Adjustment of Somali women in relation to societal systems in the Swedish society

A qualitative case study of five Somali women’s experiences

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2017
Abstract

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The aims of this study are; (a) to explore how Somali women experience their adjustment in the Swedish society in connection to societal systems, and (b) to investigate these women’s perspective of how to make the adjustment process more effective in respect to their needs. The adjustment of the participants has been investigated through a social ecological theoretical framework. Thematic analysis has been utilised to present three themes; assistance, inclusion and self-sufficient which are discussed using social ecological theoretical perspective. Results showed that lack of assistance and sufficient information has led to these women feeling helpless and lost motivation to adjust. The women showed disappointment with regard to self-sufficiency which has not been what they have expected. The suggestions made by the interviewees included assistance in their native language during their first years in the new country, inclusive opening of meeting places and an increased assessment of personal resources when receiving help to find employment. Making adjustment more effective for newly arrived immigrants in new countries is fundamental to international social work.

Keywords: Adjustment, Somali women, Sweden, Societal Systems, Social Ecological Theory
Acknowledgement

We want to express our greatest gratitude for the women who have participated in this study. Without your participation and encouragement, we would not have been able to conduct this study. It has been an honour for us that you willingly allowed to share your experiences openly. We also want to thank all the women at the organisations that showed guidance and interest in our study.

We are very grateful for the support and advice we received from our supervisor Komalsingh ‘Ajit’ Rambaree. Thank you for your guidance and inspiration.

We would also want to thank our families for their support and encouragement.
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1. Introduction

Migration was conceptualised as a social problem in Sweden in the beginning of the 20th century (Montesino & Righard, 2015). From then, the view on immigration has changed. Before the Second World War, people who did not have Swedish citizenship were not included in any statistics regarding poverty. They were also not receiving any help from the state if needed. The view on immigrants changed internationally after this war. Immigrants, especially vulnerable groups such as refugees and sick immigrants were categorised as ‘socially disabled’, which led to an institutionalised part of social work (Montesino & Righard, 2015). The Refugee Convention was created in 1951 to give refugees the ability to regain rights and protection from a national state which is not their country of origin. It has been ratified by 151 countries all over the world, which makes it an international concern (UNHCR, 2016a). According to this convention, a refugee is someone who fears to be persecuted because of personal reasons, such as race, religion or social group. Refugees are unable to seek protection in their home country of nationality or fear to return to their home country (UNHCR, 2016a). They are often dependent on states and non-governmental organisations to arrange settlement and basic needs (Healy, 2008).

Further changes were made in social work in relation to immigrants and refugees in the 1990’s, when a political reform regarding immigrants and refugees was made internationally (Montesino & Righard, 2015). The change led to a more complex and diverse perspective on migration where refugee women and children started to be seen as more independent actors than the dependent role they had in families earlier (ibid).

According to United Nations Refugee Agency, 21.3 million people were forced to move away from their homes in 2015 (UNHCR, 2016b). 1.1 million of the refugees were from Somalia which made them one of the three biggest groups of refugees in the world (ibid). Many Somalis have been fleeing to Sweden since the end of the 80’s and when the civil war started in 1991 (Migrationsverket, 2016a). Until now, Somalis are still fleeing to seek protection in Sweden due to the prevailing conflicts (Migrationsverket, 2017). In 2015, Sweden had 60 623 residents born in Somalia, half of them are women (SCB, 2016a). Brinkemo (2014), leader of the Organisation of Somaliland (Somalilands förening) in Malmö, argues that Sweden can in many ways be seen very different than Somalia. In Somalia, the state has had low trust and been barely functioning. Instead, a clan system and a narrative culture have been much more influential and powerful than the state. Conversely, Sweden has a strong national state, relatively high trust in authorities
and a bureaucratic world (Brinkemo, 2014). In many countries in the world, Somalis are seen as hardworking, determined and flexible individuals (Carlsson, 2006). On the contrary, Carlsson (2006), associate professor in economic history, argues that Somalis were prejudged to have difficulties to adjust already when they first arrived in Sweden.

In 2012, Framtidskommissionen was assigned by the Swedish Government to investigate social problems in the Swedish society. The report showed that even though Somali people are one of the largest groups migrating to Sweden, they are also one of the groups that are experiencing more difficulties to adjust to the Swedish society. In addition, the study showed that Somali women were mostly affected by the high unemployment rate and faced difficulties to adjust. Consequently, about 20 per cent of Somali women in Sweden between the ages of 20 to 64 years old had employment in 2010 (Framtidskommissionen, 2012). There has not been much research conducted concerning why it has been difficult for Somali women to adjust in the Swedish society. There is a need to understand the reasons and the consequences of this issue to be able to develop interventions necessary to improve adjustment for Somali women and other immigrants in Sweden. The purpose of this study is not to generalise the subjective realities of the interviewed women to the whole population of Somali women in Sweden. In contrast, it aims to lift up the voices of these women about their experiences of adjustment and recommendations for improvements.

1.1 Conceptualising Adjustment

Coming to a new country makes individuals experience many changes in the new environment which they have to relate to (Al-Baldawi, 2014). According to Al-Baldawi (2014), adjustment is a process of changes in individuals when meeting new situations. He argues that, adjustment refers to a well-functioning balance between the social culture element individuals have from the home country and the social culture of the host country. Adjustment in this study refers to the individual’s capacity to create social stability, which makes it easier to provide for themselves and adjust to the new changes in the new society. Therefore, adjustment in the society is significant because individuals will be able to provide for themselves and contribute to the society’s development (Al-Baldawi, 2014). This study will be focusing on different societal systems that might affect the adjustment of these women. Societal systems refer to interrelations between the participants, their social networks, institutions, authorities, public policy and physical environment (McLeroy, 1988; Ungar, 2011). The societal systems will be further explained in the theoretical framework.
2. Aim and research questions

The aims of this study are; (a) to explore how Somali women experience their adjustment in the Swedish society in connection to societal systems, and (b) to investigate these women’s perspective of how to make the adjustment process more effective in respect to their needs.

- How do these women experience their adjustment in the Swedish society?
- What are the challenging factors faced by the interviewees during adjustment?
- What is needed to make adjustment more effective for these women?

2.1 Structure of the study

The study consists of different parts that will be briefly presented in this section. In the chapter of background information, the situation in Somalia is described as well as the accuracy of different laws concerning immigrants and refugees in Sweden, is outlined. This is for the reader to understand the context of both Somalia and Sweden. After the background information, the following part discusses some selected previous research on this particular subject, from a national and international perspective. The theoretical framework of the study is presented, then after. The theory used in this study is the social ecological theory. As understood from the theory, there are different systems surrounding individuals which are presented in six levels. The theory describes that adjustment is affected by the influence and interrelation between these levels. After the theoretical framework section, the methodology of the study is described. This part includes data analysis, sampling method, database search, ethical consideration, credibility and validity, limitations and respondents. In chapter seven the result of the data collected is presented in three different themes found from the thematic analysis. Following to the methodology section is the discussion part where the result is discussed in relation to the theoretical framework, implications for social work practice and the main conclusions of the study.

3. Background information

In this section, background information concerning Somalia and Sweden will be presented to gain a deeper understanding of why Somalis are moving to Sweden and how Swedish immigration laws function concerning Somali residence and adjustment in Sweden.
3.1 Somalia

Somalia is a country in the horn of Africa which has a population of 9.5 million people (Hidde Iyo Dhaqan, 2014). Out of these, 1.1 million Somalis are displaced refugees due to the civil war which started after the collapse of the government (UNHCR, 2016b). The country became independent from the ruling of the United Kingdom and Italy in 1960 (Hidde Iyo Dhaqan, 2014). During that time, Italian was the official written language in Somalia. Somali language has a tradition of being orally transferred and the spoken word is valued and considered to be important (Brinkemo, 2014). Therefore, the Somali language was first established as a written language in 1972. The country has a tropical desert climate, with two rain seasons and two dry seasons (Landguiden, 2016).

Somalia started to become unstable in the 80’s when the criticism of the government started to increase. The previous leader of the country, Siad Barre, failed to give citizens the security they needed which led to the collapse of the government in 1991 (Hidde Iyo Dhaqan, 2014). Since then, it has been rebel groups, such as the Islamist militant group Al Shabaab, and clans that have been ruling different areas in the country (ibid). Furthermore, due to the lack of a functioning state, the clan system has a greater influence and works as a safety net for its members. This provides support and assistance for clan- and family members. Despite the clan systems, that is prevalent in different parts of Somalia, Somalis share and relate to a common culture and identity that is stronger than other countries in Africa (Hidde Iyo Dhaqan, 2014; Migrationsverket, 2016; Landguiden, 2016). Hidde Iyo Dhaqan (2014), a Somali organisation explains that, the clan system both protects its members but can also make them vulnerable towards other clans. Women are seen as a vulnerable group in the clan system because a clan is transferred through males in families. If a woman marries outside of her family’s clan, she obtains a dual clan identity. She might find herself in the middle of a struggle if a conflict would emerge between the two clans (Gardner & Bushra, 2004). Most women in Somalia have been in charge of household chores and childcare but also providing an additional income source for the family by having smaller businesses on the side (ibid).

The Swedish Migration Agency ‘Migrationsverket’ is the authority responsible of applications from people who want to apply for a residence permit, that flee from persecutions and seek asylum in Sweden. In the beginning of 2016, the Swedish Migration Agency made a report concerning the security situation in Somalia (Migrationsverket, 2016b). The report, together with other documents, could be used when making decisions about residence permit for people from Somalia. In parts of Somalia, such as Somaliland and Mogadishu, there is an existing
sector of security and justice, but as stated in the report, this sector is far from functioning. Consequently, practice of the clans has higher validity and influence than the justice- and security sector. In the report it is explained, based on the situation in Somalia during that particular year, it is of importance which clan a person belongs to but also which area a person is living in. Individuals are more vulnerable if they are living outside the area where their clan has the majority. For that reason, an individual may lack contacts or protection. In the report, it was emphasized that women and children in general are one of the most vulnerable groups in Somalia due to the civil war. In certain areas where the rebel group Al Shabaab has the main influence, the situation is troublesome for the civilians due to airstrikes and rebel groups stopping organisations of humanitarian aid to help the civilians (Migrationsverket, 2016b)

3.2 Aliens Act (2005:716)

In Sweden, there are laws concerning immigrants and refugees that help these individuals to gain residence permit and adjust into the Swedish society. The Aliens Act (Utlänningslagen, 2005:716) is the law covering issues such as the right to stay in Sweden, the rights and obligations of immigrants and refugees. The 20th of July 2016, there has been changes made in the Aliens Act (Lag om tillfälliga begränsningar av möjligheten att få uppehållstillstånd i Sverige, 2016:752), changing the norm for refugees from receiving a permanent residence permit to a temporary residence permit. This permit is only valid for thirteen months or three years. This change in the law is stated to be temporary for three years. The residence permit can be prolonged if individuals are able to find employment and support for themselves, or if the situation in the home country has not changed which makes individuals unable to go back (2016:752). This change makes adjustment and finding an employment in Sweden even more significant for refugees than it was before. Hence, employment enhances the chance of receiving a permanent residence permit that before was granted to immigrants defined as refugees or similar when seeking protection (2005:716). The change in the law was a measure taken by the government in Sweden due to the big flow of refugees coming to Sweden and Europe in 2015. This was one of the measures taken by the Swedish government that was argued as necessary to reduce effects on the welfare system and to put more effort on improving adjustment for refugees and immigrants with residence permit (Regeringskansliet, 2016). The women participating in this study all have a permanent residence permit, which means they have the right to work, live and build a future in Sweden.
As stated by the Swedish Migration Agency in their report about Somalia, the country has not had a functioning government since 1991, which has led to few documents that are seen valid from Somalia (Migrationsverket, 2009a; 2009b). No documents issued later than 1991 is accepted as a valid identification in Sweden. Somalis applying for residence permit or family reunification in Sweden have to verify their identity through other means. Individuals have to prove their identity by having their accent analysed or through a DNA-test of family members (Migrationsverket, 2009a; 2009b).

3.3 Establishment Act (2010:197)

In 1992, a law concerning introduction into the Swedish society and financial aid was created to assist refugees and other immigrants during their first two years in Sweden (Lag om introduktionsersättning för flyktingar och vissa andra utlänningar, 1992:1068). The aim of this law was to facilitate the adjustment process for refugees and other immigrants. During this period, it was the municipalities that had the main responsibility of the newly arrived immigrants (1992:1068). This law was reformed in 2010 to the Establishment Act (Lag om etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare, 2010:197). The reform was made to make the adjustment process on the labour market and community life in Sweden more effective for this group of people (Montesino & Righard, 2014). The Establishment Act (2010:197) concerns refugees and other immigrants that are entitled to receive aiding interventions from Swedish authorities. The main responsibility is on the employment office to help these individuals during a period of two years. The law is meant to assist these individuals to gain access to the labour market and community life. Thus, having access to the labour market enhances these individuals’ chances of adjusting in the society and developing independency. This is one of the first steps of adjustment in the Swedish society for some immigrant groups, such as Somali women. This act includes a personal plan of Swedish language courses, practical placement and access to the labour market. Most of the women participating in this study went through the earlier introduction programme (1992:1068), since they have been staying in Sweden between five to ten years.
4. Previous research

The following section covers earlier research that forms the basis of this study. This is compiled in five recurring themes which are discussed under one theme: cultural comparisons, unemployment, gender roles, available support and the future that affect women’s adjustment as well as their children’s adjustment. Studies have been sampled from different countries to obtain an international perspective.

4.1 Culture comparisons

In a study concerning Somali women’s reflection on the adjustment of their children in USA, Somali women discussed the changes in children’s behaviour and gender roles (Nilsson, Barazanji, Heintzelman, Siddiqi & Shilla, 2012). The women spoke about the freedom their children experienced when playing outside in Somalia without the need to have much oversight. The responsibility of looking after the children in Somalia was shared by the community, relatives and friends. Parents expressed concerns that they had to keep a closer watch on their children in the United States. Further, they mention that some of the participants experienced migration as a positive change describing it as more equality between spouses, which led to the woman earning her own income and providing for the family. Therefore, migrating to the United States has led the women to experience an opportunity to work which resulted to a change in family dynamics (Nilsson et al., 2012). In another study, it was mentioned, as a consequence of migration, the woman experienced more opportunity to work, which increased the woman’s economic independence and economic development (Kabir, 2014). Furthermore, in a study regarding immigrant women’s dependency on social welfare, participants who were interviewed experienced lack of opportunities and faced challenges in finding work for themselves and their spouses (Bergnehr, 2016). According to these participants, having work means that they will be able to provide a good life for their children and themselves. Another participant expressed her concerns about her children’s future and hopes that their children will succeed with their studies; that they would achieve to make something of themselves in the future (Bergnehr, 2016).

A report presented by Framtidskommissionen (2012) states, establishment on the labour market has been seen difficult for Somalis to adjust in Sweden compared to other countries, such as USA and Canada where adjustment has been more successful. In the report, it is explained that adjustment is more successful in these countries due to several reasons. It is more likely that people from Somalia are able to speak English prior to their settling in the new country. Somalis
moving to USA have a higher chance to adjust as they can easily access the labour market because of the ties Somali people have with non-governmental organisations that assist them in finding work, houses and starting companies. Therefore, being able to start and develop businesses for Somalis in USA is seen easier than in Sweden. The two main factors of a successful adjustment mentioned in the report, is time lived in the host country and educational background of the individuals. In the report it also states, Somali women have been mostly affected by this with a high rate of unemployment (Framtidskommissionen, 2012). Framtidskommissionen (2012) and Brinkemo (2014) suggest that to have a successful adjustment on the labour market for Somali immigrants, there should be community centres which provide assistance for Somali immigrants. In addition, the state should provide governmental support as done in Canada and USA. These community centres will be able to work better from the target group’s specific needs (Framtidskommissionen, 2012). Brinkemo (2014) argues that, information regarding the Swedish society is provided similarly regardless of the background of individuals. Most of the information is supposed to be gained by the individuals themselves. This can be a challenge for some individuals who have difficulties understanding the new society (Brinkemo, 2014). He further argues that professionals working with integration in Sweden have found it difficult to understand the reasons why Somalis experience difficulties to adjust. Carlsson (2006) has conducted a research concerning Somalis success to adjust in Minneapolis, USA. He explains that, many of the Somalis move to Minneapolis due to the perspective that this city is accepting, and has good conditions for individuals to adjust. Carlsson (2006) states that, the conditions as a wide range of good social services, strong labour market and a well-developed reception of refugees.

5. Theoretical framework

In this section, the theoretical framework of the study is presented. The social ecological theory will be used to analyse these women’s adjustment in relation to the different societal systems, and the interrelation between these systems. The theory has been chosen due to its focus on adaptation of individuals in different environments. A theoretical framework (Appendix 1) has been created from the theory which has been the basis of the interview guide (Appendix 2).

5.1 Social Ecological Theory

Social ecological theory will be used to analyse the challenges and experiences the Somali women go through when they move to Sweden, and how they adjust in a new society. This framework will help to assess the factors that influence these individuals beyond an individual
level (Payne, 2014). The approach focuses on different societal systems in relation to adjustment, and how it can be more effective for the well-functioning of individuals when adjusting in a new society (Ungar, 2002). Al-Baldawi explains in his model of adjustment that to adjust successfully in a new country, different factors need to be in balance as well as the interrelation between the factors, such as a flexible social network and good receptiveness in the host country. Ungar (2002) argues that social ecological theory focuses on developing independent- and healthy relation between individuals and their environments.

The social ecological theory is developed as a part of systems theory, one of the main distinguishes of social work compared to other humanitarian fields of work (Healy, 2005). Systems theory examines the interrelation between components of a system and focuses on a holistic view of the situation. According to Healy (2005), these parts are interconnected and dependent on each other’s functioning. The interaction between the different systems needs to be well-functioning; otherwise social problems may arise. Ecological- and social ecological theory emerged in the 1970’s when the environment surrounding an individual was understood as a contributing factor to the development and well-being of an individual and needs to be a part of assessment (Berkes, Colding & Folke, 2003). One of the most recognised theories within ecological systems theory is Bronfenbrenner’s ecological theory (Healy, 2005). According to Bronfenbrenner, the development of an individual is influenced by different factors. These influences can be external or internal. He suggests that, to fully understand individuals and their development, professionals should explore the interrelations among the different system levels that affect individuals. The multiple system levels are micro, meso, exo and macro (Hong & Garbarino, 2012). Social ecological theory has been developed and adjusted from Bronfenbrenner's ecological theory (Brown, 2015). The theory focuses on understanding interaction between a person and the environment. The core of the theory is to explain that human understanding and behaviour is affected by the multiple environments surrounding individuals. Therefore, improving the environment to fit individuals to enable them to develop and grow. This improvement may also be effective for individuals’ adjustment in the society, which is being able to support and provide for themselves, their families and becoming part of the community life.

Al-Baldawi (2014), associate professor in psychiatry, argues in his model of adjustment that there are three main important factors to consider increasing the well-functioning of adjustment for newly arrived immigrants. The individual factor is explained to be the individual’s own resources, motivation and preparation to change and adjust to the new society. The network of
the family is also an important factor that needs to be flexible and safe. The third important factor mentioned by Al-Baldawi (2014), is the flexible welcoming and understanding of local authorities. An open and dynamic interaction between these factors is essential to establish a well-functioning adjustment. Further, he explains a flexible welcoming from local authorities as to prepare good possibilities for newly arrived immigrants. This is achieved by investigating how to increase and develop the personal resources and assist to compensate the needs that they may lack. As an example, he suggests that, language education should be based on age and educational background to suit the individuals (Al-Baldawi, 2014). The individual’s motivation to adjust in the new society can be influenced by the welcoming of local authorities and the social environment, which consist of family, friends and relatives. If the social network surrounding individuals is marginalised it becomes difficult to adjust. On the other hand, if the social network is flexible and social, the process of adjustment becomes easier (Al-Baldawi, 2014). He further argues that, residential segregation decreases the chances of a well-functioning adjustment. The three factors mentioned above have been considered to be a part of individual, interpersonal and community level in this study.

According to McLeroy (1988), the social ecological model is composed of five main levels which influences and explains the experiences and attitudes of humans. The five levels are individual, interpersonal, institutional, community and public policy level. McLeroy (1988) explains the five different levels as followed; the individual level consists of individual characteristics systems such as educational background, attitudes and history of development. The interpersonal level concerns the close relationships of an individual, such as informal and formal social networks with friends and family. The institutional level consists of organisational characteristics with regulations that are both formal and informal. This includes schools, working places and neighbourhoods. Community level is the relationship between organisations and other institutional and informal networks. Authorities, such as social services and employment office, are a part of community level. The level of Public policy is the national and local laws and policies that affect the adjustment of these women.

In addition, Ungar (2011) argues that, there is a need for an increasing understanding of the relationship between individuals and their physical environment, which affects their well-being and adjustment. He argues that if the physical environment individuals live in is related to the individuals and is sustainable, then there is a higher chance that individuals will experience well-being. The level of physical environment will be part of the societal systems investigated in this study. Brown (2015) suggests that programmes and individual development that are
focusing on all levels are the ones most likely to have a lasting effect on behaviour and social change. If all these levels are included when working with an individual, the outcome should consist of an improved quality of adjustment. This research will examine how Somali women’s experience of adjustment is affected by each layer of the model and their interaction with different levels.

5.2 Criticism of Social Ecological Theory
The social ecological theory has been criticised, together with other forms of systems theory, for striving to maintain a balance and trying to fit individuals into norms instead of questioning them and fighting discriminatory structures (Payne, 2014; Ungar, 2002). According to Ungar (2002), there has been a lack of focus on power structures and power issues in social ecological theory that needs to be addressed in further usage of the theory. The power structures and power issues could be found between different members in a community but also between social workers and their clients. Ungar (2002) explains cases where social workers, using social ecological theory, have been trying to fit individuals into norms by changing their behaviour instead of focusing on the surrounding systems. This has been shown by social workers using planned interventions based on their expert knowledge, instead of investigating what the group of target believes they need. Therefore, the intervention might be wrongly directed and not making the changes needed to improve the well-being of the clients. Ungar (2002) argues that, to direct resources and interventions to the needs of the community from their perspective can help to overcome dependency of authorities. This can be achieved by striving to become an interdependent part of service system, and to not underestimate a community’s capability to care for itself. Payne (2014) argues that, this is difficult to achieve due to the increase of bureaucratic and centralised services in social work.

The theory should guide social workers in practice on how to work with communities to enhance well-being, promote community health and reduce stress (Payne, 2014). Projects focusing on the physical environment are suggested by Payne (2014) to reduce stress in neighbourhoods. As argued by Ungar (2002), there is an assumption in the theory that everyone gains equally from an established equilibrium without questioning if some people gain more than others. He also argues that the theory brings up a critical perspective on race, ethnicity and gender that should be addressed in practice. Though, the focus is not put on these structures and much effort has not been applied to change or deconstruct discriminatory structures. Further, he explains that the theory has no explanation to why different systems and the interrelation between them exist. In addition, it puts more focus on the interrelation between different
systems instead of the different characteristics within the systems. In order to develop interventions to make adjustment for Somali women and other newly arrived immigrants more effective in international social work, the above-mentioned factors need to be considered and addressed.

6. Methodology

In this chapter the mode of procedure, methods, data analysis, limitations and ethical consideration will be presented. A qualitative method of semi-structured interviews has been conducted for the purpose to answer the aim of this study.

6.1 Mode of procedure

To investigate this subject, a qualitative method was chosen to conduct this study. Qualitative method is an in-depth inquiry that describes and interprets the research (Quinn, 2015). This method consists of collecting data through semi-structured interviews and analysing the data to find themes. This study is based on Somali women’s experience. Therefore, qualitative method was chosen to understand their experiences in-depth. Databases were also used to find relevant research to investigate the subject further and to gain knowledge before collecting data. In addition, databases were used to develop a theoretical framework for this study.

The plan was to conduct six interviews to gain more data to analyse within the short time period of ten weeks. One of the participants cancelled; therefore, five semi-structured interviews have been conducted with women from Somalia between the ages of 25 to 55 years old. They have been living in Sweden between five to ten years. The data collection was made in a middle-sized city in Sweden. The study is focusing on this age group because the Establishment Act (2010:197; 1992:1068) aims to assist immigrants from the age of 20 up to 65 years old. Furthermore, other studies have shown that children and young adults going to school can be seen as having more similarities and have easier to adjust into a new society (Montesino & Righard, 2015). Our focus is on individuals who have gone through the establishment plan when they arrived to Sweden and have been in the country for five to ten years. The Establishment Act (2010:197; 1992:1068) aims to facilitate and make adjustment of immigrants more effective. Hence, women who have participated have received help from the authorities to adjust.
The semi-structured interviews included structured questions related to the aim and theory of the research. This provided the interviewees the opportunity to speak openly about their experiences and challenges concerning the subject (Grinnell, 2014). The authors of this study familiarised themselves well with the social ecological theory used in this study before formulating the interview guide. A theoretical framework (Appendix 1) was constructed to obtain a clear picture of the different societal systems that were to be examined when conducting the interviews. From the theoretical framework, the interview guide was formed (Appendix 2). The interview guide was first made in English. Thereafter, it was translated to Swedish and Somali language to facilitate the interviews, since the women speak Somali and Swedish language. Open-ended questions were constructed that gave the researchers an opportunity to probe if needed. These kinds of questions also gave the participants the chance to answer with their own words which made it easier for the researchers to gain a broader understanding of their situation (Grinnell, 2014). In the interviews, simple language has been used to avoid bias responses and misunderstandings (ibid). One of the authors of this study speaks Somali fluently, since it is her native language. This made it possible to have the interviews in Somali language without having the need to use an interpreter. All of the interviews were held in Somali language to enable the interviewees to express themselves freely in their native language. One of the interviews was held in Swedish for about half an hour, from the wish of the interviewee, which was respected. After a while the interviewee started to speak in her native language, which made it easier for her to express herself well.

6.2 Database search

To find previous research and to broaden the authors’ knowledge concerning the subject, databases were used to search for relevant sources. The search was carried out by using different databases such as Google Scholars, Ebscohost, SocIndex and Wiley. Different terms were searched, such as; Somali women, adjustment, immigrants, social ecological theory and refugees. There were several hits and the previous research most suitable for the subject of this study was read through and summarised in the section of previous research. The theoretical framework was constructed by the literature with most suitable systems for the context of this study. Laws and reports from the Swedish Migration Agency have been studied to better understand the context concerning Somalia and migration to Sweden.
6.3 Sampling and data collection

To find interviewees, a snowball sampling was chosen. This is a non-probability sampling, which means that the authors could find participants with the help of other participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). According to Quinn (2015), a snowball sampling should start from asking well-informed individuals about the subject to ask who could be suited for the study. The person refers the researchers to different individuals who could be possible participants in the study. Quinn (2015) mentions that the snowball sampling makes it possible that the person being referred to will participate in the study, due to the relationship and trust the two individuals share. The snowball sampling may also affect the result since the persons who are being referred to may have similar experiences and believes as the person who referred them (Quinn, 2015). However, this is an effective sampling method that contributes to trust which is necessary for the participants to take part in the study willingly (Nabuzoka, 2000).

The sampling was made through contact with an organisation, which is working with empowering and supporting women with foreign background to help them adjust in the Swedish society. Hence, it is important to build trust with the participants when trying to gain contact for the purpose of conducting interviews (Nabuzoka, 2000). This was achieved by attending several meetings at the organisation to build trust with the selected group. During these meetings, the authors got in contact with some women from Somalia who helped them to find more participants for the study. The authors of this study were clear from their first visit at the organisation that their intention was to find participants for the study. Further, it was explained for the women what the study was about when meeting for the first time to build a relationship and gain their trust (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). Thereafter, the authors have met with most of the women once in a week for a period of three months to assist them with their school work and the Swedish language.

The interviews were held in Somali language and were between 45 minutes to 2 hours long. Face to face interviews were conducted allowing the authors to observe the interviewees expression and body language (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The interviews were recorded by two recording devices to secure data if one of the devices would stop working during the interviews. To respect confidentiality the audio recordings and the transcriptions of the study were handled with care (ibid). The names of the participants are not mentioned in the transcriptions. The interviews were held in different neutral settings where the participants felt comfortable and safe. Before the interviews started, the participants were informed about the consent form (Appendix 3), which was carefully read through together with the researchers in
Swedish and translated to Somali. They were also informed that it was only the researchers that would have access to the recordings and it could happen that the supervisor might also have access. The interview questions were asked in both Swedish and Somali. The interviewees were encouraged to speak the language they felt most comfortable with, and that they could mix the two languages as much as they wished. They were also informed that they could call the author that spoke Somali if they had any questions or concerns about the study. Follow-up questions were asked by phone for the participants to elaborate their experiences concerning the physical environment level.

6.4 Data analysis

The collected data has been analysed through a thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is widely used and recognised as an analysing method in qualitative research (Teo, 2014). Researchers using a thematic analysis identify codes and themes from the data, which in this study are semi-structured interviews. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), a theme is considered as a higher level of information. It captures the importance of data patterns in a study in relation to the aim of the research. The themes should make a descriptive meaning of the codes found when analysing (ibid). Braun and Clarke (2006) state that, a thematic analysis consists of different steps of analysing process. The first step the authors took was to familiarise themselves with the data. The interviews were transcribed by both of the writers of this study. The first author translated the data from Somali language to English orally, and the second writer wrote down the transcripts. During the transcription, the authors could discuss and reflect over the data. The transcribed interviews were read through several times to be familiar with the text (Teo, 2014).

In the first step of analysing the data, the researchers are to find codes that are relevant to the research questions of the study. The codes were later clustered together to themes which had to be relevant and tell a story about the collected data (Teo, 2014). Braun and Clarke (2006) suggest creating a thematic network, where the different themes are presented and possible relations between the different themes. A thematic network (Appendix 4) was made in relation to the developed theoretical framework (Appendix 1) to examine its relevancy to the theory. Braun and Clarke (2006) also argue that, there is a need to examine if the codes found fits with the themes or if the codes could have another meaning. This was done through a constant check-up of the relevancy of different codes to the themes when writing the result. The themes were defined and explained when presenting the results of the interviews when the codes and themes were relevant (Teo, 2014).
6.5 Credibility and validity

The interviews were held in the native language of the participants and one of the authors of this study. There was no need of having an interpreter. The participants did not have to speak in a language which they could not express themselves, which might decrease credibility. Quinn (2015) suggests that, researchers should analyse the data separately to later compare and discuss the findings with each other to increase credibility and avoid biases. The authors of this study analysed the data separately when coding and similar codes were found when compared. Different codes were sorted into potential themes which the two authors did together. To increase the credibility of this study, the findings were shown to some of the participants to confirm if the results captured their experiences and perception of adjustment in a correct way, as suggested by Quinn (ibid).

Validity refers to the content and structure of the method that is being used to obtain the information required to answer the research questions (D'Cruz & Jones, 2014; Robson, 2007). Validity in a qualitative study means whether the chosen method of the study has achieved what was intended to be measured and has been proved. Then it can be stated that the validity of the study is accurate (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). This means validity depends on how the findings are in connection to the aim of the study. Therefore, a theoretical framework (Appendix 1) was created which helped the authors to create an interview guide (Appendix 2) which was connected to the aim of the study.

6.6 Ethical consideration

Ethical issues can arise in three areas, confidentiality, informed consent and deception (Frankfort-Nachmias & Nachmias, 2008). Researchers conducting a study should take into consideration the ethical guidelines. Our interviewees have been informed about their right to confidentiality and anonymity, as well as what the research is about. The participants could decide whether they wanted to participate in the study or not. They received information that they can withdraw from the study whenever they want without having to explain their reasons to the researchers. No personal information regarding them would be connected to this study or be brought up in the result (Robson, 2007).

The participants were informed of this through a letter of consent in Swedish (Appendix 3), which was translated orally to their native language, Somali. The women agreed to participate in the study and signed two copies of a consent form, one to keep for themselves and one for the
authors. The participants were informed that they could add or remove data if they wished. They requested that personal data should not be used in the study and was left out when transcribing. However, this did not affect the findings of the study. The participants were given fictitious names in the study to protect their privacy and avoid any tracings to them (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). To protect the anonymity of the participants further, the city where the interviews were conducted in is not mentioned in the study, which they also requested.

6.7 Limitations

The limitations that were encountered during this study are, time limitation; due to a limitation of ten weeks, which led to no more than five interviews being conducted. Some interviews were rescheduled by the interviewees due to illness. One interview was cancelled, the time limitation made it difficult to find a new participant (Quinn, 2015). The transcription process was time consuming because the authors had to translate the interviews from Somali language to English.

The interviews were transcribed from Somali to English. Consequently, some meanings might have been missed since the two languages vary from each other. There were some concepts that were missing in Somali which made some interviewees answer some of the questions in relation to previous questions. In addition, they also experienced difficulties understanding some of the questions which might have affected the result (Brinkemo, 2014). Brinkemo (2014) states, there is a relatively low trust for authorities in Somalia. The participants might have experienced this during the interviews when they were not comfortable expressing their opinions openly about certain questions relating to different authorities. Participants who were hesitant to answer certain questions were respected.

Building a relationship with the selected group is very significant because it leads to gaining their trust, which was experienced during our meetings before the study (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Nabuzoka, 2000). The authors of the study have been building a relationship with most of the participants for a period of three months. This was necessary to conduct in-depth interviews with the targeted group. The authors of this study met with one of the participants only two days before the interview was conducted with her. During the interview the authors observed that the participant was not comfortable enough to express her views in-depth. In this case, it might be different if the authors had met with this participant as often as the other participants.
6.8 Respondents

Lisa (fictitious name) is 31 years old. She has been living in Sweden for eight years with her children. She went to primary school in her home country and is studying at the moment.

Matilda (fictitious name) is 38 years old. She has been living in Sweden for eight years with her children. She graduated from high school in her home country and is studying in Sweden.

Alexandra (fictitious name) is 43 years old and has been living in Sweden for eight years with her children. She did not attend school in her home country and is studying now.

Sara (fictitious name) is 45 years old. She has been living in Sweden for nine years with her children. She attended primary school in her home country. She studied in Sweden and is currently looking for work.

Emily (fictitious name) is 42 years old and has been living in Sweden for six years with her children. She did not study in her home country and is not studying at the moment but will resume her studies soon.

7. Result

In this section, the three themes found when analysing will be presented with descriptive information of what the participants said in the interviews supported with quotations. The three themes found were; assistance, inclusion and self-sufficient. These themes have been found to be fundamental in making adjustment more effective for these women, also including the experiences and challenges they faced during their adjustment. The themes are presented with support of sub-categories which have been found when coding.

The symbol [...] in the text means that some words or sentences have been removed from the quote to shorten longer phrases. The symbol has been handled carefully to not change meanings of what has been said. The quotes have been translated to English from Somali language by the authors of this study.

7.1 Assistance

The first theme is defined as participants’ reflections on the kind of assistance they needed when they arrived in the country, and the challenges they faced during their adjustment in the Swedish society. Many problems emerged due to not being able to communicate in the language of the host country and lack of assistance from someone speaking their native language. Further, they expressed that this affected them by having difficulties to understand the different systems in the Swedish society, not being able to report problems or ask questions concerning authorities.
7.1.1 A sense of helplessness

The participants discussed the changes and challenges they experienced when moving to Sweden. They talked about how they felt a sense of helplessness when they could not speak and understand the Swedish language. They also spoke about how limited and helpless they felt when they were unable to make a call when they wanted to report an error concerning their homes. One of the participants’ heaters broke during the summertime. She did not notice that it was not functioning since there was no need to heat up the house at that time. The winter season started and she could not bear the cold in her apartment. She did not understand why the heater was not functioning. She explained that she could not sleep during the night, that she was only shaking because she was freezing. She had tried to call the housing company but they did not understand her;

“It was cold, I was new, and it was the first year. I did not know any language. I called the housing company; we could not understand each other. [...] I do not know how to say heater in Swedish. I did not know what to tell him. At last I told him the address and the house number.” (Matilda)

After that a man from the housing company came to help her. She explained the situation;

“I put my hand on the heater and I was covered with a blanket. I showed him. I told him it is very cold, I think this is not working. The man touched the heater. He saw it and he left. He came back after few minutes. He prepared the heater. He was shocked, very shocked. He said ‘how many days has it been like this?’ I said almost 2 months. ‘TWO MONTHS?’ He said. ‘You have been freezing like this. Aj aj aj!’ I became sick.” (Matilda)

Matilda also spoke about a similar incident which happened to a close friend of hers. The friend had a water leakage in her house. Her friend did not know how to make an emergency call to the housing company. She did not know how she could receive help or where to turn to for assistance. After a while she received help from other Somalis who helped her to repair the house and called the housing company who were not happy with the situation. Her friend was fined for the problem that occurred. Matilda thought it was unfair that her friend was fined for a problem which she did not know how to report.
Another participant discusses one of the challenges she faced when she received a letter from one of the public sectors. She did not understand what the letter was about due to language difficulties. Later on, she was debited for missing an appointment.

“I used to do my best and it does happen that I do not understand a letter, which I put it aside and then I am debited for it because I have not understood what the letter is about. I am new in the country. It happened a couple of times that I have been debited. Or maybe I took part in something that I did not have any knowledge about. If I knew this, I would not have done it. Those are the things that I remember, a lot of things that I remember”. (Emily)

Another interviewee talked about the same issue where authorities send papers to individuals new in the country who does not understand the language. She explained that these individuals tear up the papers and throw them away, which they later may be fined for. She continued by saying that instead of explaining how the systems work, they are assumed to already understand the system. She explained that it is necessary to assist newcomers to make them understand how the system works. Further, she stated that the system works to treat people born in the country and newly arrived immigrants in the same way. This was also mentioned by another participant. The participant explained that when applying for housing support, one is required to calculate her salary before tax, which meant that an individual will be debited if the calculation is wrong.

“When you tell an individual to calculate for themselves, and this is an individual who has not gone to school and is new in the country, they might calculate it the wrong way. They are then made to pay back the money. I think it is a problem there.” (Matilda)

7.1.2 Language assistance

During the interviews, the women discussed about changes that were made in the law concerning family reunification of Somalis, a lot of people were affected by this. They wanted to demonstrate and tell the government that they experienced this as an injustice and children have the right to be reunited with their parents. Unfortunately, they did not know the language which made their voices not to be heard.

“They would only accept documents from the first government of Somalia. It became difficult for me how I could complain about this issue. We started to demonstrate, we even visited the parliament of this country so they could accept to bring the children. We talked about this; I even recommended that we should take it further to the media, so that we are able to talk about this matter everywhere. But we do not know the language”. (Matilda)
Matilda further explains that not knowing the language is like being deaf. The participants also discussed about other difficulties they experienced because they lacked information about how the education system works in Sweden;

“You just have started to understand things, and started to invest in the education, you are told your 500 points are finished now so you have to stop coming to SFI classes. When the person leaves, the little he or she has learned, they forget, they do not understand the system. Because the person stops trying to do his or hers best”. (Matilda)

Several participants explained that they had not received sufficient information beforehand on how the education system, Swedish for Immigrants (SFI), worked. Lack of sufficient information was experienced with other systems as well. They explained that they were not aware of when making an appointment with a doctor; one had to call the health care department first. Most of the participants faced difficulties with the health care department. Some of them felt that they were not taken seriously when they went to seek help; others found it difficult with not having an interpreter present at the hospital. A respondent explained that the doctors used an interpreter through phone which made the doctor misunderstand what she needed help with. She talked about the complications this could lead to, that the doctor could prescribe the wrong medicine. They also experienced fear from authorities, such as the social services would take away their children if they did not allow the children to do as they wished. This information came from other Somali members who had been living in Sweden for many years. All the participants explained that they felt that they could receive help from other Somalis if they were in need. Alexandra explained that if individuals are faced with a problem, they first try to solve it by themselves. If the individuals cannot solve the problem and is in need of support, then the Somali community steps in to provide support.

The participants also mentioned that their well-being was affected by the seasonal changes in Sweden. Some of them experienced having severe headaches and body aches when the weather was changing. Three participants did not receive any information about the importance of taking vitamin D when it was winter season, and the kind of clothes necessary for winter. They realised this when they had been in the country for many years. One of the participants explained that it feels like she has recently arrived to Sweden every year when the winter season starts. Most of the participants experience difficulties with the snow and coldness. Matilda explained her experience with the new climate during her first years in Sweden:
“I did not know about the different seasons of this country when I came. I never had any thoughts about it. No one talked about it with me; no one told me anything about it. [...] But what I experienced, when it is fall or when the atmosphere changes, one might fall sick. During the fall people are in need of sunshine, that you are supposed to take vitamin D tablets. I did not know all of this before. It might be possible that I am aware of this for two years, when I have adjusted to the climate now.” (Matilda)

These women mentioned that if they received the right assistance in their native language within their first two years in Sweden the problems they faced would have been prevented.

7.2 Inclusion
The second theme found was inclusion, consisting of activities, meeting places and the impact of inclusion to share and exchange experiences between individuals from different cultural backgrounds. The women experienced feelings of loneliness, defencelessness and isolation. These feelings were caused by having difficulties to associate with people born in Sweden. They also experienced not being included or involved when starting meeting places.

7.2.1 Expectations
All the participants described their expectations of coming to Sweden as coming to a country of peace and safety, where they would have a better life than to live in a war-torn country. The women experienced that they have personally developed since they arrived in Sweden. They talked about that they have learned and are able to speak the Swedish language now, which has led them to understand more about the Swedish systems. Despite this, they are still faced with some obstacles of adjustment which includes language barriers and cultural conflicts. The women believed that mastering the official language of the country is the key to adjustment and society. Most of the participants are still studying the Swedish language. They discussed that it would be easier to learn the language if they had more opportunities to interact with people born in Sweden. They suggested that if there were programmes which the authorities held to provide information to the society, it would lead to creating an understanding and collaboration between the different cultures. They also explained the importance of these programmes could be used as a preventive measure in preventing discrimination, negative attitudes, defencelessness and isolation which hinders them to adjust in the society.
7.2.2 Hardships

Several difficulties have been experienced by the participants when trying to associate with others. Isolation has been created by not being able to associate as explained by two of the participants that experienced loneliness. The feeling of loneliness limited their engagement in different activities. Most women only engaged in activities outside during summer, spring and beginning of fall, some of them are still not engaging in any activities during wintertime. Activities during the summertime consist of taking long walks and picking berries in the forest. Despite the feeling of loneliness these women experienced a sense of tranquillity when they took long walks in the forest.

One participant talked about one of her experiences where she felt defencelessness when she faced negative attitudes from the society. During a period of two years there was a man saying inappropriate things to her, used to wait for her at the streets to make inappropriate comments. The participant explained how she wanted to defend herself but was unable to because she did not know the language, and did not understand everything the man was saying to her. After she had learned some Swedish, she was able to defend herself;

“One of the days, I said to him, when he said something inappropriate to me, like, go back to Africa. He seemed to be someone who was a racist. So, I went to him, as I was walking by he said inappropriate things to me. I went back, I said, why are you saying inappropriate things to me every day, am I not a human being? What do you think I am every day when you are saying inappropriate things? Do you think that I do not understand you? You were saying inappropriate things to me for 2 years” (Alexandra).

That day Alexandra defended herself by explaining to the man why she was in the country and how she felt when the man said those things to her. Since that day, he stopped harassing her and she never saw him again. Other participants had sometimes faced negative attitudes from the society, such as being called names or moved away from when entering a bus. One participant explained that she felt that some people did not accept her for who she is. Despite meeting some negative attitudes, the participants appreciated the respect they received from many individuals in the society.
7.2.3 Meeting places and activities

The women experienced that there is a need for meeting places where they can interact and participate with other community members, such as neighbourhood meetings. The neighbourhood meetings could involve discussions and receiving information of what is happening in the society. Responsibilities and decision-making should be shared by representative individuals from each community. These women suggested that there is a need of having role models, someone who has knowledge of both cultures (Swedish and Somali culture) and succeeded to adjust in the society. Hence, this would motivate other Somalis. Some women explained that many times organisations and meeting places are only created by people born in Sweden. It was explained that this could lead to Somalis becoming hesitant to attend because they are questioning the intention of the organisation. Matilda explains the importance of collaboration; it would create acceptance, participation, unity and trust.

“They (people born in Sweden) do not include us. If we were included in those interacting programmes, we would have participated. If they included us, the culture part would have worked. The cultural challenge they (people born in Sweden) are facing is that they only want some individuals to work with these programmes”. (Matilda)

The participant further talked about how inclusion, not only in organisations but also in the everyday life, could be improved;

“At the end…. When people interact and acceptance of cultures becomes better, there would not be problems, but we have to know each other first. It is the process of how to get to know each other that is the problem”. (Matilda)

The participants discussed that it was difficult to get in contact and associate with Swedish people. Some participants explained that there are mostly other immigrants that live in their neighbourhood. One of the participant suggested that since Sweden has opened up and welcomed newly arrived immigrants, Swedish people should try to be more open and accepting. A person can start by greeting their neighbours to get acquainted. Another respondent suggested that the women, themselves, should engage to associate with people born in Sweden.
7.3 Self-sufficient

All of the respondents explained that having work is crucial when adjusting to a new society. To be self-sufficient, it is necessary to have work which enables the individual to provide for themselves. Self-sufficiency establishes independency without the individual having to depend on governmental aid. The respondents’ expectations when coming to Sweden was not only to come to a land of peace, but to be able to educate themselves, to work and live a self-sufficient life. Emily explained what her motivation coming to Sweden was;

“My motivation was that I am going to leave all of these problems behind and we will be going to a place where there are no problems, where I can work and live, which I was hoping for.” (Emily)

At the moment, none of the women have an employment and only one of them has worked during their time in Sweden.

7.3.1 Practical training and personal skills

The women explained that they have been searching for many different jobs, trying to get certificates and educate themselves within different fields to be able to get an employment. During their search for work, these women have experienced challenges where they felt心broken and taken advantage of. Their goal is to have work in the future. Furthermore, they all mentioned that they have been trying to find employment by taking different measures such as training education provided by the office of employment.

“They (authorities) provided me a training education, which they said you will find work with. I thought, when I am done with this education I will be able to go to companies, and tell them I have a certificate from this country that I thought I would find work with, but I did not. [...]I searched for work. I searched for like 100 types of work. I was not even called to any interviews. I was heartbroken.” (Matilda)

The participants explained that their personal skills are not taken into consideration by the employment office, when being sent to a practical training. The participants experienced that their personal interest in the kind of work they would like to participate in, were not appreciated during practical training. They felt that being sent from one practical placement to the other was a waste of personal resources. One of the participants suggested, when authorities provide
practical placements and training educations, they should consider an individual's personal interest and goals in the future. She explained that it is important that individuals attend practical placement at a place where they are interested and where there is an opportunity to work in the future. She told that if this is not considered, an individual will lose motivation and will not gain much from the practical placement.

“People will no longer be interested in the practical training. They (other Somalis) say they (authorities) are just using us and we are not going to find any work. It is better to send the person to a place where they can find a work.” (Matilda)

The frustration of being sent to practical placements which does not lead to employment was discussed by most of the participants.

7.3.2 Certificate

The participants explained the conditions they are required to fulfil when applying for a work or practical placement. Some of the participants mentioned that it was made difficult for them when they want to take part in internship training. They explained that they are required to attend a practical training. At the end of the training they receive a certificate, which will make it easier for them to find work. Some of the respondents have not had the chance of finding any work despite having a certificate. Individuals with education background faced difficulties when their certificates were not accepted by authorities. These women mentioned that it would have been easier for them to find work or continue with their studies if certificates from their home country were accepted. One of the participants received a certificate after attending practical training but still experiences difficulties to find employment;

“I have been living here for nine years, I have not worked still. All the time, I think about working, earning my own salary. Every time I call the authorities and ask them for work, they tell me ‘we do not have a place for you yet. You have to be sent to a practical placement so you are able to receive your financial support.’ If I was to work I would like to work as a cleaner, because I have a certificate from that practical training.” (Sara)

Despite meeting the requirements of applying for work, Sara is still faced with unemployment.
7.3.3 Creating work opportunities

The participants explained the significance of work would lead to other opportunities, such as making it easier for them to speak Swedish and extend their social network. They also mentioned that being able to work would let them support and provide for their families, without expecting support from someone else. The respondents compared how creating jobs in Somalia was experienced easier and simpler than creating jobs in Sweden. They talked about how they all had a job and provided for their families. One participant mentioned that in Somalia she was independent and did not rely on her husband for financial support. Sara explained that if one is in need of work in Somalia, one can visit different shops or other places and ask if there is a chance that one can work there. She explained that only by appealing to the owners of a shop, they would consider to help and hire you. She continues by stating that it is different in Sweden, where one has to have more knowledge and certificates to be able to find employment. Matilda talked about her experiences of feeling frustrated of not being able to do the work she did in Somalia, which she really enjoyed. She explained that in her home country, jobs were created differently than in Sweden, such as starting a business. She further explains that she understands that there is a way of creating work in Sweden as well, but she still experiences difficulties with these differences. Furthermore, she explains that she found work in Sweden with the help of a fellow-citizen. Alexandra explains that when she was in her home country, she had her own business and could provide for herself and family. Now, she feels since she has no work that she has no other option than to turn to the social services for support. The participant describes how she feels when receiving financial aid from the social services;

“When I have seen how the practical training and the language are, I lost motivation a bit. [...] I do not think about taking financial support from the social services. I feel embarrassed when I am taking those forms to their offices. I feel like I am someone who is very weak”. (Alexandra)

Another participant mentioned that her goal at the moment is to learn the Swedish language and receive a certificate to make it possible for her to provide for herself and contribute to the development of the society. The women explained that despite being faced with many challenges and obstacles, they are still determined to achieve their goal which is finding work. This is what motivates them in their journey of seeking employment. Furthermore, these women experience good and respectful receptiveness from authorities and appreciating being in a safe country.
8. Discussion

The findings revealed that the women felt safety and peace, feeling appreciative to have an opportunity to live and develop in the host country. It was also found that these women experienced challenges in exposure to a new country and culture. This was caused by insufficient assistance by not understanding the language and the way different system function in the new country. Information about the new society was not well provided, which caused problems of being fined without understanding the reason and causing health problems of different kinds. The women felt there is a need of interaction with people in their neighbourhoods and community to create inclusion. They experienced difficulties coming into contact with people born in Sweden and did not feel included in starting of organisations. The women explained that they felt disappointed in regard to self-sufficiency, where they all had the hopes of having an employment in the new country. Only one of the women had worked during their time in Sweden. They all suffered from being sent to different practical trainings, without leading to an employment. This was despite having certificates which they were told that it would facilitate in receiving employment. The participants in this study had suggestions on how to make their adjustment more effective. These suggestions included assistance in their native language during their first years in the new country, inclusive opening of meeting places and an increased assessment of personal resources when receiving help to find employment. The result will further be discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and social work practice.

8.1 Adjusting to social systems

From a social ecological theoretical perspective, the three themes found when analysing the interviews are interrelated and includes different levels affecting adjustment in relation to societal systems for these women. Bronfenbrenner states, the development of individuals is influenced by different factors (Hong & Garbarino, 2012). These women are influenced by the challenges they experience when adjusting to a new society, such as having difficulties when learning the Swedish language. The participants have explained that due to lack of sufficient information about how the school system works, they were not aware that they were to learn the language within two years. Some of the participants have not had the possibility of attending school in their home country. In the report made by Framtidskommissionen (2012), they state that educational background and time in a new country are seen as the two main factors important for adjustment. However, Al-Baldawi (2014) argues, it is the preparation and motivation of an individual which are considered to be the main contributing factors when adjusting to a new society. Preparation could be stimulated from authorities and organisations
from the institutional level, and motivation through flexible social network (McLeroy, 1988; Al-Baldawi, 2014).

Lacking sufficient information about how different systems work in the host country diminishes the development of these individuals, and also affects the different levels surrounding the participants by exposing them further to other difficulties in the society (McLeroy, 1988). Therefore, how can individuals adjust or experience a well-functioning adjustment when they lack sufficient information about how the systems work? The participants experienced challenges in regard to the community level where they felt they were provided with information in the same way as people born in the country. Brinkemo (2014) explains that, information provided about the Swedish society is almost identical regardless of individuals’ background. Further, he argues that individuals have the responsibility to provide themselves with most of the information, which has been difficult for some individuals (Brinkemo, 2014). It can be seen that they were treated equally, but their needs were not met due to lack of assistance in their native language. Therefore, it is important to consider factors from the home country of the individuals which might affect their adjustment process (Al-Baldawi, 2014). Moreover, adequate information in native language needs to be provided from the community level to enhance a balance between the interrelations of other levels.

Findings of this study showed that the social network surrounding these women is marginalised. Therefore, the interpersonal level is affected which makes adjustment to the society difficult. Al-Baldawi (2014) explains that, if the social network surrounding individuals is marginalised, then it becomes difficult to adjust. The participants explained that it would have been easier for them to communicate in Swedish if they had contact with people born in Sweden. Furthermore, Al-Baldawi (2014) argues that, residential segregation decreases the chances of coming into contact with people born in Sweden, which the participants experienced. The participants suggested that by creating a platform, people with different cultural backgrounds could meet and share experiences and learn from each other. A participant recommended enhancing collaboration when appealing to Somali people and gaining their trust, it requires individuals who have knowledge of both cultures. This would contribute to a flexible welcoming and understanding between Swedish society and Somali community. Another suggestion made by the participants was having platforms as a meeting place where society’s lack of knowledge about the difficulties these women go through can be discussed and changed, by sharing and exchanging experiences and knowledge with each other.
Adjustment is a process that takes time but individuals function well when provided with the right tools. The participants have explained that their personal skills have not been taken into consideration by authorities on the community level, when searching for work. Al-Baldawi (2014) explains that, making use of the individuals’ resources and assisting to compensate the needs individuals lack can facilitate their involvement in society. Hence, appreciating factors on the individual level increases individuals’ motivation and well-being. The respondents have discussed that they were sent from one practical placement to another without leading to employment. They explained that they are sent to do their practical training at a place where they are not interested in, which makes them lose hope and motivation. Therefore, losing hope and motivation affects the well-being of the individuals and makes them to stop trying to adjust. An imbalance between the different levels contributes to difficulties to adjust and lack of motivation (McLeroy, 1988). Therefore, assessing all the different levels which affects and influences individuals should be seen as a contributing factor to the development and well-being of individuals (Ungar, 2002).

Most of the participants felt unsupported by the local authorities when finding work. Consequently, access to support services may be a problem for this group. Findings also indicated that, the participants appeared to experience support from other Somalis when searching for work. Despite having expectations to work the participants have experienced difficulties finding employment. Similar findings were found in previous research by Bergnehr (2016), where participants in the study experienced few opportunities to find work. In the study by Kabir (2014), the participants experienced it differently with more opportunity to work when migrating to another country. The women who experienced more opportunity to work lived in USA and UK, where other previous studies have shown that Somalis had easier to adjust than Somalis in Sweden (Framtidskommissionen, 2012).

8.2 Adjusting to a new climate

An important factor in social ecological theory is the physical environment level which affects well-being of individuals. Adjusting in a new country should be investigated from a holistic perspective. Not only social relationships should be in focus, but also a new environment and climate (Payne, 2014; Berkes et al., 2003). Explained by one of the participants, she feels new in the country every year when the winter season starts. Another participant explained that she felt adjusted to the climate in Sweden after six years. Ungar (2011) explains that, if individuals feel connected to the environment surrounding them, their well-being and adjustment will increase. The sense of connection could be increased by interventions focusing on awareness of
the surrounding environment and supporting green projects, as suggested by Payne (2014). Adequate information regarding the seasonal changes and importance of taking medicines, such as vitamin D, can increase energy and motivation during the colder months. This could affect other levels such as interpersonal and institutional level, having more energy to do activities, meet friends and motivation to study or search work (McLeroy, 1988; Ungar, 2011). To consider this in interventions might enhance effective improvements of adjustment (Brown, 2015). The importance to recognise the physical environment in adjustment can be seen in Matilda’s experience of a broken heater during her first year in the country. The problem that occurred for a period of two months affected her well-being by becoming sick and not receiving help. She was in a new country with another climate than she was used to; having problems to report the problem affected her on an individual level. Brown (2015) explains that, problems in one level may affect other levels since they are interrelated. Therefore, there is a need to address all levels to be able to achieve a lasting social change. There is also a need to be prepared for colder seasons with adequate warm clothes, functioning heating system and vitamin D.

Another experience the women faced was that they all enjoyed taking long walks during summertime. They engage in more activities outside when it is warm than on the wintertime. Explained by Al-Baldawi (2014), there is a need to consider factors from the home country of the immigrants that might affect their adjustment. The climate in Somalia is most similar to the weather during summertime in Sweden, making it more likely that these women will experience a higher sense of connection to the climate during summertime (Ungar, 2011). During the summertime some of the women went to the forest where they felt a sense of tranquillity, which increased their well-being. For social work practitioners focusing on community work, there is a need to make these women feel more related to the climate during wintertime as well. This can increase their well-being and contribute to a balance in the interrelation between different levels (Ungar, 2002). It was also mentioned by the women that, their motivation of coming to Sweden was based on a longing of peace and safety in the surrounding environment, which they felt was fulfilled. Coming from a war-torn country to peace and safety can also increase well-being and appreciation of the new environment which makes the adjustment of the new physical environment easier (Ungar, 2011).

8.3 Implications for social work practice
The social work profession covers preventive practice and finding measures to solve social problems on different levels. There is a need for social workers to make adjustment for these women and other immigrants more effective. It has been seen of importance to interview these
women to be able to understand their view of adjustment and how it can be more effective. In social ecological practice, as stated by Ungar (2002), interventions in communities should involve goal- and decision-making from the individuals affected to increase well-being and adjustment. This practice has been out of focus for some social workers using this theory, whereby the power issues between practitioners and their clients have not been considered. Payne (2014) states that the increase of bureaucratic and centralised services in social work has made it difficult to put resources where they are most needed. This is prevalent in the examples of these women where they believe that they are being taken advantage of or not helped sufficiently in trying to find employment. The participants explained that focus should be on resources in helping to find practical training which an individual is interested in and that can lead to an employment. Not to be sent to numerous practical trainings without evaluating the interest of the individual. Al-Baldawi (2014) states that, professionals working with newly arrived immigrants should make an assessment of personal skills and interests as soon as possible when they arrive. Social workers should help to map the goals of the individuals to make the individuals keep their motivation but not to put unreasonable demands on them.

Furthermore, Al-Baldawi (2014) explains that language education should be adjusted to the educational background and age of the individual's. Complementary to this, the participants in this study requested a great need of assistance to understand the Swedish society and systems in their native language. Therefore, receiving adequate information about the new society from someone well-informed about the two different cultures should be promoted by professionals. The participants expressed their concern about the social services that their children could be taken into custody if they were not seen as good parents. This information was received from other Somali members who might have not received sufficient information when arriving to Sweden. To prevent such misconceptions, it is necessary to provide sufficient information in their native language. Furthermore, it is significant when providing information to these individuals, to consider the condition from their home country. Somalis have been living in a country that lacked a well-functioning state for years, which led them to develop low trust for authorities (Brinkemo, 2014). Therefore, it is important for professional to have cultural knowledge and to be aware of the need of building trust.

8.3.1 Community perspective

From a perspective of social workers working with communities, professionals can strive for an increased inclusion in communities. This should be approached with a focus to find a balance between different levels of social systems and physical environment. In previous research by
Framtidskommissionen (2012), it was shown that Somalis having close contact with non-governmental organisations and community centres have been found to have easily adjusted and accessed the labour market. Community centres should provide assistance to target the needs of this group. In the study, it was shown that it was not as common for Somalis in Sweden to have close contact with non-governmental organisations and community centres. Ungar (2002) explains that, community workers should strive to make members in communities interdependent and increase the capability to care for themselves. This could be developed from inclusive decision-making on goals of interventions, and opening of meeting places were members of a community can exchange experiences and ideas. This was mentioned and suggested by the participants of this study, as they felt a need to be included.

Al- Baldawi (2014) states, flexible social networks surrounding a person are important when adjusting in a new country. Payne (2012) suggests that, professionals using social ecological approach should aim to stimulate social networks by helping to create new and sustain already existing networks. Professionals should aim to engage and involve as many members in the community as possible, which eventually benefits a greater amount of people (Ungar, 2002). This should be considered carefully, not to make some people gain more than others, which could maintain existing power structures. Ungar (2002) suggests that, interventions in communities should promote the value of diversity and different solutions to problems. This could be achieved by including members who represent different community groups in organisations, which was suggested by one of the participants. The participant expressed that there is need of having Somali role models in the community. A promotion of valuing diversity could decrease negative attitudes from the society because it aims to increase acceptance. Diversity should be promoted by a self-critical practice of the professionals concerning power issues in construction of well-being and effective adjustment (Ungar, 2002).

Payne (2014) suggests that, social workers should involve communities in planning activities and social actions that is relevant to what they need and are interested in. The participants in this study experienced difficulties, when changes in the laws were made concerning validity of documents from Somalia. In cases like these, social workers working with communities could involve social action planning that could lead to a change in the public policy level which affects the group in need. Payne (2014) also suggests that, activities could consist of green projects in relation to the physical environment. Consequently, this could lead to a feeling of being more related to the new climate which would increase well-being (Ungar, 2011). It is possible that other system levels could exist surrounding these women, which have not been
investigated in this study. These could be equally important for the adjustment of these women. Through other perspectives, other reasons for why they experience difficulties to adjust in the Swedish society could be presented.

To conclude, providing sufficient information in native language is potentially useful to avoid misconceptions about authorities, and learn how the different systems in the society functions. It is significant because it facilitates the involvement of these individuals in the society; thus, contributing to a well-functioning adjustment and a balance between the different system levels. In addition, information concerning a new climate and environment should be included. These women gained this information by themselves after several years in Sweden. Furthermore, it is significant to consider the personal resources of the individuals and compensate the needs that they may lack. As a result, this increases the chances of the individuals contributing to the development of the society, which is the goal of the participants. The first step for social workers in Sweden to take could be to work with this group of people from a community perspective. Basically, creating contact between Somalis and community centres; to expand their social networks and to make their adjustment more effective.

8.4 Suggestions for further research
This study has been limited to the experiences of five women in a middle-sized city in Sweden; a wider research could be conducted to be able to find more recurring themes and suggestions on how to make adjustment more effective for Somali women. There would be a need to investigate if Somali women in other cities or countries experience similar challenges and need of improvements. The result could be that cities or countries benefit from each other and develop more effective interventions. Research concerning adjustment of Somali women from the perspective of authorities and organisations could be conducted. The subject would be researched from their perspective as well, to find a mutual goal to strive for. No previous research was found concerning adjustment to the physical environment. Therefore, there is a need to investigate the effect of adjusting in a new physical environment and improvements to make it more effective. Furthermore, not only Somali women are affected by difficulties adjusting to a new country. Therefore, research concerning refugees and other immigrants’ adjustment could be conducted to explore the issue from a more holistic perspective.
9. References


10.2 Appendix 2- Interview guide

**Interview guide:**

Can you tell us about your movement to Sweden?
Can you tell us about your life in Somalia?
How did you perceive your arrival and first period in Sweden? (First 2 years)
Could you tell us about your family?
Tell us about your life in Sweden?
What are your thoughts about the Swedish culture and life in Sweden?
Tell us how you create social networks in Sweden?
How would you describe your relation with friends, family, neighbours and community?
Describe how you have experienced meeting with different authorities in Sweden?
Tell us about your thoughts regarding the different policies and governmental system in Sweden and Somalia?
Can you tell us what you think about the Swedish climate?
What comments or questions do you have for us? Is there anything you would like us to explain?
What would you like to tell us that you have thought about during this interview? Do you have any recommendations on how to improve adjustment in the society?
Hej!
Vi är väldigt glada att du vill vara med och delta i vår undersökning. Vi skriver vårt examensarbete inom socionomprogrammet med inriktning internationellt socialt arbete på Högskolan i Gävle.

Vi är intresserade av att intervjua dig för att vi är intresserade av upplevelser från somaliska kvinnor som har bott i Sverige i mer än fem år. Syftet med vår studie är att få en djupare förståelse i hur somaliska kvinnor uppfattar etableringen i Sverige och hur de upplever att det kan utvecklas. Intervjun kommer ta ungefär 40–60 minuter och är helt frivillig. När som helst har du som deltagare rätt att avbryta intervjun och kan efter intervjun att avbryta din medverkan och vi kommer i sådana fall ta bort uppgifterna du uppgav i din intervju i forskningsresultatet.


Salaan soo dhaweyn badan leh
Med vänliga hälsningar
Maryama Mahammed och Maria Båld

Jag samtycker till att delta i intervjun:
Datum: ___________________ Namnteckning: ___________________
Appendix 4 - Thematic network

Assistance
- Sense of helplessness
- Authorities
- Education
- Limitation
- Distribution of resources
- Fear
- D-vitamin
- New environment
- Experiences
- Cultural conflict
- Support
- Self-blaming
- Being punished
- Different systems
- Lack of information/language skills/understanding of system

Understanding how the society systems works.
Leads to finding work.
Increase chance of having wider social network= more support= well-being

Self-sufficient:
- Seen as most important in adjustment
- Expectation
- Unemployed
- Personal capabilities
- Waste of personal resources
- Experiences/language
- Practical placement
- Taking advantage of
- No work/employment
- Certificate
- Goal/motivation
- Independent
- Individual interest
- Significance of work
- Creating work opportunities

Inclusion:
- Expectations/Peace
- Isolation/loneliness
- Discrimination/negative attitudes/defencelessness
- Language key to adjustment
- Acceptance
- Sharing experiences
- Programmes
- Information of what is happening
- Role models
- Preventative measure
- Activities

Individual development
Increase motivation with flexible network
Can contribute to development of society
Networking may lead to work opportunities
Independence
Role models

Better understanding of society and of each other.
Learning from each other.
Acceptance
Collaboration
Increase of motivation
Brings everyone together which strengthen the community