labor market by focusing on their accumulation of human and social capital and stressing the intrinsic relation among them.

4.2 Applications in Migration Studies

According to World Bank, forced displacement is both a humanitarian concern and a development challenge, affecting more than 100 million people around the world. The number of refugees due to the war in Ukraine has been growing rapidly, making it the most significant crisis of its kind since the end of World War II.⁹¹ Previous study shows that forced migrants, such as refugees, have impacted their human and social capital, income, and employment through displacement and forced migration.⁹² In order to provide a thorough theoretical background, it is insufficient only to present the general theories and theoretical ideas from prominent scholars. In the following sections, the applications of human capital and social capital in migration studies are presented. The in-depth application of capital in migration research combined with the general theories and theoretical ideas can better serve to answer the main questions of this thesis.

4.2.1 Human Capital and Social Capital in Migration Studies

The scholarships for refugees' human capital and social capital are scarce in the academic field. So far there is no comprehensive explanation of the category of refugees from the perspective of human capital and social capital theory. Thus, the scholarship on refugees relies on the studies of migrants and migration.

As Chiswick et al. (2005) described, refugees experience a “steeper decline” at the early integration stage and “steeper improvement” later, comprising a deeper “U” shape than economic migrants. They indicate refugees are less adaptable to migration since they are not influenced by economic factors. Because refugees did not plan for or prepare for moving into a destination country, their human capital can be even more devalued in the domestic labor market than economic migrants at the beginning.⁹³ Besides the

⁹¹ The World Bank, “Forced Displacement.”

⁹² Williams and Krasniqi, “Coming out of Conflict,” 308.

⁹³ Chiswick, Lee, and Miller, “A Longitudinal Analysis of Immigrant Occupational Mobility,” 336-37.

unpreparedness, Chiswick et al. also discover another unfavorable factor that some of the refugees' skills have little international transferability. They indicate that skills such as destination language proficiency, occupational licenses, certifications, or credentials as well as more narrowly defined professional skills may not be perfectly transferable from the low-wage origin to the high-wage destination countries. For example, the skills of refugee lawyers are less transferable because the legal system varies sharply across countries.⁹⁴ In conclusion, refugees experience a “steeper decline” compared to economic migrants in their salary and employment status.⁹⁵ Notwithstanding the unfavorable situation of refugees at the early stage, Chiswick et al. denote refugees would have a “steeper improvement” after they invest their human capital compared to economic migrants.⁹⁶ Similar results were shown in the research of Buber-Ennsner et al. (2016). They show the result that individuals, who make investments in education and skills training, would achieve economic gains in the future, whereas those who are reluctant to invest in human capital will lead to a precarious situation. Further to their result, Buber-Ennsner et al. find out refugees are more likely to be self-employed than the population in the host country, which suggests their high entrepreneurial spirit and motivation to gain a foothold in the labor market due to a lack of return options.⁹⁷

Besides the “U” shape that Chiswick et al. put forward, Bakker et al. (2016) discovers a large “refugee gap” at the beginning of refugees' residency in the host country. Similarly, they describe this early “refugee gap” implying refugees' substantially lower labor market participation rate than labor migrants.⁹⁸ Bakker et al. present mental health problems and limited rights during the asylum procedure as another disadvantageous factor of refugees, which restrain them from transferring or accumulating human capital from the moment of their arrival.⁹⁹ With regard to mental health problems and limited rights, Mottaghi (2018) and Ruiz and Vargas-Silva (2018), also indicate that because of mental stress after

⁹⁴ Ibid, 334-335.

⁹⁵ Ibid, 336.

⁹⁶ Ibid, 336.

⁹⁷ Buber-Ennsner et al., “Human Capital, Values, and Attitudes,” 13-15.

⁹⁸ Bakker, Dagevos, and Engbersen, “Explaining the Refugee Gap,” 1788.

⁹⁹ Ibid, 1788.

displacement and limited rights during the asylum procedure, refugees are less likely to be employed and earn less than locals and other migrants, which prevents them from making a quick start from the moment of arrival.¹⁰⁰¹⁰¹

In my thesis, I focus on human capital investments in language acquisition, education, and on-the-job skills training. However, human capital alone cannot fully explain the barriers faced by refugees. Therefore, social capital is introduced here to explain the importance of refugees' networking regarding developing the host labor market accessibility and integration process.

Utilizing Putman's concept of bonding and bridging social capital in migration studies, Woodlock and Radin (2008) state that instead of seeking areas where high chances of employment could take place, immigrants and refugees prefer relocating to areas where they have already established relationships with family and friends. Immigrants and refugees rely on this bonding social capital to assist them in securing housing, finance, and jobs, despite their language barriers and temporary legal residency status.¹⁰² Besides bonding social capital, participating in civic associations such as churches, sports clubs, and the Red Cross, can let individuals engage in a high level of bridging social capital where they can get acquainted with locals and internationals.¹⁰³ Patulny (2015) strengthens their statements, that immigrants and refugees who are driven and equipped to enhance their careers and develop their own social networks by interacting with a larger local population, usually have a high level of civic engagement, attempting to seek out bridging links.¹⁰⁴ Therefore, in my thesis, I will dwell on exploring and illustrating the impact of both bridging and bonding social capital of Ukrainian refugees, to find out if social capital can achieve labor market integration in their cases.

¹⁰⁰ Ruiz and Vargas-Silva, "Differences in labor Market Outcomes," 860.

¹⁰¹ Mottaghi, "Investing in Refugees," 34.

¹⁰² Woodcock and Radin, "A relational approach," 416.

¹⁰³ Ibid, 416.

¹⁰⁴ Patulny, "A Spectrum of Integration," 212.

4.3 Conclusion

This chapter presents the theoretical framework of human capital and social capital. Human capital enlightens how refugees' skills, education, and work experience can affect their ability to integrate into the labor market in Sweden, while social capital can be used to understand the importance of social networks and relationships in accessing job opportunities and other resources. Particularly for social capital, the three structural capitals will be used in analyzing the relationship between individuals and organizations. These two capitals constitute the two main themes in analyzing the results of interviews with Ukrainian refugees, representatives of CSOs, and a municipality. Therefore, in the analysis chapter, it will be needed to use both capitals to illustrate the challenges that Ukrainian refugees encounter in Sweden, and how CSOs utilize capital to support Ukrainian refugees.

5. Research Method and Data

The purpose of this chapter is to present the research methods and data. The first section and the second section respectively describe the qualitative methods for collecting the data, and thematic analysis for the process of analyzing the data. The third section touches upon personal reflection and ethical considerations.

5.1 Methods of Data Collection and Sampling

In order to collect empirical material, semi-structured interviews were chosen. Three parties were interviewed to provide individual and organizational experiences and perspectives: Ukrainian refugees who have participated in the project of CSOs, representatives from Swedish CSOs helping Ukrainian refugees, and a representative from a Swedish municipality that also provides support to Ukrainians.

5.1.1 Sampling Strategy and Sample Presentation

In order to recruit Ukrainian refugees and representatives from CSOs for my research, I used non-probability sampling methods, which means the data collection is driven by

subjective opinions from the researchers.¹⁰⁵ These methods are used when researchers cannot identify the “accurate estimates of population parameters” and when probability sampling is “unnecessary, infeasible or too burdensome to carry out”.¹⁰⁶ Uwe Flick (2007) explains that “sampling in qualitative research ... is conceived as a way of setting up a collection of deliberately selected cases, materials or events for constructing a corpus of empirical examples for studying the phenomenon of interest in the most instructive way”.¹⁰⁷ Therefore, the sampling in my research is oriented toward a purposive selection, which is applying purposive sampling and snowball sampling strategies.

In terms of purposive sampling, it relies on the subjective opinions of researchers in deciding whom to interview.¹⁰⁸ It is essentially to do with the selection of units which may be people, organizations, events, and so on with direct relation to the research questions.¹⁰⁹ For this reason, based on my research questions, my thesis only focuses on two different groups: CSOs that help refugees in searching for jobs and equip them with necessary skills in the Swedish labor market, and Ukrainian refugees of working age in Sweden under temporary protection of the EU, who has participated in courses and activities of CSOs, not necessarily the CSOs from the sampling. Therefore, I utilized my own networks and selected and interviewed people who had relevant knowledge and experience based on these requirements, to comprise the informants in my thesis.

In terms of sampling the CSOs in Sweden, I aimed to include organizations working in various economic and social settings in order to acquire a thorough understanding of the kinds of organizations and where they operate. Six of the respondents are representatives of three CSOs in Stockholm, Lund, and Malmö, who were interviewed from March to April 2023. Among the six respondents, three are representatives from ABF from Northern Stockholm County, a branch of the largest study association in Sweden. In 2023, ABF carries out the Care for U project funded by the European social fund. The project aims to

¹⁰⁵ Shively, “Sampling: Who, How and How Many?” 57.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 57.

¹⁰⁷ Flick, *Designing Qualitative Research*, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 418.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid, 418.

bring together social actors with employers and Ukrainian refugees, establishing refugees in the Swedish labor market.¹¹⁰ Two other respondents are community managers at Ukrainian Meeting Central in Lund, a nonprofit organization that is mainly staffed by Ukrainian refugees.¹¹¹ Lastly, a project manager from Care Myllret program in Malmö agreed to take part in this study. The Care Myllret program is also financed by the European social fund, aiming to support Ukrainian refugees to achieve economic and social integration in Sweden.¹¹² Therefore, regarding the type of organizations, I contacted a study association and two voluntary organizations that are distributed in refugee aggregated cities.

However, I found that only using a purposive sampling strategy may lead to an insufficient sample size for my study. Thus, snowball sampling was utilized. The core method of snowball sampling is asking participants for other people who might be relevant to the study.¹¹³ For example, in my study, I recruited the first pool of representatives from CSOs and then asked for their recommendations for other potential Ukrainian participants in their programs.

Therefore, by using snowball sampling, I managed to conduct seven interviews with Ukrainian refugees. In particular, two of the refugees are also the community managers of Ukrainian Meeting Central in Lund. At the time of the interview, the Ukrainian respondents were aged between 24 and 56 years old, they are all women, and they all have a good level of English. The criterion of having good English is to ensure the information from refugees can be delivered so that I as a researcher can understand it on the spot. Their civil status is Ukrainian refugees in Sweden under the temporary protection of the EU. They are comprised of a non-working individual and working individuals in different sectors of the labor market in Sweden. In terms of different sectors, occupations such as social workers, service staff, media studio managers, and freelancers are identified. This in

¹¹⁰ ABE, "Care for U."

¹¹¹ Eos Cares, "Ukrainagiven."

¹¹² Care Myllret, "Care Myllret."

¹¹³ Ibid, 425.

many ways was important since they were able to share their experience of accessing the labor market and understanding their employment from different points of view. They were all educated with bachelor's degrees in different fields, while three of them have certificates as teachers, lawyers, and accountants in Ukraine, and two of them were learning IT and project managing skills in Sweden. I wish however to point out that the choice of the professions, the level of education, and gender were not the selecting criteria of Ukrainian participants as I mentioned earlier. Additionally, in order to make use of multiple and different sources to confirm and verify the gathered information, I also conducted an interview with a project manager from Lund municipality who is responsible for Care Ukraine-Lund project.¹¹⁴ As a result, 11 interviews were conducted from March to April 2023 and all the interviews were carried out in person.

Besides sampling people, I also selected the events pertaining to my research. I participated in different lessons and activities for Ukrainian refugees organized by different CSOs. Among the lessons, three types of courses were observed: Swedish language learning lessons at beginner and advanced levels, Swedish news reading with journalists, and labor market lessons providing practical labor market information to Ukrainian refugees. Two activities were also observed: a podcast introducing Swedish labor market knowledge, and an organized excursion with Ukrainian refugees. Participating in these events facilitated me in comprehending the programs offered by CSOs, and how refugees are influenced by them. However, my participation cannot be categorized as participant observation as I did not fully immerse myself in a group for an extended period.¹¹⁵

In my sampling process, there were also difficulties and limitations encountered when collecting respondents' data. Recruiting respondents for the study was not an easy task. Several factors impeded the progress. Firstly, some of the organizations refused to conduct interviews since the duration of the relevant projects was short. Secondly, of those people who allowed me to interview, most of them had tight schedules for their work as

¹¹⁴ Lunds Kommun, "Arbetslöshet."

¹¹⁵ Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 432.

sometimes interviews were rescheduled more than once. By contacting several organizations and rescheduling interviews without delay, I managed to overcome these challenges. Besides recruiting difficulties, purposive and snowball sampling has the drawback that it is difficult to determine whether the sample is accurately reflecting the population of interest, and there is a risk that the sample will be tainted by the researchers' biases.¹¹⁶ However, I considered that these approaches might be the only available strategies for sampling Ukrainian refugees and representatives of CSOs to efficiently collect relevant and useful information with time constraints and reasonable cost.

5.1.2 Semi-Structured Interviews as a Research Method

To study the experiences of Ukrainian refugees and CSOs, the semi-structured interview was chosen to obtain the data set. The semi-structured interview is a conversation between the researcher and the respondents, in which the researcher would ask certain questions that are prepared to guide the conversation.¹¹⁷ Moreover, semi-structured interviews need to make the respondents comfortable to speak openly about the subjects.¹¹⁸ In order to conduct a good interview and to get results, I developed two interview guides (Appendix 1: Ukrainian refugees interview guide and Representatives from CSOs interview guide) with questions in different but co-related themes. Furthermore, I conducted a pilot interview to test the quality of my interview guides to either change the topics of the questions or modify the way of asking questions.

Each interview lasted around 30 to 40 minutes and was conducted in English. I asked for respondents' permission by signing the consent form (Appendix 2), and then interviews were conducted by interview guides depending on whether they are refugees or representatives. The interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim, and all names were fully anonymized. Throughout and after the interviews, I took notes on relevant information mentioned by the respondents, which were also used for my thesis analysis with the respondents' permission. Nevertheless, the language aspect has proven to be a

¹¹⁶ Shively, "Sampling: Who, How and How Many?" 61-62.

¹¹⁷ Luo and Wildemuth, "Semistructured Interviews." 248-49.

¹¹⁸ Ibid, 248-249.

limitation as some participants showed long hesitation in wording and felt more comfortable articulating their experience in their native language. The limitation could have been solvable using Ukrainian translators or using digital translation devices. However, I did not choose these methods because of time and cost constrain, and most of the Ukrainian refugees could express themselves clearly. Furthermore, the accuracy of the language has not been the focus, since interviews have been utilized to understand the general labor market experiences of Ukrainian immigrants without stressing linguistic problems. Except for language issues, all the respondents that I interviewed showed a huge interest in my study and were willing to openly tell their stories to me, which secured my research through sufficient data to analyze.

5.2 Method of Analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of qualitative data analysis used to systematically locate, classify, and explain overarching themes in a data set. It enables researchers to identify recurring patterns in how a topic is discussed and discover universal or common meanings and experiences across a data set. Therefore, the transcriptions of the interviews were conducted with thematic analysis, with guidance from Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke's six-phase method.¹¹⁹ By applying this method, codes were attached to the data, and themes were deduced. The research questions served as a major direction for the themes that were identified. To understand the information provided by the respondents and give meanings to the findings, concepts from preceding literature and the theoretical framework were used.

The application of Braun and Clark's six-phase thematic analysis allowed me to define my analytical process. During the first phase, I familiarized myself with the data by listening and reading the transcriptions and making notes. In the second phase, codes were generated by identifying aspects from the respondents' interviews that were relevant to the research topics. During this phase, I managed to code on hard-copy data by marking the associated text and creating the code names. The third phase to the fifth phase was all

¹¹⁹ Braun and Clarke, "Thematic Analysis," 57-69.

centralized to searching for themes, revising the quality of the themes, and confirming the themes. For this reason, in my discussion, I identified the major themes that pertain to my research objectives by finding the overlapping and resemblance from the coded data. Further classification of sub-themes for each research question was done by applying the concept of human capital and social capital. In the final phase, findings are organized and written up.

In conclusion, using thematic analysis allows me to focus on the data set flexibly as codes and themes can be added or changed as the analysis progresses. The main advantage of using thematic analysis in my thesis is to maintain the integrity of the analytical process. As a result, I ensured that all codes were relevant to the research questions and helped identify themes. As I previously stated, thematic analysis is flexible, and having diverse themes reflects this. It implies that any code, regardless of how irrelevant it may seem, can be incorporated into a miscellaneous theme. This could be helpful for creating new themes in the future. The thematic analysis also asks researchers to review the connections between themes and data extracts. It is also crucial to ensure that the themes relate to the entire data collection, which maintains the integrity of the findings.

5.3 Validity, Reliability, and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the accuracy of the qualitative account, I undertook two of the validation strategies from Creswell and Poth (2020). The first strategy is to confirm the evidence through the triangulation of multiple data sources. This strategy involves the researcher making use of multiple and different sources, triangulating information to provide validity to their findings.¹²⁰ The main respondents of my study are Ukrainian refugees and representatives from CSOs. But I also conducted an interview with a project manager from Lund municipalities, who works closely with Ukrainian refugees' issues. From the perspective of the project manager of Lund municipality, I was able to validate the data provided by the Ukrainian refugees.

¹²⁰ Creswell and Poth, *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design*, 340.

The second strategy is to prolong the engagement and observation in the field. To be able to spend as much time in the field as is feasible, researchers need to build rapport with participants.¹²¹ Knowing the fact that refugees are generally in a destitute situation, I offered a material gratitude that is small in value for thanking them for participating in the interviews. Furthermore, I established a good relationship with the representatives from the CSOs, so that they enabled me to participate in any activities and invited me to join events after work with them. During the relatively close and long observation and engagement, I was able to check for misinformation and know better the refugees' situation and the activities offered by the CSOs.

Besides validity, reliability is also another salient factor to ensure the quality of the data. To increase the reliability, Franklin et al. (2009) suggest using the various forms of the same questions to examine the respondents' answers.¹²² Through the interviews, besides following the interview guide, I also managed to ask the same questions repeatedly in different forms and timelines, which helped me to examine the internal consistency of their responses. Another way to increase the reliability is to deal with the field notes as soon as possible after each interview and observation session.¹²³ I managed to organize most of the field notes and transcribe the recording as soon as feasible, however, in practice unexpected things would happen, so it was not always easy to manage the data in time.

Reamer (2009) states that informed consent, awareness of the research, and confidentiality should be carefully considered in terms of the ethical issues pertaining to the research.¹²⁴ Researchers should avoid convincing people to participate in the research and to answer all the research questions.¹²⁵ At the early stage of recruiting participants, I informed the potential participants verbally and in written form that participation in the survey is voluntary. In addition to designing the consent form, I mentioned that the participants can refuse to answer questions that were personal to their understanding. Besides avoiding

¹²¹ Ibid, 342.

¹²² Franklin, Cody and Ballan, "Reliability and Validity in Qualitative Research," 357.

¹²³ Ibid, 357-358.

¹²⁴ Reamer, "Ethical Issues," 432-439.

¹²⁵ Ibid, 435.

coercion, participants should also ascertain the content and details of the consent form.¹²⁶ Therefore, I included the background, purpose of the research and the procedure of the interview. I also translated the consent form into Ukrainian since some of the Ukrainian participants did not have a good level of English. Lastly, confidentiality and privacy are also salient to protect the data of the participants.¹²⁷ Before the interview, the participants were informed about the anonymization of their identity, and their recordings are only accessed by myself.

6. Analysis and Discussion

In this chapter, I report the results of the analysis. Several themes emerged from the interviews describing the dynamics of challenges and support that Ukrainian refugees and representatives of CSOs indicate as salient in the process of accessing the labor market. I separate the sections based on the research questions. In the first section, I organize the themes by looking at challenges that emerged from the insufficiencies of human capital and social capital of Ukrainian refugees themselves, in accessing and integrating into the labor market. The second section presents the role of CSOs and reflects the limitations of CSOs in the process of labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees.

6.1 Internal Barriers from Ukrainian Refugees

The aftermath of the displacement is harsh on the refugees since they were not prepared and equipped with the information and knowledge of the labor market in moving to a destination country. Thus, internal barriers emerge from refugees themselves. Several themes have been found through the interviews: insufficiencies of language skills, working experiences or education, social networks, and poor conditions in the mental health of Ukrainian refugees.

6.1.1 Insufficiency of Language Skills

The first theme highlighted in my analysis relates to language insufficiency. Language-related conversations are the most frequently mentioned topic in all the

¹²⁶ Ibid, 436.

¹²⁷ Ibid, 439.

interviews with Ukrainian refugees. All the refugees frame the issue of learning Swedish as one of the basic prerequisites for looking for better jobs. The interview with Sofiya offers an example of this:

In my field of communication or TV, you need to know society, even if your English is fluent. Because you need to understand the history and the cultural difference. You need to understand how to catch these people (attention) ... It's an issue with Swedish, I understand that. Yes, Sweden is nice and very international. And you can really find a good job with English only. But if you know Swedish, your chances will be much, much higher, at least 30%, even 50%. (Sofiya, Refugee)

Aligned with this case, Dustmann (2002) stresses that local language skills are quintessential for temporary migrants to access and integrate into the host country's labor market.¹²⁸ The Ukrainian refugees in my research all have a good comprehensive knowledge of English, which allows them to find either formal or part-time jobs in Sweden where English is recognized as their main working language (some of the people also use Ukrainian as part of the working language with a prerequisite that English is the main communication language). They have the same beliefs that one of the ways to integrate into the local market, with the accumulation of time and experience, is to learn and master Swedish. It aligns with Åslund et al. (2017) indication that immigrants to Sweden need appropriate labor skill acquisition such as education and training, but "a common need for most is to learn the Swedish language".¹²⁹ The explanation from the perspective of the relationship between language and the labor market is that mastering the local language can help immigrants and refugees, who often have limited skills in the host country language, to grasp more job recruitment-related information, to gain a deeper understanding of the status of related industries, and to establish more effective communication with colleagues or customers.¹³⁰ However, Ukrainian refugees have the potential to overcome language difficulty owing to their generally high educational levels. The OECD study predicts that the generally well-educated members of the Ukrainian

¹²⁸ Dustmann, "Temporary Migration," 297.

¹²⁹ Åslund, Forslund, and Liljeberg, "Labour market," 32.

¹³⁰ Carlsson, Eriksson and Rooth, "Language Proficiency," 24-26.

diaspora have developed quite strong language abilities and potentially could facilitate learning a new language.¹³¹ For this reason, given enough time and support, Ukrainian refugees can achieve a good level of Swedish to strengthen their human capital.

6.1.2 Inadequateness of Education

A second theme emerging from the qualitative material relates to the inadequateness of education and work experience pertaining to the local labor markets' needs. This barrier is inevitable since the sudden displacement took place when refugees were not prepared to consider the destination country's labor market needs and thresholds. From the employers' perspectives, in regard to foreign and domestic education, Damelang and Kosyakova (2021) claim that employers favor local graduates over international graduates since employers regard foreign education or degree as implying a lack of human capital accumulation and indicating inferior productivity.¹³² Thus, even if refugees have completed relevant studies in their home country, they are still considered as lacking relevant education credentials by employers in the host country. As previously stated, this phenomenon is apparent for refugees who had regulated professions in their home country, which are legally recognized and regulated by a specific country but have difficulties in transferring their professional skills, such as accountants or lawyers.¹³³ These regulated professions call for certain educational requirements and sometimes competencies needed to be verified by licenses or certifications. The cases of Eva and Mariya are emblematic in this regard. Mariya graduated in law from a university in Ukraine. After the war broke out, she tried to find a job as a lawyer or likewise positions in Sweden, but she describes her experience as "hopeless". Mariya says:

The legal systems in Ukraine and Sweden are different, so my knowledge and education are not recognized here. (Mariya, Refugee/ CSO)

The same goes for Eva, who worked as a chief accountant in a Ukrainian bank for 25 years. But after coming to Sweden, she ends up working as an assistant chef in a restaurant chain:

¹³¹ OECD, "What we know about the skills and early labor market outcomes."

¹³² Damelang and Kosyakova, "To Work or to Study?" 1.

¹³³ Chiswick, Lee, and Miller, "Patterns of Immigrant Occupational Attainment in a Longitudinal Survey," 51.

I have given up on finding a similar job (as I worked before) ... The most important reason is that if I want to be an accountant in Sweden, I need to spend a few years completing my education here to get a degree. But this is very unrealistic. If I come to Sweden in my 30s or 40s, I may go to study again. (Eva, Refugee)

6.1.3 Lack of Working Experiences

Another theme that I identify in my analysis relates to labor market experience, which is another form of human capital besides education and language skills.¹³⁴ Previous studies show that working experience and skills from past positions could be a major factor in determining wages;¹³⁵ however, the amount of work experience gained in the country of origin could not be completely recognized by the host country's employers, due to a lack of compatibility with the host society's labor market.¹³⁶ A low compatibility indicates that there are significant barriers to the transferability of human capital. Since the labor markets in the home and destination countries are not anchored in the same destination-specific abilities (as well as soft skills in the destination country), share no common educational system, and speak different languages.¹³⁷ Sofiya describes that she had an interesting experience during the interview, which serves as an example of the discrepancy between pre-migration and post-migration labor market experience:

I worked in video production in Ukraine. There was a person in a Danish company, who was very interested in my working experience from my CV. He said that they had the same production company's name in Denmark. I didn't know. I said, "No, it's not in Denmark. It's in Ukraine". Maybe he wasn't paying attention to my CV, and said, I thought you worked in Denmark. Anyway, they didn't give me that job. (Sofiya, Refugee)

It can be analyzed from Sofiya's experience that the employer from the Danish company shows great interest if the candidates have working experience in Denmark, which resonates with the result from the previous statement that employers may not recognize much of a candidate's pre-migration labor market experience with the reason of limited

¹³⁴ De Vroome and Van Tubergen. "The Employment Experience of Refugees," 379.

¹³⁵ Nawakitphaitoon, "Occupational Human Capital and Wages," 79.

¹³⁶ De Vroome and Van Tubergen, "The Employment Experience of Refugees," 379.

¹³⁷ Tibajev, "The Economic Return to Labour Market Experience of Immigrants," 4.

compatibility of their working experience. Thus, Sofiya's labor market experience acquired in her home country's labor market is less vital than the working experience obtained in the host country from the Danish employer's point of view.

6.1.4 Needs of Social Networks

The fourth theme stressed in our analysis is related to social networks. Similar to language skills, social networks are also frequently mentioned by the refugees during the interview. The previous study states that social networks and relationships can be valuable resources for individuals in accessing employment opportunities.¹³⁸ Through the interview, I discover there are two types of social capital that refugees are lacking based on different situations. Firstly, some refugees came to Sweden without knowing any friends or relatives who live in Sweden. Thus, from the classification of social capital, those refugees are short of bonding social capital, which can assist them to ensure housing, finance, and jobs with support from families, relatives, and friends who share the same nationality or ethnic background.¹³⁹ Nadiya came to Sweden with her father. From her description, it could be seen that it is valuable for her to have networks with Ukrainian people who live in Sweden, as they are able to help newly arrived refugees with financial aid and provide useful labor market information:

I'm here without my friends and family and I am alone here. Most of them live with relatives who live here, for maybe 20 or 30 years. Of course, it's easier for them because they have some money support. And they know this country and they can advise. Maybe they (Ukrainian families, relatives, or friends) already work in a good company. (Nadiya, Refugee)

The situation is different in cases where the refugees have bonding social capital. As was the case of Sofiya, who has an aunt that lives in Sweden, helping her to secure a job. Her aunt used to work at a university here and introduced Sofiya to a studio manager position at the same university. Another way to interpret Sofiya's case is that she also has building social capital, meaning building networks with the locals. Even though Sofiya's aunt is a

¹³⁸ Lin, *Social Capital*, 19.

¹³⁹ Woodcock and Radin, "A relational approach," 416.

relative of hers, she also has permanent residency status in Sweden since she lived there for decades. Therefore, Sofiya's aunt has the local resources and her networks in the local labor market. Previous studies can demonstrate the significance of building social capital. De Vroome and Van Tubergen (2010) explain the locals have been staying in the host country for a longer period, some of whom are also better educated and better employed. Thus, building networks with them is particularly vital to refugees because they can give refugees immediate and mainstream resources to have a shortcut to the labor market than people who do not have this connection.¹⁴⁰

6.1.5 Mental Challenges

The last theme identified in the analysis relates to refugees' mental state. Previous research demonstrates that the mental health of refugees is worsened compared to the economic migrants, giving a negative impact on the economic integration of refugees.¹⁴¹ The case of Nadiya and Alina can serve as examples of this point. Nadiya sent resumes to numerous companies but always has been turned down. She describes her state of mind as being depressed:

Some people (employers) just smile and promise. And after a few days or after one hour, they just say, "Sorry, I changed my mind". Maybe they feel sorry about us, so they don't want to say in front of us, such as "Sorry, you are not good enough". And I am depressed. Because I don't understand what's going on with me, why I am not good enough. (Nadiya, Refugee)

The case of Nadiya can serve as one of the examples of the fact that migrant communities have more difficulty in finding and keeping a job compared to the Swedish locals, causing them to develop stress-related disorders.¹⁴² Meanwhile, Alina, who works for an organization that helps Ukrainian refugees, also describes her state of mind as stressful by the work she is doing:

I want to resign for a while and have a good rest. Every day, many Ukrainian people come to the organization to ask for help. Every time I deal with their things,

¹⁴⁰ De Vroome and Van Tubergen, "The Employment Experience of Refugees," 380.

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 398.

¹⁴² Di Thiene et al., "Risk of labour market marginalization," 1025.

I think back to the cruelty and cost of the war. (Alina, Refugee/CSO)

According to a prior study, experiencing or seeing violence and persecution already has an impact on refugees' health, particularly their mental health. During their stays in the host country, the refugees' mental state may be deteriorated. Refugees may have seen a decline in their acquisition of the host country's human capital and social capital during this period as they may not have the motivation in looking for work and contacts, and may not have many opportunities to engage in the labor market.¹⁴³ Therefore, having a mental health issue interferes with learning new skills and making social contacts, which makes it difficult for refugees to adapt to their new surroundings and integrate into the local labor market.

In this section, I present the several challenges that refugees have in the host country by using the concept of human capital and social capital. The absence of both human capital and social capital can restrain finding suitable employment, meanwhile, it also prevents refugees from fully utilizing their previously established working abilities and potential in the labor market. Additionally, the section reveals how human capital and social capital influence one another with respect to mental health: having poor social and human capital can have an impact on refugees' mental health. Inversely, poor mental health can deteriorate the driving force to build human capital and social networks. Both approaches have the potential to fail to integrate refugees into the labor market in the host country.

6.2 The Roles of CSOs

As the previous research and background mentioned, CSOs are actively involved in the socio-economic integration of refugees. In this section, I present the solutions that CSOs use to tackle the previously mentioned barriers of Ukrainian refugees, and what helps enable CSOs to provide these solutions.

6.2.1 Language Skills Development

As the analysis above shows that language skill is fundamental for refugees entering and

¹⁴³ Brell, Dustmann, and Preston, "The Labor Market Integration," 96, 112.

integrating into the local labor market, the CSOs stress the importance of providing language courses for this reason. In a previous study on immigrant job mobility in Sweden, Rooth and Ekberg (2006) conclude that immigrants who invest in a Swedish academic education or language skills of the destination country can mobilize quicker in upward occupational status.¹⁴⁴ Through the interviews, all the CSOs involved in the study have language courses in training Swedish or English skills. Isabella from ABF in Stockholm mentions that language is one missing puzzle in the blueprint of refugees' labor market integration:

If they had known the language better, I think they would have been able to get much more appropriate jobs, considering their education, and what they've been working within Ukraine. (Isabella, CSO)

Furthermore, besides the traditional way of teaching language, ABF also provides a course that practices languages with Swedish journalists. During the course, Ukrainian participants grasp the knowledge of Swedish society and culture by reading Swedish news, following discussions, and exchanging opinions with the journalists. One of the Ukrainian participants, Lidiya, has no complains but praises the concept of this course:

They are very cool guys (the Swedish journalists). It's not boring like we are just sitting, writing, and listening. I can learn from Sweden and help me to practice my speaking. (Lidiya, Refugee)

From this example, we can see that CSOs can provide tailored services and creative approaches to match refugees' needs. The previous study states that CSOs can customize their services and offer a variety of options to cater to the diverse needs of refugees because they are not bound by the bureaucratic constraints that often limit the services provided by government agencies.¹⁴⁵

6.2.2 Career Coaching

Besides language skills, CSOs also attach importance to general job skills in preparing for

¹⁴⁴ Rooth and Ekberg, "Occupational Mobility for Immigrants in Sweden," 72.

¹⁴⁵ Numerato, Čada and Hoření, "CSOs and labor market integration," 88.

labor market entry. For instance, ABF in Stockholm offers individual or group coaching to guide refugees on how to search for jobs online, and how to write resumes and cover letters. Vilda from the ABF built a course for instructing the Swedish labor market knowledge to Ukrainian refugees. She describes the reason that career coaching is necessary for Ukrainian refugees:

When you come to a new country, you don't know anything about how it works. Therefore, I explain everything, starting with how you write your resume in Swedish, how you write your personal letter in Swedish, what sites you go to seek work, how a union works, how the employment agency works, and what authorities are responsible for. So, it introduces refugees to labor market's laws and rules. It's quite a challenge. (Vilda, CSO)

It can be analyzed that CSOs implement career coaching to help Ukrainian refugees develop their skills, and knowledge that is linked to job searching methods and other labor market-related procedures. Since refugees are not familiar with the host country's cultural norms or soft skills and have zero or little experience with the job search process, they can learn more about the demands of the host labor market, as well as how to effectively showcase their abilities and experiences to prospective employers through the working skills training. Therefore, CSOs which have the know-how of local labor market knowledge can act in an effective role to assist refugees in overcoming these obstacles by offering career counseling.

6.2.3 Network Building

CSOs play a crucial role in helping refugees build the necessary networks to find jobs in their host country. Based on Putman's bonding and bridging social capital mentioned in the theoretical framework, I find out that local CSOs as ABF, and refugee CSOs as the Ukrainian Meeting Center in my research can provide different types of social capital.

As I previously mentioned in the presentation of my samples, the Ukrainian Meeting Center in Lund is a voluntary organization staffed entirely by Ukrainian refugees as community managers. From the interview and research, the representatives describe the

organization functions as an information center for Ukrainian refugees in Lund where they regularly organize labor market information meetings or excursions. Mariya, a community manager at Ukrainian Meeting Center highlights the uniqueness of her organization:

It's like a safe space where you can talk, and you can share your problems in your mother tongue. It is a very nice place for Ukrainians. People who don't know how to speak English or Swedish like to come here because they can make more friends here. (Mariya, refugee/CSO)

It can be analyzed that the Ukrainian Meeting Center provides a platform where Ukrainians can meet others who share the same nationality and ethnic background. According to Newman et al. (2018), social support from persons with a similar background might be helpful since they may have had comparable experiences overcoming obstacles and adjusting to a new place, culture, and work environment.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the Ukrainian Meeting Center gives chances and a platform for refugees to build bonding social capital, which connects them with people of the same ethnicity or nationality so as to help them feel more supported in a new environment.

In contrast with the case of the Ukrainian Meeting Center, the managers and teachers of ABF in Stockholm are staffed entirely by Swedish locals. They offer study visits to universities and company visits. They also collaborate with municipalities and other associations for granting more opportunities for Ukrainian refugees. Samuel from ABF shares an ongoing project collaborating with a Swedish municipality:

We have cooperation with the Boden Kommun where they have a steel industry. We are going to bring some Ukrainians that want to go up there. They are going to get to know some employers, and they are going to see how it is to live there. There's a demand for a workforce, and Ukrainians have the competence that the workforce needs. So, I think it could be a good match. Also, it's easier and cheaper to get a house or apartment up there. So, it's easy to build a stable life. (Samuel, CSO)

From this quote, we can see ABF directly provides a chance to get in touch with Swedish

¹⁴⁶ Newman et al., "Mediating Role of Psychological Capital," 19.

companies. Therefore, the Ukrainians can build a bridging social capital with Swedish locals in an efficient way. It also shows that the convenience of asking for help from local CSOs is that the local employers can utilize their professional networks and build networks, that are closely connected to the needs of refugees and the local labor market's demand, helping them better navigate the local labor market and fastening refugees' way of accessing the labor market.

6.2.4 Mental Supporting

As mentioned in the challenges of refugees' mental state, I discover the refugees' mental state is highly related to their establishment of social capital and human capital in the host country. According to Lecerof et al. (2015), refugees who participate in social activities early on after arriving in their new country are less likely to suffer from poor mental health.¹⁴⁷ The cases of CSOs in Lund and Malmö serve as an example of this point. The Ukrainian Meeting Center in Lund offers a diverse range of leisure activities, including outdoor hiking, museum visits, crafting and painting classes. According to the representative of the Lund CSO, she observes that many refugees suffer from the traumatic experience of the war, even after resettling in Sweden. Hence, she describes the provision of such engaging and stimulating activities can alleviate refugees' emotional distress and promote a positive outlook toward their new life in the host country. Jakob from Care Myllret discovers the mentality changes of Ukrainian refugees participating in the podcast activity:

They do have experiences to talk about, and they are so happy to share. And we can see that makes them grow as individuals to be able to stand in front of people and share their experiences. (Jakob, CSO)

From the research of Numerato et al. (2023), refugees are appreciative of the psychological advantages that come with CSOs' various activities. By participating in these activities, refugees can boost their self-confidence and reduce marginalization not just during the job searching process, but as well as in integrating with a social context.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Lecerof et al., "Does Social Capital Protect Mental Health," 650.

¹⁴⁸ Numerato, Čada and Hoření, "CSOs and labor market integration," 90.

6.2.5 Leveraging Enablers of CSOs

In this section, I analyze what helps enable CSOs to provide the solutions mentioned above. Two enablers are identified in the analysis: local and international networks of CSOs, and a tailored approach to match refugees' needs.

The first element emerging from the qualitative material relates to CSO's role in building networks with other organizations and institutions. Although CSOs are an organization independent of the government and the public sector, this does not mean that CSOs do not cooperate with other organizations. In analyzing the materials, the local and international levels of cooperation are identified. Care Myrilet, a CSO program in Malmö has collaborated with seven Folkbildning organizations (public education organizations)¹⁴⁹ in the Skåne region and a local UN association in Malmö. These organizations and associations provide Ukrainian refugees with labor market knowledge and networks of employers in Sweden. Besides building networks at the local level, CSOs also cooperate with international institutions. Two of the CSOs in this study are funded by the European Social Fund (ESF) under the "Care 2" project in Sweden. As mentioned in the background, ESF is the primary tool in Europe for assisting individuals in obtaining better employment opportunities, and in investing in individuals' human capital, such as language skills, working skills, and education.¹⁵⁰ From the examples above, being able to build networks with local and international actors, CSOs also develop social capital so as to provide substantial and reliable resources to Ukraine refugees.

Another element that is presented in the words of my respondents is the CSO's role of providing customized services that can meet refugees' needs and provide various choices. Vilda from ABF studied the Russian language before, and has built a course "Work and Studies" by her initiative. The language of instruction in this course is Russian because Ukrainians can also understand Russian. She explains the reason why she uses Russian as the teaching language:

¹⁴⁹ Folkbildning rådet, "Folkbildning."

¹⁵⁰ European Commission, "European Social Fund."

You cannot teach it in Swedish or English, because their Swedish is not even at a beginner level. It's low level. And it's a complicated issue. Because we're talking about the labor market. (Vilda, CSO)

Thus, in the case of ABF, using a language that Ukrainian refugees can understand better sometimes is necessary when refugees do not process the host country's language at the early stage. In Malmö, Care Myllret uses the means of media creatively and effectively. Jakob, the project manager of Care Myllret initiated the idea of podcasts where the CSO invites guest speakers to share their knowledge and experiences of working in Sweden. He indicates that besides inviting professionals or experts, Ukrainian participants are also willing to share their experiences and challenges in the Swedish labor market. Apart from podcasts, they also created webinars, which they broadcast over the internet to provide an interactive forum for work-related topics. Jakob describes these two media channels' advantages:

There are podcasts just to listen to, and we then upload them to Spotify. So, Ukrainians can listen to it many times. But we've also got the webinars, as I said, those are interactive. So, the participants partake in the webinar, and they can ask questions. (Jakob, CSO)

These two findings are consistent with the findings of the study by Numerato et al. (2023), where they discover CSOs facilitate labor market integration due to their networking abilities, as CSOs serve as intermediaries linking refugees with state authorities, employers, and other stakeholders. Additionally, CSOs help refugees maintain a healthy mental condition by providing them with social and cultural assistance.¹⁵¹

6.2.6 Conclusion

Overall, by summarizing the findings in this section, CSOs play a crucial role in supporting the labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees. They are acting as facilitators in solving refugees' inadequacy of human capital and social capital; as brokers between

¹⁵¹ Numerato, Čada and Hoření, "CSOs and labor market integration," 88-90.

external resources and refugees, obtaining resources through cooperation with other organizations ; and as emotional supports, offering leisure and cultural activities, positively impacting refugees' mental state.

Managing the labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees is complex, but CSOs have their ways of managing to achieve the goal. Unlike government agencies, CSOs have the flexibility to adopt creative approaches, adapt to changing needs, help refugees gain confidence, and engage with different services in labor market integration. Additionally, to achieve their agenda of labor market integration, CSOs establish networks with local and international stakeholders. This allows them to access additional resources, funding, and social connections necessary for refugees.

6.3 The Hindrance of Labor Market Integration: Policy Gap and CSOs' Limits

However, the recent survey presents a gloomy outlook on the overall employment situation of Ukrainian refugees: nine out of ten Ukrainians living in Sweden are seeking employment, while around seven out of ten are still unemployed after a year of their arrival, despite the civil society organizations offering assistance and help.¹⁵² Therefore, this section aims to find out what are the hindrances of CSOs to succeed in the labor market integration of Ukrainian in Sweden. Both the policy restrictions and CSOs' structural and functional limitations are discovered.

6.3.1 External Barriers from Governmental Policy and Agency

One of the potential barriers is the Ukrainian refugees' precarious status in Sweden. Ukrainian refugees must undergo an annual status renewal process for their temporary residency while other EU member states such as Latvia issued a two-year temporary residence permit in 2013. Finland, Iceland, Ireland, Norway and a few more countries have automatically extended the duration of one more year.¹⁵³ Oksana, a project manager in the Care Ukraine-Lund project from Lund municipality finds conflict with the decision made by the Swedish government:

¹⁵² Sputnik, "High Rate of Jobless Ukrainians."

¹⁵³ Fragomen, "European Union/ Ukraine: Temporary Protection Status."

Because the Swedish government decided to do it (renew the refugees' status) once a year, but some other European countries did it for like three years. But Sweden is not like that. So people cannot plan anything. And employers also cannot plan, they can also go through a lot of hassle, such as they need to train the person, but then they don't know if this person will stay for more than nine months. (Oksana, Municipality)

It can be analyzed from Oksana's comment, the precarious temporary status that the government decides for Ukrainian refugees has a lot of potential disadvantages. Combined with the findings of previous studies, not only does short temporary status hinder refugees' ability to make long-term plans for their future, but it can also create a constant state of limbo resulting in mood and anxiety disorders, negatively affecting their mental state and their motivation in pursuing a career.¹⁵⁴ At the same time, from the position of employers, the short temporary status can lead to a low employment rate for refugees since the employers might need to invest additional time and resources in recruiting, and training new employees if the potential or current refugees are unsure of their refugee status.

Additionally, Ukrainian refugees who have a residence permit in Sweden are covered by the Act on the Reception of Asylum Seekers and Others (LMA) which applies to all asylum seekers in Sweden, this means the daily allowance of Ukrainian refugees should be based on the Act and they get the same amount of daily allowances as other refugee groups.¹⁵⁵ From the data provided by the Swedish Migration Agency, Ukrainian people can live on 71 SEK per day where food is not included.¹⁵⁶ Oksana from Lund municipality states that the little daily allowance can restrict their mobility, resulting in few possibilities to build their networks. She gives an example that even refugees living in Dalby have a difficult time commuting to Lund. Furthermore, Isabella from ABF in Stockholm mentions that Ukrainian refugees might choose prostitution or work with no-contract jobs to survive due to insufficient financial support from the government. It can be analyzed that insufficient financial support can detrimentally impact Ukrainian refugees' living

¹⁵⁴ Hajak et al., "Systematic Review of Factors Affecting Mental Health," 2.

¹⁵⁵ Migartionsverket, "Information regarding the situation in Ukraine."

¹⁵⁶ Migartionsverket, "Financial support for asylum seekers."

conditions and impedes their mobility, hindering their integration into society and labor market. Moreover, the precarious financial situation can push some refugees into illegal work as a means of survival. This not only compromises their well-being but also poses societal challenges.

Furthermore, Arbetsförmedlingen, the Swedish public employment service has not played its role effectively. In contrast to a large number of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden, it is stated that less than 1500 of them have obtained employment thanks to Arbetsförmedlingen.¹⁵⁷ In addition, the refugees' attitude towards the Swedish public service from the interviews is also not too optimistic. Based on the interview data from Ukrainian refugees, they all share a similar point of view that they are reluctant to register or use Arbetsförmedlingen, due to the perception that it is time-consuming, inefficient, and unhelpful. Furthermore, Oksana from Lund municipality also highlights another perspective that relates to the temporary status of Ukrainian refugees. Due to Ukrainians' status, they cannot benefit from the same right as other people do in using Arbetsförmedlingen, such as having access to internships or training programs and obtaining insurance coverage for refugees through Arbetsförmedlingen.

6.3.2 Limitation of CSOs

Besides the unfavorable situation for Ukrainian refugees created by the governmental policy and agency, I also focus on the CSOs' hindrance of implementing services and the CSOs' structural and functional drawbacks. CSOs are able to provide different services due to the funding they receive from different stakeholders, such as associations in the public sector or non-governmental sector. Two of the CSOs in this study are funded by European Social Fund under the "Care" project, but the funding can only be provided until the end of September 2023¹⁵⁸. Isabella from ABF has a worrisome attitude toward this decision:

Our activities will have to end around the last of August or the beginning of September. There is very little time for refugees being able to learn a new

¹⁵⁷ Sputnik, "High Rate of Jobless Ukrainians."

¹⁵⁸ Svenska ESF radet, "Care".

language, find a job and, get everything we aim to do. (Isabella, CSO)

The reliance on funding affects CSOs to fulfill their agenda and goals since CSOs need to meet the requirements and follow the instructions from the fund providers. In the case of ABF, the activities and services should be terminated within the funding phase, which is considered by the representative of CSOs too brief of time for the refugees to accumulate new human capital and social capital in the host country.

Although CSOs have contributed significantly to helping refugees find employment, my analysis of refugee attitudes indicates that some of the services they offer may not have been as effective in addressing their needs. Nika enrolls in Swedish classes offered by a CSO, but she is unhappy with the methods of instruction:

The organizational program is not enough for structure, especially in the language classes I attend. From the beginning they give us texts to read, I don't know even words, how to read, and how to speak. I don't think the teachers are professional. For me, it's just a waste of time because sometimes they do nothing but just sit and sing. (Nika, refugee)

The situation described by Nika is consistent with the knowledge and experience gaps seen in some CSOs in prior research. The limited knowledge and experience of the CSO personnel can hamper the operational capability of delivering services, which can have a negative impact on refugees' acquisition of skills necessary for labor market integration.¹⁵⁹

This section illustrates the precarious legal status of refugees, the inefficiency of the public employment system, the reliant nature of CSOs on funding, and the limitations of CSOs in terms of professional know-how in addressing refugees' needs by analyzing the interviews with refugees, CSO and municipality representatives. All of these elements may contribute to the fact that Ukrainian migrants still have a long way to go in terms of integrating into the Swedish job market.

¹⁵⁹ Numerato, Čada and Hoření, "CSOs and labor market integration," 96.

7. Conclusion

This paper presents the inherent difficulties faced by Ukrainian refugees in the Swedish labor market, focusing on their lack of human capital in terms of language proficiency, education, work experience and skills, as well as their lack of social capital in terms of networks with fellow Ukrainian community or local Swedes. Due to the absence of Swedish human and social capital, combined with the traumatic experiences of refugees have undergone, they may experience high levels of stress, depression, and other psychological issues. Civil society organizations play an indispensable role in providing necessary assistance to Ukrainian refugees in order to meet their needs, especially when Swedish governmental policies towards them are insufficient and unfavorable. This article summarizes the role of civil society organizations in facilitating the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market in Sweden, primarily by providing language and vocational skill services, establishing networks for Ukrainian refugees within Sweden, and ensuring and improving their mental well-being. Civil society organizations are often able to address the specific challenges faced by refugees and provide appropriate assistance, as confirmed by Ukrainian refugees in this research who have had contact with such organizations. The ability of civil society organizations to accomplish this is closely related to the positive collaborations they establish with other stakeholders, as well as their flexibility in activity and service design and their responsiveness to the needs of refugees. Civil society organizations offer a wide range of services to help refugees enter and integrate into the labor market. However, it is worth noting that the majority of Ukrainian refugees still face challenges in accessing the labor market, which this article attributes to resistance within the national policy framework and limitations inherent to civil society organizations themselves.

As this paper represents one of the first attempts to explore the situation of Ukrainian refugees in the Swedish labor market and the role of civil society organizations in this situation, I am aware of its limitations, which are often associated with exploratory research. The first limitation is the lack of diversity in my research sample, as it does not

fully encompass all the characteristics of Ukrainian refugees in Sweden, nor does it comprehensively cover the diversity of Swedish civil society organizations. This limitation consequently affects the overall characterization of the situation of Ukrainian refugees and civil society organizations in Sweden. The second limitation is the singularity of the theoretical framework, as the paper only briefly mentions the relationship between refugees' psychological states and the other two forms of capital, lacking substantial and relevant analysis. This leaves room for further research, where future literature can provide a more comprehensive analysis of how psychological states, as a form of capital, interrelate with the other forms of capital and impact the integration of refugees and other socially disadvantaged groups into the local labor market.

This article can serve as an example for civil society organizations in European Union countries in their approach to the integration of Ukrainian refugees into the labor market. It also provides empirical evidence and suggestions for improvement to policymakers and personnel within civil society organizations. This will enable better provision of essential services to Ukrainian refugees and other refugee groups, ultimately leading to solutions for their employment issues and achieving a win-win situation of national economic growth and social harmony.

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Appendix 1

A: Guide for Ukrainian refugees

Before the interview:

1. Introduce the researcher
2. Thank you for their participation
3. Introduce the aim of the study
4. Explain the interview procedure (audio recording, taking notes, participants can stop)
5. Signing consent form
6. Ask if there are any questions about the procedure of the interview or the research

Interview questions:

Background information

Can you please tell me about yourself and your background?

(age, which city are you currently living in, marital status, children, year of arrival, education level, work experience in your country, type of residence permit you have).

Refugee Status

- 1) How come you came to Sweden? (social relation, pragmatical decision)
- 2) When did you take or begin to have your refugee status in Sweden?
- 3) How fluent are you in speaking and understanding the Swedish language? (Please choose: fluent/ close to native, good, or poor, I am the beginner) Please explain what has influenced the level of your language proficiency.
- 4) How do you experience Sweden as a hosting country?
- 5) Have you received any support or assistance in your job search from the Swedish government (Public Employment Service/ online integration lessons...)? If so, what kind of support? What do you think of their service?
- 6) Do you know about other organizations that support Ukrainian refugees in finding jobs in Sweden? If so, can you describe your experience with them?

Economic Integration

- 1) Do you have a job currently in Sweden?

If YES:

- a. Is it in line with your field of expertise?
- b. How long did it take you to find a job? What was helpful and what did you find as an obstacle? (Language proficiency, Education level, and recognition qualifications, Discrimination, Cultural values, Integration policy, The labor market regulations)
- c. Are you satisfied with your current job? Why?

If NO:

- a. Have you tried to find a job? How was your experience in finding a job in Sweden?

- b. What factors help/hinder your process of finding a job? (language proficiency, education level, recognition qualifications, discrimination, policy, The labor market regulations)
- c. Have you found some work that is in your field of expertise? Or have you had to settle for lower-skilled jobs when searching for jobs? Or do you have to learn other fields of expertise from the beginning in order to find a job?

- 2) Do you think the Swedish labor market is welcoming to refugees?
- 3) What kind of skills does a refugee need to have in order to enhance their participation in the Swedish labor market? How does that enhance the refugee's participation?
- 4) Why do you choose to come to this organization to attend this program? To what extent, do you think it can help you to find a job (or a suitable job) in Sweden?
- 5) What kind of services or support have you received from the program for your future career? How can you evaluate this program? What are its pros and cons?
- 6) Which course and activities do you attend? How have these courses and activities impacted your ability to find a job in Sweden?

Social Relations

- 1) Did you find this organization through your friends or relatives?
- 2) Do you have many friends and relatives in Sweden? How many of them are Swedish people?
- 3) How did you get to know Swedish people? (Through workplace, activities, etc.)
- 4) Have you participated in any activities or events (political, hobby, athletic)? Why do you participate in those activities?
- 5) What is your impression of Swedish people's attitudes towards refugees? What make you say so?
- 6) Have you met or befriended Ukrainian people or people from other countries through the program or the organization? Do they share the job information with you?? Do you think it is very important to know more people in Sweden in order to find a job? Do you think that this organization gives you the space to let you build a connection with other people?

Barriers

- 1) What advice would you give to other Ukrainian refugees who are currently seeking jobs in Sweden?
- 2) What could have been done better to achieve a faster and more ideal path to the labor market?

Is there anything else you would like to add?

B: Guide for Representatives of CSOs and municipality

Before the interview:

1. Introduce the researcher
2. Thank you for their participation
3. Introduce the aim of the study
4. Explain the interview procedure (audio recording, taking notes, participants can stop)
5. Signing consent form
6. Ask if there are any questions about the procedure of the interview or the research

Interview questions:

- 1) How long have you been working for your organization? What is a normal working day for you?
- 2) How does the organization select the Ukrainian refugee for the program? Whom do you refuse? How many refugees that the organization can help?
- 3) Who are the Ukrainian refugees that the organization support (age, education...), and what help they need when they came to your organization?
- 4) What are some main challenges for Ukrainian refugees?
- 5) What activities and programs? To what extent, do you think the program can help refugees to find jobs and integrate to the market?
- 6) What relationship does your organization have with other stakeholders (eg. Swedish Public Employment Service, municipalities, NGOs, etc.) regarding labor market integration? How do the different stakeholders work together to integrate refugees? What are the main challenges in this cooperation?
- 7) Does your organization work together with state representatives? Do you receive funding from the government for the projects your organization develops?
- 8) What do you think are the unique characteristics that your organization has, but the government service program or other organizations don't have in terms of helping refugees to find a job?
- 9) What jobs do refugees normally get after receiving help from your organization?
- 10) Through of after the program, what is the percentage of Ukrainian refugees that be employed?
- 11) Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix 2

Consent Form

Background and Purpose

I am a student in the master's program of European Studies at Lund University. I would like to conduct interviews to collect data for my master's thesis. The topic of this study analyzes the challenges of the Ukrainian refugees in the Swedish labor market and what is the role of civil society organizations (CSOs) in this context. The purpose of this study is to get a deeper understanding of the current situation of refugee integration in the Swedish labor market associated with CSOs' influence.

Procedure

As a participant in this study, you will be invited to an online or in-person interview where you will be asked to share your experience about

- a. If you are a Ukrainian refugee: the challenges you face in finding a job in the Swedish labor market. Particular attention will be paid to your perspective as to what role does CSOs play in terms of labor market integration.
- b. If you are a civil society worker: share your experience about helping Ukrainian refugees who are interested in finding jobs in Sweden. Particular attention will be paid to your perspective as a civil society worker about the establishment program and the labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees.

The interview will last around 30 to 40 minutes and you will be asked a few open-ended questions that will lead to a conversation about the labor market integration of Ukrainian refugees.

Researcher: Lin Cui

Research Participant's name: _____

Thank you for consenting to be interviewed for this research project. For academic research to be ethical, the people being interviewed must clearly agree to be interviewed and agree that the content of the interviews can be shared. This consent form is being given to you to make sure that you know why you are taking part and what the rules are for your participation. Please, read and understand the following ethical considerations before signing:

1. I have understood the purpose of this interview and I have the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
2. I understand that even if I agree to participate, I have the right to refuse to answer questions that are personal or confidential to your understanding.
3. I understand that my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity.
4. My answers from the interview will be analyzed by Lin Cui.

5. Access to my answers will be limited to Lin Cui and her supervisor.
6. If any of the above conditions need to be changed, clear permission from the people taking part in the study will be asked for again.
7. I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

I understand the conditions stated above and agree to be interviewed.

I agree that my name is not published and a pseudonym is used instead.

I agree that the researcher may publish documents that contain quotations by me.

I agree to the interview being audio recorded and accept that the researcher may take written notes.

signature _____

date _____

Researcher: Lin Cui, Master Student of European Studies at Lund University.

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