



AALBORG UNIVERSITET

**“A Flight for Safety: Analyzing Push Factors behind Afghan Minors’
Migration and Their Integration in Denmark”**

Master’s Thesis

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Abstract

Afghanistan is one of the top countries where many people leave because of long-lasting problems inside the country. For about 40 years, it has faced fighting and troubles, causing big economic and political issues. Because of this, Afghan people have been moving to other countries for nearly five decades. People from Afghanistan primarily migrated to neighboring countries, such as Iran and Pakistan, where a significant number of Afghans currently reside. But some people take more risks by coming to Europe or even other developed countries in the world. For instance, thousands of Afghan individuals and their descendants currently reside in Denmark. Some of them are living as refugees, while others are citizens. There are several reasons to leave their country, these include persecutions, political turmoil, social issues and so on. In our research, we uncovered the motivations of Afghan minors to leave their country and explored the integration process of these individuals in Denmark. To explore this, we have chosen five respondents who are currently living in Denmark. To conduct this project, we have applied the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) to uncover the lived experiences of our participants. Additionally, we have utilized Richard Jenkins' concept of social identity, Theory of Migration (Push-Pull theory) by Everett Spurgeon Lee, and the Security concept to identify the motivations behind Afghan people's decisions to leave their country. Additionally, researchers have used the Integration Concept by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang, the acculturation theory of John Berry, and transnationalism to understand the integration process of those people in Denmark. This research employed thematic analysis to identify the answer to the research question. Our study has discovered the factors behind the migration of the Afghan people at such a young age and their integration journey in Denmark.

Keywords: refugee, migration, integration, death threats, target killing, Sariah law, Taliban control.

Chapter One

Introduction

Migration is the physical relocation of an individual or group from one society to another, involving departure from an existing social environment and the integration into a new one, often resulting in the transformation of social ties, cultural practices, and everyday life B.R.K (n.d.). People leave their home countries for various reasons, like getting economic advantages, improving their standard of living, pursuing education, and escaping from wars or conflicting situations (Mohamoud & Osman, 2008). In terms of refugees and asylum seekers, factors such as persecution, abuse of human rights, and breakdown of infrastructure need considered as push factors. (*Transcultural Health and Social Care*, n.d.) In this study, researchers have used personal and origin-related factors, which encompass several factors such as persecution, human rights violations, and so on in Afghanistan, to understand why the Afghan people left their country at their minor age. Millions of Afghan people have been compelled to leave their homeland and relocate abroad due to four decades of civil conflict, brutality, and instability (Matsangos et al., 2022). Afghan nationals have consistently been the second-largest group of asylum seekers in the EU 27. According to Eurostat data, 100,930 Afghans applied for international protection in the EU in 2023, with the majority of applications submitted in Germany (43%), followed by Greece (15%) and France (17%). The same data also indicates a significant rise in first-instance protection rates for Afghan nationals across the EU, reaching 80% in 2023 (including national forms of protection), compared to 57% in 2020 and 53% in 2019 (ECRE, 2024). Though the number of Afghan asylum seekers is small in comparison to these countries, there is a group of Afghan people living in Denmark as asylum seekers or maybe as citizens. More than 50 % of all immigrants and descendants living in Denmark originate in 15 countries, and Afghanistan is one of them. The proportion of Afghans in Denmark is 2% of all immigrants and descendants. In 2024, the number of Afghan populations was 21,635 (Corporate Management and Supervision, Ministry of Immigration and Integration, 2024). Earlier research has discussed various reasons for Afghan migration to different countries. For example, In the article "Migration is a Rite of Passage," the

author examines the complex dynamics of the migration of Hajara males from Afghanistan to Iran. The document highlighted the long-standing tradition of migration in Afghan society, which derived from political turmoil. In another article titled "The Aspirations of Afghan Unaccompanied Refugee Minors Before Departure and on Arrival in the Host Country," the author (Vervliet et al., 2014) discusses the motivations and aspirations of Afghan unaccompanied minors migrating to Belgium. Researchers discovered that numerous studies have explored the topic of Afghan refugees and migration. However, no studies have specifically researched the motivations of Afghan young people who leave their country as minors, particularly those who sought refuge in Denmark during their youth. The first part of the research question aims to find out why they migrated.

The research also aims to explore the integration process of those Afghan people for answering the second part of the research question. Because integrating refugees and migrants is a complex, ongoing process involving access to jobs, housing, education, and healthcare, as well as support in building relationships, understanding rights, and overcoming language and cultural barriers. While experiences vary, successful integration is essential for full participation in society (Ager & Strang, 2008). We also read some existing papers regarding the integration of the Afghan refugees in different countries in the world. For instance, in their work, the authors (Donini et al., 2016) focused on the unaccompanied minors who faced unique challenges during their migration. The authors noted that those young individuals often experience a sense of failure if they are unable to continue their journey or integrate into the host country. But we found that no such study had been conducted to find out the integration process of the Afghan people who left their country at a young age. So, this study will explore the integration process of the Afghan people who are living in Denmark and left their homeland years ago when they were not adults.

Research Question

What are the motivations behind the Afghan people leaving their country at a minor age, and how do they integrate into Danish society?

Motivation of the study

In the era of globalization, migration has taken on new forms, meanings, and consequences. Globalization refers to the movement of products, ideas, and people across the borders, which has reshaped the patterns of mobility of human beings. People migrate from one place to another for various reasons, such as economic restructuring, climate change, geopolitical instability, and conflict, which compel millions of people to seek better lives elsewhere. In 1971, during the liberation war, millions of Bangladeshis migrated to India for a few months. The families of the researchers, who are Bangladeshis, experienced this situation firsthand. Moreover, Bangladesh and Bangladeshi people have experienced hosting well over 1 million Rohingya refugees who were forcibly displaced from Myanmar because of systematic persecution in Rakhine state in Myanmar. This situation generated additional sympathy for the refugees who were displaced from their homeland. In Denmark, researchers observed that many Afghans were living as refugees, and they are working in several sectors, like other people in Denmark. A particularly striking observation is that many young Afghans have been living in Denmark as refugees without their families. These observations motivated the researchers to investigate the reasons behind the Afghan refugees' departure from their country, especially those who left at a young age, and to explore how they are integrating into Danish society, which is vastly different from Afghanistan.

The rationale for the study

The aim of the study is to explore the motivation of Afghan people to leave Afghanistan at an early age and their integration process in Denmark. Since the 1960s, Denmark has gradually been transforming into a multicultural country due to the influx of immigrants, refugees, and workers (Kaergard, 2010). Studying the Afghan refugee will help the researchers to know the root causes of leaving Afghanistan and their integration in Denmark. This study will be helpful for further research as it provides a complete picture of Afghan refugees' experiences in their past and their journey to integrate into different socio-cultural structures in Denmark. The findings of this paper can guide the development of refugee policy to ensure a better life in the host country. This research can assist the policymakers to design more effective refugee management strategies that address immediate needs and sustainable integration processes.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

The study's literature review section will primarily focus on the migration of individuals from Afghanistan. The literature review section of the study is crucial because, according to Cresswell in the book of Forrest & Mocek (2012), the literature review determines whether the research topic is worth studying. By collecting and analyzing the available literature on the subject, the literature review aims to find different contexts and themes. Furthermore, the analysis will help us pick out different ideas and new ways of doing things. The literature review aims to give a thorough summary of all the available literature and spot any gaps in the field.

Motivation

The article “Investigating the political factors of Afghan migration” provide a comprehensive overview of the key drivers behind Afghan migration, with a particular focus on the political, economic, and social conditions that have compelled individuals to leave the country. The study highlights how over three decades of continuous conflict in Afghanistan have resulted in widespread instability and insecurity, creating an environment in which safety and basic survival are not guaranteed. Political turmoil and economic hardship, including extreme poverty, high unemployment rates, and a general lack of job opportunities, are presented as primary motivators for migration. The authors also emphasize the role of ethnic conflict, tribal tensions, and systemic social injustice in deepening social fragmentation. These factors disproportionately affect Afghan youth, particularly those with limited access to education, security, and prospects.

Specifically, to investigate the motivations of underage Afghan migrants, Özey and Hashemi’s study provides a foundational understanding of how macro-level factors—such as political instability and economic deprivation—contribute to migration pressures. Their work provides a broad overview of the political, economic, and social conditions that drive Afghan migration, such as long-term armed conflict, poverty, unemployment, ethnic tensions, and systemic injustice. While comprehensive, their analysis focuses primarily on the general Afghan population, without

distinguishing between age groups or exploring how these factors uniquely affect minors. This gap in the literature highlighted the need to investigate how such push factors specifically influence Afghan youth. Our research was therefore inspired to delve deeper into the motivations of underage individuals, aiming to understand how both broader national issues and internal family, educational, and social pressures contribute to their decisions to migrate (Özey & Hashemi, 2020).

The article “Reasons for the Migration from Afghanistan to Turkey: Aegean Region Example” by Erol and Ali (2022) examines Afghan migration to Turkey between 1979 and 2019, focusing on the factors that influenced this movement. The study highlights ethnic and religious tensions within Afghanistan as major drivers of migration. Given Afghanistan’s multiethnic composition, ongoing ethnic conflicts—along with religious divisions, particularly between Shia and Sunni groups—have contributed significantly to the decision of many individuals to leave the country. The article also notes that Afghan migrants often faced systemic discrimination in public institutions, which further exacerbated feelings of marginalization and insecurity. The study employed a quantitative research approach, surveying Afghan migrants in the Aegean region of Turkey. The results indicated that 38.1% of participants cited conflict as the primary reason for migration, 28.6% cited war and enmity, 4.8% cited economic reasons, and 23.8% cited other motivations. These findings underscore the significance of violence, hostility, and identity-based divisions in shaping migration decisions. Erol and Ali’s research informed and inspired the researchers in two keyways. First, their identification of enmity and conflict as major push factors raised important questions about how such hostilities affect minors. This led to our focus on exploring how experiences of ethnic or religious conflict and community-level hostility compel underage Afghans to flee their homeland. Second, while their study utilized a quantitative method, our research adopts a qualitative approach, using narrative interpretation to gain a deeper insight of the personal, social, and psychological motivations of Afghan individuals who migrated as minors. By doing so, researchers aim to provide a more detailed, age-specific insight into the migration experience.

In the article "Migration is a Rite of Passage," the author examines the complex dynamics of the migration of Hazara males from Afghanistan to Iran. The document highlighted the long-standing tradition of migration in Afghan society, which derived from political turmoil. The Hazarajat region was the poorest in Afghanistan and predominantly inhabited by Hazaras. The lack of government support had led many to seek better opportunities abroad, particularly in Iran. This

paper also highlighted that migration is an integral part of Afghan social life, encompassing several forms, like seasonal movements, economic reasons, and being forcibly displaced from the homeland due to long-term conflict. The author focused on the Hazaras' male migration to Iran, which was vital to their life cycle and economic survival. This migration is characterized by three classical stages of a rite of passage. In the initial phase, they illegally cross borders as a test of their resilience and courage. In the second phase, they try to cope with the new environment by taking temporary jobs, living modestly, and saving money to support their families back home, which establishes their reputation as responsible individuals in society. In the final stage, they return home as an adult marriageable man, and this transition is a redefinition of their roles within family and society (Monsutti, 2007). This paper highlighted the Hazaras traditional migration particularly male migration to neighbor countries as a ritual. These traditional migrations motivated the researchers to work on underaged Afghan who leave country at the early age without family not for a ritual. It motivated researchers to know other factors which compel themselves to leave home in early age to move in Denmark instead of going or staying the neighbor countries of Afghanistan.

In the article “The aspirations of Afghan unaccompanied refugee minors before departure and on arrival in the host country,” the author (Vervliet et al., 2014) discussed the motivation and aspirations of Afghan unaccompanied minors as they migrate to Belgium. The study reveals that their primary reason for leaving Afghanistan was seeking safety from the threat of insurgent groups like the Taliban and pursuing education. Their initial focus was on finding a safe environment. The author discussed those unaccompanied minors who were living in Belgium. The security concern on the minors in Afghanistan motivated the researchers to know the motivation of leaving because of several threats like political, social, religious from insurgent groups to the underaged Afghan who were living in Denmark. It will help us to know the answer to the research question why Afghan motivated to leave country in early age.

The study underscores that the aspirations to leave the Afghanistan was to support family in Afghanistan because of vulnerable economic condition in Afghanistan. Because of responsibility, they felt they need to go out from homeland to provide financial support or education. After reaching Belgium, their aspirations shifted to obtaining legal documents and reuniting with family members. The study also examined the role of social networks in shaping the Afghan minor's aspirations by receiving advice and information from peers, smugglers, and community members

during their journey (Vervliet et al., 2014). It helps to understand the various reasons of the Afghan people who migrated in their minor age.

This paper, “Afghans on the Move: Seeking Protection and Refuge in Europe”, addressed the ongoing Afghan migration to Europe. It highlighted the prolonged violence in Afghanistan. The authors (Donini et al., 2016) addressed a concept, "the moral economy of migration," which refers to the interplay between protection in homeland, access to livelihoods, and social status associated with Afghan migration abroad, particularly in Europe. The authors explained that the migration rate among young Afghans is significantly higher than that of other groups. The decision to migrate was not only based on economic factors but also on the desire for prestigious and social recognition. Family expectations and societal norms compelled them to move abroad without family. In this paper the societal norms in Afghan society motivated the researchers to know the Afghan socio cultural norms and customs as well as social structures which may provoke or compel themselves to leave their homeland particularly in minor age when they need to support of family in their life most.

According to (Yawar & Muhsini, 2024), understanding migration is not just a result of economic or political condition, but also influenced by social factors. they highlighted several factors influencing the desire migration among Afghan people and categorized the different level. In macro level they discussed about the negative attitudes towards the economic condition in Afghanistan, political instability because of prolong conflict and general dissatisfaction to the social dynamics and safety. In medium level factors they highlighted the transnational networks such as family or community connection influenced them to move abroad. From this article, the dissatisfaction of social dynamics and safety things motivated the researchers to know in depth reason of social dissatisfaction which influenced the Afghan to leave their country. In this paper the authors also described that the younger individuals particularly who were from 18 to 25 or underaged they tended to leave Afghanistan. This also help the researchers to focus on underaged Afghan in Denmark and to align with motivational factors particularly social factors which compel them to leave their homeland.

Integration

The article “Between a Rock and a Hard Place: Afghan Migration to Europe from Iran” by Crawley and Kaytaz (2022) explores the migration trajectory of Afghan refugees who initially fled to Iran due to prolonged conflict in Afghanistan and subsequently moved onward to Europe. The study highlights the restrictive conditions Afghan refugees faced in Iran, including inadequate access to education, employment, and medical facilities. These structural barriers contributed to feelings of marginalization and exclusion, making integration into Iranian society extremely difficult. As a result, many Afghan refugees viewed Europe as a more viable destination for securing safety, rights, and future opportunities. In addition, the article discusses the European Union’s evolving migration policies aimed at deterring irregular migration, further complicating the journey for Afghan refugees. While the study focuses primarily on the challenges faced in Iran and during onward migration to Europe, it provides valuable context for understanding the broader migratory experiences and structural exclusions that influence Afghan refugees' decisions to seek refuge in European countries.

This article inspired our research by drawing attention to how host country policies—such as those in Iran—can directly impact refugees' sense of belonging and long-term decisions. Specifically, the exclusionary practices in Iran prompted us to explore how Afghan refugees, particularly those who migrated as minors, are being received and integrated in Denmark. Our study builds on the themes identified by Crawley and Kaytaz but shifts the focus to integration policies in a European context, where underage Afghan refugees are navigating a different, yet still challenging, social and institutional landscape. While the article offers insight into systemic marginalization, it does not specifically address the experiences of underage refugees or the integration processes in EU countries—gaps which our research seeks to address through a qualitative investigation of the Danish case (Crawley & Kaytaz, 2022).

Authors (Donini et al., 2016) also focused on the unaccompanied minors who faced unique challenges during their migration. The authors noted that those young individuals often experience a sense of failure if they are unable to continue their journey or integrate into the host country. These unaccompanied minors led them to be mentally unstable and hindered their well-being as well. This paper highlighted the unique challenges during migration and didn’t focus on the

integration process in host countries which motivated the researchers to research on what types of support they get in host countries to integrate in new society particularly who are underaged migrant in Denmark.

The author (Songhori et al., 2017) highlighted the Iranian discrimination or negative perception of Afghans who had been living there for many years, which discouraged the Afghan adolescents from matching up with the Iranian peers. In this paper, the author also discusses the facilitators of integration in Iran. Language was key factor, especially for those who spoke Persian, which helped them fit into Iranian society. Some Iranians were very positive to the Afghans because of physical similarities and their academic success. It helps them to create a safe environment for Afghan people in Tehran. Several NGOs helped the Afghan adolescents continue their education despite the legal barriers to attending public schools. Many NGOs provide social services to address their basic needs and ensure excellent physical and mental health. The author also discussed the role of NGOs in fostering a community of Afghans in Tehran. These organizations organized many cultural programs to know Iranian culture and norms as a support to integrate into Iranian society. These organizations also assisted in providing jobs that aligned with their skills (Songhori et al., 2017). This paper highlighted the host country's perspective to the Afghan adolescent in Iran, which is considered a barrier to integration, though they have some similarities in culture. This issue prompted the researchers to focus on Afghan refugees living in Denmark and their integration process, despite of significant cultural differences between them and the Danish population. Moreover, it motivated the researchers to explore the initial support for the integration of Afghan refugees from several organizations who work for refugee in Denmark. The authors (Pir, n.d.) also discussed the integration process of Afghans in host countries. Afghan communities established themselves in Pakistan and Iran to practice their culture. However, the Afghan experienced many difficulties, like those related to legal status and access to education and employment opportunities in Pakistan and Iran. In western countries, the Afghan diaspora played a crucial role in supporting newcomers through community organizations and networks. In this article, the author focused on an influential Afghan diaspora figure, Khaled Hosseini, who worked for the Afghan diaspora by raising his voice for Afghans affected by conflict and displacement. Hosseini utilized the diaspora platform to provide humanitarian assistance to the Afghan diaspora living abroad (Pir, n.d.). This article helps researchers to understand the situation of Afghanistan from a historical perspective and assists in finding out the reasons for the Afghan migration over the years in the neighboring

countries. This paper also discusses an overview of Afghan cultural preservation in host countries and how diaspora organizations help them integrate.

In the article, “SOCIAL INTEGRATION AND CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF AFGHAN REFUGEES IN PAKISTAN,” the author discussed the complex challenges and processes experienced by Afghan refugees in Pakistan and highlighted the significant humanitarian, legal, and socio-economic aspects of their integration. Language played a crucial role in integrating into Pakistani society by showing proficiency in the Urdu language. Learning the local language helped them interact with the Pakistani communities. The development of several social integration programs helped them to know cross-cultural activities to make an understanding between refugees and locals, which helped them to access essential services like education, health, employment and so on. The authors also concentrated on the community engagement of refugees, encouraging their participation in various social events and activities that significantly contributed to their integration. The cultural adaptation of Afghan refugees to align with the norms and values of Pakistani society helped them to easily integrate into Pakistan. In this paper authors particularly focused on Afghan refugee integration and several initiatives to help them integrate in Pakistani society. Since Pakistan and Afghanistan had some similarity in social and religious cultures which was helpful for refugee to integrate. This similarity motivated the researchers to focus on Afghan refugee integration in Denmark because Afghan and Danish society are totally different which can be a great barrier to integration in Denmark. To know the research question, answer how Afghan refugee is integrating in Denmark this paper helps us to work on this gap of this paper in our thesis particularly to work on underaged Afghan who leave their country alone.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter is designed to describe the methodological section in detail. It is structured to detail research design, data collection procedure, data analysis techniques, ethical considerations, and limitations. This study will adopt a qualitative research methodology, as it provides a richer and more complex understanding of people's feelings, thoughts, and behavior than quantification in data collection and analysis processes (Smythe & Giddings, 2007) for identifying the motivational factors of Afghan people to flee from their homeland at a minor age and their integration journey in Denmark.

Research Approach

The purpose of the research is to explore the motivation of Afghan refugees to leave Afghanistan at their minor age and the integration process in Denmark. To conduct this type of research, the qualitative research method is more effective because “qualitative research is a research strategy that usually emphasizes words rather than quantification in the connection and analysis of data” (Smythe & Giddings, 2007). Therefore, researchers have chosen the qualitative research method for this study. According to (Delmas & Giles, 2023) qualitative research encompasses a variety of methodologies, including ethnography, process tracing, qualitative comparative analysis, and phenomenology. Creswell explains that a phenomenological study describes the shared meaning for multiple individuals of their lived experience of a concept or phenomenon (Alase, 2017). Furthermore, the interpretative phenomenological approach facilitates the exploration of participants' personal and societal contexts, emphasizing the significance of their experiences (Biggerstaff & Thompson, 2008). An interpretative phenomenological approach enables a thorough comprehension of participants lived experiences, allowing for a participant-oriented approach that respects the participant’s perspectives and narratives. So, researchers chose an interpretative phenomenological approach. The reason for choosing an interpretative phenomenological approach in this study is to understand the lived experiences of the research respondents and to enable the investigation of the phenomenon to be studied. By applying the interpretative phenomenological approach, this study aims to uncover two research questions:

what motivates Afghan refugees to leave their country, and how is the integration process in Denmark?

Data sources

The research paper constitutes a robust analysis of Afghan refugee motivation to leave their country at an early age and their integration process in Denmark using both primary and secondary data.

Primary Data

Researchers collect primary data from Copenhagen, Denmark, where a significant number of Afghan refugees have resided for more than ten years. This area is very important for this research because in Copenhagen, many Afghan refugees live and communicate with other people who are from Denmark or the rest of the world who are staying for various reasons. The primary data collection has focused on narrative interviews with the Afghan refugees who came to Denmark from Afghanistan at an early age. Narrative interviews are a method used to gather people's personal stories and experiences. This approach places individuals at the center of research and values the meaning they give to their own life events. When studying people's lives, narrative interviews can provide a deeper and more complete understanding of their experiences compared to tools like surveys or graphs. This method helps researchers better understand the context and uniqueness of each person's story (Anderson et al., 2015). According to (Anderson & Kirkpatrick, 2015), "narrative interviews provide an opportunity to priorities the story teller's perspective rather than imposing a more specific agenda." In this research, researchers asked the respondents about their past experiences, integration process and their plans in future. No specific questionnaire was present during the interviews, and the respondents got enough time to tell their life experiences and thoughts. In research, effective sampling guarantees that respondents encompass a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives that align with the research topics. Sampling allows the researchers to target one specific group of the population, which is critical to the study. In this research, researchers have applied Purposive and Snowball sampling to select an appropriate sample size. Purposive sampling emphasizes selecting individuals with characteristics, experiences, or information related to the research question. The technique is designed to provide information-rich scenarios that can produce deeper insights (Lopez & Whitehead, 2012). In this

research, the researchers also utilized the snowball sampling process. Snowball sampling is applied when samples with the target characteristics are not easily accessible (Naderifar et al.,2017). This process involves asking initial respondents to recommend other individuals who meet the research criteria. This approach involves interviewing initial respondents and using their additional contacts to recruit new respondents (*The Annals of Mathematical Statistics*, n.d.).

In this research, researchers have set a research question, and to answer the question, it was important to know the motivation of Afghan refugees who left their country at an early age and their integration process in Denmark. In this research, the respondents were from Afghanistan and had been living in Denmark for a long time. To connect with them, researchers have used their professional network and community ties. It was challenging for the researchers to collect data since the research topic has focused on the lived experiences of Afghan refugees in their homeland and their integration process in Denmark. Since in this research, the research question is related to their personal life so most of the respondents were not like to speak about that. Respondents who are being asked about sensitive topics may also display reluctance. Any personal issue which makes them embarrassed can fall into sensitive category (Adler & Adler,2001). Since the research question encompass the personal information which may be sensitive to the respondents which is related to their life in Afghanistan as a citizen as well as the ongoing life as a refugee in Denmark. As a result, researchers had to contact lots of people who were targeted as a respondent according to research topic. But after knowing about the interview topic most of them indirectly avoided the researchers and cut off the contact which makes sample size small in this research. To collect data researchers have decided to use two sampling methods, namely purposive and snowball sampling, due to the limitation in accessing Afghan refugees as respondents, especially those who were underage when they arrived in Denmark. Purposive sampling conducted the first two interviews, while the snowball sampling method conducted the remaining interviews. By using these two sampling methods, researchers conducted a total of five interviews with five different individuals, which assisted them in identifying the target respondents needed to collect data for answering the research questions.

Primary Data Analysis Method

Data analysis is an important part of qualitative research that deals with a comprehensive overview of analyzing and identifying the underlying trends and patterns within the data (Flick, 2014). There are numerous approaches for qualitative data analysis. This study used thematic data analysis as described in Braun and Clarke's 2006 publication, "Using thematic analysis in psychology" (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Researchers utilize thematic analysis in qualitative research to identify, understand, and describe patterns or themes within a set of data. Researchers followed the six steps of Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis in our report, facilitating the thematic analysis of data.

During the first phase of thematic analysis, the researcher should thoroughly engage him/herself with the data to understand deeply and fully what it contains. It emphasizes immersion, which involves repeated reading of the data and actively reading it to search for profound meanings, understandings, trends, patterns, and so on (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87, cited in Roy et al., 2024, p. 20). In our case, we read carefully all our interviews repeatedly over a period of four days at Vanløse Bibliotek. We took notes on intriguing ideas, similarities, dissimilarities, structure, and patterns between various interviews, which would provide a framework for the subsequent phases.

Several techniques exist for coding extracts. In our project, we manually coded our interview data by marking the texts and used highlighters or colors to mark probable patterns and distinguish various segments of the data. We identify preliminary codes and assign them instant names. Subsequently, we consolidate all the codes into a single file and correlate them with data extracts, such as sentences, paragraphs, or phrases.

The third step in Braun & Clarke's (2006, p. 89) thematic data analysis process is searching for themes. We began by reviewing our extensive lists of beginning codes that we had found throughout our whole data set. Here, we have examined our codes and combined them into a cohesive theme.

The fourth step involves reviewing themes. When a set of possible themes has been defined, then refinement comes, which involves merging or eliminating some themes from the dataset that are overlapping, problematic, or unfit (Braun & Clarke, 2006, cited in Roy et al., 2024, p. 21). This

phase involves going over each theme's segments again to make sure the themes match the data set and to make sure we didn't overlook any more information within the themes during earlier coding stages.

Defining and naming themes is the fifth phase that involves analyzing data within themes, identifying their essence, connecting them with data to the research question, and creating short and informative names for the themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 91, cited in Roy et al., 2024, p 21). The following codes/categories were obtained at this point, which helped us develop the themes through an analysis of our interview scripts and quotes that seemed significant.

The first theme is Forced to flee: Escaping Violence, Persecution, and the Deep Scars of Trauma. We divided this theme into two sub-themes: Religious and cultural constraints and Exile from survival. Here Religious and cultural subthemes emerged from the codes and categories, such as Islamic rules and religious threats, gender norms and societal expectations, and going against culture and traditions. Another sub-theme emerged from the following codes/categories: Individual experience with violence and persecution, Physical abuse, unjust detention, and targeted oppression.

The second theme is the road to inclusion: Creating pathways for integration and participation. This theme also has two sub-themes: they are "Bridges to tomorrow and A Nation Left Behind. The first sub-theme emerged from the following codes/categories: Aspiration for education and career development, Practical skills for thriving in a new cultural landscape, Learning language and Establishment of a network. The second sub-theme has also emerged from the following codes/categories: Emotional connection and nostalgia, searching lost connection to family, sending remittance and Sending support from Denmark to Afghanistan.

Lastly, creating or writing the report is the sixth step in Braun & Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. In this phase, we have narratively presented our data analysis in accordance with their criteria. We employed targeted and captivating extracts to support our themes and confirm their importance to evaluate the data and answer our research question.

Secondary data

Secondary data has been collected from several sources to support and contextualize the findings from primary data. These sources encompass the research papers, journal articles, and other relevant papers. In the analysis part of this research, researchers have used journal articles to analyze and support primary data of this research. A journal article named “Taliban rule and the ethnic factor in Afghanistan” has been used in this paper. Another journal article namely “The censorship of music in Afghanistan”, published in journal of RAWA. “A comparative study between the Islamic Emirate of Taliban in Afghanistan” also used in this paper. “HUMAN RIGHTS IN AFGHANISTAN FOLLOWING TALIBAN TAKEOVER” helped the researchers to understand the human rights in Afghanistan. “Refugees’ views of the effectiveness of support provided by their host countries”. “The Taliban may no longer control Afghanistan, but their persecution of religious minorities will forever remain a stain on global history” published in *NYLS Journal of Human Rights* (Vol. 18, Issue 3, p. Article 15). These journals along with the various research articles reports and other publications have helped the researchers to understand socioeconomic and political situation of Afghanistan and refugee integration process in different countries. These secondary sources were important in understanding how several incidents in Afghanistan influenced or compelled the Afghan people to leave their country over the time. These sources helped the researchers in identifying the factors that influenced Afghan to take decision to flee from country because of several threat such as socio-cultural threats, political issues and so on as well as the way of survival in a new country. By combining primary data which collected from the narrative interviews from Afghan refugee respondents and review of existing literature, the study aimed to provide a thorough knowledge of the motivation of Afghan refugee in leaving homeland and their integration journey in Denmark. This approach allowed to have detailed look at both the motivational factors of Afghan to leave their country at early age and their integration process in Denmark.

Secondary data analysis methods

Document analysis is the main methodological tool for secondary data analysis. Document analysis is a methodological approach of examining both electronic and printed documents to extract valuable information and achieve thorough knowledge. This approach involves carefully

and thoroughly examining different kinds of documents to understand and gain empirical knowledge from the data (Corbin and Strauss, 2008). There are several types of documents which can be used for systematic evaluation for research. These include books, survey data, newspapers, organizational reports, journals, radio and TV scripts, public records and so on. Examining these papers in a planned way, it helps researchers to triangulate findings and validate data from various sources, which makes the study's conclusions stronger and more validated (Bowen, 2009).

Ethical Consideration

Since human beings are the ones who create science, their existence is required to establish ideas, theories, formulas, and beliefs. Because social science works with subjects that are pertinent to researchers' everyday lives and personal experiences, it is particularly susceptible to subjectivity. Research subjects may have an emotional, practical, or intellectual impact on researchers. According to Patton, subjectivity in qualitative research may be both a strength and a weakness that helps science and social science innovate as needed (Diefenbach, 2009).

Guthrie (2010) asserts that ethics refers to a set of rules or guidelines that direct people's actions. The word ethics in the context of research ensures that obligations to treat their responders with integrity and respect. Guthrie (2010) suggested a few research ethics guidelines. These consist of confidentiality, feedback, responsibilities, permission to do research, and participatory research. We conducted the study in accordance with all accepted ethical standards. We carefully chose five respondents to gather data for our study, and researchers tried to avoid bias during the interview. All respondents received comprehensive information about our study's methodology, goals, possible risks, and advantages prior to their participation. Additionally, respondents were informed that participation was completely voluntary. With the participants' permission, researchers recorded every interview to ensure the accuracy of the data. However, by utilizing pseudonyms in the transcription, we were able to protect the privacy and anonymity of the participants' identities. Participants were given the choice to skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering to prevent discomfort. Although all the respondents, the researchers had comparable sociocultural backgrounds and currently live in similar places where our lived experiences may coincide, we tried to avoid including our own ideas and viewpoints in the data analysis.

Limitation of the study

The main goal of this paper is to explore the motivation of the Afghan people who left Afghanistan during their minor age. It will also examine what they did or followed in Denmark to integrate in Danish society after leaving their home country, despite differences in culture and social structure, as well as their thoughts and feelings about their homeland. To answer the main research question, “What are the motivations of Afghan people who left Afghanistan at a minor age, and how is the process of their integration in Denmark?” researchers have chosen a qualitative research method. Qualitative methods in social sciences research are more effective in addressing the research questions since they facilitate comprehensive knowledge of phenomena (Bryman, 2006). This approach helped the researchers get insights about the respondents' previous lives in Afghanistan, their migration journey and integration process in Denmark, and their plans in future. Although the researchers employed a strong and thorough methodology in this thesis, there are still some notable limitations in the paper. Qualitative approaches offer significant insights, yet their qualitative stringency may be inadequate for wider generalizability (Jonson, Adkins, and Chauvin, 2020). This limitation makes it difficult to generalize the results throughout several settings or groups (Mohajan, 2018). In this paper, the researchers have conducted only five interviews. Because the respondents were from Afghanistan and are living in Denmark as refugees. The researchers had a hard time reaching each other for interviews since they do not belong to the same community. Trust issues were the major barrier for collecting data because they were not so comfortable with the researchers to share their past experiences because their previous experiences were so traumatic and sensitive. So, to recall the past memory make them emotionally vulnerable and retraumatized. Therefore, some individuals first agreed to be our respondents then they just cancel the appointment because of the sensitivity of the information. Moreover, the study primarily focuses on the motivations for leaving Afghanistan during minor age, their integration process in Denmark, and their feelings toward their homeland. But it may not be enough to cover the other relevant context widely. For instance, this research could cover various contexts, such as the role of Afghan refugees in supporting their families by sending remittances, several threats to ethnic groups, and so on. Additionally, understanding migration, refugees, and integration in a host country is a long-term process, making it difficult to obtain insightful findings within a limited timeframe.

Limitations of Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis is a method of analyzing qualitative data. Thematic analysis is a key method in this paper and is inherently subjective, as it significantly depends on the researchers' skills and perceptions. Skills and interpretative capabilities may differ (Braun & Clarck, 2006). Sometimes the subjectivity of this procedure results in bias that can influence the reliability of findings (Guest et al., 2012). Moreover, thematic analysis may sometimes oversimplify intricate social issues by categorizing detailed data into broad categories (Nowell et al., 2017). This approach may overlook minor but significant behavioral differences, resulting in a shallow understanding of fundamental dynamics (Maguire and Delahunt, 2017). Since identifying themes is subjective, different researchers may discover different themes, which might alter the trustworthiness of the results (Terry et al., 2017).

Limitations of document analysis

Document analysis in this research faced various challenges because of the viable quality and availability of secondary data (Bowen, 2009). This variability may influence the consistency and depth of context derived from documents (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Additionally, documents often lack context, which makes it challenging to understand the whole background or possible biasness of data (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These limitations may lead to deficiencies in comprehending the wider context of information (Prior, 2003).

Chapter Four

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework is a significant chapter of a research paper, and it helps a researcher to provide a structured approach from formation to reporting. Researchers can utilize one or more theories to analyze data, explore complex social phenomena, interpret empirical findings, and structure their presentation of results. According to Müller & Urbach (2017), theory offers a structured framework for researchers; it facilitates the interpretation and comprehension of data, identifies gaps, refines concepts, and assesses credibility and dependability by connecting data with extensive academic disciplines. This research project emphasizes the motivations behind why Afghan minors flee their country and how they integrate into Danish society.

In this research project the research question has been divided into two parts. In the first parts we will try to find out the reasons and motivations that influenced the Afghan people to leave their country, and to find out the answer to this part of the question, we will use Identity concept, A theory of Migration (Push-pull Theory) and the Security theory. These theories will give us insights into how identity crises, push-pull factors, and security concerns motivated them to make the decision. The second part of the question is to figure out the integration process of these Afghan people in this new host land (Denmark), and the researchers have chosen three more theories to understand this integration process. Here, theories of Acculturation and Integration will help us to understand how these people integrated into this new society and what kind of measures they have taken to make these processes successful. And the concept of Transnationalism will help us identify the economic, social, and cultural connection of the Afghan people to their homeland.

Identity Concept by Jenkins

The concept of identity is universal, and it is applicable for both human and the other creatures of the universe (Jenkins, 2014, p. 17). Jenkins (2014) said that there are two basic meanings to define identity; the first one is the similarity or the equalness of the objects of identity, and the second

one is the continuity of identity over time. Jenkins also stated that identity is something which is continuously changing its shape; it is not a rigid thing. The identification process gives people the opportunity to associate themselves with other people and groups, which include friends, sports teams and even the same ideology.

In his argument Jenkins (2014) said that human identities are basically social, shaped by interaction, agreement, disagreement, innovations, conventions, negotiations and communication. He criticized the contemporary literatures of identity due to their static concept about it. Identity is a fluid and dynamic process of "being" and becoming shaped by institutional frameworks and continuing interactions. From a sociological point of view, Jenkins defines identity as a process where individuals and collectives distinguish themselves in their relations to others (Jenkins, 2014, p. 18).

Identity, which has its roots in language, is the human ability to recognize who is who and what is what. According to Martin (1995), identity is not something people simply have but something they are always shaping through a process called *identification*. This means people are constantly thinking about who they are based on their surroundings and relationships. It includes how they see themselves, how others see them, and how they see others. Identity is an ongoing activity that helps us understand social interactions, but it doesn't completely control what people do or decide.

Many scholars have pointed out that the concept of identity is unclear. Essentialists see identity as fixed and unchanging, while constructivists view it as flexible and shaped by social context. This mix of views makes identity a useful tool in sociology (Brubaker & Cooper, 2000, as cited in Jenkins, 2014). However, Jenkins (2014) criticizes the common separation between individual and collective identities, arguing that this division overlooks the complex ways they interact. He believes that individual identity is deeply connected to collective identity, and one cannot be fully understood without the other. Social interaction shapes both identities, revealing both similarities and differences among individuals. Jenkins (2014) also describes three linked levels that make up the social world: the individual order (personal thoughts and experiences), the interaction order (relationships and communication between people), and the institutional order (social systems and structures). These levels do not exist separately but influence and shape each other at the same time. According to our data, researchers think these factors influence the Afghan people to leave

their country. Respondents experienced negative events and unfavorable personal circumstances. They also said that the relationship with the neighbor was not friendly, and they treated each other like enemies. In some cases, respondents also mentioned that the social norms and customs were not in their favor. These kinds of incidents might create some identity crisis. Martin (1995) posited that identity is not innate, but rather a dynamic process that individuals constantly shape through identification. It means people are constantly thinking about who they are based on their surroundings and relationships. In this process it is important to consider how they see themselves, how others see them, and how they see others.

There is tension between internal and external identity which is endless. Internal identity means how we think and present ourselves, while the other people's view of us refers to the external identity (Jenkins, 2014, p. 103). Jenkins stated that the terms 'internal' and 'external' can be deceptive because they simplify complex facts too much. The terms could be used metaphorically to describe how individuals and groups define themselves in a specific environment. The formation of identity is a more dynamic, continuous and interconnected process. The processes of internal and external identification can happen simultaneously, and they challenge the typical, orthodox, and sequential perspective on how language and cognition typically work. Identification takes place in a shared environment where internal and external processes are intertwined and continuously interact and impact one another. However, depending on different contexts and circumstances, both internal and external influences may change (Jenkins, 2014, p. 47).

Jenkins (2014, p. 158) critiques the perspectives of Emile Durkheim and Margaret Thatcher about society and highlights the collectivities, like social networks, nations, or corporations, are more intricate and abstract than just the total of their members. These groups are shaped by several layers of social, economic, political, and cultural dynamics that interact and influence one another in diverse ways. Jenkins (2014, p. 132) contends that, despite the theoretical shifts and emergence of postmodernism, the concept of community remains vital and essential in daily life. It plays a role as a key source of collective identity and assists in addressing basic human needs. Being part of a community does not necessarily imply the sameness in the thoughts and behaviors of its members. Understanding and relationships attached to symbols can vary among members of a community. As an example, Jenkins (2014) speaks about a rugby club situated in South Wales that acts as a center of diverse meanings and significance for various people, such as a former player, a spouse

dealing with financial difficulties, and a new local teacher. A community and its symbols can encompass a variety of meanings that demonstrate the identity of a community is both collective and individually shaped (Jenkins, 2014, p. 136). As a core sociological concept, identity bridges individual experience to group interactions. These ideas are fundamental to understanding how societies work and change because they illustrate human behavior across history and address the difficulties of the present day. Moreover, understanding identity and the way we interact with others is vital to capturing the modern human relationship and the structural framework of society. (Jenkins 2014, cited in Roy et al., 2024).

However, the ‘Social Identity’ concept by Richard Jenkins focuses on the ongoing process of identity creation and can be applied to the analysis of the dynamic interaction of the Afghan people to identify their motivation to leave their country at their minor age, navigate their survival during the migration period and explore the integration process of them in their new host land (Denmark).

Theory of Migration (Push-Pull Theory)

Everett Spurgeon Lee, a professor of Sociology at the University of Georgia, is best known for his theory of migration, also known as the Push and Pull Theory. Lee is the pioneer of the theory of migration. The theory, which is based on sociological concepts, aims to provide a framework for understanding the factors influencing migration between origin and destination (Lee, n.d.).

Lee stated that migration is a broad concept; it includes any kind of permanent or semi-permanent change of living. Migration doesn't consider distance or if the move is voluntary or forced. It also treats a small move, such as shifting from one apartment to another, even if it is in the same building, as migration. Simultaneously, a large overseas movement, like from Bombay to Cedar Rapids, is also referred to as a migration; the causes and the consequences of these two movements could be different. However, this migration concept excludes the movement of nomads or seasonal workers who travel from place to place for their livelihood. This theory is important for this research because the researchers want to find out the motivations of the Afghan people who left their country when they were minors and took refuge in Denmark. This migration is neither seasonal nor work-related. Lee emphasizes that whether it is a large or small movement, there must

be three key parts to it: 1) an origin, 2) a destination, and 3) an intervening set of obstacles, including distance, which is always considered a factor (Lee, n.d.).

Lee classified four factors that influence people in the process of decision-making for migration. The four factors are 1) Factors associated with the area of origin, 2) Factors associated with the area of destination, 3) Intervening obstacles and 4) Personal factors (Lee, n.d.). This study used personal and origin-related factors to understand why respondents left their country.

Personal factors influence migration decisions, but they vary from person to person. According to our data, personal factors that motivate respondents to flee can include fear of persecution, loss of livelihood, or even the orthodox social structure. Life stages and transitions link certain factors, while others remain constant throughout life. It depends on the perception of the place of origin and is shaped by personal awareness, intelligence, and information availability that influences migration rather than the actual condition of the people. In addition, personal thinking makes a change in this matter; some people need vital reasons for migration, while on the other hand, some people are waiting for a little provocation to migrate (Lee, n.d.).

According to Lee, different types of random or unpredictable incidents, such as being a victim or experiencing injustice, motivate people to leave their place or country. For instance, one of our respondents departed from Afghanistan due to his neighbor's harm and the police's lack of assistance. This kind of incident may not directly affect the entire society or community, but it could still motivate individuals or groups within the community to migrate from that place. Parkins asserted that people expressed their distress over crime and violence as the most talked-about issues. Unsatisfactory political and social situations some of the factors driving migration include ethnic, socioeconomic, political, and religious inequities; international conflicts; internal military conflicts; political instability; natural disasters; and unemployment. Our data indicates that some of these factors, particularly the socioeconomic situation and religious radicalization, contribute significantly to Afghan migration. Thomas-Hope's (2002) study shows that crime and violence are one of the major factors that influence people making decisions about migration (Parkins, n.d.). These individual and collective experiences have the power to alter how appealing or secure a location seems, leading people to search for better chances or settings elsewhere (Lee, n.d.).

Though the Theory of Migration, or push-pull theory, has been acknowledged as a fantastic and effective model for explaining the various causes and consequences of human migration, it has also faced some criticism. Many scholars assert that it is difficult to determine which push and pull factors at both the place of origin and the destination are quantitatively more attractive to different groups of people. Additionally, due to intervening obstacles, the demographers are unable to identify the major and the minor factors of migration. For this reason, Lee's theory does not offer significant assistance in policy and decision-making in the developing countries (Lee, n.d.).

However, A Theory of Migration' gives us an understanding of the factors and reasons that may push or pull the individuals or the groups to migrate from their place of origin to their destination. So, the researchers of this study choose this theory to identify the causes and the factors that motivate the Afghan people to leave their place of origin at such a young age.

Security Concept

Historically, the security concept focused on the protection of states from external military threats, which is rooted in realism (Kunz & Morgenthau, 1948). Security studies, traditionally focused on the state's survival, have evolved to encompass threats to individuals or groups. The Post-Cold War era saw a paradigm shift in security. Barry Buzan broadened the traditional security concept beyond the military concept. This evolution reflects the changing character of modern threats, which encompass not only military aspects but also economic, social, cyber, and environmental aspects (Buzan, 2007). According to Jones & Emyr Wyn Jones (1999), traditional security has been focused on the state as a main actor in security matters, and it prioritizes military solutions over social, economic, and environmental considerations. The traditional concept of security fails to recognize many of the most pressing security issues. Traditional security overlooks the human security issue, which can reinforce existing power structures and inequalities. Other scholars criticized this narrow concept for its inability to address the complex, multilayered threats experienced by individuals and communities. Traditional security perpetuates social injustice and fails to address the actual root causes of insecurity. Human security refers to the protection and enhancement of individuals' well-being over state-centric security, which emphasizes the individual protection from several threats, including economic, food, environmental, health, personal, community, and political security. In this paper, respondents also faced these kinds of

threats in Afghanistan, particularly personal threats from the community, like who were the members of the Taliban. Because of the support of the West-backed government in Afghanistan, one of the respondent's family experienced a political threat by the Taliban. These kinds of threats made an insecure situation for the respondent in Afghanistan. The new concept of human security helps the researchers to address the actual security threats in contrast to traditional security theory.

According to UNDP (1994), human security is defined as “freedom from fear and freedom from want,” emphasizing the protection of individuals from chronic threats like poverty and repression, as well as sudden disruptions in daily life. Security is “the absence of threats to core values,” with priority given to emancipation, freeing individuals from constraints that stop them from carrying out what people freely would choose to do (Booth, 2007). "Freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" were absent in Afghanistan, which disrupted their daily lives. Because of free mixing with girls one respondent faced a threat from the girl's family, which refers to the presence of threats and hampers the concept of freedom from fear and freedom from want.

According to Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy (2007), human security challenges the traditional thinking of security and focuses on threats that may come from within the state itself, such as structural violence, marginalization, or physical violence to individuals. It emphasizes two key aspects, such as protection from critical and pervasive threats and enabling people to develop individuals' resilience against insecurity. Political conflict or violence, such as terrorism, repression, and civil conflict, directly threatens individuals and groups. According to Kaldor (2012), the concept of new wars highlighted the conflicts that are characterized by blurred lines between war, organized crime, and human rights violations, which predominantly affect individuals. Social threats refer to the dangers to the social group's identity and cohesion. O et al. (1993) assert that threats to collective identities, such as religious or ethnic identities, can elicit existential fears within groups. Societal insecurity can result in violence, exclusion, and displacement of individual groups. In Afghanistan, ethnic conflicts disrupted the social group's identity and cohesion. There was a long history of ethnic conflict in Afghanistan, particularly between Hazaras and Pashtus, which turned into political conflict because of Taliban support for Pashtu people. This kind of threat made the ground of social insecurity for the individuals or groups, which led to violence and displacement of groups or individuals.

Researchers used this security concept in this thesis to understand security-related matters that may create threats to individuals or groups of people for several reasons. In this paper, one research question is, "What are the motivations of Afghan refugees to leave the country?" According to the respondents, most of the motivations are related to life safety because of several threats, such as killing threats, religious threats, and political threats, affecting both individuals and ethnic groups. To examine these types of threats, this security concept will be helpful for researchers to connect with the data for analyzing data in this paper.

Integration Concept by Alastair Ager and Alison Strang

Integration of the refugees and migrants in a new place is a complex and ongoing process. The process encompasses providing employment, housing, education, and medical facilities, as well as assisting individuals in forming friendships, understanding their rights, and overcoming challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and adapting to a new environment. Integration varies for every individual, and it can be influenced by different factors, but it plays a vital role for the refugees or migrants to be included and to be a part of the society (Ager & Strang, 2008).

The concept of integration is so complex and contested when it comes to the refugees and immigrants. Robinson (1998: 118) stated that integration is a chaotic concept. The user and their purpose determine its meaning, despite its widespread use. He **highlights its individualized, contextualized, and contested nature, suggesting that personal perspectives, political contexts, and specific situations can vary its interpretation.** Similarly, Castles et al. (2001:12) stated that there is no universally accepted definition of refugee integration. It is a controversial concept, and people often debate in this regard how the refugees adapt themselves to this society (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Integration is important, according to European Commission 2004; Scottish Executive 2006; Frattini 2006; HMG 2007; Welsh Assembly Government 2006; USEU 2007, both as a declared governmental policy and as a desired result for initiatives including refugees. So we should define successful integration based on how the other groups see it. As Korac (2001) noted, often people measure the level of refugees' integration in terms of their employment, accommodation, education and other public benefits. These are the common indicators that someone is integrated well into a new society. Government policies and researchers often measure these indicators for

integration. 'Full and Equal Citizens' also focused on this idea that is commonly used in different studies about the settlement of the refugees in Europe. This idea is described in the 1951 Geneva Convention, where it is written that the refugees also have rights, such as the right to work, get education & proper accommodation and other public benefits. Ager & Strang (2008) stated that they used the term "*public outcomes*" to describe success in areas like employment, housing, education, and social welfare, as these consistently stood out throughout the study (Ager et al., 2002). However, viewing success in these areas only as indicators of integration is limiting. While they can reflect integration, they also play an important role in helping people become integrated (Ager & Strang, 2008).

(Ager & Strang, 2008) proposed four major themes which include ten key domains that are very important when we are thinking about the integration of the people into a new society, especially when it comes to resettlement, such as for refugees or immigrants. These themes serve as crucial areas for evaluating and guiding integration efforts. The themes encompass achievement and access in various sectors, such as employment, housing, education, and health; assumptions and practices related to citizenship and rights; processes of social connection within and between groups within the community; and the structural barriers that impede such connections due to language, culture, and the local environment. We provide a framework that connects these domains, facilitates discussion, and clarifies the people's understanding of integration. This framework and the domains help the researchers to answer the second part of the research question, which is the integration process of the Afghan people who had come to Denmark at their young age.

(Ager & Strang, 2008) provided a conceptual framework to define the core domains of integration:

Markers and Means: Successful integration often depend on the review of some specific indicators related to public benefits such as jobs, education, etc. Korac (2001) said that administrative reports and analyses also focus on these indicators when they are thinking about a successful integration (Ager & Strang, 2008). According to Ager & Strang (2008), the public benefits of employment, housing, education, and health are the basic potential domains that support the integration of refugees and immigrants.

Employment: According to Castles et al. (2001), employment is the most important and dynamic indicator of integration. (Africa Educational Trust 1998; Bloch 1999; Tomlinson and Egan 2002). It has been stated that employment is a factor that influences many other relevant issues, such as providing economic independence, future planning, a chance to meet with the people of the host society, an opportunity to improve language skills, boosting self-esteem, and encouraging self-reliance. Simultaneously, securing employment in a new society may present certain challenges. Often, the refugees are unable to prove their educational documents, and the employers may not be ready to recognize them. Duke et al. argue that there should be some programmers for the refugees so that they can find a way in the new society; for example, if there were such an opportunity, the qualifications of the refugees could be converted to be used for new employment (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170).

Housing: According to Glover et al. (2001); Dutch Refugee Council/ECRE (2001), housing is important for the refugees' overall mental and physical wellbeing and the feeling of home in the new host country. Proper housing also gives the refugee the opportunity to build up a good relationship with their neighbors in the host society, which helps them integrate socially (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 171).

Education: Education makes an individual more skilled and qualified and enables them to be more efficient and active members of society. In the case of refugee children, education plays an important role in their lives. School allows them to bond with the host community, aiding their integration. But some obstacles may arise during this process, such as bullying, racism, difficulty making friends, etc. (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 172).

Health: Health is one of the key factors of a successful integration process. Health plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to actively participate in society. Refugees and immigrants require access to medical facilities for both physical and mental health to successfully integrate into society. But often some difficulties, like language barriers, less information, etc., make them vulnerable to getting the proper health facilities in the host country (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 172-173).

In this conceptual process, social connections have a great impact on the integration of refugees and immigrants into a new society. According to the conceptual framework by Ager & Strang (2008), social connections have three domains: being connected with the society they are in (social bridges, social bonds, and social links). Ager & Strang (2008) cited that integration is a long-term, two-way process that is related to the condition and participation of refugees in European society as well as a sense of belonging to their homeland (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 177).

Ager & Strang (2008) coined the idea that the concepts of "inclusion" and "exclusion" are always at the center of the discussion about social integration. These ideas are often used as a metaphor for removing barriers so that social integration takes place in a successful way. According to Hale's observation (2000: 276), economic and social participation in mainstream society is the central concern of the integration of Vietnamese refugees who came to the UK during the 1970s. We assumed that these barriers create obstacles in the process of effective integration, and the government should take initiatives to remove them. Ager & Strang, 2008, identified two major areas of barriers: 1) language and cultural knowledge, and 2) safety and security (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 181-182). The last point of the conceptual framework is its foundation, which focusses on the domain of rights and citizenship. Citizenship and rights are more controversial issues for the refugees, as they depend on the sense of identity and cultural understanding of nation and nationhood (Saggar 1995: 106). Identity and nationhood create certain values that shape integration (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 173-174).

After the discussion, it can be said that the conceptual framework of Ager & Stran (2008) is essential to understand the integration of the people in a new society, especially for the refugees and immigrants. Their themes and domains give us clear insight into the integration process. In this research this conceptual framework gives a view to evaluate and understand the integration process of the Afghan people who came to Denmark at a minor age as refugees, and it also helps the researchers to identify the obstacles the respondents face during this integration process.

The Acculturation theory of John Berry

Berry (1997) introduced the concept of acculturation, which is defined as a process that happens when people from different backgrounds interact with one another. This is relevant when people move from one country to another country, bringing them into direct contact with different cultural norms and social and Behavioral expectations. When people move from one country to another country, they encounter different social, cultural, and environmental practices, which might contrast with what they are accustomed to in their home country. This new environmental, social, and cultural norm may lead to conflict with their existing perceptions rooted in their home country.

The researchers have chosen this theory to answer the research question, which is related to the integration of the Afghan people in Denmark who came here as refugees at an early age. In interviews, the respondents said they faced issues like not knowing the language, culture, or weather after arriving in Denmark. To overcome these barriers, they learned the local language, assimilated into the local culture, developed their skills, and attempted to integrate into society, all of which they claimed helped them survive in this new land. In this theory, Berry (1997) proposed four adaptation strategies during the acculturation phase. So, these strategies will help the researchers find out the answers to the research question more efficiently.

Assimilation: This strategy involves when an individual adopts the cultural norms, values, and behavior of the host country and abandons the rooted aspects of their own culture.

Separation: In This approach individual maintain strong attachment with the cultural and societal norms and behavior of their home country and avoid the influence of the host culture.

Marginalization: It occurs when individuals do not maintain a strong bond with the cultural heritage of the home country nor want to connect with the host culture.

Integration: This strategy is regarded as a balanced strategy in which people maintain their original identities in relation to the social mores and cultural norms of their home countries while maintaining and participating in the host culture by assimilating different aspects of the host nation (Berry, 1997 ; as cited in Ahmed , Dewan, Ferdous , & Roy, 2024 p. 18).

According to Ward, 1996, adaptation comes through acculturation and involves how individuals adjust themselves to the new cultural environment. There are two different kinds of adaptation: sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation. Sociocultural adaptation refers to how people successfully navigate, manage, and function through the acculturation process in a new cultural context. Psychological adaptation is concerned with an individual's psychological well-being and mental health (Berry, 1997 ; as cited in Ahmed , Dewan, Ferdous , & Roy, 2024 p. 18).

According to Berry, during the process of acculturation, different types of factors affect the adaptation of an individual in the new society. Age, gender, education, motivation of the migration, status of the individual, expectation from the society, and cultural distance, such as language, religion, and the personality of the individual (Locus of control, flexibility), are the prior factors, and the length of time, attitudes and behavior towards acculturation strategies, coping strategies and resources, social support, and social attitudes are those factors that affect acculturation during the process (Berry, 1997, p. 15).

According to Berry (1997), integration is the best of these four strategies because it maintains a balance between interacting with the cultures of the home and the host country and produces the best results in terms of sociocultural adjustment and psychological well-being. Conversely, marginalization denotes a lack of social and cultural ties in both the culture of the home and the host countries, which harms one's mental and physical health because of a 19 | Page lack of social support and increased stress (Berry, 1997). The study by Berry et al. (2006) shows that assimilation and separation strategies yield less favorable outcomes compared to integration. These strategies are more functional than marginalization but do not support the fullest potential for sociocultural and psychological adaptation, but they are still more successful than those who marginalize themselves from host and home cultures. Maintaining social connection with both home and host country may provide valuable support, practical assistance, and valuable information, which are crucial for navigating and adjusting to a new cultural environment (Berry, 1997 ; as cited in Ahmed , Dewan, Ferdous , & Roy, 2024 p. 18-19).

In the project, four strategies proposed by John Berry in his acculturation theory, such as assimilation, separation, integration, and marginalization, the researchers of this project can use

integration as a lens to understand which strategies help the Afghan people to adapt in the new environment.

Transnationalism

According to Schunck (2014), Nina Glick Schiller, Linda Basch, and Christina Szaton Blanc's anthropological study established the transnationalism concept as widely acceptable in the field of social sciences. Transnationalism refers to the escalation of interconnectedness among people all over the world, which has weakened the concept of traditional non-state boundaries and covered political, social, economic, and cultural processes. Transnationalism also described the process through which migrants and immigrants uphold and create multilayered identities and social bonds that connect their home and host countries (Schiller et al., 1995). The definition of transnationalism emphasizes that it requires and involves individual acts that contribute to making a connection between home and host country. One of the main characteristics of transnationalism is border crossing, which enables immigrants to live not only within national borders but also in other countries in the world. (Blanc et al., 1995, As cited in Schunck 2014). According to Vertovec (1999), the concept of transnationalism primarily focuses on individuals and civil society, emphasizing the cross-border connection aspects, frequent transnational exchanges, and high intensity. Some respondents in this study told researchers how they feel about their homeland and stay connected to it from abroad. Respondent said that though he lives in Denmark, he has a connection with family who are living in Denmark. This type of connection refers to the interconnectedness of people across the border.

According to Schiller et al. (1995), the capitalist economy makes ground for labor migration, which created such kinds of situations in sending countries that motivated individuals to migrate to receiving nations while focusing on the opportunities and wealth. When migrants arrive in host countries, they encounter various social and economic challenges due to limited opportunities, a lack of integration prospects, and discrimination.

To describe these connections, Glick Schar and colleagues coined the term “transnational social field.” The transnational social field refers to the interconnection and dynamic nature of relationships that go beyond the traditional nation-state concept, and it is defined as a set of multilayered networks of interconnections across national boundaries by which practices,

concepts, and resources are shared, exchanged, and transformed (Levitt and Schiller, 2004, p. 1009). Going beyond traditional migration theories, according to Levit & Schiller (2004), transnationalism is the dynamic, multiple connections that migrants have between their home country and host land. Methodological nationalism, which maintains that the nation-state is the natural social and political unit and acts as a container for social and political processes, is criticized by Levit and Schiller (2004). Levitt and Schiller (2004) contend that the container model is not adequate for capturing the interconnections of modern migration and global realities, which need the exploration of a new theoretical structure. Consequently, they introduced the transnational social field and argued that assimilation and maintaining transnational connections are not mutually exclusive; individuals can maintain ties with their country of origin by the practice of being and belonging. This point of view demonstrates that an individual can maintain a strong connection with their homeland while integrating into the host country. One respondent stated that as a Muslim, he celebrates the Eid festival (the main religious festival for Muslims) rather than remaining in Denmark, where the culture is less familiar compared to Afghanistan. the concept of way of being and belonging will help the researchers to connect the transnationalism feelings of Afghan refugees in Denmark.

Schunck (2014) recommends a more empirical approach to studying transnationalism, in contrast to Glick Schiller and her team (Portes, 1999), by utilizing Robert Milton's criteria for establishing new phenomena in scientific research. According to these criteria, for transnationalism to be considered, it must meet three requirements: widespread engagement, long-term stability, and uniqueness.

Portes et al. (1999) argue that technological advancements, such as in communication and mass transportation, are primary conditions to make transnationalism viable by allowing immigrants to move easily between countries and stay informed and connected about several events in their country of origin and maintain strong social and familial bonds across borders. Potres et al. (1999) described that ethnic groups have a history of cross-border activities that provide networks and resources and encourage transnationalism. Immigrants who live in dense ethnic communities are more likely to be involved in cross-border interaction to foster and support their communities (Portes, 2003). According to Vertovec (1999), migrants play an important role in the transnational economy by sending remittances to the host countries, which helps boost the host country's

economy. According to Kriesberg (1997, as cited in Vertoveck, 1999), international NGOs like the Red Cross and several UN agencies play an important role in transnational activities because they can provide resources across borders and prove a safe place where people face repression in their home country.

The transnational social space is facilitated and articulated by the simultaneous maintenance of many political, familial, socioeconomic, religious, and cultural connections. Through these social networks, migrants connect to both their home and host land by forming and maintaining connections at different levels and social sectors. These ties not only engage those who don't go back to their society but also make connections with those who stayed in the original communities, affecting to a greater or lesser extent the regular social, economic, political, and cultural life of the communities of origin (Reyes Romo, 2008). In this research, one respondent claims that they have an Afghan community here, and they maintain social connections with those people who live in Afghanistan, and they conduct some social welfare activities from Denmark. In transnational social spaces, connections to home and host lands are made based on religious, political, and socioeconomic issues, which will be useful for this research.

Assimilation is the process through which two distinct culture groups mix or integrate, adopting each other's cultural practices and social institutions. Richard Alba has identified various forms of assimilation. For instance, he has proposed the idea of "socioeconomic assimilation," which refers to minority groups' capacity to move around and, above all, their involvement or participation in institutions such as the labor market and educational system under the same conditions as native groups. However, complete socioeconomic assimilation is not always achievable; instead, labor immigrants and their experiences often result in segmented assimilation, where they typically end up at the lowest level of society's stratification order and adapt to that situation to maintain their jobs (Reyes Romo, 2008).

In summary, transnationalism involves forming migratory enclaves linked to networks that provide a comprehensive understanding of the connections between regions of emigration and immigration. Both the societies of origin and settlement are impacted by the transnational social space, which articulates and facilitates the flow of people, goods, ideas, and information across boundaries. (Reyes Romo, 2008).

The concept of transnationalism will help the researchers to analyze and describe how social, cultural, and economic factors play a significant role among the Afghan people and their activities to enhance the connection with borders. It will also help us to understand the integrational inspiration of individual Afghan people in Denmark and how they maintain connection with their homeland.

Chapter Five

Historical Background of Afghan Migration

Afghanistan is one of the countries in the world that produces the most migration because of their internal conflicts. Afghanistan has been experiencing internal conflicts for around the last 40 years, resulting in ongoing economic and political crises. Afghans have been migrating to the other countries of the world continuously for about 50 years (Dashti, 2022). In this paper, the researchers want to know the motives of Afghan minors leaving their country. To know their motive, it is very important to know the historical background of Afghanistan, particularly from some specific period, considering the respondent responses, particularly from the Taliban regime and afterwards.

The Taliban took power in the mid-1990s after the withdrawal of soviet forces. The Taliban, primarily composed of Pashtun fighters, positioned themselves as a force for restoring peace and enforcing Islamic law. They established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which was based on the strict interpretation of Sharia Law. They implemented harsh penalties for the violation of the government rules (Fazli, 2022). Under the Taliban rule, particularly from 1996 to 2001, the government revealed itself as a brutal regime because of its strict interpretation of sharia law. The Taliban's ideological foundation was rooted not only in ethnic identity but also in a specific interpretation of Islam. This perspective led them to be more violent not only to the non-Muslims but also to those who were Muslim but didn't obey the rules of Islam. Gender discrimination and restrictions on personal freedom showed the Taliban's ideology and their oppressive nature in society. Public executions, whipping, and amputation became tools for establishing fear in society, while people were subjected to extreme restrictions by the Taliban government, including the banning of several cultural activities such as music, dancing, and other forms of entertainment (Brahimi, 2010). The Taliban government allowed certain types of music, including religious songs. To prevent music and dance at weddings, the Taliban decreed that if their rules were violated, the head of the family would be arrested and punished. The Taliban banned cassettes and music to prevent their presence in shops, hotels, vehicles, and rickshaws. If a shop owner preserves or sells cassettes, they should face imprisonment as part of the shop ban (Baily, 2001). The Taliban brutally ruled over Afghan women in urban areas, especially when it came to the dress code.

Freedom of movement for women was restricted in the Taliban regime. Women were allowed to go outside only with their male legal guardian. If they caught women with a man who wasn't their legal guardian, they would face public lashing. If they found any extramarital affairs, the punishment was death by stoning (“The Taliban’s War Against Women—State,,” 2001).

USA forces invaded Afghanistan with the international coalition, resulting in the collapse of the Taliban government in late 2001 and the formation of a new government with Western support in Kabul in 2001–2002 (Monsutti, 2008). September 11th, 2001, Allied force intervention, and the Bonn agreement of 2001 opened a new chapter in Afghan history. But the ethnic divisions and civil war memories remained fresh because of the special connection of the Taliban with the Pashtun tribes. After the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, around 20,000 Pashtuns were estimated to have been forced out from the Northern and Western part of Afghanistan (Fields et al., 2011). This region served as a haven for Taliban leaders to continue their activities during the US invasion. The tribal areas served as a recruitment base for the Taliban. They used to force the many young men from those areas who were students, especially from Madrasa (Islamic Religious School), to join their team (Afghanistan COI Repository, 2024). They executed their ideologies through fear in tribal areas. The Taliban engaged in targeted killings against the individuals who were working with the foreign forces or Afghan government, and it included officials, former security officers, and NGO workers associated with western humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Misusing the concept of Islam, the Taliban attacked and destroyed cultural and historical sites to instill fear among the populace (Johnson & Mason, 2007). Non-Muslims, particularly Hindus and Shia Muslims, faced various forms of discrimination and were required to wear some specific clothes to identify themselves. The Taliban prohibited non-Muslims from constructing places of worship without permission and from criticizing Muslims in any way. Freedom of religion was absent, and numerous restrictions on the practice of religion were in place, as the Taliban enforced a strict interpretation of strict sharia law (Treyster, 2002).

Since the Taliban primarily was a Pashtun movement, they enforced several policies that politically and socially marginalized non-Pashtun groups like Tajiks, Uzbeks, and Hazaras. The Taliban adopted violent tactics against the ethnic groups, particularly in response to resistance. These ethnic groups experienced suppression of their cultural identities and practices because of Taliban Islamic rules. The Taliban maintained law and order through fear and violence, using mass

arrests, collective punishment, and targeted killing of opponent groups, particularly in that area where strong anti-Taliban sentiment belonged (Ullah et al., 2024). The Taliban also targeted the Hazaras, another ethnic group. On January 8, 2001, they conducted a massacre against the Hazaras. They detained about 300 civilian adult males, the majority of whom were workers of local humanitarian organizations. They killed them in daylight as a collective punishment to help the Hazaras, who were considered the opponents of the Taliban. In June 2001, the Taliban burned around 4000 houses, shops, and public buildings, including mosques, prayer halls, medical centers, madrasas, and so on. In Yaka Olang, they killed many civilians when they were trying to escape (Treyster, 2002). After 2 decades of insurgency, the Taliban returned to power in 2021. Since the Taliban takeover in Afghanistan, the human rights crisis has been the worst, and the world leaders are very concerned about the situation. In the month leading up to the Taliban takeover, the terrorist attacks increased. Initially in the first phase of regaining control, they promised to protect the women's and girls' rights, but a few months later, they denied giving these rights. (Moorehead, 2023). After taking power, the Taliban declared a general amnesty for all Afghans who were against it. But the situation was totally different. there have been several reports about extrajudicial killings of Taliban soldiers— specifically former members of the security forces, media workers, civil society activists, and human rights defenders who were related to the previous Western-supported government. In Kandahar province in late July 2021, during the Taliban takeover, the well-known Khasha Jawan was detained by the Taliban in his house because of his anti-Taliban militia involvement. (Amnesty International, 2022). Despite the promise of minority rights, after 15th august in Daikundi province, around 400 to 2000 families from 15 villages were ordered out of their homes and off their farming lands (Shelton, 2021).

The Taliban discriminated against people based on race, sex, gender, religion, and belief. They also try to instill fear among the civilians and impose strict interpretations of Islamic law to control their lives and freedom of movement. The US-backed government had no control over the Taliban's constant influence in rural Afghanistan. This situation forces people to decide to leave Afghanistan. So, the researcher thinks that this background part of this paper will help them to identify the motivation of the Afghan people who left their country in their minor age and get a better understanding regarding this issue.

Chapter Six

Data Analysis

In this chapter, we will discuss our data analysis part. We will conduct a thematic analysis as part of our study. Our research question primarily focuses on two aspects: firstly, identifying the reasons behind the Afghan people's decision to leave their country at a young age, and secondly, examining the integration process of these individuals in Denmark. We have selected two themes for data analysis. **The first theme, Forced to Flee: Escaping Violence, Persecution, and the Deep Scars of Trauma, encompasses two subthemes: Religious and cultural constraints, and exile from survival.** This theme will delve into the reasons behind individuals leaving Afghanistan at a young age. **The road to inclusion: Creating pathways for integration and participation** is our second theme. This theme also includes two subthemes, which are **"Bridges to tomorrow and A Nation Left Behind.** This theme will allow us to get an insight to the understanding of the integration process of Afghan people in Denmark and their connection to their homeland. Some themes interconnect and influence each other from different angles. We will also use theories for our analysis. In this data analysis part, we will use the Identity Concept by Jenkins, A Theory of Migration (Push-Pull Theory) by Lee, and the Security Concept to analyze our data under the first theme. We will analyze the second theme using Berry's Acculturation Theory, the Integration Concept, and the Transnationalism Concept. To ensure anonymity, we named our respondents: Respondents A, B, C, D, and E.

Forced to flee: Escaping Violence, Persecution, and the Deep Scars of Trauma

In this section of our data analysis, we will examine the factors that led Afghans to flee their homeland at a young age. We will analyze the data under two subthemes, which are Religious and cultural constraints and exile from survival. This analysis part will help us to find out the answer to the first part of our research question, which is ‘What are the motivations behind the flight of the Afghan people at their minor age?’

Religious and cultural constraints

The radical organizations like Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and DAESH are now a part of Afghanistan. These globally recognized terror organizations pose a significant threat to global security. Corruption, socio-cultural religious erosion, and ethnic, religious, and ideological favoritism are prevalent in Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, people are forced to leave their place to protect their lives from death or threats of death (Erol & Mohammad Ali, 2022).

The Taliban took power in the mid-1990s after the withdrawal of soviet forces. The Taliban, primarily composed of Pashtun fighters, positioned themselves as a force for restoring peace and enforcing Islamic law. They established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, which was based on the strict interpretation of Sharia Law. They implemented harsh penalties for the violation of the government rules (Fazli, 2022). This kind of fear of the environment can restrict the movement of the people and freedom of living. This also happened to our respondents when they were living in Afghanistan. Our respondents said the Taliban were too strong in rural areas and the US-supported government couldn't control them. The Taliban were the unauthorized rulers of those areas and practiced their ideologies. (Baily, 2001) stated that, during the time of the Taliban regime, the Taliban banned cassettes and music to prevent their presence in shops, hotels, vehicles, and rickshaws. If a shop owner preserves or sells cassettes, they should face imprisonment as part of the shop ban. The Taliban are carrying out the same actions in the rural tribal areas of Afghanistan under the US-backed government. One of our respondents said that he had a shop where he sold music cassettes, movie DVDs, and books on different religions, especially Buddhism. The Taliban in his area forbade him from selling these items, often threatening to shut him down. But he didn't listen, and as a result, they burnt their shop.

Respondent C said that,

“I used to sell different movies, videos, and some books about the Buddhist religion. The US backed the government of Afghanistan, despite the Taliban controlling my area. My business was illegal in this area; the Taliban burnt my shop, causing me to lose it and threatening my life.”

After this incident, he decided to leave his country because, according to Lee, different types of random or unpredictable incidents, such as being a victim or experiencing injustice, motivate

people to leave their place or country. In his theory of migration, Lee also said that factors associated with the area of origin motivate people to leave (Lee, n.d.).

Although Afghanistan was governed by the Taliban, they enforced Sharia Law, characterized by its severe and regressive nature. The influence and the impact of this law dominate society even after their regime dissolved. The Taliban regime restricted women's freedom of movement. Women were allowed to go outside only with their male legal guardian. If they caught women with a man who wasn't their legal guardian, they would face public lashing. If they found any extramarital affairs, the punishment was death by stoning ("The Taliban's War Against Women—State," 2001). This type of law is extremely harsh, severely restricting people's lives and placing them on a narrow path. In the case of respondent-A, these brutal social norms forced him to leave his family and motherland nine years ago. Respondent-A said that.

"I fell in love with a girl, and the girl said that she loved me, and I also said the same to her. However, we kept everything hidden from both our families and society. In Afghanistan, society did not allow this type of relationship. The whole society was strictly following the Islamic lifestyle, which does not allow relationships without marriage. One day the girl called me and said, please come to our home. I felt nervous because it was very risky to go to their place. Eventually, I decided to go to her home, and we became close. At that moment, her mother came home and discovered we were in that situation. Her mother called the family members, and they caught me. When they asked the girl if she had called me, she denied it. The girl, like any other girl in Afghanistan, was clearly scared, and her actions were obvious. This behavior was considered sinful by society and religion."

Respondent-A also said that after this incident,

"I escaped from the girl's house, and in my absence, they took my elder brother into their custody and killed him brutally. My family was also forced to leave this area. In that moment, if I was going back to my home, they would kill me as well. It is very common in Afghan society that if you do something wrong to others, they will do the same thing to you."

Such behavior can lead to lifelong enmity. Such social norms can make individuals feel vulnerable and marginalized. In the case of Respondent-A, his family was less powerful than the girl's family,

resulting in them being dominated. Such situations marginalize and render people helpless. Therefore, they experience an identity crisis, as Jenkins (2014) posited that human identities are fundamentally social, shaped by interaction, agreement, disagreement, innovations, conventions, negotiations, and communication.

Martin (1995) posited that identity is not innate but rather a dynamic process that individuals constantly shape through identification. It means people are constantly thinking about who they are based on their surroundings and relationships. In this process, it is important to consider how they see themselves, how others see them, and how they see others.

In this study, respondents A and C violated the social norms of Afghan society. Because of the violation of the social norms, they were targeted by a group of people and got punishment. As a result, respondents A and C felt scared, suffered from an identity crisis, and wanted to move to a place where they could live with their true identity and dignity. That is the reason behind the fled of the Afghan people at their minor age.

Exile from survival

In Afghanistan, individuals are often compelled to abandon their homes either voluntarily or through forced displacement due to economic hardship and concerns for personal safety. While The primary drivers of migration and exile are socio-economic conditions, ongoing conflict also plays a significant role. Moreover, such movements frequently occur under coercion or duress, threats commonly issued by armed groups.

According to Vervliet et al. (2014), the motivation and aspirations of Afghan unaccompanied minors who migrated to Belgium were to seek safety from the threat of insurgent groups like the Taliban. In a country like Afghanistan, the socio-economic condition and the political unrest create social instability, which creates insecurity and life threats. In this study, the respondents experience several life-threatening calls from the militia groups like the Taliban. In Afghanistan, if people were working for the government or for NATO, they would be treated as the enemy by the Taliban and other militia groups. According to UNDP (1994), human security is defined as

“freedom from fear and freedom from want,” emphasizing the protection of individuals from chronic threats like poverty and repression, as well as sudden disruptions in daily life. According to Johnson & Mason (2007), “The Taliban executed their ideologies through fear in tribal areas. The Taliban engaged in targeted killings against the individuals who were working with the foreign forces or Afghan government, and it included officials, former security officers, and NGO workers associated with western humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan. Misusing the concept of Islam, the Taliban attacked and destroyed cultural and historical sites to instill fear among the populace.” This kind of incident happened to one of our respondents, and he left Afghanistan. His father was a government employee, and he received death threat calls and letters to leave the job; otherwise, they would be in trouble. According to Respondent-E,

“A few days later, my father once again received letters and phone calls, this time with a more aggressive tone. For this reason, we likely changed our address seven or eight times, but it did not prove to be beneficial. Someone kidnapped my elder brother one day, and we received a ransom call. They demanded a huge amount of money to leave my brother; at that time, we were unable to provide the money, and my brother disappeared forever. We were unable to locate him or determine whether he had died.”

This incident forced him to leave his country for his safety and security of life. From the interviews of the respondents and our observation, we can say that the influence of the Taliban was not fully stopped during the regime of the US-supported government in Afghanistan. They didn’t stop their activities and recruitment during those years. According to the Afghanistan COI Repository (2024), “After the fall of the Taliban government in 2001, around 20,000 Pashtuns were estimated to have been forced out from the Northern and Western part of Afghanistan (Fields et al., 2011). This region served as a haven for Taliban leaders to continue their activities during the US invasion. The tribal areas served as a recruitment base for the Taliban. They used to force the many young men from those areas who were students, especially from Madrasa (Islamic Religious School), to join their team.” The memory of war and the Taliban oppression make people decide to leave Afghanistan. In his interview, Respondent-B stated that,

“The United States backed a government that ruled Afghanistan in 2016. But their control was limited to the city area; outside the city, most of Afghanistan was under Taliban control. So, one

day, the Taliban came to our school, and they forced the school authority to close it. It was an unexpected moment for us, and we were very upset. After closing the school, my uncle enrolled me in a madrasa (Islamic religious school), and I started to study there. But one day some people came to Madrasa; they were dressed like Taliban. They asked us to join their group, and there was no option. I came back to my uncle's home and told him I would not join their group."

He also said that there were some reasons to not join the Taliban force. According to his words,

"The first incident is in our neighborhood: a military man lived there, and one day when he went to the mosque for Friday prayer, the Taliban killed him. The Imam (Islamic priest) of the mosque criticizes the murder, and he says that the army man serves his nation. The next day, the Taliban reportedly killed the Imam in retaliation for his statement against them. Another incident occurred in the morning when NATO began bombing without regard for casualties, and I witnessed ambulances transporting injured people to the hospital near my school, which was a horrifying sight. These two incidents made a deep impact on my mind, and I decided that I would never kill people without any reason." [Respondent-B]

The Taliban upheld law and order by employing fear and violence, which included mass arrests, collective punishment, and targeted killing of opposing groups, especially in areas where strong anti-Taliban sentiment was prevalent (Ullah et al., 2024). According to UNDP (1994), human security is defined as "freedom from fear and freedom from want," emphasizing the protection of individuals from chronic threats like poverty and repression, as well as sudden disruptions in daily life. Security is "the absence of threats to core values," with priority given to emancipation, freeing individuals from constraints that stop them from carrying out what people freely would choose to do (Booth, 2007). "Freedom from fear" and "freedom from want" were absent in Afghanistan, which disrupted their daily lives. In the case of respondent-A, to love a girl is not allowed by society, and he was bitten and threatened by the girl's family.

Respondent A stated that

"Everybody blamed me for the intimacy before marriage, and they pulled me into their backyard and bit me like an animal. When they bit me, I started bleeding and lost consciousness. A rope

bound my hands, and when my senses returned, I found myself in a pitch-black room. I decided to escape from their home because if I didn't do this, then they would kill me."

According to Erol & Mohammad Ali (2022), "In the context of Afghanistan, migration resulting from persecution often involves social dimensions. Notably, conflicts over marriage arrangements and land ownership emerge as prominent drivers of such a movement."

According to Respondent-D, in Afghanistan the social structure is not so modern, and it has not updated for years. So, if there are some social issues or problems to be solved, the people depend on the local body. The police or other governments are not interested in these matters. Violence against others is a common phenomenon in Afghan society.

Respondent D faced a land dispute incident, which made him decide to leave Afghanistan. According to him,

"To settle a land dispute, we met with the senior village members, who told our neighbor that this land has been used by our family for centuries, and we all know that it is theirs. So, you cannot take over the land; it would be unfair. In addition, we called this meeting because in rural Afghanistan, police were not interested in dealing with this kind of land dispute case, and often the village juries take decisions in these cases. But our neighbor was not ready to accept the meeting's decision."

Respondent-D also stated that,

"After a few months, one morning, a group of people suddenly arrived and attempted to seize control of our land. We protested them, and a fight broke out between the two groups. We were three brothers: the eldest, me, and the youngest. In this fight, my younger brother got injured, but it was not a grave injury; one of the boys from their group got brutally injured. In Afghanistan, families will avenge a death or injury even after 50 years. So, when we heard this, we had to plan to get rid of it. We knew that they would not attack the women, elderly people, or kids in the family. They also refrain from attacking individuals who are not present at the scene of the incident. Therefore, they could potentially target either me or my older brother."

According to Lee, different types of random or unpredictable incidents, such as being a victim or experiencing injustice, motivate people to leave their place or country. In the case of Respondent-D, the sudden violence changed his life forever, and he left his country for his security of life.

Above all discussion, we can say that there are different types of incidents that happened with the Afghan people of this study, but the main reason for their flight is the fear of life. They did not feel secure in Afghanistan and left their country illegally on short notice. In Afghan society, the influence and fear of the Taliban were present when a non-Taliban government ruled over the country. But the law and order were not fully controlled by the government. Therefore, the government failed to completely eradicate social and political violence from society. The moral policing by the Taliban and the orthodoxy pattern of society made people vulnerable and forced them to leave Afghanistan.

Integration Part in Denmark:

In this integration section, researchers established a single theme, **"The road to inclusion: Creating pathways for integration and participation,"** as part of their thematic analysis. Researchers have developed two subthemes under this main theme: **A Nation Left Behind and Bridges to Tomorrow.** To analyze this part, researchers used three theories: integration concept, acculturation theory, and transnationalism concept. To analyze the **Bridges to Tomorrow**, researchers used Integration and Acculturation theory, and for **A Nation Left Behind**, it is Transnationalism concept.

Bridges to Tomorrow

Here researchers have focused on the integration journey of Afghan refugees who took shelter in Denmark at their minor age. Although refugees face several challenges because of the negative impacts of their premigration and their experiences of the migration journey, new challenges come to their lives at the end of the migration pathway. Successful integration has a significant effect on well-being and may also mediate or moderate the effects of previous trauma that they experienced in the past (Hynie & York University, 2018). Integration of the refugees and migrants in a new place is a complex and ongoing process. The process encompasses providing employment, housing, education, and medical facilities, as well as assisting individuals (Ager & Strang, 2008).

Refugees face several challenges, including inadequate shelter, lack of basic needs, absence of proper legal framework, and so on (Tariq et al., 2024). To cope with the new environment, it is very important to get initial support. According to Ager & Strang (2008), employment, housing, education, and health are fundamental areas that support the integration of refugees and immigrants. According to respondents C and D, they stated that

“After this, they took us to the office and contacted the translator on the phone. Then the police decided to send a camp, and in the morning, they provided clothes, food, rooms, and ID cards from the Red Cross.” [Respondent-C]

According to Glover et al. (2001) and the Dutch Refugee Council/ECRE (2001), housing is important for the refugees’ overall mental and physical well-being and the feeling of home in the new host country. Proper housing also gives the refugee the opportunity to build up a good relationship with their neighbors in the host society, which helps them integrate socially (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 171).

“I was only 16 years old; they sent me to the camp, and I lived almost a year in the camp. When I turned 19, they gave me a room, but before that, I lived with some other guys like me.”
[Respondent-D]

Providing accommodation is a crucial step in the initial integration process, as it significantly impacts their mental health. Housing is not only a current need but also a priority for future support, which aligns with their aspiration for stability in host countries (Zepinic et al., 2022).

According to respondent A,

“They sent me to Copenhagen and gave me a place to live, and though I was below 18, they appointed a person as, like, my local guardian.”

It’s critical to get initial support to survive in a new environment, which helps them in forming friendships, understanding their rights, and overcoming challenges such as language barriers, cultural differences, and adapting to a new environment (Ager & Strang, 2008). In a new environment, refugees face several challenges, such as loneliness, which can lead to feelings of

mental dissatisfaction. Refugees typically leave behind their family, friends, and communities, leading to their isolation. Refugees from multicultural societies or collectivist cultures may find it particularly difficult to cope in individualistic societies where social structure and community bonds differ from the refugees' social setting. The stress associated with adapting to a new culture led the refugees to feel lonely in the host country (Nguyen et al., 2024). Adaptation comes through acculturation and involves how individuals adjust themselves to the new cultural environment. There are two different kinds of adaptation: sociocultural adaptation and psychological adaptation. Sociocultural adaptation refers to how people successfully navigate, manage, and function through the acculturation process in a new cultural context. (Ward, 1996, as cited in Berry, 1997, as cited in Roy et al., p. 18).

Respondent E and D expressed that,

“I think the main difficulty I faced in Denmark was loneliness. I had many friends in Afghanistan, but here I have almost no friends.

Psychological adaptation is concerned with an individual's psychological well-being and mental health (Ward, 1996, as cited in Berry, 1997, as cited in Roy et al., p. 18).

“One more challenge was to socialize with people. I was a village boy then, and we lived a very close, collective social life. But in Denmark, people have a more individualistic mindset. Everyone here is preoccupied with their lives, leaving me feeling isolated and unrooted. I was depressed about all these issues. But the fun thing is I did not recognize that I was in depression because this kind of feeling was unknown to me. But time is the best remedy, and within that time I recover from it, and later I realize that it was a matter of depression.”

Refugees, particularly those young individuals, often experience a sense of failure if they are unable to continue their journey or integrate into the host country. Being unaccompanied can lead these minors to become mentally unstable, hindering their well-being as well (Donini et al., 2016). To overcome loneliness, it's essential to make connections with other people to share feelings. According to respondents A and B,

“Life in Denmark is not straightforward living. I have no family here. When I think about them and remember the old memories, I just cry in my room. I feel very lonely here and long for someone to express my feelings and emotions.

“After arriving in Denmark, I discovered I was alone in this journey. I had no family or friends here, and I didn’t know the Danish language. During my time at the camp, I felt isolated and alone.”

Medical Support

Health is one of the key factors of a successful integration process. Health plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to actively participate in society. Refugees and immigrants require access to medical facilities for both physical and mental health to successfully integrate into society. (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 172-173). Refugees experience significant trauma due to violence, conflict, or persecution. Access to health services in host countries is essential for these individuals to process their trauma, cope with this stress, and rebuild their new life (Johnson et al., 2019). According to B,

“After I came to Denmark, I missed my family and friends, and day by day I became depressed. The problem was across the limit, and I went to the doctor for treatment, and now I have overcome the problem.”

But often some difficulties, like language barriers, less information, etc., make them vulnerable to getting the proper health facilities in the host country (Ager & Strang, 2008, pp. 172-173). Language can also contribute to making better mental health outcomes by reducing the feelings of isolation and enabling refugees to seek help and build networks (Damen et al., 2021).

Respondent B and D said that,

“When I came to Copenhagen, it was totally a new world for me. I started going to school, and I made some friends. I tried to improve myself so I could integrate into Danish society.”

“Life in Denmark, mostly in the camps, was not straightforward for me. I encountered numerous challenges during my time in Denmark. The first challenge I faced was the language barrier. At that time, I was not proficient in either English or Danish, which made it extremely difficult for me to communicate effectively with others.”

Language proficiency plays a crucial role in the integration of refugees in host countries. Language skills enable refugees to communicate with the local people. Language helps them enhance social connections, which are often prerequisites for employment opportunities. Language skills enable refugees to pursue their education and vocational training for personal development in the host country (Damen et al., 2021).

Respondent D said that,

“I was also faced with difficulties in job searching; I didn’t know how to apply for a job or where to find one.” Even in class, I didn’t understand the accent. It was a challenging time for me. Now, I am learning the language, working for a shop, and doing well.”

Host country language means a second language, and literacy development is the gateway to successful educational outcomes, which affects the life courses and opportunities offered to the refugees (Paradis et al., 2020). Language skills contribute to long-term integration in host countries' labor markets. It secures the job and improves the quality of jobs (Hangartner & Schmid, 2021). As a part of the integration to develop their personal careers in Denmark, respondents A and E stated that

“I enrolled in a language school, and within two years I had completed the basic Danish language level. Besides, I worked for my living. My first job was at Netto as a sales assistant. That time I was not good at Danish, so I faced some difficulties there, but I managed it. Then I worked in a restaurant, and following that, I worked in a gambling club. Now I am working in a shop as a sales assistant.”

“I continued my language classes, and within three years I learned the Danish language. Then I got a job in a supermarket, and then I switched jobs several times.”

In host countries, refugees faced several challenges that encountered individuals, such as insufficient language support, lack of recognition of their qualifications, and systematic discrimination in the job market, which leads to unemployment despite the aspiration of refugees for meaningful work to integrate into host society. Between education and employment opportunities, there is a direct correlation for refugees. Essential skills and knowledge that facilitate the transition into society contribute to the development of a sense of belonging. Education helps the refugees to develop skills that are often not recognized or transferable from their homeland (Baker et al., 2019).

Respondent B stated that

“After I left the camp, I came to Copenhagen and enrolled in a language school. In addition to the language school, I enrolled in a technical school to acquire skills relevant to my future career. I studied electrical work, which was a four-year course. I have finished the course, and now I am a trained electrician, and I can work independently.”

According to Castles et al. (2001) cited by Ager & Strang, 2008, employment is the most important and dynamic indicator of integration (Africa Educational Trust 1998; Bloch 1999; Tomlinson and Egan 2002). It has been stated that employment is a factor that influences many other relevant issues, such as providing economic independence, future planning, a chance to meet with the people of the host society, an opportunity to improve language skills, boosting self-esteem, and encouraging self-reliance (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 170). According to respondent C,

“I got my apartment and started a government job (ATP) according to my skill. During that period, I established a friendship with an Afghan colleague working for a particular company. With his support, I started a job at his company. Thirteen restaurants operated under this company, but business was struggling. As a result, the owner decided to sell them, and I bought a restaurant.”

Education makes an individual more skilled and qualified and enables them to be more efficient and active members of society. In the case of refugee children, education plays an important role in their lives (Ager & Strang, 2008, p. 172). According to D,

“I would like to educate myself more so I can get a better job. I can currently handle low-paying jobs, but enhancing my education will make it easier for me to secure a high-paying position. And I hope one day I have my own house, car, and family here in Denmark.”

Social Interaction

Social connections have a significant impact on the integration of refugees and immigrants into a new society. According to the conceptual framework by Ager & Strang (2008), social connections have three domains: being connected with the society they are in (social bridges, social bonds, and social links). Educational settings foster social interactions, which can help build networks and communities in host societies. These connections are more significant for emotional support and can help you search for a job. The educational environment can contribute to the mental well-being of refugees by reducing mental pressure and helping them to cope with the challenges of displacement and the transition to new life in a new environment (Baker et al., 2019). According to E,

“The chapter of my life started here in the camp, and I went to the language school. The other students at the school were like me. They also come from different countries and live here as refugees. I made some good friends in the camp, and we are still connected.”

Social networks are a vital integration in the host land. Moving from one country to another expose's refugees to diverse cultural norms and social and behavioral expectations. When people move from one country to another country, they encounter different social, cultural, and environmental practices, which might contrast with what they are accustomed to in their home country (Berry, 1997). Still, in host countries, people maintain their original identities in relation to the social mores and cultural norms of their home countries while maintaining and participating in the host culture by assimilating different aspects of the host nation (Berry, 1997, cited by Tonny et al., p. 18).

A Nation Left Behind

Transnationalism refers to the escalation of interconnectedness among people all over the world, which has weakened the concept of traditional non-state boundaries and covered social, economic, and cultural processes (Schunck, 2014). Transnationalism significantly influences the emotional experiences of individuals. Individuals often experience nostalgia for their homeland and feel a deep emotional connection to their roots (Falicov, 2005). According to respondent A,

“I started my journey in 2015, and I reached Denmark in 2016. The journey took four months to reach Denmark. From that day until now, I have not been able to communicate with my family. I do not even know where they are now. Before I left Iran, my uncle called me once and said that the policeman killed my elder brother. From that day on, my family also left the village, and I never found them. I tried several times to use the Face Trace site, but every time it was a failure. The Red Cross tries to find my family, but every year they send me an empty letter.”

Separation from family may feel like a profound longing to reunite. Individuals feel nostalgia when thinking about their family ties (Darieva, 2016). According to E,

“I also miss my family, whom I have not been in contact with for the last 9 years. I don't know if they're still alive or if those people killed them. When I am thinking about it, I cry a lot, and I think that I will never find them in my lifetime. However, I hold onto the hope that one day I will be reunited with my family, a hope that inspires me to strive for improvement in my life.”

Connected through technology

Technological advancements, such as in communication and mass transportation, are primary conditions to make transnationalism viable by allowing immigrants to move easily between countries and stay informed and connected about several events in their country of origin and maintain strong social and familial bonds across borders (Portes et al., 1999). Transnational affect plays a crucial role in how individuals make or maintain emotional bonds despite long distance. It refers to emotions not being confined to face-to-face contact; rather, they can be intensified through various forms of communication (Wise and Velayutham, 2017).

Respondent C stated that,

“I can now work freely and maintain a connection with my family in Afghanistan. Regularly I call them.”

The use of communication technology can facilitate lasting emotional ties across borders. Transnationalism helps to maintain a close connection to families despite geographical distance and enhances feelings of belonging (Falicov, 2005). The transnational social field is the way relationships connect and change across different countries, involving various networks that allow for sharing and exchanging ideas, practices, and resources. Those who live in dense ethnic communities are more likely to be involved in cross-border interaction to foster and support their communities (Portes, 2003). According to respondent C,

“We have an Afghan community in my area, and we engage in various social activities, such as distributing free books, pens, and other educational materials.”

According to respondent C,

“I have a dream to do work for my country because there are lots of possibilities to grow our economy. I feel my country is deep in my heart, and we have a big community here. We stay connected with our community and try to do our best for my country.”

According to Vertovec (1999), Migrants play an important role in the transnational economy by sending remittances to the host countries, which help to help host country's economy. According to C,

“I can now work freely and maintain a connection with my family in Afghanistan. Regularly I call them and send money for their household needs.”

Transnational feelings make aspirations and hopes that migrants maintain for their homeland while they are navigating life in host countries. They dream of contributing to the development of their home countries by sending remittances or investments (Pries, 2008). According to respondent C,

“I have a dream to do work for country because there are lots of possibilities to grow our economy. I feel my country is deep in my heart, and we have a big community here. We stay connected with our community and try to do our best for my country.”

The transnational social field argued that assimilation and maintaining transnational connections are not mutually exclusive; individuals can maintain ties with their country of origin through the practice of being and belonging. This perspective demonstrates that an individual can maintain a strong connection with their homeland while integrating into the host country (Levitt and Schiller, 2004). Transnational feelings often encourage the individuals or families to engage with both local and immigrant communities. Participation in several cultural events, religious festivals, or practices can enhance social connections and provide opportunities for collective participation, reinforcing their cultural identity (Falicov, 2005). Respondent E said that,

“I tried to make friends here, and I have some we often meet. For example, I have come here to celebrate the Eid festival with my friends.”

Participating in several cultural festivals they try to stay connected with their roots which showcase the way of belonging in transnationalism. By this transnationalism individuals try to make their own community abroad and celebrate their culture which helps them to integrate in abroad as a process of integration.

From this discussion, researchers can conclude that Afghan refugees in Denmark encounter several challenges, including psychological issues and language barriers. To overcome these challenges, they went to school to learn the local language, make friends, build a community, and integrate into Danish society.

Concluding Remarks

This paper will address the research questions through data analysis, focusing on two key themes. From the data analysis, researchers have found that the motivation of the Afghan refugees and their integration in Denmark were left to their minor age. Historically, Afghanistan is a land of conflict because of political or geopolitical reasons. Afghans are part of a multicultural society, where religious matters, particularly Islam, heavily influence their culture. Researchers in this study discovered that social, cultural, and political threats motivated Afghan minors to flee their country. Here, social threats refer to the orthodox social patterns that imposed restrictive boundaries and enforced specific values on individuals. Freedom of choice was absent in Afghan society, with a particular focus on the restrictions placed on relationships between men and women due to religious values. Researchers discovered that norm violations should result in punishment, including death. This motivation drove the Afghan minors to flee their home country. Internal conflict in society, particularly in rural areas of Afghanistan, such as land disputes among the neighbors, made a ground of animosity, and most of the cases are dealt with by village jurisdiction because legal authority is not willing to solve this kind of problem, which leads to conflict resulting in death threats. This social threat compelled the Afghan minor to leave their country because most of the young are becoming victims of this incident.

Moreover, researchers found that the failure of the West block supported the government's ability to rule over the whole Afghanistan provided a safe haven for terror groups like the Taliban in rural areas, where they targeted madrasahs (Religious Institutions) as recruitment hubs and coerced young boys into joining their militia groups. There's no option of denial. If anyone denied joining, they would face capital punishment by the Taliban, which compelled many young Afghans to leave their country. Additionally, the Taliban established a fear of threat by target killing those people who were working for NATO and the government. The Taliban caused suffering not only to those people but also to the family members of the NATO and government employees. This kind of target killing forced them to shelter in a safe zone and sent the family members to other countries as refugees. Researchers also found that specific interpretations of Islamic ideology made them intolerant to other ideologies and cultures. For instance, they imposed cultural boundaries based on their religious beliefs by banning music, movies, and various religious and ideological books. Those who defied these bans faced the destruction of their livelihoods and received death

threats from the Taliban. These incidents motivated individuals to flee from their country to save their lives and livelihoods.

As refugees, individuals start their second phase of life in the host country. It is critical to integrate in the host country; as a result, researchers focused on the Afghan refugee integration process in Denmark, who left their homeland at their minor age. In Denmark, they got initial support, such as living space, clothes, food, and so on in camps, from the authorities. Though they faced several challenges, for example, they experienced psychological challenges such as feeling lonely in Denmark. To overcome this challenge, they felt that they needed to establish a connection with the local community in Denmark. However, language is one of the major barriers to making connections with locals and expressing their feelings. To overcome this barrier, they learned the Danish language and went to school to integrate into Danish society. Learning the Danish language enabled them to secure employment and thrive in the job market, which was crucial for their economic survival. To advance their career, they participated in a skilled program in Denmark, which aimed to improve their quality of life by establishing a new home, car, and family. While they are trying to integrate in Denmark at the same time, they become nostalgic for their previous life. To make a connection with their community, they made friends in Denmark who belonged to the same culture and ideology and celebrated their festivals together. These homely feelings help them to integrate in Denmark and inspire them to do something for their homeland. Some of them send remittances to family or provide social support to their community to contribute to their family and society.

The study has explored their motivation to leave Afghanistan at a minor age and their integration process in Denmark. It can also open some focus areas for conducting future studies, such as the role of Afghan diaspora communities to help in integration and support Afghan refugees who came to Denmark at a minor age.

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Appendix

Interview-01

Respondent-A

Date: 18/02/2025 (Copenhagen)

I lived in a beautiful village in the northern part of Afghanistan. I lived with my parents and five siblings. I was the second child born to my parents, who also had three other brothers and two sisters. I went to school, and my life was full of joy and happiness. My father was a gardener, and his workplace was near to our residence. It was a private property, and the owner of the garden was a policeman. My father worked for them for many years. The policeman had a daughter, and we were like the same age. I was in the sixth grade, and so was she. Often, I used to take lunch for my father. When I took lunch for my father, the girl and I met and talked to each other. We had known each other since our childhood and were close friends back then. But when we entered in our childhood, we felt that our relationship was something more than friendship. When I was 14, I discovered that we were falling in love with each other. My family was poor, but the girl had a rich family, so she bought me a mobile phone so that we could talk to each other whenever we want. I was so happy to have this, and several times in a day we talked over the phone. She said that she loves me, and I also said the same to her. But everything was hidden from the families and from the society. Because in Afghanistan this type of relation was not permitted by the society. The whole society was strictly following the Islamic lifestyle, and the religion never allowed this kind of relations without marriage. So, we kept our relationship secret, but we enjoyed our love. Everything was fine for me, and I lived a normal life like a teenager. One day, a phone call drastically altered my life, forcing me to abandon both my homeland and my family. I will now share with you the details of that incident, which turned into a nightmare for me.

One day the girl called me and said, please come to our home. I asked, why should I come? She replied that nobody was home at that time so we could spend a wonderful time with each other. I was happy to be with her, but at the same time, I felt nervous because it was very risky to go to their place. But at the end I went to her home, and we got intimate. After an hour or maybe more, suddenly, the door opened and we saw that it was her mother. In that moment I was shirtless and intimate with her. I tried to escape, but I was on the second floor of the building, so I couldn't do

this. Her mother called the family members, and they caught me. They asked the girl about me, and she denied calling me. The girl was scared, and what she did was pretty obvious, like any other girl in Afghanistan. This behavior was considered sinful by society and religion. So, everybody blamed me and they pulled me into their backyard and bit me like an animal. When they bit me, blood came from my body, and I became senseless. When I got my senses back, I discovered myself in a dark room, and my hands were tied by a rope. I decided to escape from their home because if I didn't do this, then they would kill me. I tried and somehow succeeded in escaping from there. I just ran away and tried to reach my uncle's place; it was quite far from our house. So, when I ran to my uncle's place, a car driver helped me reach my destination. When I arrived at my uncle's house, they were taken aback by my presence and assisted me in cleaning up and providing some food. My uncle called my father, and my father told him to send me to a safe place because the family searched my house and took my elder brother. They said that if my family returned me back to them, then they would free my brother, and they also demanded that one of my sisters marry their family members. It is very common in Afghan society that if you do something wrong to others, they will do the same thing to you.

After talking to my father, my uncle took me to Kabul that night and tried to send me to Iran, where he had a friend. The next morning my journey began to reach Iran. I have no money and no knowledge about this journey. My uncle did all the arrangements, and I started my journey with a group of people whom I didn't know. First, I reached the Nimruz, which is a border with Pakistan and Afghanistan. We crossed the border and went to Pakistan. Then we reached the Iranian border and entered the country. My uncle's friend gave me a job on a construction project where I cooked food for the workers. I had no permission to go outside the building because I had no legal documents to live there. My uncle's friend wasn't giving me the salary and saved it for my further journey. After six months in Iran, my next journey began—the way to Europe. From Iran I reached Turkey and then took a journey with 50 other people in a small plastic boat. No doubt it was a dangerous journey, and I wasn't sure I would complete it. The boat's lack of safety meant that anything could happen at any moment. But after a few days, I reached to Greenland and the Greenland authority gave me a paper and sent me on another journey by a ship. The ship landed in Macedonia, then Serbia, Austria, Germany and then Denmark. During my train journey to Denmark, the ticket checker asked for my ticket, to which I replied that I did not have one. He again asked me, where would you want to go? I replied that I want to go to Denmark, and he said

that you are there now. Then he sent me to the police, and I did not understand a single word of them. Then they asked me about my language, and I told them I can speak Dari. Then they called a translator, and I described my situation. They gave me a paper, took my fingerprints, and sent me to a camp that was near Aalborg city.

In my camp days, I met with other people, and some of them became my good friends, and we are still in touch and meet occasionally. I left the camp after eleven months, and the camp authority asked me where I wanted to live, and I told them I wanted to live in Copenhagen. Then they sent me to Copenhagen and gave me a place to live, and though I was below 18, they appointed a person as, like, my local guardian. After I came to Copenhagen, I enrolled in a language school, and within two years I had completed the basic Danish language level. Besides, I worked for my living. My first job was at Netto as a sales assistant. That time I was not good at Danish, so I faced some difficulties there, but I managed it. Then I worked in a restaurant, and following that, I worked in a gambling club. Now I am working in a shop as a sales assistant.

My journey was the hardest experience of my life. I left my family, friends, and country behind—maybe forever. I tell you that because I started my journey in 2015, and I reached Denmark in 2016. It was a four-month journey to come here. From that day until now, I have not been able to communicate with my family. I do not even know where they are now. Before I left Iran, my uncle phoned me once and said that the policeman killed my elder brother, and from that day my family also left the village, and I never found them. I tried several times to use the Face Trace site, but every time it was a failure. The Red Cross tries to find my family, but every year they send me the empty letter. So, life in Denmark is not easy living. I have no family here, and when I think about them, remembering the old memories, I just cry in my room. I feel very lonely here and want someone to express my feelings and emotions. I believe that one day I will find my family and try to get them out from Afghanistan because it is not a safe country to live freely. And I also think that I would develop myself and make a good career here in Denmark; that's why I enrolled in a school. Thereafter, I want to marry and make a family. I strongly believe that in the end everything must be alright; if not, then it is not the end.

Interview-02

Respondent-B (Copenhagen)

Date: 18/02/2025

I can recall a memory from my childhood that I never forget. The incident is, I was sitting in a hospital and saw that one woman lying down on the hospital bed, and she was so ill. In that time, I could not recognize her, but when I became older, I heard that she was my mother, and she died of cancer. So, I lost my mother in my early childhood, and after my mother's death, my father married again. I lived in a village near the city called Jalalabad in Afghanistan. My father had a shop, and he also had some farming land. Our living conditions were quite stable back then. I often helped my father in the shop. I also went to school, and I enjoy reading story books. Often the older individuals of our village talked about the past history of our country when the USSR grabbed Afghanistan. In 2016, when I left Afghanistan, the country was ruled by a government backed by the United States. But their control was limited to the city area; outside the city, most of Afghanistan was under Taliban control. So, one day, the Taliban came to our school, and they forced the school authority to close it. It was an unexpected moment for us, and we were very upset. After closing the school, my uncle enrolled me in a madrasa (Islamic religious school), and I started to study there. But one day some people came to Madrasa; they were dressed like Taliban. They asked us to join their group, and there was no option. I came back to my uncle's home and told him I would not join their group. I recall two of the incidents that made me decide not to join the Taliban group. The first one is in our neighborhood: a military man lived there, and one day when he went to the mosque for Friday prayer, the Taliban killed him. The Imam (Islamic priest) of the mosque criticizes the murder, and he said that the army man serves for his nation. It is his duty to do so for the country's safety and development. The next day, the Taliban killed the Imam for his statement against them. Another incident was in the morning when the NATO started bombing, and they didn't care who got injured or who was killed. I went to the school, and the hospital was near my school, and I saw ambulances take injured people to the hospital; it was a horrible situation there. These two incidents made a deep impact on my mind, and I decided that I would never kill people without any reason. My uncle told me you have one choice: leave the country immediately.

My uncle arranged my escape plan, traveled to Kabul, and embarked on an arduous journey to Europe. First, we arrived in Pakistan, accompanied by a group of individuals who shared my desire to escape the country. Next, we made our way to Iran and from there to Turkey. Every time we traveled with different groups, those who were responsible for our group gave us food and water. But when we reached Istanbul, they said that we are now not responsible for the rest of the journey; you had to find your own way. Four people in my group asked for food because we were hungry, but they said that you didn't get anything free here; you had to pay for it. Then they said that you can stay here for a few days, or you can come with us for the further journey. I decided to go further because the people in Istanbul were not friendly, and I didn't like them. From Turkey we started our journey on a small plastic boat, and we reached Gress. Here we got some food and clothes, and the next day we sent them to Italy and from Italy to Macedonia, then Serbia, Austria and at last Hamburg. The police caught us in Hamburg and relocated us to a refugee camp, where I spent four months. But we would rather not live in Germany, and we wanted to come to Denmark. I left the camp and took a bus to Denmark, and when I reached Denmark, the police caught me and asked me about my reason for coming here. But I couldn't speak English or Danish, and I said I could only speak Pashto; then they called a translator for me, and I told them about my whole story, and they gave me a paper and sent me to a camp. I lived there almost six months, and then I got permission to leave the camp.

After I left the camp, I came to Copenhagen and enrolled in a language school. In addition to the language school, I enrolled in a technical school to acquire skills relevant to my future career. I studied electrical work, which was a four-year course. I have finished the course, and now I am a trained electrician, and I can work independently.

The journey from Afghanistan to Denmark was not straightforward for me. It was a four-month journey, and the route was full of danger. But to save my life and to save another's existence, it was mandatory for me to leave my country. If I had not done that, I don't know what would have happened to me. After arriving to Denmark, I discovered I was alone in this journey. I had no family or friends here, and also, I didn't know the Danish language. During my time at the camp, I felt isolated and alone. I wasn't able to make friends. When I came to Copenhagen, it was totally a new world for me. I started going to school, and I made some friends. I tried to improve myself so I could integrate into Danish society. But I also faced some difficulties here. After I came to

Denmark, I missed my family and friends, and day by day I became depressed. The problem was across the limit, and I went to the doctor for treatment, and now I have overcome the problem. Now I am trying to focus on my future in Denmark because I cannot go to Afghanistan, and it is now under the control of Taliban. If I return to Afghanistan, the Taliban might kill me, so I do not feel safe going there. I cannot leave Denmark as a refugee. Occasionally I feel from 2016 to now I am living in an open jail. But I also think that my decision was right to leave Afghanistan because it gave me a new life, and I thanked God for this.

Field notes: The researchers met with respondent B twice after the first meeting. During those meetings, he shared his future plan. He said that he has sent remittances to your family regularly because his family needs this support. He also said that he has invested money in the share market, though he can earn more. He aspires to tie the knot in the near future, and the prospective bride hails from Afghanistan.

Interview-03

Respondent-C

Date: 22/02/25 (Copenhagen)

In 2014, I travelled from Afghanistan to Denmark, a journey that required crossing numerous countries' borders. First, I came to Pakistan and contacted some people who helped them to cross the border, and with their help they crossed the Pakistani border and entered Iran. Of course, there was a border with Iran, but it was closed to us. Many individuals were paid to perform various tasks in order to illegally cross the border. Following the same way, I crossed the border of Turkey, and I stayed there for about 4 months. At that time, I was on the lookout for someone who could assist me in travelling from Turkey to Greece. After four months, I found one person who took 1400 dollars from me and sent me to Greece by crossing the sea with a big ship. In the same month, I came to Italy following the same method, and I spent around 4200 dollars. After arriving in Italy, we travelled by train across several countries. My plan was to travel to Denmark, but I also had plans to visit Finland. However, I was apprehended by Danish police at the station due to my lack of familiarity with the country. After apprehending me, the Danish police collected my fingerprints at their Copenhagen station office, leaving me with no option to relocate to another country.

I decided to leave my country because we didn't have our freedom in Afghanistan, and there was a lack of opportunities to live a better life there. When I decided to leave my country, I was under 18, and I had a shop in Afghanistan. I used to sell different movies, videos and some books on the Buddhist religion. Even though the Taliban controlled my area, it's interesting to note that at that time, Afghanistan was ruled by a government supported by the United States. My business was illegal in this area, they burnt my shop and I lost it, threatening my life. I decided to live a life of freedom, choosing Iran as my destination. When I arrived in Iran, I observed that the Afghan people were experiencing the same hardships as those in Afghanistan. The Iranian government was not friendly with Afghan refugees. But I also leave because it's also an Islamic country, and it was not possible to be legal in Turkey. If they were to catch me, they would directly send me to Kabul. I decided to go to Finland because I had three friends, and I met with them in Turkey. One

of them had a friend in Finland who told us that if we went there, it would be comparatively easier to get legal papers. entries. But Denmark was not friendly like others; we caught them here because they suspected me of seeing our abnormal activities. After this, they took us to the office and contacted the translator on the phone. Then the police decided to send a camp, and in the morning, they provided clothes, food, rooms, and ID cards from the Red Cross. I am currently considering leaving this country; my two friends have already relocated to Finland, but I was unable to join them due to their age of 15. Because of their age, Finland accepted them, but my age already crossed 9, so they will not accept me. If I go there, they will deport me to Denmark again. Because of age, my friends got legal papers and passports, but I didn't get them yet. I stayed in camp for at least two years, and it was a long time for me. After leaving camp, I came to Alhom commune and got a room to live in. I lived there at least 2.5 years in that room. After that, I got my apartment and started a government job (ATP) according to my skill. At that time, I made an Afghan friend who was employed by a specific company. With his support, I started a job at his company. Thirteen restaurants operated under this company, but business was struggling. As a result, the owner decided to sell them, and I bought one restaurant.

I can now work freely and maintain a connection with my family in Afghanistan. Regularly I call them and send money for their household needs. After leaving my home, some ridiculous people destroyed my shop, but my family was safe. I have two brothers and one sister, and one of my brothers has a job in Dubai. My parents, along with one brother and my sister, live in Afghanistan now. They didn't get any threat because of mine. We have an Afghan community in my area, and we engage in various social activities, such as distributing free books, pens, and other educational materials. Now I can go to my country, but I don't want to go back now because I still feel threatened with my life. But I have a dream to do work for my country because there are lots of possibilities to grow our economy. I feel my country from my deep heart, and we have a big community here. We stay connected with our community and try to do our best for my country.

Interview-04

Respondent-D

Date: 31/03/25 (Copenhagen)

I was born in a small village in Afghanistan. It was located far from the urban areas and cultural centers. Life was so simple and natural. I went to school and played with my friends. It was the most joyful period of my life. We live in a village with a big community of people. We have lots of neighbors and most of them were very good to us. But every story has an evil character; so, does mine. We own a large house in my country, which is surrounded by a large plot of land. We have used this land for years, and everybody knows that it is ours. But one day one of our neighbors said that the land is owned by them and they are going to use this land to build a new house. They also said that if they do not build a house on this land, they can use it for a garden too. Usually in Afghanistan, people have big families and relatives, so they often build a guesthouse for the purpose of having guests, and visitors mostly come when someone gets married or even when a relative dies. So, they use this land for this kind of purpose. My family was shocked to hear this news. Naturally, we disagreed with their plan. So, we called a meeting where the senior village members were present, and they said to our neighbor that, as far as we're concerned, this land has been used by our family for centuries, and we all know that it is theirs. So, you cannot take over the land; it would be unfair. In addition, we called this meeting because in rural Afghanistan, police were not interested in dealing with this kind of land dispute case and often the village juris take decisions in these cases. But our neighbor was not ready to accept the meeting's decision.

After a few months, one morning, a group of people suddenly arrived and attempted to seize control of our land. We also protested against them, and a fight was happening between two groups. We were three brothers: the eldest, myself, and the youngest. In this fight my younger brother got injured but that was not a grave injury but one of the boys from their group got brutally injured. In that time there were no such medical facilities in our village and it was difficult to go to the hospital. But both groups managed to get their boys admitted to the hospital. When I was in the hospital with my brother, we heard that they are looking after us and trying to kill either me or my younger brother. Maybe you do not know that in Afghanistan, if you hurt or kill someone, the family will take revenge in the same way even after 50 years, but they will never forget the issue. So, when we heard this, we had to make a plan to get rid of it. We knew that they would not attack

the women, elderly people, or kids in the family. They also do not attack those individuals who are not present in the incident place. So, the possibility was that they could only attack me or even my older brother. In that situation we were distressed about what to do. My elder brother was married and he had three kids, so it was very hard for him to leave the family behind. So, we planned to escape from the village and go to the city to live. But in Afghanistan it is difficult to hide from the people. People in Afghanistan are highly connected, making it easy for them to find us. However, my brother was left with nothing to do; he was unable to leave the family, so he left the village and moved to the city. But I was single, so my family decided that I should leave the country and go to Europe. While it may seem simple to you that I left my country in a single night, for me, it marked the end of my relationship with my family. It was not simple for me to leave my home, where I was born and raised. I lost all of my wonderful days and my precious memory in one night. But I had no choice; staying there would have resulted in my death, so I made the decision to flee Afghanistan.

My journey started with a group who also wanted to leave Afghanistan illegally. We began our journey in Kabul. First, we reached Pakistan and stayed there for a few hours, and then we again started our journey to Iran. We reached Iran and stayed there for a few months. Our life in Iran was challenging; despite our illegal status, we had to constantly hide from the police. Fear of arrest prevented us from venturing into the city or beyond our encampment. We also didn't have a good room, bathroom, food, or other facilities. Another issue was the language barrier; as a Pashto speaker, I was unable to understand Farsi. And one more thing: I realize that there is no future in Iran. So, I wanted to leave Iran as soon as possible and I found that some people were decided to go to Turkey and I joined with them. My situation in Turkey was better than in Iran. Here I found a job in a packaging company; there were a few different jobs for people like us, and the jobs were controlled by some Afghans. But it was a rural area, and the fear of police and being illegal made our lives difficult day by day. Once again, I came to the realization that my future could not be built here. Therefore, I made the decision to travel to Europe, embarking on a journey that began in Turkey, continued through Greece, and ultimately reached the German border. It was a two-month-long journey, and we had no chance to take a bath, eat proper food, sleep, or even wear the same pair of shoes. After embarking on the journey, I boarded a bus and arrived in Frankfurt. A police officer approached me, asking for my documents or tickets, to which I replied, "I have nothing." Then they took me to an office, and they asked me about my situation, but I did not

understand their language, so they managed to hire a translator for me, and I told them my story. Thereafter, they sent me to a camp where I saw hundreds of people who had also come illegally to Europe. I began residing in the camp, but the conditions there were significantly worse than expected. People often got drunk and fought with each other. I would rather not live there and I talked to the camp authority and told them I wanted to leave the place. But they replied that now it is not possible for me to leave the camp; I have to wait until my legal documents are prepared. Subsequently, I inquired with several campers regarding my departure and the most suitable destination. They said that Norway would be the best option and I took a train from Frankfurt, and when I asked for a ticket, I was unable to show it and then they asked for my passport and I only replied, no passport because I could not understand the language. All those incidents happened when I was in the territory of Denmark. On the same train, there were other individuals who were similar to me. The police also questioned them, and despite their similar circumstances, they were sent back to Germany. Though I was only 16 years old, they sent me to the camp, and I lived almost a year in the camp. When I turned 19, they gave me a room, but before that, I lived with some other guys like me.

Life in Denmark, mostly in the camps, was not straightforward for me. I encountered numerous challenges during my time in Denmark. The first challenge I faced was the language barrier. At that time, I was not proficient in either English or Danish, which made it extremely difficult for me to communicate effectively with others. But in camps I started to go to the language school and after 4 years of learning I was able to learn Danish and English both. The second difficulty I encountered was the hot and dark winter in Denmark. I came from a country where we had sunlight almost all year, and here it was totally opposite. One more challenge was to socialize with people. I was a village boy then, and we lived a very close, collective social life. But in Denmark, people think so differently. Everyone here is preoccupied with their own lives, leaving me feeling isolated and unrooted. I was depressed for all of these issues. But the fun thing is I did not recognize that I was in depression because this kind of feeling was unknown to me. But time is the best remedy and within the time I recover from it and later I realize that it was a matter of depression. I was also faced with difficulties in job searching; I didn't know how to apply for a job or where to find one. Even in the class, I didn't understand their accent. It was a challenging time for me. But now I learn the language and work for a shop and I am doing well.

In the future, I would like to educate myself more so I can get a better job. I can currently handle low-paying jobs, but enhancing my education will make it easier for me to secure a high-paying position. And I hope one day I have my own house, car and family here in Denmark. I am uncertain about my family's current location, the whereabouts of my older brother, and whether they killed him. I have no connection with them. I believe returning to Afghanistan would not be possible for me. The economic and political situation in Afghanistan is dire. The other thing is here in Europe I can live alone but in Afghanistan you need a community to live with. So, it would be impossible for me to go back.

Interview-05

Respondent-E

Date: 31/03/25 (Copenhagen)

I spent my childhood in Kabul. My father was a teacher, and my mother was a housewife. We were three brothers and a little sister. Our life was blissful in those days. We, the siblings, first went to a madrasah (Islamic school) and later went to an English school. Though my father was a teacher, he was cautious about our study. He often came to our school and talked to our teacher about our study. In the afternoons, we played football and cricket in the playground. It was a lovely and happy childhood that was a dream for thousands of Afghan children.

When I was 17 years old, my father got a new job. I'm uncertain if he was employed by the government or the NATO, given their presence in Afghanistan at the time. I only knew that he worked as a translator in an office. My father knew English so he got the job. Everything was positive in our life. We live in the capital city so we have all the modern facilities and we enjoy it. But after a few months, my father got a letter from an unknown address, and it was threatening. The letter threatened that if my father was employed by the government or NATO, they would take action against us. Therefore, my father should leave the job as soon as possible. But my father did not leave the job, and we got another letter after a few days. The same words were written there, and we also got phone calls. After that, my father became concerned about our security, prompting us to change our address. However, the change proved to be ineffective. A few days later, my father once again received letters and phone calls, this time with a more aggressive tone. They said that changing addresses would not be a solution for us, and it will not save us from them. My father replied that I am just working as a translator; I have no other interest here over phone but they said they would rather not hear anything; my father must have to quit the job. I am not sure who the people were—were they Taliban or from other groups? —and my father continued the job, but this time he informed the office about this matter, and they advised him to change our location again. We probably changed our address 7 to 8 times, but it would not be a help for us. One day, my elder brother was kidnapped, and we received a ransom call. They demanded a huge amount of money to leave my brother; that time we were unable to provide the money and my brother disappeared forever. We never found him, nor did we know if he had been killed.

After that incident, we again received the threatening calls and letters, and they said that if my father did not listen to them, their next target would be me. After receiving this letter, my father was filled with fear, telling us that he had already lost one of his sons and would not risk losing another. So, my father decided to send me out of Afghanistan. At the time, I was only 17 years old, lacked a passport, and our time was limited. So, my father decided to send me here illegally, and the next day I started my journey from Kabul with a group of people who also wanted to cross the border. Initially, we crossed the border and headed towards Pakistan, but we didn't linger there for long before embarking on our journey to the Iranian border. At that time, I was unable to recall the number of days it took to reach Iren. In Iren, we spent several weeks in a building located far from the city, living as if we were criminals on the run from the police. It was an incredibly distressing experience for both myself and the other members of my group. We didn't even open the windows those few weeks we lived without sunlight. Then we started our new journey from Iran to Turkey and when we reached Turkey the leader of our group said that we have no responsibility for the further journey; if you want to go to Europe, then you should manage it by your effort. It was decided that I had to go to Sweden. I just asked some of the people in my group what their plan was, and they replied that they also wanted to go to Europe. Then, we decided to follow a group of people who were headed to Europe. The journey was very dangerous; we were almost 50 people in a small plastic boat and reached Gress. From Greece, we traveled to Germany via a large ship, where I eventually arrived in Hamburg. In Hamburg, German police apprehended me and escorted me to an office where immigration officials inquired about my circumstances. Though I studied in an English school, I communicated with them in English. They listened to my story and sent me to a refugee camp. I spent a few months living there, but my ultimate goal was to reach Sweden, as my father had informed me that it offered more facilities for refugees. Therefore, I formulated a plan to flee from Germany. One day, I left the camp along with others who shared my desire to travel to Norway or other countries. We started our journey, and I was caught by the police when they asked for a ticket on the train, and I had no ticket, even a passport, or any other documents. They escorted me to the immigration center and inquired about my circumstances. I recounted my entire journey to them, but they informed me that they couldn't send me to Norway and instead sent me to a camp.

The chapter of my life started here in the camp and I went to the language school. The other students of the school were like me. They also came from different countries and live here as

refugees. I made some good friends in the camp and we are still connected. I lived only seven months in the camp because I turned 18 and they asked me where I wanted to live and I replied I wanted to live in Copenhagen. They gave me accommodation here and I also started working in a restaurant. Besides that, I continued my language classes and within three years I learned the Danish language. Then I got a job in a super shop and then I switched jobs several times.

I think the main difficulty I faced in Denmark was loneliness. I had many friends in Afghanistan but here almost no friends. I also miss my family, whom I have not been in contact with for the last 9 years. I am unaware of whether they are alive or whether they were killed by those individuals. When I am thinking about it, I cry a lot, and I think that I will never find them in my lifetime. But I tried to make friends here, and I have some we often meet. For example, now I am coming here to celebrate the Eid festival with my friends. However, I hold onto the hope that one day I will be reunited with my family, a hope that inspires me to strive for improvement in my life.