



GÖTEBORGS UNIVERSITET
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL WORK

**Migration, Education and Women's Empowerment:
A Case Study of Sub-Saharan African Women Immigrant in Gothenburg,
Sweden**

Master's Programme in Social Work and Human Rights

Degree report 30 higher education credits

Spring 2013

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ABSTRACT

Migration is a multidimensional phenomenon, which expands the opportunities for productive work and leads to a wider perspective among migrants. Female migration from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) to Western Europe has gained importance during recent years and has been linked to a variety of factors, including social and economic contexts, the level of poverty, gender equality and political instability in the sending countries. The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between migration, education and women's empowerment among female migrants from SSA who moved to Sweden. The study seeks to assess factors determining female migration from SSA to Sweden; their integration process into the social life and labour market; their empowerment process and the role of education; as well as implications of female migration for the families and communities in the sending countries. Anti-oppressive, empowerment and feminist theories have been considered. The empirical data consists of qualitative data, using individual interviews with primary respondents. The findings indicate that some female migrants from SSA used voluntary migration (e.g. for studies reasons or family reunification) as strategy to move to Sweden. For other immigrants, the move to Sweden was dictated by the political instability in the sending countries. The data demonstrate that the main challenges faced by female migrants during their integration into the Swedish society were the knowledge of the Swedish language, lack of social relations/networks and access to the required information. For some migrants, the integration process was hard and slow, while for others – it was easy because they already had family members who immigrated before to Sweden and had background information on Sweden. When it comes to accessing jobs, women even have more power than men as highlighted by respondents. Jobs were found to be in principle education-oriented and the knowledge of the Swedish language- a prerequisite. The data also confirm previous studies that there is still some segregation in the labour market, especially based on gender, ethnicity, educational background and the knowledge of the Swedish language. Gender equality between men and female migrants was illustrated by equal division of tasks for home work and child care. The findings revealed that women in Sweden have the power to take independent decisions regarding their lives, in accordance with the Swedish government policies on women's empowerment. Finally, female migrant remittances were shown to have a positive impact on the families and communities left behind.

Key words: Sub-Saharan African female migrant, education, gender equality, women's empowerment

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all, Glory to the Almighty God.

This thesis is the result of my studies at University of Gothenburg in the Master's Programme in Social Work and Human Rights. I thank the Department of Social Work at University of Gothenburg for offering a scholarship to support my studies and the very conducive work environment. I highly appreciated the University of Gothenburg Library Services.

I want to express my gratitude to the Coordinator of the Programme – Ing-Marie Johansson for the overall organization of the programme, all the teaching and administrative staff and Peer Helpers for the new knowledge provided, rich experience and timely administrative support.

I am especially indebted to my Supervisor Professor Ulla-Carin Hedin who helped me with very useful and timely comments that permitted me to make good progress.

I thank all my interviewees for their kindness, time and willingness in providing the basic information on which my results are based.

I appreciated the support provided during my internships in different organizations, including the Social Welfare Office in Gothenburg and the Autism and Asperger Association of the District of Gothenburg. My special thanks go to Akosua Acheampog, Ulla Adolfsson, Annika Lindström and Eila Onsjö.

Special thanks to my beloved mother, sisters and brothers in Rwanda. I will always remember my father who passed away few days before submission of this work. I recognize his love, prayers and support.

I thank fellow students on the Master's in Social Work and Human Rights (2011-2013) with whom I shared great learning experiences.

My appreciation to Rwandan PhD and Master's students studying in Gothenburg for their great support at different occasions. My great appreciation also goes to different Rwandan families living in Gothenburg that I met and shared interesting experiences and prayers in particular.

Thanks to the Pastors and Christians of the Smyrna International Church, Gothenburg for moral support.

I am very indebted to my friends in Rwanda, especially the families of Modeste Kabayiza and Josephine, Margret and Baryinyonza, Bernardin and Gertrude, Laetitia Nyinawamwiza and Peter, Claude Habineza and my sister Xaverine Uwamariya Dina, Angelique Utamuliza and all Christians from the Assembly of God Church at Huye.

Finally, special thanks to my husband Callixte Gatali for his encouragement and support during my studies.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CEDAW	: Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
DRC	: Democratic Republic of Congo
EU	: European Union
IFSW	: International Federation of Social Workers
ILO	: International Labour Organization
IOM	: International Organization for Migration
MIPEX	: Migration and Integration Policy Index
SSA	: Sub-Saharan Africa
SIC	: Smyrna International Church
SIDA	: Swedish International Development Agency
SSI	: Semi-structured Interview
UK	: United Kingdom
UN	: United Nations
UNDP	: United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNIFEM	: United Nations Development Fund for Women

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CHAPTER I– INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM AREA

1.1 Background

Empowerment has been one of the most fashionable terms used by feminists and social work practitioners since the 1990s (Leung, 2005). As Leung pointed out, feminists have also suggested making a shift from identifying women as the ‘victims of oppression’ to constructing women in positive and powerful ways. Solomon (1976, p.12) talks about empowerment ‘as the process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatized social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles’. Empowerment is also a process in which the first stage is about making the links between our personal position and structural inequalities, which means access to power and resources (Dalrymple and Burke 2006). Effective empowerment practice involves understanding the process of change that enables one to feel less powerless (p.113).

Drolet (2010) defined women’s empowerment as the process to enhance women’s capacity for self-determination or agency¹ to meet their practical and strategic needs, through which women achieve equal rights, power and resources with men in society and in the economy. Chawla and Chawla (2009) provide another definition of women’s empowerment as “ a process in which women gain greater share of control over resources - material, human and intellectual like knowledge, information, ideas and financial resources like money - and access to money and control over decision-making in the home, community, society and nation, and to gain power”. Many authors (Melkote and Steeves 2001; Mohanty 2001; Inglis 2005; Payne 2005) cited by Jönsson (2010) have associated empowerment with radical social movements and have linked it to participation, power, control, self-realization and influence. Saraswati (2005, cited in Jönsson 2010) argues that processes of empowering women should not only be concerned with simply helping women to gain access to resources, but also changing social and cultural forms of patriarchy that remain the sites of women’s oppression. Women’s empowerment is about human rights and equity and empowerment should focus on how individual is treated in society and is given access to resources and power (Cowger 1994, cited in Reichert 2011; Roche and Dewees 2001). The World Bank has identified empowerment as one of the key constituent elements of poverty reduction and has made the promotion of women’s empowerment a development goal for two important reasons: (i) that social justice is an important aspect of social welfare; and (ii) that women’s empowerment is a means to other ends (Malhotra et al. 2002). This has also been underlined by Kabeer (2009), who considers women’s economic empowerment as a top priority for poverty reduction and, as men; women must be viewed as economic actors and important agents of change.

This degree report focuses on qualitative discourse of women’s empowerment and its link to migration and education, making a case study of African immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa living in Gothenburg, Sweden.

¹ Women’s agency means the processes of decision-making, negotiations and manipulation required for women to appropriate and to use resources (Kabeer 2001, cited in Drolet 2010).

Sweden stands out as the most advanced country in the world in narrowing gender gap and successfully promoting the equality of women and men (Lopez-Carlos and Zahidi 2005). However, in Sweden, according to a comparative report of the Nordplus programme (2010-2011), unemployment among immigrant women is much higher compared to native women and compared to male immigrants. According to this report, factors influencing this lack of integration into the labour market include low educational background, cultural traditions of the country of origin, number of years in the host country, age, health, and family situation, lack of working experience and language skills of the host country. Despite important achievements in empowering women in Sweden, some questions remain unanswered: What are the barriers that prevent immigrant women from sub-Saharan Africa to easily integrate job opportunities in Sweden?

1.2 Problem statement

Female migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Europe is a recent phenomenon compared to other migration from Asia, Eastern Europe or Latin America. Important differences have been shown to exist between female and male migrants with emphasis on the reasons of migration and status of social integration (Riaño, 2005). The author also argues that there are critical differential effects of geographical origin, ethnic factors, educational skills and legal status on the social integration of immigrant women. Sub-Saharan African female immigrants in Gothenburg have emigrated from countries where social, economic and political inequalities are high (Skeldon 2003; Adepouju 2000, 2007). Patriarchal regimes in many of these countries favor men with regard to education, access to specific jobs and productive means such as land and bank credit. Previous studies of female migration also showed that the main reasons for this migration include labour migration, family reunification migration, marriage migration and migration caused by the consequences of globalization (Riaño, 2005). Although reasons for female migration seem to be varied for women from different regions of the world, there are some particularities related to female immigrants from SSA that still need more investigation such as specific causes of their move and specific challenges related to their integration into the social and labour market in the host country.

Coming from patriarchal societies that oppressed them or due to their educational and socio-cultural backgrounds, many female migrants from SSA require special attention in their empowerment process in order to overcome new challenges in the host countries such as the language barrier, gaining educational skills, and integration into social life and labour market. The challenges that these women face in the host countries may vary depending on immigrant integration policies of each host country, immigrant status, economic situation and cultural behavior of native people. For example, Africans are reported to be among migrant groups considered as multicultural in Sweden (Mwenyango, 2012).

As emphasized in previous paragraphs, there is increasing number of Africa women moving to Sweden. Earlier research has also shown that Africa in general and SSA in particular is not homogeneous and that 'tradition remains a very powerful force limiting the choices open to Africa women' (Stock 1995, p. 244, cited in Mwenyago 2011, p.10).

Therefore, carrying out the present study is likely to produce new knowledge on the situation of female immigrants from SSA living in Gothenburg and assess how their integration process into the Swedish society and the labour market affects their ability to take independent decisions regarding their own lives.

1.3 Aim of the study

The aim of this study is to examine the relationships between migration, education and women's empowerment, using a case study of female migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) living in Gothenburg, Sweden.

1.4 Specific objectives

The specific objectives of this study were:

- To analyze factors driving international migration of sub-Saharan African women to Sweden;
- To find out the challenges that affect the integration of these women into the Swedish social life and labour market;
- To analyze gender equality issues in their families;
- To gain a better understanding of the empowerment process of these women and the role of education;
- To assess the implications of female migration for families and communities left behind.

1.5 Research questions

This research is driven by the following research questions:

- (1) What are the factors that drive international migration of female immigrant from sub-Saharan Africa to Sweden?
- (2) To what extent does empowering these women help addressing their specific needs, rights and welfare? What is the role of education in empowering women?
- (3) Which are the barriers that prevent these women from integrating into the labour market and social life?
- (4) Which implications does female migration from SSA have for the families and communities in the sending countries?

1.6 Boundaries of the study

The main point of this case study will focus on the integration of female immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa, with legal status, into the Swedish society and labour market, and their empowerment. The reason for only focusing on these women is that they are more recent in the Sweden's migration history compared to other immigrants. In addition, sub-Saharan Africa is a region full of contradictions: rich in resources, it is still the poorest in the world; therefore migration is way out of poverty, inequality and social injustice. With the theoretical perspective, the study will stay at the empowerment at the individual level. Also due to limited resources both in time and finances, the study only targets female immigrants living in Gothenburg.

1.7 Definition of key concepts

There are four main concepts that were considered under this case study. These included integration, empowerment, migration and international migration.

- **Integration**

From a macro perspective, integration (or social cohesion), as a concept, refers to a characteristic of a social system, e.g. a society. 'The more a society is integrated, the more closely and the more intensely its constituent parts relate to one another' (Entzinger and Biezeveld 2003). Integration as perceived from the perspective of groups and individuals means that 'all groups and individuals display a certain degree of integration within a given society' (p.6).

- **Empowerment**

'Empowerment is a process whereby persons who belong to a stigmatized social category throughout their lives can be assisted to develop and increase skills in the exercise of interpersonal influence and the performance of valued social roles' (Solomon, 1976, p.12 cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.106).

- **International migration**

According to Skeldon (2003) migration is a system linking origins and destinations in which there is a flow of people, money and goods. International migration is a complex and multifaceted process, linked to socio-economic development, which involves increased mobility of persons, societal change and a great deal of international cooperation (Niessen, 2012). International migration is therefore a way for migrants to fulfill their aspirations, whereas for both the sending and receiving countries it can become part of an overall strategy to achieve economic and social goals.

CHAPTER II– LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter discusses existing literature on topic under investigation. It explores the link between migration, education and women's empowerment. It specifically addresses the causes of international migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Western Europe, understanding the concept, principles and process of women's empowerment and the role of education in empowering women.

2.1 Understanding the causes of international migration from SSA to Western Europe

Skeldon (2003) defines migration as a system, which links origins and destination in which there is a flow not only of people but also money and goods. Through migration, women in particular expect to improve their status and fulfill their aspirations such as education, acquiring job skills, human rights and freedom, gender equality, empowerment and so on (Skeldon, 2003). Niessen (2012) characterized international migration as a complex process which is linked to socio-economic development, and involves increased mobility of persons, societal change and a great deal of international cooperation. However, this international migration represents a big challenge for Western Europe because increasing number of illegal and undocumented immigrants (Nordplus programme, 2010-2011). The academic research carried out during the last three decades has revealed that unemployment among immigrant women is much higher compared to native women and male immigrants, especially because of low educational background and lack of formal working experience among Non-Western immigrant women (Nordplus). The Nordplus report further emphasized that for successful integration of immigrant women into the labour market in Europe in general and Nordic countries in particular, there are two main prerequisites: (a) the need to learn the language of the host country and (b) relevant formal education (mainly from Western Europe) recognized by the employers.

The reasons for the increasing feminization of international migration can be found in a combination of social, economic and political factors (Riaño, 2005). Different studies investigated several factors that cause international migration of women from sub-Saharan Africa to European countries (UNESCO 1998; Skeldon 2003; Adepoju 2000, 2007; ILO 2007; IOM 2011). These include: (1) rapid population and labour force growth; (2) armed violence and the lack of long-term peace and security (e.g. Somalia and Democratic Republic of Congo); (3) fragile democratization processes; (4) gender disparities because of lack of adequate education and employable skills; (5) persistent economic decline coupled with deteriorating living conditions; (6) poverty caused by low incomes, macro-economic adjustment measures, globalization and unemployment; (7) political or religious persecution like that caused by some integrist movements; and (8) widening international economic inequalities, natural disasters external debt burden of many African countries. Using a feminist structural approach, Kawewe (2001) demonstrated that major structural forces such as cultural and religious traditions, historic economic disempowerment, political disempowerment and unequal distribution of resources impair the social, economic and political status of women in sub-Saharan Africa.

The author argued that in most countries of this region, policies and practices favour men's control over women and set limits for women and influence opportunities available to them; for instance, women carry out the burden of poverty because of conditions of unequal access to economic, social and political resources, imposed by men. The above mentioned factors coupled with the consequences of the globalization process (Sen 2002; Adepaju 2007) have eroded the developmental progress of SSA and forced many people, including women, to migrate towards Western countries as a way out of poverty (Adepaju, 2007).

2.2 History of migration in Sweden and national immigrant integration policy

Major cities in Europe with strong economies have attracted several immigrants from over the world. Therefore, their populations become extremely heterogeneous and there is a need to maintain peaceful and productive relations among the multi-ethnic, multi-cultural and multi-religious societies (Lüken-Klaßen, 2009). On the other hand, immigrant integration is an ever-increasing challenge facing member countries of the European Union (Savage, 2010). Nonetheless, it is important for the host countries to have genuine integration practices.

Sweden's recent migration history starts after the World War II where the country has been subject to large scale immigration, including about 2.4 million people who immigrated between 1946 and 2003 (Dribe and Lundh 2008). Post-war immigration to Sweden can be divided into three phases as described by Lüken-Klaßen (2009) and Savage (2010). The first phase starts after the Second World War, when the Swedish government stimulated labour migration. Because Sweden was not most unharmed by the war, it had the ability to supply products and infrastructure to the rest of Europe that was rebuilding after the war, thus it looked elsewhere for workers (Savage, 2010). Therefore, migrants mainly came from former Yugoslavia and Italy in the 1950s, whereas in the sixties, they came from Spain and Portugal. At the same time, during the 1950s and 1960s, large-scale migration to Sweden came from Denmark, Norway and Finland due to the common labour market set up in 1954 by all Nordic countries (Lüken-Klaßen 2009).

The second phase in Sweden's recent immigration history came from the late 1960s when the immigration management was modified. To slow down migration to Sweden, work permits were introduced in 1967. Institutions were created to deal with the influx of immigrants and the new restrictions slowed the process of immigrants entering the country (Savage, 2010, p.53). The second phase of immigration to Sweden during the 1970s and 1980s was dominated by Nordic immigration, family reunification and the influx of immigrants from Eastern Europe. Since the 1970s Sweden has also received refugees from Chile and other Latin American countries, also large groups coming from Iran, Irak, Lebanon and Somalia because of war (Lüken-Klaßen 2009; Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality 2009).

The third and most recent phase of Swedish immigration started in the early 1990s and coincided with the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the wars in the Balkan region that led to massive influx of asylum seekers from former Yugoslavia and the Middle East. Also, because Sweden joined the European Union (EU) in 1995, this permitted free movement of all EU citizens within the EU and allowed other EU citizens to live and work in Sweden. In 2004, when 10 European countries joined the EU and Sweden was one of the only three 'old' member states that allowed citizens of the new eastern European member states to work in Sweden without requesting a work permit. According to the figures provided by Lüken-Klaßen (2009), 3.2% of the foreigners living in Sweden in 2009 were Somalis.

The Commission of the European Communities (2005, cited in Kontos 2009) considers integration of immigrants as a 'dynamic, two-way process of mutual accommodation by all immigrants and residents of member States' and brings both immigrants' own efforts for integration and the social policy aspects. Nonetheless, 'in the European Union the integration policy targeting migrants is the responsibility of individual Member States. However, integration policy has become increasingly important at the EU level and there are efforts to develop a common approach for integration within a coherent European framework' (Kontos, 2009). The ratification of the Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997 was the first important step in creating a common immigration policy at the EU level and instilled the importance of having a good integration policy alongside an immigration policy (Savage, 2010). According to Lüken-Klaßen (2009) before the 1970s, Sweden had no official policy for integrating migrants into the Swedish society. It was just taken for granted that migrants would assimilate into the society.

The Swedish Parliament in 1975 endorsed an integration policy based on the needs of labour migrants from Southern Europe. As further highlighted by described by Lüken-Klaßen (2009), the above mentioned policy was condensed in three main objectives: equality, freedom of choice and partnership. 'Equality' is the central objective and stated that immigrants residing permanently in Sweden were to enjoy the same rights as Swedish citizens (e.g. access to welfare system). The 'freedom of choice' clause states that individuals can decide whether they wish to assimilate or maintain their native culture but it has to comply with essential Swedish values and norms. Nonetheless, the author criticizes the fact that 'Sweden accepts and respects ethnic and cultural rights to identification, but does not provides especial rights to ethnic or cultural minority communities resulting from immigration' as it is the case for the five national minorities (Sami, Swedish Finns, Tornedalers, Romanies and Jews) which have specific rights.

The 'partnership' clause seeks to encourage immigrants' participation and interaction with Swedish political institutions and organizations, including voting rights in local and county elections.

The Swedish immigration policy adopted since 1975 was shaped based on the principle of multiculturalism in which the integration of immigrants was hand in hand with the promotion of civic unity and the protection of diversity in the society (Savage, 2010, p.77). However, these objectives were just a political goal and were very difficult to maintain in practice. Therefore, this integration strategy was not considered very successful, that is why the Swedish governments set up several expert committees and developed new strategies (Lüken-Klaßen, 2009).

In 2008, the Swedish government introduced a new integration policy ('Empowerment against exclusion-the Government's strategy for integration') whose main focus was to increase the supply and demand of labour, improve school quality and equality in school and better conditions for entrepreneurs (Lüken-Klaßen, 2009). According to the Swedish Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality (2009), the goal of immigrant integration policy in Sweden is to achieve equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all, independently of ethnic or cultural background. The government's integration policies are coordinated by the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality, which also has the responsibility for introduction courses for newcomers, grants to municipalities for the reception of refugees, Swedish nationality and urban development issues (Lüken-Klaßen, 2009).

Despite above mentioned weaknesses, in principle, Sweden stands out as being one of the only few countries in the world that has a sound and coherent immigrant integration policy, which is regarded as inclusive and quite successful (Lüken-Klaßen 2009; Savage 2010). 'Sweden's immigrant policy has often been presented as an ideal in terms of the formal rights and protection it grants immigrants' (Graham and Soininen 1998). Sweden has also for long time been considered as a bastion of equality between the sexes (Mason 2003; Koopmans 2010). However, the multiculturalism in the integration policy has been criticized and was found inefficient in addressing the social inclusion of immigrants as the immigrant population increased throughout the years (Geddes 2000, p.121, cited in Savage 2010, p.77; Koopmans 2010). Ethnic discrimination for instance, was repeatedly referred to the labour market partners by the Swedish government and it took 26 years for the latter to pass a law fighting ethnic discrimination in the labour market (Graham and Soininen 1998).

Koopmans (2010) emphasized the interaction between immigrant integration policies and welfare regimes. First, integration policies determine access to equal rights in general, and therefore entitlements to welfare benefits. Second, as the author highlights, 'the cultural dimension of integration policies may have consequences for human capital deficiencies with which immigrants enter the labour market'. For instance, policies emphasizing linguistic and cultural assimilation force immigrants to acquire knowledge and social ties that improve their probabilities for integrating into the labour market. These policies show higher integration outcomes than multicultural policies that emphasize immigrants' own language and culture (Koopmans, 2010).

Another important aspect of the Swedish immigrant integration policies on the socio-economic position of immigrants is their degree of welfare-state ‘decommodification’(or ‘benefit generosity’), which ‘occurs when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market’ (Esping-Andersen 1990, pp.21-22, cited in Koopmans 2010). According to Esping Andersen’s typology, the Swedish ‘social-democratic’ type of welfare has the highest levels of decommodification compared to ‘liberal’ (lowest) and ‘conservative’ (intermediary) welfare types (Koopmans, 2010). In his analysis, Koopmans (2010) suggests three reasons why welfare ‘decommodification’ matters for the socio-economic position of immigrants in the host country. First, this is driven by the ‘hypothesis that immigrants with lower educational skills and a concomitant weaker labour market position will tend to migrate to countries with a relatively equal income distribution, which offer disadvantaged groups relatively good protection against economic adversity’ (Borjas 1989 and Van Tubergen 2004, cited in Koopmans 2010).

Therefore, skilled immigrants will tend to migrate to countries with higher levels of social inequalities, whereas ‘immigration to with relatively inclusive and generous welfare states will be negatively selected’ (Koopmans, 2010). Second, similar considerations will influence immigrants’ decisions whether or not to invest in improving their human capital (Chiswick and Miller 1995, pp. 248-249, cited in Koopmans 2010). The third mechanism is the subjective perception of welfare benefit levels. Koopmans (2010) argues that for natives, ‘welfare dependence is likely to be seen as a strong source of relative deprivation’, whereas for immigrants and natives alike, welfare dependence will compare negatively to their former situation when still employed in the country of immigration.

2.3 Understanding the concept of empowerment

According to Payne (2005, p.295) ‘empowerment seeks to help clients to gain power of decision and action over their own lives by reducing the effect of social or personal blocks to exercising existing power, increasing capacity and self-confidence to use power and transferring power from the groups and individuals’. As highlighted by Payne, empowerment aims to achieve the social justice objectives of social work, both in the way it is practiced and its aims. Rees (1991, cited in Payne 2005, p.303) argues that the basic objective of empowerment is social justice, giving people greater security and political and social equality, through mutual support and shared learning, building up small steps towards wider goals. Garvin (1997) and Freire (1997) cited by Sakamoto and Pitner (2005) also recognize that empowerment is part of the social work’s mission. For example, ‘empowerment of social workers is crucial because it will help disempowered social workers to (re)gain personal and professional power to effectively perform their role to help service users’ (Sakamoto and Pitner 2005). Adams (2003, p.8) provided another working definition of empowerment as ‘the means by which individuals, groups and/or communities become able to take control of their circumstances and achieve their own goals, thereby being able to work towards helping themselves and others to maximize the quality of their lives’.

Empowerment has been related to a number of significant concepts such as democratization, normalization/social role valorization, reflexivity and criticality, consciousness-raising, user-led practice, radical social work, anti-oppressive practice, and postmodernism and social work in the new age, which are discussed in detail by Adams (2003, pp. 9-13).

Promoting empowerment is also an integral part of anti-oppressive practice (Dalrymple and Burke 2006). According to Rees (1991, cited in Dominelli 1997, p.130) empowerment addresses structural inequalities. Empowerment means that 'clients' are capable of defining their 'needs' and affect how social work agencies consider them (Dominelli, 1997, p.131). In this context, what constitutes 'human needs' depends mostly on economic exigencies (p.131). Leung (2005) recognizes three different perspectives of empowerment: individualistic, structural and postmodernist. The individualistic perspective focuses on the strengths of individuals, enhancing their self-esteem and increasing service user social participation as means of fighting their sense of powerlessness. The structural perspective of empowerment is about power, which is understood as a tool that can be captured by oppressors to oppress those who are marginalized in society. Here empowerment might involve the recognition of how power operates in society and how people's power is affected in order for people to reach greater control over their lives.

Finally, the postmodernist perspective on empowerment is concerned with the analysis of unequal power relations between men and women and internal barriers to women's exercise of power. Therefore, the feminist approach to empowering women is about recognition of power relations and about the interpretation of their own situations. According to Inglis (1997, p.4, cited in Jönsson 2010), empowerment involves people developing capacities to act successfully within the existing system and structures of power.

The original concept of women's empowerment (in the 1970s) acknowledged inequalities between men and women, situated women's subordination in the family, community market and state and emphasized that women were oppressed differently (Bisnath, 2001). It recognized the importance of struggle for social justice and women's equality through economic, social and political transformations at the national and international levels. Therefore, Bisnath (2001) argues that women's empowerment might be attainable through political mobilization, consciousness raising and education.

Rappaport (1984, p.3, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.105) describes the link between the personal and political aspects of empowerment as the way in which 'people, organizations and communities gain mastery over their own lives'. Based on findings of UNIFEM regarding global patterns of inequality between men and women, the World Economic Forum proposed five important key areas of measuring women's empowerment (Lopez-Claros and Zahidi 2005) that include economic participation, economic opportunity, political empowerment, education attainment and health and well-being. In the context of global market economy, the concept of development, where successful development is equivalent to economic growth, modernization, production growth, privatization and consumption, has replaced the concept of empowerment linked to social justice (Jönsson, 2010).

Addressing the issue of empowering young women, Sen (1999) pointed out the pivotal role of empowerment of women in the decision of families and in the genesis of communal norms. He highlighted the importance of different factors such as involvement of women in gainful activities outside the home, the opportunity of women to earn an independent income, the property rights of women and the general status and standing of women in the social culture.

2.4 Empowerment as a process

Empowerment is a dynamic process. As already mentioned, ‘empowerment-based practices are about the dynamics and structures of gender relations which help to construct their self-identities, not just women’s roles’ (Leung, 2005). As Leung stressed, service users should not be passive but they can rather be the agents for change. Dalrymple and Burke (2006, p.112) argue that ‘the first stage of empowerment is about making the links between our personal position and structural inequalities’. Empowerment is about replacing powerlessness with ‘some sense of power’ (Rees 1991, p. 21, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.113). Dalrymple and Burke (2006) distinguish three levels of empowerment. First, at a micro level, empowerment is characterized as the development of personal feeling of increased power or control without any change in structural arrangements (p.113). Second, empowerment on a micro level is seen as a process of increasing collective political power. ‘A third level of empowerment relates to the interface of these two approaches: individual empowerment can contribute to group empowerment and, in turn, the increase in group power can enhance the functioning of its individual members’ (p.113). According to Dalrymple and Burke (2006, p.113) ‘effective empowerment practice involves understanding the process of change that enables us to feel less powerless’.

Different authors discuss empowerment at different levels. For example, Hasenfield (1987, p.479) cited by Dalrymple and Burke (2006, p.115) identifies three levels of empowerment practice: the *worker-client* level, which is concerned with ‘improving the client’s power resources’; the *organizational* level, which is aimed ‘generally at harnessing the agency’s power advantages to increasingly serve the needs of the client’; and the *policy* level, which ensures that ‘the formulation and enactment of policy decisions are influenced by those directly affected by them’. Thompson (1993) also cited by Dalrymple and Burke (2006:116) proposes a model of anti-discriminatory theory in which empowerment is taking place at three levels: personal/psychological, cultural and social/structural. Leung (2005), in her experience on empowerment-based practice for women in Hong Kong and based on the postmodern feminist perspective on empowerment, recognizes four issues of particular importance in empowerment practice. First, women’s empowerment deals with power relations; both in relations between men and women and among women (e.g. need to reconsider the postmodernist notion of power). In addition, women are to be viewed as active change agents with power to control their lives. Second, in empowerment-based practice for women, it is important to link personal experience to public actions. Third, ‘the dilemma of difference is central to all empowerment discourses.’

Fourth, the solution is not only to recognize the power relationship between the empowerer and the empowered, but it is also essential in postmodernist feminist practice. According to Leung (2005), the strategies that must be used in empowerment practice include encouraging partnership, participation and user involvement.

Mosedale (2005) argues that ‘different people use empowerment to mean different things’, but with regard to women’s empowerment, she highlights four aspects which are generally accepted in the literature. First, ‘to be empowered one must have been disempowered’. As the author underlines, this is relevant to the case of empowering women as a group because they are disempowered compared to men. Second, empowerment cannot be conferred by a third party. Instead, ‘those who would become empowered must claim it’. As the author emphasizes, for example development agencies cannot empower women, rather they can facilitate women empowering themselves by creating conditions favourable to empowerment. Third, empowerment usually involves ‘people making decisions on matters which are important in their lives and being able to carry them out’. This may happen either on an individual or a collective level. Finally, ‘empowerment is an ongoing process rather than a product’. This means that nobody can be empowered in some absolute sense as Mosedale (2005) underlines. She noted that people are empowered, or disempowered, relative to others or, importantly, relative to themselves at a previous time’. Above discourse means that people (e.g. women) must be active in empowering themselves by taking advantage for example of favourable conditions and support provided by change agencies.

2.5 Women’s empowerment principles

A partnership initiative of UN Women and the UN Global Compact Office (2011) recognized that empowering women to participate fully in all sectors of economic life worldwide is important to: build strong economies; establish more stable and just societies; achieve internationally-agreed goals for development, sustainability and human rights; improve quality of life for women, men, family and communities; and propel businesses’ operations and goals.

This partnership suggests the following seven women’s empowerment principles: (1) Leadership promotes gender equality; (2) equal opportunity, inclusion and nondiscrimination; (3) health, safety and freedom from violence; (4) education and training; (5) Enterprise development, supply chain and marketing practice; (6) community leadership and engagement; and (7) transparency, measuring and reporting. The above mentioned partnership also suggests a number of approaches on how to make and measure progress regarding each of the seven Women’s Empowerment Principles.

According to Dalrymple and Burke (2006, p.110) empowerment is not a straightforward process. To be meaningful, empowerment needs to be related to challenging injustice, inequality and oppression (Ward 2000, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006). DuBois and Krogsrund-Miley (1992) cited by Dalrymple and Burke (2006) propose the following guiding principles and assumptions of empowerment (pp. 110-111): (1) empowerment is a collaborative process, with service users and practitioners working together as partners; (2) the empowering process views service user systems as competent and capable, given access to resources and opportunities; (3) service users must first perceive themselves as causal agents, able to effect change;

(4) competence is acquired or refined through life experiences, particularly experience affirming efficacy, rather than from circumstances where one is told what to do; (5) solutions, evolving from the particular situation, are necessarily diverse and emphasize ‘complexities of multiple contributory factors in any problem situation’ (Solomon 1976, p.27, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.110); (6) informal social networks are a significant source of support for mediating stress and increasing one’s competence and sense of control; (7) people must participate in their own empowerment; goals, means and outcomes must be self-defined; (8) level of awareness is key issue in empowerment, ‘knowledge mobilizes action for change’ (Swift and Levin 1987, p. 81, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.111); (9) empowerment involves access to resources and the capacity to use those resources in an effective way; (10) the empowering process is dynamic, synergistic, ever-changing and evolutionary; problems always have multiple solutions; and (11) empowerment is achieved through the parallel structures of personal and socio-economic development.

Saraswati (2005) has criticized empowering strategies that aim at improving the life situation of those that are marginalized without addressing unequal power dynamics that creates those inequalities. Improving individual capacities of women such as self-confidence and consciousness should be linked to change of structures that oppress women (Saraswati 2005; Jönsson 2010). Empowerment processes should not only help women to gain access to resources but also aim to redefine existing patriarchal social and political power structures (Saraswati 2005, Afshar 1998, Rowlands 1998, cited in Jönsson 2010; Leung 2005). Discoursing empowerment, Rogers, Chamberlin, Ellison and Crean (1997, p. 1045, cited in Cakir and Guneri 2011) characterize empowerment as having three legs or supports. The first leg of empowerment includes self-esteem, optimism and control over the future; the second leg includes the ‘actual power’ of individual; and the third leg includes ‘the ability and willingness to harness anger into action and a socio-political component of empowerment that is evident in both community activism and righteous anger’. In line with the present study, Cakir and Guneri (2011) reported that there exists a psychological empowerment, which is a form of positive adaptation of immigrants, their demographic characteristics (e.g. length of stay in the host country), educational level and language proficiency.

2.6 The role of Education in empowering Women

Education is an activity which aims to broaden a person’s horizons through the acquisition of knowledge and skills (Ireland 1985, cited in Dominelli 1997, p.177). Education is a key prerequisite for empowering women in all spheres of society (Lopez-Claros and Zaidi 2005). Educational level was found to be an important factor in the empowerment of migrant women; it may function as a personal resource in the migration context (Berry 2006, cited in Cakir and Guneri 2011). Most migrants expect first of all to find in the host country an adequate education and skills that allow them to access the labour market so that they can improve their social, economic and political status.

The Nordplus report (2010-2011) highlights that Non-Western immigrant women with low educational background and without formal working experience are most at risk of unemployment. Therefore, 'language skills and education relevant to labour market demand are important prerequisites for integration of immigrant women into the labour market and society' (Nordplus, 2010-2011). Reichert (2011) pointed out that lack of woman's access to education among other advantages makes her powerless and results in different kinds of vulnerabilities, discrimination and inequality.

The Swedish government recognizes the important role of education and training of women in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment (Regeringskansliet, 2009). This has been emphasized in the five-year period (2004-2009) of the Sweden's follow-up of the Platform for Action from the UN's Beijing Conference on Women held in 1995. As mentioned in the above report, implementation mechanisms put in place by the Swedish government include: (1) ensure equal access to education: for example, the Higher Education Act states that equality between women and men should always be borne and kept in mind in the activities of the higher education institutions; (2) eradicate illiteracy among women; (3) improve women's access to vocational training, science and technology, and continuing education: and (4) promote life-long education and training for girls and women.

2.7 Swedish government policies to promote gender equality and women's empowerment

Sweden has clear policies that promote gender equality and women's empowerment and put in place powerful institutions for implementing these policies. For instance, gender division of unpaid family work (e.g. parenthood), equal opportunity between men and women with regard to education and labour market. Sweden has for example a fairly long and well-paid parental leaves, with a reserved quota for fathers and a fairly universal childcare coverage (Saraceno, 2011). In the UNDP Human development Report 2013, Sweden is ranked seventh in the world in the 2012 Human Development Index. According to this report, Sweden is considered to be one of the greatest gender equality and gender empowerment measure where it is ranked second in the world in gender inequality index.

In terms of legislation, major transformations have occurred in Sweden. Sweden has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) on 2nd July 1980. The sixth and seventh periodic reports of the Swedish Government on measures to give effect to the CEDAW (UN CEDAW, 2006) highlight important measures taken by the Swedish government. The Swedish Government did a great work to promote women's enjoyment of human rights. The Swedish Government gender equality policy (Regeringskansliet, 2009) has as the overall objective to ensure that women and men have the same power to shape society and their own lives. The four sub-goals of this policy, adopted by the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) in a Bill passed on 16 May 2006, are the following: (1) an equal distribution of power and influence between men and women; (2) economic equality between women and men, especially with regard to education and paid work;

(3) an equal distribution of unpaid care and household work; and (4) men's violence against women shall stop. As specified in the above UN CEDAW (2006) reports, discrimination on grounds of gender, in addition to being the subject of provisions in the Swedish Constitution, is primarily dealt with in the Equal Opportunities Act (1991, p.433), the Prohibition of Discrimination Act (2003, p. 307), the Equal Treatment of Students at Universities Act (2001, p.1286) and the Act Prohibiting Discrimination and Other Degrading Treatment of Children and School Students (2006, p.67). In addition, the Equality Ombudsman was given the task or mission to supervise compliance with the new Anti-Discrimination Act. Moreover, the Abortion Act has been amended so that a woman no longer has to be a Swedish citizen or resident to have an abortion (Regeringskansliet, 2009).

Necessary resources have also been allocated by the Swedish Government to the Gender Equality Policy. For instance, in 2007, the Swedish Government allocated SEK 300 million to women's entrepreneurship for 3years programme in 2008, SEK 110 million were allocated to promote gender equality in schools; in 2009 SEK 60 million were allocated to promote gender equality in higher education; in 2007, the Swedish Government granted SEK million to gender equality initiatives at local and regional level. Above examples illustrate the commitment in different of the Swedish government to promote gender equality and women's empowerment in different spheres social, education, economic and political life and remove all barriers to equality between men and women without any discrimination based on sex, educational level, rights, colour, immigrant background, and so on.

CHAPTER III- THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In the current chapter, different theories (anti-oppressive, empowerment and feminist theory) are presented and related to the case study to follow. These theories fit into the group of socialist-collectivist social work theories (Payne, 2005, pp. 11-12) and are used to link the social work practice with the topic under investigation.

3.1 Anti-oppressive theory

According to Dalrymple and Burke (2006) anti-oppressive practice is a radical social work approach which is informed by humanistic and social justice values, and considers the experiences and views of oppressed people. Anti-oppressive practice is based on a belief that social work should make a difference, so that those who are oppressed may regain control of their lives and re-establish their right to be full and active members of society (Dalrymple and Burke 2000, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006). Anti-oppressive approaches in social work emerged in response to the struggles of ethnic minorities, feminists and people with disabilities to challenge the power structures (Langan 1992, Payne 1997, cited in Sakamoto and Pitner 2005). ‘Anti-discriminatory, anti-oppressive and anti-racist perspectives focus on combating institutionalized discrimination in society, which represents the interests of powerful groups’ (Payne, 2005, p. 269). According to Dalrymple and Burke’s (1995) anti-oppressive practice proposes working on the connections between feelings, ideas and actions to respond to powerlessness, using the resources of the agency and professional help (cited in Payne, 2005, p. 270). Based on above discourse, anti-oppressive theory is relevant to this study given the situation of female immigrants from SSA, which is a region where they were thought to be oppressed by a variety of factors including wars and political conflicts, poverty, social economic differences, violence against women, religion and culture, and so on. Moreover, this anti-oppressive theory may help in understanding new oppression female migrant may face in the host country like learning Swedish language, communication barriers, social-cultural differences, low education background and unemployment.

In anti-racist perspectives that apply to most oppressed groups, the assimilation perspective for example assumes that migrants to a new country will assimilate to the culture and life style of that country (Payne, 2005). The explanation is that migrants identify with the culture and life style of their country of origin and substitute or acculturate to the new country’s culture and way of life (p. 274). Payne (2005, p.275) further argues that an important issue with assimilation perspectives is that they assume a cultural deficit, that the original culture does not develop the skills and knowledge to cope with the new environment. According to Adams et al. (2002) anti-oppressive practice is concerned with the implementation of social justice, and is linked with notions of improving the quality of life or well-being of individuals, groups and communities. In its early days, anti-oppressive underlined specific social divisions such as ‘race’, class, age, gender and sexual orientation (p.5).

Dalrymple and Burke (1995, cited in Payne 2005) propose three principles of anti-oppressive practice): (1) an empowering approach which focuses on helping the clients to gain more control over their lives, become aware and use their own personal resources, overcome obstacles in meeting their needs and aspirations, have their voice heard in decision-making and be able to challenge inequality and oppression (p. 286). Empowerment requires making links between clients' personal positions and structural inequalities.

Promoting empowerment is an integral part of anti-oppressive and anti-discriminator practice (Dalrymple and Burke 1995; Dominelli 2002; Thompson 1997, cited in Sakamoto and Pitner 2005). However, the empowerment of social workers themselves is crucial because it will help disempowered social workers to (re)gain personal and professional power to effectively perform their role of helping service users (Sakamoto and Pitner 2005); (2) working in partnership with clients: this involves effective inter-agency work and careful planning of services, so that clients have the widest degree of choice (p.288); and (3) minimal intervention, which requires workers to be aware of their potential power in order to reduce the oppressive and disempowering potential of social work intervention. This approach stresses to intervene at earlier stage to prevent greater incursions into clients' lives (p.288). Anti-oppressive practices can be more effective by utilizing classroom exercises, such as inter-group dialogues, by framing power dynamics in terms of agent/target groups and by explicitly linking critical consciousness to empowerment of both service users and workers (Sakamoto and Pitner 2005).

3.2 Empowerment theory

‘The social work profession promotes social change, problem solving in human relationships and the empowerment and liberation of people to enhance well-being...Social work addresses the barriers, inequities and injustices that exist in society...’(Healy 2007; IFSW 2012).

Solomon (1976, p.19, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.107) states that empowerment is the process whereby the social worker engages in a set of activities with the client system that aim to reduce the powerlessness that has been created by negative valuations based on membership in a stigmatized group. In her thesis, Mwenyango (2012) reported that empowerment theory is fundamental to gender equality because it provides a way for re-visiting discriminatory practices that hinder access to legitimate forms of power and resources. In similar way, Gutierrez (1990, p.149, cited in Dalrymple and Burke 2006, p.107) and Reichert (2011) have identified empowering practice as a process of increasing personal, interpersonal or political power so that individuals can take action to improve their life situations.

As Reichert (2011, p. 200) pointed out, there are two interdependent and interactive dynamics of empowerment: personal and social empowerment. Personal empowerment resembles to self-determination, in which client direct the helping process, take charge and control of their personal lives; personal empowerment is also related to opportunity, without which the process of self-determination becomes difficult. On the other hand, the social empowerment dynamic recognizes that individual empowerment cannot be separate from the environment in which the individual lives.

Reichert (2011, p.201) also argues that personal empowerment and social empowerment are mutually inclusive and that helping individuals and groups empower themselves to overcome inequitable treatment is a key part of the social work profession as already mentioned. She further highlights that empowerment tradition is linked to the achievements of human rights, which center on equitable treatment for everybody, regardless of his/her status. Furlong (1987, cited in Payne 2005, p.297) emphasizes that empowerment has a social democratic aspect by placing work with individual and families in a context of concern for social objectives; therefore it avoids a crude polarization of social action.

According to Payne (2005, p.297), empowerment practice helps individuals and groups to overcome social barriers to self-fulfillment within existing social structures, thus rejecting the transformational aims of radical and critical theory and the emancipatory aims of feminist and anti-discrimination theory. Discouraging about who has power and how they used it, Payne (2005, p. 243) argues that the role of critical social work in empowering individuals is to reconstruct power relations through analyzing and reflecting on the power that exists in people's situations and then trying to reconceptualise it. He underlines that communication and dialogue helps people to see how power is being used depending on the situation they are in.

Based on the above discourse on empowerment, sub-Saharan African female immigrants may be considered powerless because of factors related to their migration status and integration process in a new environment, which may be challenging for many of them. Given the focus of empowerment theory, it may help in building self-confidence in increasing the power of decision for SSA female migrants and accelerate the process of their integration in the Swedish society as well as their participation. In addition, considering the patriarchal nature of society in SSA where female migrants come from and where men try to dominate women in several decision-making instances, the empowerment theory can be expected to provide these females with information that they have the right to decide the fate of their lives.

In connection to the thesis at hand, empowerment theory is useful for the understanding of the empowerment process of African female immigrants and their integration into the Swedish Society and labour market. Dalrymple and Burke (2006, cited in Mwenyango 2012, p.29), highlighted that 'for empowerment to be sufficient, it has to challenge injustice, inequality and oppression – by enabling vulnerable groups to have access to resources, as well as building their capacities'.

3.3 Feminist theory

'In social work, feminist thinking has raised concern about power relations that disadvantage women in the profession and reject women's competence, experience and values, the need to understand and value women's experiences and lives as separate and different from those of men and the role men should play where gender issues arise, as in issues around caring, prostitution and domestic and sexual violence and exploitation' (Payne, 2005, pp. 251-252).

Feminist theory in social work focuses on explaining and responding to the oppressed position of women in most societies. The feminist theory helps to understand women's social roles and position (Payne, 2005, p. 251). Feminism is a term that encompasses a variety of schools of thought (Blanks 1981, cited in Dominelli 1997). 'Feminism draws on a rich theoretical framework that is capable of providing in-depth analyses of women's experiences, both within and outside social work'(Trevithick, 2009, p.282). In connection with this case study, feminist theory should help in challenging possible inequality, injustice and discrimination African women may face in the Swedish labour market society and in removing barriers to their integration in the Swedish system. According to Dominelli (1997) feminist scholars have shown that gender is an important element in the framing of knowledge; 'unless gender differences are identified, the specificity of women's encounters with social institutions is lost' (p.26).

Dominelli (1997), Payne (2005) and Trevithick (2009) classified the main schools of feminist thought into the following categories: (1) *liberal feminism* or *gradualism*, which is an individualist-centered perspective, based on claims for equal rights (Bryson 2003, McLaughlin 2003, cited in Teigen and Wängnerud 2009). Liberal feminists are women-centered women who focus on improving women's condition within the existing framework of society (Dominelli, 1997, p.30). Liberal feminism seeks equality of men and women, especially in workplaces and caring and family responsibilities (Payne, 2005, p. 253). According to Payne (2005), the answer to inequalities is to reduce inequality and promote equal opportunities by legislation, changing social conventions and altering the socialization process so that children do not grow up accepting gender inequalities; (2) *radical feminism* or *separatism*, which focuses on gender differences as caused by patriarchal structures, where men as a group dominate women as a group (Bryson 2003; McLaughlin 2003, cited in Teigen and Wängnerud 2009). Radical feminism seeks to promote separate women's structures within existing organisations and women's own social structures (Payne, 2005, p.253); (3) *socialist* or *Marxist feminism* or *activism* that addresses women's oppression by patriarchy as part of structured inequality within a class-based social system (Payne, 2005, p.253). Socialist feminists are interested in tackling issues in ways that enable men to take up feminist struggles (Dominelli, 1997, p.34); (4) *black feminism*: starts from racism and points to the diversity of women and the different kinds of and combinations of oppression by which they are affected (Payne, 2005, p. 253). This is especially because white feminists have ignored the impact of racism on their experience as women, therefore, black feminists have had to defend their own specific interests as black women (Dominelli, 1997, p.36); and (5) *postmodern feminism*, which identifies the complexity and sophistication of social relations that involve women by focusing on how discourse in society creates social assumptions about how women are and should be treated (Payne, 2005, p.253).

In connection with the case under investigation in this degree report, Kawewe (2001) argues that feminist perspectives can help social workers to improve the conditions of sub-Saharan African women, oppressed by major structural forces of society (patriarchy) that disempower women socially, economically and politically in most sub-Saharan African countries and force some women to migrate to Western Europe. According to the author, feminist approaches should address these major structural forces of society that impair the status of women. For example, from the liberal feminist perspective, combatting the international feminization of poverty is a challenge to social workers' commitment to social justice and equity for women worldwide (Kawewe, 2001).

CHAPTER IV– METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative in its nature and uses a case study. According to Matthews and Ross (2010) a case study is research design, which aims to in-depth study of a community, organization or a group and itself must be pertinent to the research topic. The case must have the potential to produce data that enable the researcher to address the research question (p. 128). The subjects of this case study are African female immigrant from SSA, living in Gothenburg, Sweden. It makes an in-depth analysis of the link between migration, education and women's empowerment. This case is qualitative because it is primarily concerned with understandings, feelings, opinions and beliefs of participants about the topic under investigation (Matthews and Ross 2010). This case study uses content and document analysis as well as individual semi-structured interviews. Printed and internet documents relative to migration, education and women's empowerment in general and in Sweden in particular were analyzed. In addition, semi-structured interviews were administered to a purposive sample of eight immigrant women.

4.1 The case study

The core of this degree report is the case study as already mentioned. Gilbert (2008, p. 36, cited in Rölver, 2010) stressed that 'usually there is no attempt to select a random or representative sample of cases. Instead, the cases are ones that are interesting for their own sake, or sometimes are exceptional in some way...' (p.31). Female immigrants from SSA were chosen based on their availability, willingness to participate in the study and their ability to express themselves either in English or French, the two languages the investigator could herself use. This qualitative case study will not attempt to broadly generalize the findings. Only adult females (18 years old and above) were included in the study, both married women and single. In addition, respondents who have spent two or more years in Sweden were considered because they were assumed to have familiarized with the Swedish System and Society. Educational background or family situation was not a limiting factor for inclusion in the study.

4.2. Content and document analysis

According to Matthews and Ross (2010), 'content analysis is a technique for examining the categories that the data comprise and condensing them into fewer numbers so that they are easier to understand'. This technique is usually applied to 'textual' data (Bos and Tarnai 1999) but it can be used with other forms of data (Stemler 2001, cited in Matthews and Ross 2010, p.395). Weber (1990, p.37) cited by Matthews and Ross (2010, p.395) describes categories as 'a group of words with similar meaning or connotations', and notes that they need to be readily identifiable and relate only to one concept. The textual data for this case study are interview transcripts (Bos and Tarnai 1999). Categorization in this case study is therefore based on transcribed interviews and in accordance to the main themes and subthemes of the study.

In using content analysis for this case study, I referred to the following steps (in their chronological order) described by Matthews and Ross (2010, p.396): (1) identify research questions and construct; (2) identify text to be examined; (3) specify the unit of analysis; (4) specify the categories; (5) generate sample and coding scheme; (6) collect data (pretest); (7) purify the coding scheme; (8) collect data; (9) assess reliability; (10) assess construct validity; and (11) analyze data. Steps (7) and (10) are in turn related to step (4) while steps (7) and (9) are related to step (5). I tried to make some adaptation of above steps to my case study.

Documents are written records about people and things that are generated through the process of living (Matthews and Ross 2010). Document analysis as a qualitative research method is a procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents-both printed and electronic (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis requires that data be examined and interpreted to elicit meaning, gain understanding and develop empirical knowledge (Corbin and Strauss 2008, Rapley 2007, cited in Bowen 2009). Bowen (2009) describes the rationale for document analysis, specific uses of documents, procedures for analyzing documents (combination of content analysis & thematic analysis) and evaluating the evidence that I will follow in data gathering. He also provides the following advantages of document analysis: efficient method because it is less time-consuming and requires data selection, availability of documents (e.g. internet), cost-effectiveness, lack of obtrusiveness and reactivity (documents are not affected by the research process), stability, exactness (inclusion in documents of exact names, references and details of events) and broad coverage. The primary source for documentary analysis for this study was the University of Gothenburg Library (databases and journals). Important sources referred to included databases, scientific journals, books, internet and official web addresses. Substantial publications on migration, education, gender equality and women's empowerment exist but priority was given to such documents that have studied the above subjects in the context of the situation of female migrants either in Sweden or in sub-Saharan Africa.

4.3 Semi-structured interviews

Qualitative interviewing involves a special kind of conversation, one in which an interviewer (or more than one) asks questions of a respondent or subject (or more than one), on a particular topic, or topics, and carefully listens to and records the answers (Warren, 2003).

- **Interviewing planning and process**

Data for this degree report were collected using semi-structured interviews (SSI), which use open-ended questions. Mikkelsen (2007, pp.171-172) describes the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses of this type of interview. The process of planning and conducting interviews followed the outline described by Matthews and Ross (2010) and the 'seven stage of an interview inquiry' of Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p.102). The process of thematizing has been composed of the general purpose of the study, literature review on the research topic and formulation of the research questions. The design of interviews (semi-structured), interviewing, transcribing and analyzing are described in the methodology section.

The results are reported in a structured overview of the main findings and evaluated for reliability, validity and generalizability (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009).

As Matthews and Ross (2010, p.221) highlighted, semi-structured interviews are most typically linked with the collection of qualitative social data when the researcher is interested in people's experiences, behavior and understandings and how and why they experience and understand the social world in this way. The authors further underline the advantage of using semi-structured interviews (pp.222-224) and some tips for successful interviewing (p.231). Individual SSI interviews were used for the purpose of this case study. An interview guideline in the form of outline was prepared in accordance to general guidelines for asking questions suggested by Mikkelsen (pp. 174-179, see Appendix 1). According to Matthews and Ross (2010, p.219) the key feature of an interview is that there is direct contact between the interviewer (who may be the researcher) and the participant, and there is an interaction. The interview as a data collection method usually has two main advantages: (1) it facilitates direct communication between two people, either face to face or at distance via telephone or the internet (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.219); and (2) enables the interviewer to elicit information, feelings and opinions from the interviewee, using questions and interactive dialogue (p.219).

The target group for my interviews was composed of African women from sub-Saharan Africa who live in Gothenburg. In total eight women were interviewed, including seven that I met at Smyrna International Church (SIC) Gothenburg and one student at University of Gothenburg. My interviewees were selected purposively according to their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Their selection did not follow any random sampling. After one Sunday service I contacted some women and briefed them about my research topic and requested their voluntary participation in my study. For those who agreed to participate in the study, I took their phone contacts and arranged the appropriate time for an individual interview. Most of women were only available during the weekends because of their work, therefore, some interviews were conducted after the Sunday service in one of the rooms of the Church where there was no noise (four interviews). Three interviews were conducted in the houses of my respondents, whereas one interview was conducted in one of the small rooms of Undergraduate Library of University of Gothenburg. And the last interview was conducted in a Cafeteria at Frölunda, Gothenburg. Before starting the interview process, I introduced myself, presented the purpose of my study and my informed consent to interviewees (see 4.3.2 for details), and requested permission to record the interviews. I asked questions and recorded the answers on voice recorder. All interviews were conducted in English and were recorded. Interviews lasted between 30-40 minutes. My interviews were carried out between 28th February and 20th March 2013. My respondents were from the following sub-Saharan African countries: Burundi, Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Somalia and Uganda.

Interviews were transcribed for the process of analysis and were read several times. In accordance with my research questions, major themes or subheading emerged (see chapter 5 below).

- **Ethical considerations, validity, reliability and generalizability of interviews**

In social research there are four measures of quality that include reliability (or dependability), validity, generalizability and ethical practice (e.g. Matthews and Ross 2010), which are addressed in this case study. First, all social research has *ethical implications* and involves the participation of human beings and working with information about people, therefore consideration should be given to the ethics of research behaviour, the possible impact of the research on participants and the honesty and care of the researcher (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.13).

‘The ethics of social research is about creating a mutually respectful, win-win relationships in which participants are pleased to respond candidly, valid results are obtained, and the community considers the conclusions constructive’ (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.71).

General ethical considerations for social research were addressed in this degree report in accordance to ethical guidelines suggested by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Matthews and Ross (2010, p.226). Ethical procedures were also clarified by consulting the CODEX rules and guidelines for research (online) and the ‘Code of Conduct for Social Science Research and Ethical Guidelines of UNESCO (de Guchteneire, online). In particular, the following ethical issues were addressed: protecting confidentiality and safety of respondents, ensuring anonymity and informed consent.

The role of *informed consent* is making sure that people who are going to take part in the research understand what they are consenting to participate in (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.73). For this, I first presented myself, explained the purpose of the investigation, the benefits and risks associated with participation in the study. Consent was freely given and respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and they had the right to withdraw at any time. Therefore, the informed consent was given to each respondent, read and signed (see Appendix 2 for a sample informed consent form). Regarding *confidentiality/anonymity*, participants were assured that they will not be identified in the research and that their input to the study will be confidential (Matthews and Ross 2010, p.78). *Confidentiality* entails protection from unauthorized individuals gaining access to the information. In this case study, confidentiality was addressed by assuring respondents that their names will not appear in transcribed interviews and in the final reporting. As the Swedish Research Council (2005) underlined, *anonymity* involves eliminating the connection between samples or questionnaire answers/interviews and a certain individual so that neither unauthorized individual can re-establish it; for example no one should be able to combine a certain piece of information with a specific person’s identity. In this study, anonymity of respondents was achieved by conducting interviews without noting specific individuals’ identity; instead, codes and fiction names or pseudonyms were used as recommended by Silverman (2005).

Second, ‘*validity* is ascertained by checking, questioning and theorizing through the entire research project in order to enhance credibility, plausibility and trustworthiness of findings’ (Kvale 2009, cited in Mwenyango 2010, p.37). In other words, validity is a measure of research quality, meaning that the data we are planning to collect and work with to address our research questions is a close representation of the aspect of social reality we are studying (Matthews and Ross 2010, p. 53). The validity of my interviews was checked in accordance to the seven-stage validation procedure of the interview process (e.g. thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, validating and reporting) developed by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009).

Third, *reliability* is another measure of research quality, meaning that another researcher would expect to obtain the same findings if they carried out the research in the same way (Matthews and Ross 2010, p. 53). For the reliability of the acquired interviews, two important reflections have been made: (1) conducting interviews in the language interviewees felt more comfortable enabled them to express themselves normally; (2) the fact that the interviewer was also African origin created more trustworthiness between interviewees and the researcher. In addition, an interview guide was developed to ensure that all respondents are asked the same questions. Fourth, generalizability/transferability are measures of research quality in which the researcher asks ‘How far am I able to claim that the results or findings from my research are true for or relevant to the wider population or a different context?’(Matthews and Ross 2010, p.12). However, there are large concerns for broadly generalizing findings from case studies and small sample sizes (Kvale and Brinkmann 2009; Mwenyango 2012). In line with above statement, the finding of this case study cannot be generalized because of the small sample size.

CHAPTER V– FINDINGS AND ANALYSES

In this chapter the primary empirical data (interviews) of the case study are presented and analyzed in relation to the research questions and theoretical perspectives described in earlier chapters. The data are organized under different subheadings in accordance to the case study research questions. Data are systemized, discussed and compared to earlier research in the problem area.

5.1 Demographic information of participants

All respondents come from different countries of sub-Saharan Africa (see section 4.3.1). Fiction names were given to the respondents for the purpose of anonymity. The age of respondents varied between 22 and 37 years. Of the eight participants involved in the case study, five were married, two had “Sambo” relationships with their boyfriends and one was single. The majority of respondents immigrated to Sweden between 2005 and 2010 except one respondent who moved to Sweden in 1992 with her parents when she was three years old. At the time of moving to Sweden, most respondents were aged 16 to 32 years, except the one mentioned above (who was three years old). At their arrival in Sweden, the educational level of respondents ranged from a Bachelor’s degree (2 respondents), one year of University education (1 respondent), College/High school diploma or certificate (3 respondents), Junior high school (1 respondent) and no education (1 respondent because she was too young). Once in Sweden, most respondents pursued their education: one got a Master’s degree, two are pursuing a Master’s programme, one is pursuing a Bachelor’s degree, one is pursuing high school, one is still studying the Swedish language but two did not manage to continue their studies due to various reasons. Individually, respondents are characterized as follows:

‘Zaina’ is 29 years old and voluntarily moved in Sweden in 2010. She got an invitation from her cousin and once in Sweden she met her Swedish boyfriend and they now live together in a ‘Sambo’ relationship. At her arrival, she was 26 years old and had a college degree (high school level), but she did not continue her education in Sweden yet. She has no children.

‘Alicia’ is now 37 years old, married with three children and the younger child was born in Sweden. Her move to Sweden in 2008 was voluntary for study reasons. She came with a Bachelor’s degree and now she has a Master’s degree from University of Gothenburg.

‘Penina’ is single and 22 years old. She voluntarily moved to Sweden in 2008 for family reunification because her parents immigrated before to Sweden. She was 16 years old at that time. She interrupted her high school education in her native country when she came to Sweden but she is now completing it in Gothenburg. She has no children yet.

‘Natasha moved to Sweden in 2010 due to security reasons. She is 26 years old and married. At that time, she had a College diploma and 1 year of University education, unfortunately she did not continue her education in Sweden yet.

She met her boyfriend from the same country here in Sweden. She has one child born in Sweden.

‘Assumpta’ is 29 years old, married and she has two children both born in Sweden. She moved to Sweden in 2005 for family reunification because her husband (from the same country) moved before to Sweden. Regarding her educational background, she had a Secondary school/High school certificate at arrival and she is now pursuing a Bachelor’s programme at University of Gothenburg.

‘Melanie’ is 29 years old now; she is married with two children both born in her country of origin. She came to Sweden voluntarily in 2010 for study reasons (Master’s degree) together with her husband who is also from the same country.

‘Hamida’ is 23 years old. She moved to Sweden in 1992 with her parents due political instability in her native country. She grew up in Sweden where she is currently doing her Master’s programme at University of Gothenburg. She is married with a husband from the same country but she has no children yet.

‘Marie’ is 33 years old. She is married and has two children both born in Sweden. She said she came to Sweden due to security reasons in 2005. She has a partner from a different country. She came with a Secondary school level of education and she is currently pursuing her studies in Gothenburg.

Nowadays, people with immigrant background represent 17% of the total population in Sweden and a large percentage of immigrant women come from the Middle East, Africa (mainly Somalis) and Asia (NORDPLUS, 2010-2011). As NORDPLUS further underlies, ‘immigrant women with low educational backgrounds lack the relevant education in order to enter labour market of their host countries’ (see below). Migration patterns show that female migration from SSA is dominated by young women both married and unmarried who moved to Sweden for various reasons. Here, common stereotypes of female migration are illustrated: women accompanying their husbands, family reunification and young unmarried women for marriage (Ghosh, 2009). Educational backgrounds of female immigrants from SSA are quite diversified and probably depending on what the possibilities for education were in their country of origin as emphasized by NORDPLUS (2010-2011).

5.2 Factors driving female migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Sweden

The majority of respondents (five out of eight) moved to Sweden due to voluntary reasons either as family migration with husbands and children for pursuing education (two cases), or as part of family reunification (two cases) or just to meet a boyfriend (one case). The remainder (three cases out of eight) was forced to move to Sweden due to security reasons because of the consequences of political instability and wars in many countries of sub-Saharan Africa. The findings from this case study are consistent with previous writers who underlined that individual or collective reasons for migration depend on social and/or family factors, economic and/or political reasons and an often inter-related factor (Lyons et al. 2006, cited in Hall 2006, p.198).

Hall (2006, p. 199) highlighted that migration is complex social phenomenon, which may be whether natural or forced and which involves relocation and integration. He stressed that migration is a conscious choice for some, based on employment opportunities in more conducive labour market (p.196). For others, migration is a long established livelihood strategy, or it is forced upon various causes, including wars and famine (p. 196). Healy (2004) cited by Hall (2006, p.198) argues that people migrate to seek education, for marriage or family reunification or for other reasons related to individual aspirations or family commitments as it is the case in this study.

Migration is often seen as a flight from poverty (Skeldon, 2003), especially from developing countries in the global South to developed and economically stable countries in the global North or West. Adepoju (2000, 2007) also highlighted some patterns of emigration from Africa and the increasing feminization of migration as well as its effect on the families left behind like the role of remittances and diaspora in alleviating poverty in sub-Saharan Africa (see below). According to Solimano (2001), most of the time, people migrate in search for better economic opportunities in host countries. This might be the case for those respondents who voluntarily moved to Sweden. Migration patterns and important economic factors driving migration from Africa in general and SSA in particular to western Europe such as poverty, the wave of globalization and different kinds of inequalities created by patriarchal societies in SSA have been analyzed by previous studies (e.g. Adepoju 2000; Solimano 2001; Sen 2002; Skeldon 2003; Gumisai 2006; Hall 2006; Adepoju 2007). Solimano (2001) highlighted that ‘most of the time, people migrate abroad in search for better economic opportunities for the migrants and their families offered by foreign countries...’ In addition, he mentioned unemployment, low wages and meager career prospects for highly educated people among factors that propel people to emigrate abroad. Unemployment, especially among youth in Africa is another key factor triggering migration abroad, especially from a gender perspective (Fahy et al. 2008). The authors highlight that the lack of employment for young women has increased feminization of poverty, mainly in the form of prostitution as a survival strategy. The authors further argue that gender perspectives need to be considered in all employment promotion programs and macroeconomic frameworks in Africa and young women should be empowered to participate and have access to productive job opportunities (Fahy et al. 2008, cited in Min-Harris, online).

Another important factor shown by respondent to be a driving force for international migration from SSA is the security caused by political instability, wars, ethnic and religious conflicts and the consequences of the 1994 genocide against Tutsis in Rwanda. Sub-Saharan Africa is champion in conflicts that have eroded its economy and left it as the poorest region in the world. For example, the conflict in Somalia is lasting more than 20 years, forcing people to constantly migrate to other countries.

About five years ago, ethnical conflict in Kenya claimed more than 1000 lives during the election campaign, forcing some people to move to other countries. Nowadays, media have reported more and more conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, which are related to ethnic or religious beliefs such as the ones in Mali, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), forcing again several people to migrate where they can find security and peace. The consequences of the 1994 genocide in Rwanda will last for several years. The importance of security reasons as a driver in forced international migration, especially from SSA has also been documented by earlier studies (e.g. Adepoju 2000; Solimano 2001; Hall 2006).

5.3 Integration of female immigrants from SSA into the Swedish society and labour market: is there any structural discrimination?

Respondents were asked the main challenges they faced, as immigrant newcomers, at the beginning of their social integration into the Swedish Society. Six respondents out of eight mentioned that the main challenge they faced was that they could not speak the Swedish language; therefore it was difficult to communicate with other people. Three respondents pointed out social relations because either they had no friends yet or that they felt alone. Other challenges mentioned by the respondents included lack of access to necessary information and the cold weather. One respondent was worried about the process of giving birth because she was pregnant. And one respondent did not remember any challenge because she was too young. As highlighted by my respondents, the language barrier was the most important challenge because all the information they needed for their survival and integration was written in Swedish (e.g. shops, transport, newspapers, migration office, education...). However, those who could speak English had an advantage compared to those who spoke French for example. One respondent said for example:

“The first challenge was the Swedish language; it was difficult to communicate with people and everything in shops, trams... was written in Swedish. But the advantage I had was that I could speak English; even without knowing Swedish, I could communicate with people.”

The integration process of women immigrants from SSA into the Swedish society varied from one individual to another. Some respondents found it easy because they already had some background information on Sweden from their colleagues or that they had a family in Sweden. One respondent also found integration very enjoyable because she grew up in Sweden. Others found the integration process very slow and difficult due to some challenges and barriers mentioned above like the Swedish language. One respondent who moved into Sweden in 2010 said for example:

“Integration into the Swedish Society is hard and it comes slowly, it takes time. I cannot say that I am fully integrated into the Swedish society.”

Another respondent stated:

“Integration was not too easy at the beginning because first you have been an immigrant; second you are of different colour; you are a kind of stranger and people keep away from you, but when people get to know you, they become friendly and more open to you.”

The integration process of female immigrants from SSA into the Swedish society follows the Sweden’s immigrant integration policy, which has been characterized as one of the most coherent, inclusive and successful integration policy worldwide (Lüken-Klaßen 2009; Savage 2010) as described under section 2.2 of this degree report. Respondents indicated their efforts to integrate into the Swedish society and labour market and stressed barriers they faced. Finding a paid job into the formal sector is probably for female migrants to improve their own position.

I agree with the respondents’ narratives that integration is a long and complex process especially when you come from a very different cultural and development background like sub-Saharan Africa. You first need to learn the language of the host country and get to know the culture of native people in the host country. Here, female immigrants from SSA have also to deal with multiculturalism as Sweden has been receiving other immigrants from all over the planet.

Hall (2006, p.199) also recognizes that migration, whether natural or forced has varying degrees of stress, disruption, loss and disorientation. Some of the implications of the processes of migration include education, finances, language, cultural adaptation, mental and physical health and family dynamics (Abbot 2000, Potocky-Tipodi 2002, cited in Hall 2006, p.199). Not only was the Swedish language found to be an important factor for the integration process of female migrants from sub-Saharan Africa but also social relations. The latter is especially critical for learning the Swedish culture, making friends and accessing necessary information. Referring to immigrant incorporation in Western democracies, Freeman (2004) argued that ‘immigrants of different legal origin are treated substantially differently’. He noted that immigrants with permanent residence visas have more rights and privileges than those with temporary work visas. Also, ‘skilled migrants may be better positioned than the unskilled to control the terms of their integration.’

With regard to immigration and integration, in 2003, Sweden passed an anti-discrimination law prohibiting discrimination based on ethnicity, religion, disability and sexual orientation. Sweden also passed legislation based on EU directives ensuring proper working rights to third Country national (Savage, 2010, p.59). As Savage reported, in 2008, the Swedish Government set up a strategy for integration, which identified the following seven areas as important for the proper integration of immigrants: (1) faster introduction for new arrivals; (2) more in work, more entrepreneurs; (3) better results and greater equality in schools; (4) better language skills and more adult education opportunities; (5) effective anti-discrimination measures; (6) development of urban districts with extensive social exclusion; and (7) common basic values in a society characterized by increasing diversity.

Above strategy shows again that Swedish integration aims to increase the supply of labour and create equality in the Swedish society.

Social Work responses to migration vary depending on the vulnerability, their reasons for migration and the needs of specific migrant groups (Hall, 2006). In connection with this case study, social professionals could be active in work that dealt with social integration and migration status of female migrants from SSI into the Swedish society, their possible experience of discrimination or exclusion from the labour market (Hall, 2006). Social professionals were also well placed to respond to those female migrant who have been affected by possible trauma caused by forced migration. Additionally, Hall (2006, p.204) argues that ‘social professionals have an increasing part to policies and practices which address the inequalities and injustices often associated with migration’.

As mentioned in previous sections, women involved in this case study did not enter Sweden as labor migrants. Their move was due to other reasons including to seek education, family reunification and other economic opportunities. But after acquiring some education and skills, the majority of women entered the labour market. Three respondents had a fulltime employment; three had a part time job, while only one did not work yet. Most respondents again mentioned education and language as the main barriers for accessing a job. At least two respondents mentioned that jobs in Sweden are education-oriented, stressing the importance of education for accessing jobs. Participants were asked which opportunities were offered to them for accessing jobs. Some respondents mentioned that in Sweden, there are equal opportunities between men and women when it comes to accessing jobs. One respondent said for example:

“What I have noted here in Sweden, there is equal opportunity to everybody and even when it comes to jobs, women have more power, more opportunities. There is no specific challenge related to sex, either being a man or a woman they do not discriminate. Women are even given more power than men.”

However, some respondents mentioned that the colour of their skin (‘black’) was a limiting factor for accessing some jobs. This may be related to some traditional discrimination as discussed further. The data also show that most female immigrants from SSA were found in special segments of the labour market such as cleaning, care, restaurants, cafes, and factories regardless of their educational level. This is consistent with previous findings that ‘in Sweden, service, healthcare and sales are the most common areas of employment for immigrant women’ (NORDPLUS, 2010-2011). Respondents were also asked whether they receive the same salary as men who do the same job. Four respondents answered yes to that question but one respondent added that some jobs favor men than women. Two respondents answered “No” to the question, arguing that it was dependent on the kind of job performed. One woman said:

“Here in Sweden salary is unfair because men get higher salary than women. But in the company I work for, there are not many men.”

Regarding a question about payment for extra hours, all respondents said they were paid for extra hours; the rate is even higher when you work during the weekends or holidays. Respondents were also asked if, as migrant, they were treated equally as others at their place of work. Respondents' reactions were mixed. The majority of respondents said they were equally treated at their place of work but two answered that the treatment was unequal in some cases. One respondent said for example:

“No, at the beginning I did not know my rights and I was afraid to say the truth, what I felt. After I got necessary information relative to my rights, I started to claim my rights.” And the second respondent said: “No it is different from that of Swedish people, I do not know if it depends on colour or something else.”

Moreover, respondents were asked whether they have ever experienced any inequality or violation of their rights at the place of work. The question was as follows: Have you experienced any kind of inequality or violation of your rights at your place of work? The majority of respondents answered that they have never been victim of any violation of their rights at the place of work. But one respondent mentioned that she experienced some inequality and injustice at her place of work at the beginning and that she was afraid to claim her rights because she was new. Another respondent emphasized her answer to the asked question by the following statement:

“Not really. But what some people will say yes when it comes to certain decisions. But in general women are given equal opportunity as men, there is no discrimination based on gender.”

Despite that Sweden has clear anti-discrimination policies, above statements support several researchers in Sweden who investigated the labour market and found some discrimination due to foreign background. For example, Englund (2003, p.7, cited in Mumba et al. 2011) argues that the Swedish labour market is highly segregated, especially with regard to gender and ethnicity; ‘It has been observed that even if an immigrant has an education, they still find it difficult getting jobs within their professional field’ (p.10). In addition, as the author stressed foreign-born with foreign diplomas face the greatest difficulties. The Nordplus report (2010-2011) also emphasized that in the Nordic countries, ‘unemployment among immigrant women is much higher compared to native women and compared to male immigrants’. As the report stressed, non-Western immigrant women, like sub-Saharan African female immigrants, with low educational background and without prior formal working experience, are most at risk with regard to employment. Discussing the integration of immigrants into the Swedish labour market, Wuokko (2000) also noted that this integration is function only of Sweden’s economic needs and structural labour market conditions, otherwise immigrants face segregation in the labour market. Kontos (2009) argues that integration into the labour market is an important factor affecting social integration more generally.

Kontos (2009) also highlights that ‘integration needs to be considered using a long-term perspective’ and that strong emphasis should be put on the socio-economic dimensions of integration as a basis for female migrants to integrate the wider society. Previous research shows that since the 1980s, the employment integration of immigrant women was dictated by the increase in organizational and technological changes, the demand for new skills of Swedish kind, the demand for greater fluency in the Swedish language, communicative and interpersonal skills (Bevelander, 2005).

Nowadays, it is recognized that in Sweden, ‘Women have a high labour-market activity level, even though it is common that women work part time’ (Kvist and Peterson 2010). A paid work increases women’s labour-market position and economic independence (Prop. 2006/07: 94, cited in Kvist and Peterson 2010). However, Kontos (2009) found that migrant women across European societies constitute an important portion of irregular labour because of the demand for informal sector, which encourages irregular migrants in need of employment and because that those who have a regular migration status and non-migrants in need of work.

Having a paid job for African female immigrants will not only improve their social well-being and welfare, but also increase their power for decision-making through increased income for example. My findings showed that female immigrants from SSA are offered the same opportunities as other women in the Swedish labour market. They are also treated equally as native people and as men at their different places of work. This supports previous findings which demonstrated that inequalities between immigrants and native-born in terms of real wages are smaller in more egalitarian Swedish system (Kesler, 2010). In a comparative study between Sweden, Germany and Britain, Kesler (2006) found that ‘immigrant women in Sweden work at higher absolute rates than immigrant women elsewhere.’

Investigating how integration policies and welfare-state regimes have affected the socio-economic integration of immigrants in eight European countries that are Germany, France, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Sweden, Austria and Belgium, Koopmans (2010) concluded that ‘multicultural policies²- which grant immigrant easy access to equal rights and do not provide strong incentives for host-country language acquisition and interethnic contacts-when combined with a generous welfare state, have produced low levels of labour market participation, high levels of segregation...’ Sweden, which has combined multicultural policies with a strong welfare state, was found among countries that display relatively low integration outcomes. However, Sweden offers the greatest degree of legal equality to immigrants and scored highest (e.g. 88) on the Migration and Integration Policy Index³ (MIPEX) for 2007 (Koopmans, 2010). Much earlier, analyzing the employment integration of immigrants in Sweden, Bevelander (1999) showed that between 1970 and 1990, the entire difference in employment rate between Swedes and immigrants could be explained either by traditional discrimination or by structural changes that have occurred in the economy, which increased the demand for specialized knowledge (e.g. language skills and culture-specific social competence).

² Koopmans (2010) refers to multiculturalism as a particular type of policy approach to the management of immigrant-induced cultural heterogeneity, not that heterogeneity itself.

³ Countries score high on the index when immigrants can easily and with minimal preconditions obtain equal rights (Koopmans, 2010)

Some differences between men and women mentioned by some respondents may be due to some specific tasks to perform. My data clearly show that integrating the labor market depends on various factors including educational and training skills, previous work experience and the knowledge of the Swedish language. The findings also show that some female immigrants were not treated equally due to their colour of skin (black), indicating some traces of traditional discrimination in the labour market. Previous research characterized migration as a multidimensional phenomenon, which can have many positive effects in terms of expanding the opportunities for productive work and leading to a wider perspective on many social issues among migrants but also negative effects (Ghosh, 2009). Talking about jobs and economic benefits, Savage (2010, pp.77-78) highlighted that ‘when it comes to economic terms, immigrants in Sweden do not do as well as their native counterparts. This seems to be based on hidden discriminatory behavior by the native Swedes when it comes to employment practices’. The findings of this case study show that female immigrants from SSA managed to overcome barriers and found employment in the formal labour market, even though some women work part time. This will have a positive impact on their welfare and their long term integration plans.

Kontos (2009) also reported that in Sweden like in UK, France and Germany, there is an increased emphasis on active job seeking in combination with restricted welfare benefits. She highlighted that the efforts that new female migrants make towards their integration are accompanied by a number of features, including their desire for their work to be recognized as valuable and themselves to be seen as equal members of society. Those women are not passive as the author highlights; they instead actively resist discrimination and inferior labour market positions. However, Kontos (2009) argued that stratification of the labour market in which the women are incorporated is an important factor working against integration because of ethnicisation of particular sectors combined with isolation of certain occupations, e.g. cleaning and care sectors. In his analysis of ‘the employment integration of immigrants in Sweden’, Bevelander (1999) showed that foreign-born both men and women arriving in Sweden after 1970 experienced difficulties in obtaining employment and that years in Sweden increased the probability of securing employment but this never reaches the native levels. Dribe and Lundh (2008) found a strong correlation between intermarriage with natives and economic integration in terms of employment and income. For instance, immigrants married to Swedes have greater probability of having a job, and also having higher individual and household income but my sample does not include such cases.

My results match well with the NORDPLUS (2010-2011) findings about what women immigrants themselves found challenging in Sweden: (1) language – fluency in Swedish language is prerequisite for higher studies and employment integration; (2) discrimination – ‘many recruiting agencies simply hear the accent, see the name or skin colour and decide not to interview the person despite their qualifications or language ability’ (NORDPLUS, 2010-2011).

With regard to perceived discrimination based on the colour of skin, Triandafyllidou (2009) argues that sub-Saharan African immigrants in Europe tend to be classified under the ‘black’ race category, which imposes on them a common pan-African dimension and the racial disadvantage and prejudice faced by these immigrants; (3) ‘Lack of recognition for non-national qualifications— Non-national degrees/education is often not recognized in-country as being valid (despite in some cases international recognition, NORDPLUS, 2010-2011)’. Kontos (2009) also pointed out that recognition of academic titles or accreditation in the EU countries is a very difficult and demanding process and several migrant women are discouraged by the difficulties and may turn to informal labour market. Moreover, as the author highlights, recognition of academic titles does not automatically guarantee the acquisition of a license to practice a profession; (4) access to information is difficult; (5) Integration issues, which are often caused by attitudes. NORDPLUS underlined again that ‘hostile/racist attitudes against immigrants, lack of understanding or interest to learn more about them, assumptions being preferred over facts, and valuing homogeneity over multiculturalism are typical barriers’; (6) limited study options; and (7) limited choices. For example, it is reported that ‘some immigrant women are not always able to / allowed to make their own decisions due to the state, family or other issues’ (NORDPLUS, 2010-2011).

I want to stress again a possible discrimination in the labour market against immigrants that has been emphasized by previous studies. Rydgren (2004) investigated different mechanisms of exclusion of migrants from the Swedish labour market and confirmed previous works that

“There are strong arguments suggesting that discrimination against migrants—in particular against non-European migrants—is rather extensive in Sweden.”

The author argues that non-European migrants in particular have higher unemployment rates and lower wage incomes than native Swedes. He also identified three main exclusion mechanisms, which include ‘statistical discrimination (based on stereotypical thinking), network effects (due to separated, ethnically homogeneous networks), and institutional discrimination’. Rydgren (2004) further describes two different ways by which employers discriminate migrants: (1) ‘by making decisions about recruitment, etc. based on stereotypical—and often prejudiced— beliefs about group-specific characteristics rather than on individual skills’; and (2) ‘by choosing people they know or who have been recommended by someone they know for vacant positions (network recruitment). Above arguments demonstrate again that, despite legal documents (e.g. The Swedish anti-discrimination law) and policy programmes, there are strong indications of large differences in the labour market between migrants and native Swedes.

5.4 Gender equality and the role of education in empowering women

Respondents recognized gender equality in family and the division of labour between men and women. This was illustrated by the division of tasks for children care work and home work responsibility. One respondent stated:

“Women here in Sweden have been already empowered compared to Africa. For example, when it comes to work and take care of the children, the tasks are divided between the man and woman. When one goes to work, the other takes care of the children.”

Gender equality was also seen when performing other tasks, including food preparation, cleaning, dish washing, taking children to school, and so on. ‘Gender equality has been defined as an important political goal on European political agendas’ (Kvist and Peterson 2010). Sweden as a welfare state, its social democratic model is characteristic for its emphasis on ‘universalistic egalitarianism – no one is special and no one should be excluded’- and for ‘its guarantee of adequate resources to all’ (Esping-Anderson, 1998, p.262). Gender equality, home responsibility and child care show fundamental differences between Swedish gender policies and sub-Saharan Africa. In the former, there is a shared responsibility between man and women, whereas in the latter, women perform most of house work and children care. Regarding policies on care for children for example, ‘in Sweden, the State and local governments provide generous and flexible leave policies, and there is good availability of child care services (Boje and Leira 2000, cited in Kvist and Peterson 2010).

Participants were asked how they perceived the role of education in accessing employment and empowering women. All respondents recognized the critical role of education in accessing employment and for women’s empowerment. Especially for Sweden, respondents stressed the importance of knowing the Swedish language. One respondent mentioned for example that education was important for accessing required information for accessing jobs and for women’s empowerment. The following two statements come from two different respondents:

“What I most appreciated in the Swedish Society is that women have power of decision. Here in Sweden, you can be whatever you want and reach any level as long as you have education.”

“When you can speak Swedish and have education it is easier to access a job. Jobs here are in general education-oriented.”

As shown by respondents’ answers to the question, it is clear that not only education is important for integrating the labor market but also the knowledge of the Swedish language of the host country. Dribe and Lundh (2008) highlight that higher educational background of immigrants facilitate the learning Swedish and adapting to Swedish customs. Previous sections show that the prerequisite to integrate both the social life and labor market for female migrants from SSA was the learning of the Swedish language and pursuit of formal education. In fact, fresh female immigrants from Sub-Saharan Africa who arrive in Sweden have limited access to the power structures of the Swedish society due to their educational and cultural backgrounds, lack of technical skills and language barriers.

Therefore, it is important to engage them in problem-solving process, first by enabling them to talk about their experiences of oppression in their countries of origin. By expressing their personal experiences, they begin to value themselves-which of itself is empowering (Dalrymple and Burke 2006).

With regard to education as an important factor for integrating into the labour market, Sweden offers more advantages compared to some other European countries because access to education and training programmes is open and free in Sweden for all migrants with legal status. Nonetheless, training needs to be combined with compensatory mechanisms (Kontos, 2009).

For instance, mentoring projects where women are provided with personal contacts, who give them support, help and advice, showed positive outcomes in this respect. The Nordplus report (2010-2011) also highlights that language skills and education relevant to labour market demand are important factors affecting the integration of immigrant women into the social life and labour market in the Nordic countries. Discouraging the role of education in empowering women, Cakir and Guneri (2011) hypothesized that 'higher level of education would be associated with greater empowerment among women'.

5.5 Understanding Women's empowerment issues in the Swedish context

To better understanding empowerment issues of women immigrant from SSA, respondents were asked a question about their views on women's empowerment in the context of Sweden. All eight respondents recognized that Sweden is one of the leading countries in the world in empowering women. They acknowledged that women are really empowered in Sweden. One respondent stated for instance:

"I think here in Sweden, women are given upper hand, they are given equal opportunity as men to express themselves, they are even given more opportunities than men, and they have the power."

Responding to the question asked about women's empowerment, another respondent revealed:

"Women should be proud of being female and there should be strong women's rights; Women should take initiative to empower themselves. Women also need to know their rights in order to develop. Access to information is also important because you may have the willingness to develop but lack necessary information; Education is important in order to access required information; and women should also have self-confidence."

This respondent also tried to define women's empowerment in her own words:

"I think women's empowerment is about encouraging women to do better to improve their lives. Sweden is advanced in women's empowerment and Women are encouraged, given power to decide about their lives."

Another respondent also stated that in Sweden Women are encouraged to overcome many challenges; to start something on their own. Every participant gave a strong statement with regard to women's empowerment in Sweden. The next respondent, when comparing empowering women in Sweden and Africa, said: "Men and women have equal opportunity, studies are free; it is not the same as in our country where school fees are a big problem."

And the last but not the least statement said: “Women have power in Sweden in every domain of life.”

The next question I asked my respondents was whether they were aware that Sweden has policies to empower women. All respondents recognized that the Swedish government set up policies that promote women’s empowerment. Empowering women is part of the Swedish system as one respondent underlined. Some respondents thought that Sweden has such policies but did not pay any particular attention to them. The following is an illustration from one respondent:

“I believe Sweden has such policies but I do not think about them.”

Some respondents got information about Sweden’s women empowerment policies from their place of work, while others got it from some organizations such as the SpringAid Sweden. Participants were also asked if they know any organization that deals with women’s empowerment in Sweden. Half of respondents did not know that in Sweden there are specific organizations that promote gender equality and women’s empowerment. Some respondents have never used the services provided by such organizations. One of such organizations is ‘SpringAid Sweden’, which is a non-political and non-religious organization for all national African diaspora groups, companies and aid organizations in Sweden to work together for the integration of Africans into Swedish society, promote African culture, economy and development, especially for the eradication of poverty which is one of the biggest challenge in Africa (SpringAid Sweden, 2013).

Regarding the provision of social assistance, participants were further asked if they receive any social assistance for their living. Most of respondents answered that they no longer rely on social assistance because they have a fulltime paid employment. Others receive student loans because they are students and many of them also have a part-time employment. Only one woman still receives a social assistance from the migration office. Also one respondent mentioned she received social assistance for children. Another woman is working part time and receives a financial support from her “Sambo” relationship. It is important to note that the majority of African women are engaged in a productive work to support themselves and their families.

I also asked a question regarding what participants have most appreciated in the Swedish society in general and for women’s empowerment in particular. Point of views varied from one individual to another. Their appreciations included respect for human rights, gender equality, the fact that women have power of decision, lack of discrimination, security and peace, easy access to facilities such as electricity and a large number of schools and churches. Here come some comments from respondents: (1) “Women have the same opportunities as men, even higher than men”; (2) “men and women are treated the same way”. Participants also expressed their views about what they found most problematic in the Swedish society. Some respondents cited language barrier and hard local weather conditions as already mentioned. Others suggested the fact of being immigrant itself and the integration process. Another respondent mentioned the Swedish City.

Another one pointed out access to information as most problematic as above mentioned. One respondent stated for example:

“Being immigrant in general is much harder in Sweden and getting employment or studying at University level may be difficult.”

The findings clearly demonstrate that respondents well understand the concept of empowerment and what it means to them. They stressed the critical role of self-empowerment and building self-confidence. While the EU is proud of its advancement in the pursuit of social justice and inclusion (Ellerbe-Dueck, 2011), Sweden is among leading countries in EU in promoting equal opportunities between men and women, human rights and providing power to women as respondents themselves stressed. Respondents recognize that Sweden has clear policies for empowering women. In connection with the present case study, the construct of empowerment is relevant to female immigrants from sub-Saharan Africa living in Gothenburg, especially their ‘psychological empowerment’, which is perceived as their ability to gain control over their own lives and to initiate changes that result in positive outcomes for their wellbeing (Grammel and Stoppard 1999, cited in Cakir and Guneri 2011). Fitzsimons and Fuller (2002, cited in Cakir and Guneri 2011) showed a connection between empowerment of migrant women and the social support. Other researchers made it clear that the latter promotes a sense of empowerment in women (Moradi and Funderburk 2006, cited in Cakir and Guneri 2011).

5.6 Implications of female migration for sending countries: Remittances

Female migration from sub-Saharan Africa to Sweden was shown to have a positive impact on the families and communities left behind. Implications are mainly in the form of female remittances. All respondents, except one, recognized that they regularly send money to their families, relatives or friends. The money was either sent monthly, twice a year, or once in 2-3 months depending on how much females can gain from their work. As respondents pointed out, their remittances play important roles in reducing poverty, paying school fees for their relatives, and so on.

Respondents also noted that Africa has much to learn from Sweden in terms of gender equality and women’s empowerment such as: (1) respect and improvement of women’s rights; (2) increase financial means to support women’s initiatives; (3) not to intimidate women; (4) learn to fight corruption; (5) encourage women to do things on their own (e.g. self-determination); (6) equality between men and women; (7) fight domestic violence; and (8) that African women should be able to perform some specific tasks as men do.

This case study demonstrates that remittances from female migrants from SSA are important for supporting the families, communities and the national economy of the sending countries as also emphasized by Hall (2006). Spaan and van Moppes (2006) highlighted that more recently several African governments and the African Union have acknowledged the importance of migration for their countries, and have recognized that migration and development are interlinked processes.

Investigating the exact amount of money each female regularly sends to her native country is beyond this case study, but it is clear that the money sent has a positive impact on the lives of people left behind.

There are similarities in the importance of remittances from female migrant from sub-Saharan Africa with the 'Nanny Chain' described by Hochschild (2000). Especially for sub-Saharan Africa, Adepju (2008) highlighted that remittances from migrants have a positive contribution to development in home countries and are a major source of income in many countries. He underlined that remittances values have risen over time for many sub-Saharan countries including Burkina Faso, Ghana, Somalia, Lesotho, Nigeria, and Cape Verde. Another example of women in the Rwandan diaspora in Stockholm – they formed an association, which helps some of the 1994 genocide orphans and widows in Rwanda through small-scale projects that are founded by their remittances or sometimes supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA). Hall (2006) highlights that changes that occur in the sending countries due to female migration are not only in economic benefits from remittances, but also in the roles and relationships within families and communities left behind.

CONCLUSIONS

This study investigated the relationships between migration, education and women's empowerment, using a case study of female migrants from sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) living in Gothenburg, Sweden. The study findings demonstrate that factors determining female migration from SSA include social and economic contexts, the position of women in patriarchal societies and level of poverty in different countries of SSA. The majority of females voluntarily moved to Sweden as part of family migration either for continuing their education or as family reunification. The remainder migrated to Sweden due to wars and political instability in their countries of origin. With regard to political instability in the recent years, sub-Saharan Africa seems to be champion.

The results of this case study have also shown that female migrants from SSA face a variety of challenges during their integration process into the Swedish society and the labour market, including their educational background, the knowledge of the Swedish language, lack of social networks and access to the required information. For some female migrants, the integration process was found to be hard, frustrating and slow due to above mentioned barriers. For others, integration was easy because they had family members or friends who immigrated before to Sweden. This research supports previous studies that Social Work is in better position to respond to those female migrants who have been, in one way or another, affected by the migration process or the challenges of integration into the Swedish society. Access to paid employment is one way for female migrants from SSA for improving their social status and was found to be education-oriented among others. The proficiency of the Swedish language was found to be a prerequisite for accessing jobs. Female migrants were offered equal opportunities as men in their place of work.

Respondents highlighted that women in Sweden are even given more power than men when it comes to accessing jobs and that their rights were respected. However, the findings of this case study support previous studies that there is still some segregation of the labour market in Sweden, mainly based on gender, ethnicity, educational background and the knowledge of the Swedish language. Sweden is a social democratic welfare state which characterized by Universalistic egalitarianism. For instance, gender equality between men and women migrants from sub-Saharan Africa was illustrated by equal division of tasks relative to home responsibility and child care. In accordance with the Swedish government policies related to women's empowerment, female migrants as other women have the power to take independent decisions regarding their lives. This is emphasized again through equal opportunities to education, job opportunities and gender equality. Finally, this case study showed that female remittances play an important role for families, communities and national economies in the sending countries. Based on above findings, it can be concluded that relationships between migration, education and women's empowerment are important for individuals, their families, both the sending and host countries. I recommend a further and deeper investigation of those relationships.

Swedish government immigrant integration policies need to further address perceived discrimination in the labour market. International migration policies must address the main factors that cause female international migration from SSA to Europe. Finally, social work professionals should influence policy makers to insure that the rights of female migrants are taken care in relation to social integration and labour market.

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Appendix 1: Interview Guide

Topic: Migration, Education and Women's Empowerment: A Case Study of Sub-Saharan African Women Immigrant in Gothenburg, Sweden

I. Demographic information

1. What is your age? What is your marital status?
2. What is your country of origin (country of birth)?
3. In which year did you move to Sweden?
4. What was the main reason for moving to Sweden? (voluntary or forced)
5. Did any international organization intervene in your move to Sweden? If any, which one?
6. How old were you when you came to Sweden?
7. Were you married when you came to Sweden or did you meet your partner here in Sweden?
8. Is your partner from the same country as you?
9. What educational level did you have when you came to Sweden?
10. Which level of education do you have now?
11. Do you have children? How old are they? Are they born in Sweden?

II. Women's empowerment

1. Could you describe the main challenges you faced when you arrived in Sweden?
2. How was your integration into the Swedish society?
3. Do you get any assistance for living? What kind of assistance?
4. Do you have a paid employment?
5. As female migrant, what was the main barrier or challenge to access a job?
6. Do you get the same salary as men who do the same job? Are you paid for extra hours?
7. As a migrant, are you treated equally as others at your place of work?
8. Have you experienced any kind of inequality or violation of your rights at your place of work?
9. What do you think about women's empowerment here in Sweden?
10. Do you know any organization or agency that specifically addresses women's issues such rights and welfare?
11. Are you aware that Sweden has policies to empower women?
12. Do you send money to your relatives? How often?
13. What do you appreciate the most in Swedish society?
14. What do find as the most problematic in Swedish society?
15. What do you think Africa can learn from Sweden in terms of women's empowerment?
16. Do you have anything to add?

Appendix 2: Informed consent

My name is Epiphanie Mukundiyimana. I am a master student at University of Gothenburg, department of Social Work and Human Rights. Myself I come from Rwanda.

I am conducting this interview for my degree report. My topic is “Migration, Education and Women’s Empowerment: A Case Study of Sub-Saharan African Women Immigrant in Gothenburg, Sweden”. I am interested to know how empowering women can help in addressing their specific rights and social welfare. And I would like you to help me have such information. I would like first to request you whether you would like to participate in this research and i promise you that the collected data will be handled in confidentiality, will be used to write down my degree report and will be kept in such a way that no unauthorized person can view or access it.

The interview will be recorded as this makes it easier for me to document what is said during the interview and also helps me in the continuing work with this research. During the analysis, some data may be changed so that no interviewee will be recognized and will be destroyed after we finish the study.

You have the right to decline answering any questions, or terminate the interview without giving an explanation.

You are welcome to contact me or my supervisor in case you have any questions (e-mail addresses below).

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Interviewee