Socio- Economic and Cultural integration of Arab immigrants in Sweden: Integration Challenges and Strategies

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Dedication

I want to dedicate this thesis to my eternal love, my son Josef Ben Abdelhamid, I want him to always remember that parents love is unconditional and that I will always love, protect and support him.

Citation

"*Internal peace is an essential first step to achieving peace in the world. How do you cultivate it? It's very simple. In the first place by realizing clearly that all mankind is one, that human beings in every country are members of one and the same family*"

The Dalai Lama

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Abstract

In the last five years, Sweden is experiencing a sharp rise in the numbers of immigrants from all over the world especially from the countries where living conditions are deteriorating significantly like the countries of the MENA region i.e. (Middle East and North Africa).The newly arrived Arab immigrants, who decided to leave their countries regardless their reasons while looking for a better life in Sweden, face the challenges of cultural and socio-economic integration. Integration is a process which can be fulfilled in an effective manner under certain conditions. These conditions manifest essentially in a mutual understanding and effective communication to improve trust.

The research questions of this thesis are:

1) What are the integration strategies provided by the Swedish government? Are they effective?
2) How do people from the Arab countries experience cultural differences between their home countries and the Swedish culture? How do they experience their integration in Sweden?
3) How should Sweden improve integration?

The methodology applied in this thesis consists on the conduction of semi-structured interviews with some Arab immigrants and of a qualitative approach to analyze participants' responses. The opinions of immigrants who have been interviewed depict that integration strategies in Sweden are effective but more consideration of intercultural communication and a focus on labour market integration can lead to improvement of the process of integration in the country.

Keywords: Intercultural communication, culture, communication, immigrants, integration.

I.   Introduction

The situation in the Middle East in recent years and other conflicts has forced more than 4 millions of people to flee their homelands from wars and violence. In 2015, Sweden received 162,877 asylum requests (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016) comparing to 81,301 request in 2014 (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016).These asylum seekers will be, after receiving their residence permit, considered as immigrants. Sweden experiences a noteworthy augmentation in the number of immigrants every year. The official site of Sweden (2016) based on information taken from *statistiska centralbyrån* (SCB, 2016), announces that in 2014, the total population of Sweden is 9,747,355 with 16% of the population born in another country. The official website of Sweden also announces that in Sweden, in the year 2014, there are 67,671 residents are born in Syria and 130,178 born in Iraq. Such a situation is very challenging because it requires the establishment of clear actions plans. Firstly, in order to deal with the issues of meeting the needs of migrant inflows. Secondly, in order to deal with the integration of all these people with different backgrounds, languages, religions, ages, races and ethnicities.

In this context, the refugee crisis not only brought new challenges for both immigrants and Swedish society but also underlined the significant gaps in the new Swedish fabric in terms of culture, value and the relationship between different groups. Therefore, language-proficiency, cultural understanding and additional skills become primordial for a successful socio-economic integration of immigrants as well as for a more efficient intercultural interaction in the Swedish society between foreign-born and Swedish people.

Few studies have been conducted to explore the actions plan of immigrant integration or the ways that takes into account their personal experiences in adapting into a new culture. Thus, over the last few years, there has been a growing research interest in migration to Sweden. Wiesbrock (2011) examined the model of integration of immigrants in Sweden as an example for the rest of the European Union. "In an overall ranking by the Migration Policy Group in 2006 measuring immigrant integration policies in 28 countries, Sweden scored more points than any other country"(Wiesbrock, 2011, p.4). Nonetheless, before admitting the efficiency of integration methods in Sweden, it is always better to know if the positive evaluation of the Swedish integration model is also confirmed by other indicators. For that reason, Wiesbrock (2011) aimed through his research to evaluate the Swedish integration strategies in comparison with other countries. Furthermore, the author examines the possibility to apply Swedish successful integration measures in other countries.

However, there have only been a few investigations about the role of intercultural communication in improving integration of people coming from the MENA region i.e. (Middle East and North Africa). According to the Office of the Higher Commissioner for Human Right (OHCHR 1996-2016) the MENA region includes Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arabs Emirates, Syria, Yemen, Bahrain, Qatar, Oman, Palestine, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia, Morocco, Algeria and Mauritania. Only few researchers have written about the integration of people from MENA region in Sweden. However many researchers have studied the integration process of others like the Iranians. Asadulah Naghdi (2010) explored "Iranian Diaspora: with a focus on Iranian immigrants in Sweden" and Francesco Pasetti (2015) wrote a research report entitled "The integration of Turkish and Iranian immigrants in Sweden."

Evidently, the relationship between integration and intercultural communication has got a little attention when it comes to the integration challenges that immigrants from MENA region with an Arabic background confront in Sweden. Therefore, this thesis attempts to bridge the research gap through conducting a study of the integration of this specific group (Middle Eastern and North African immigrants with an Arabic background) in Sweden in straight connection with intercultural communication.

I.1   Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to debate the progress of the integration process in Sweden as well as underlying considerable strategies for improving the integration strategies for Arab immigrants in Sweden. Also, this study seeks to identify different socio economic and cultural challenges of integration that the immigrants from Arab countries face in Sweden.

I.2   Research questions

The thesis focuses on answering the following questions:

RQ1: What are the integration strategies provided by the Swedish government? Are they effective?

RQ2: How do people from the Arab countries experience cultural differences between their home countries and the Swedish culture? How do they experience their integration in Sweden?

RQ3: How should Sweden improve integration?

II.   Theoretical background

The main focus of this chapter is to present an overview of the theories and research related to intercultural communication and integration. The first part of this chapter includes the definitions of important intercultural communication concepts followed by a comparison between the Arab and the Swedish cultures. The second part explores the issue of integration in Sweden. It includes an overview of the history of both integration and immigration. Furthermore, there is an identification of the early and the recent integration strategies.

II.1 Intercultural communication

 "The history of intercultural interactions is as old as humankind" (Samovar et.al, 2014, p.5).It is "the migration of peoples that has brought people from different cultural backgrounds into contact" (Samovar et.al, 2014, p.5). Edward T. Hall cites that the concepts of culture as communication originated when the grandfather of American anthropologist Franz Boas declares that "communication constitutes the core of culture and indeed of life itself" (Hall, 1966, p.9).Ting-Toomey (1999) defines intercultural communication as a "a symbolic exchange process where people of different cultures negotiate shared meanings in an interactive situation" (Tin- tomeey, 1999, p.16). Allwood defines intercultural communication as:

> "the sharing of information on different levels of awareness and control between people with different cultural backgrounds, where different cultural backgrounds include both national cultural differences and differences which are connected with participation in the different activities that exist within a national unit" (Allwood, 1985, p.3).

Clearly all the definitions of intercultural communication acknowledge that it means broadly the communication between people belonging to different cultures. Therefore, a deep understanding of the field necessitates the examination and analysis of the two fundamental perceptions, culture and communication, as an elementary method to understand intercultural communication.

II.2 Communication

The concept of communication has been defined by many different scholars. Communication is defined by Lustig & Koester as "Communication is a symbolic, interpretive, transactional, contextual process in which people create shared meanings" (Lustig & Koester, 2010, p.13). The thesis adopts the definition of the concept of communication in relation to culture that has been developed by Allwood as "the sharing of information between people on different levels of awareness and control" (Allwood, 1985, p.3). The reason behind the choice of this definition is the selection of the word "sharing". The determination suggests that communication is a mutual exchange of knowledge between at least two participants.

II.3 Culture

"A nation's culture resides in the hearts and the soul of its people" Mahatma Ghandi (1869-1948).

The concept of culture has always fascinated and interested many researchers hence it is difficult to consider one single and simple definition for culture. A book with more than 200 pages focusing on presenting different definitions of the concept of culture was published in 1952 by Alfred L Kroeber and Clyde Kluckhohn. In the 19th century Sir.E.B.Tylor defined culture as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, beliefs, arts, morals, law, customs, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by a human as a member of society"(Tylor, 1871, p.1).

Allwood defines culture as a "reference to all the characteristics common to a particular group of people that are learned and not given by nature" (Allwood, 1985, p.1). Actually, this definition emphasizes the hypothesis that culture is a learned pattern of behavior and not a biologically transmitted concept. This thesis adopt the definition that stress the fact that culture differ from one group to another is developed by Hofstede "Culture the collective programming of the mind that distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others". (Hofstede,2011, p.3)

II.4 Classifications of culture

Starting from the fact that different societies have different cultures, many researchers who are interested in intercultural communication suggested several characteristics and classifications of cultures.

A very popular theory developed by Geert Hofstede (1983). It is a theory that attempts to classify cultures according to certain dimensions. In fact, Hofstede identifies in total six dimensions of national cultural. Below, only five dimensions are defined.

- **Power distance:** It is mostly related to human inequality. "The extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally". (Hofstede,2011, p.9)

- **Uncertainty avoidance:** reflects the level to which extent some people are more comfortable with ambiguity and tolerate uncertainty than others. "It deals with a society's tolerance for ambiguity. It indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations. (Hofstede, 2011, p.10)

- **Individualism Vs collectivism**: reflects people's relationships to other groups they are a part of. "Individualism on the one side versus its opposite, Collectivism, as a societal, not an individual characteristic, is the degree to which people in a society are integrated into groups."(Hofstede, 2011, p.11)

- **Masculinity Vs femininity**: It is related to gender distributions of tasks and values. "Masculinity versus its opposite, Femininity, again as a societal, not as an individual characteristic, refers to the distribution of values between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society, to which a range of solutions can be found" (Hofstede, 2011, p.12).

- **Long term Vs short term orientation:** short term oriented societies are past and present oriented societies while long term oriented societies are future oriented

societies. "Long Term versus Short Term Orientation, related to the choice of focus for people's efforts: the future or the present and past" (Hofstede, 2011, p.8).

	PDI	IDV	MAS	UAI	LTO
Iraq	95	30	70	85	25
Lebanon	75	40	65	50	14
Lybia	80	38	52	68	23
Egypt	70	25	45	80	7
Morocco	70	46	53	68	14
Syria	80	35	52	60	30
Sweden	31	71	5	29	53

Table 1: Cultural dimensions of some Arab countries and of Sweden.

The table 1 confirms that there is a strong difference between the Swedish culture and the Arab culture for example in Sweden there is a low level of Power Distance with (31) while in all Arab countries Power Distance Index is around (70-95). In fact, individuals deal with some norms and values differently according to their culture principles. In that sense, their plans and practices are not similar and also their way of communication is, to a large extent, in an opposite direction.

Anthropologist, Edward T. Hall (1976) classified culture into two groups; High context (HC) culture where background information is implicit; most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, very little is coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. "A high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, or transmitted part of the message"(Hall 1976, p.91). The second type of culture is Low context (LC) where much of the background information must be made explicit in an interaction. "A low context communication is just the opposite, i.e. the mass of information is vested in the explicit code" (Hall, 1976, p.91).

"In spite of over two thousand years of contact, Westerners and Arab still do not understand each other." (Hall, 1966, p.154). Hall (1976) divided countries of the world into two sides according to culture variations. As mentioned above, some societies are influenced by high context culture principles and others are ruled by low context culture styles. The table below shows that Arab countries belong to high context culture whereas Sweden belongs to low context culture.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3" align="center">High Context Cultures
Japan
Arab countries
Greece
Spain
Italy
England
France
North America
Scandinavian Countries
German-Speaking Countries
Low Context Cultures</td></tr>
</table>

Figure 1 : High/Low context by culture (Hall& Hall, 1990)
Sources: Nishimura et al, 2008, p.786

Factors	High Context Culture	Low Context Culture
Overtness of messages	Many implicit messages with use of metaphor	Many overt and explicit messages that are clear
Use of non-verbal communication	Much non-verbal communication	More focus on verbal communication
People bonds	Strong people bonds with affiliation to community	Fragile bonds between people
Level of commitment to relationship	Relationship more important than tasks	Tasks more important than relationships
Flexibility of time	Time is open and flexible	Time is highly organized

Table 2 : Cultural differences from contextual perspectives
Sources: Mehmet.A.Orhan, 2016

In a high context culture the meaning is usually embedded in the information and the listener is asked to read between the lines. The listener is also expected to be able to decode the implicit messages because of the indirect and ambiguous communication. In contrast, in a low context culture meanings are directly expressed through spoken communication.

Another important classification of culture is made by Hofstede (1976). The table 2 illustrates the enormous dissimilarity between Arab culture and the Swedish culture.

However the classifications of cultures and cultural taxonomies have been developed many years ago and in the last centuries. Today, because of globalization, the world is getting smaller and people with different cultural background interact with each other more frequently. In this context, frequent communication enriches cultural exchange and can though not necessarily) lead to cultural homogenization. An individual can start adapting the characteristics of another culture and vice versa.

II.5   The Acculturation model

Berry (1997) admits that people experiences acculturation differently which promote the existence of variations of model. These alterations are indeed known as acculturation strategies. According to Berry (1997) it is possible to distinguish five models of acculturation.

II.5.1   The assimilation strategy

In a society made of various culture and ethnic groups, the assimilation strategy occurs when individuals reject their culture identity and express willingness and motivation to accustom themselves to the dominant culture. "When individuals do not wish to maintain their cultural heritage and seek daily interaction with other cultures the assimilation strategy is defined (Berry, 1997, p.9)

II.5.2   The separation, segregation and marginalization strategies

In contrast with the previous strategy, some people may prefer to maintain their original culture and refuse interaction with others. "When individuals place a value on holding on to their original culture, and at the same time wish to avoid interaction with others, then the separation alternative is defined" (Berry, 2005, p.705). However when the separation is forced it is called segregation "when separation is forced by the dominant group it is called segregation (Berry, 2005, p.706). Berry also identified another model of acculturation called marginalization. "When there is little possibility or interest in cultural maintenance (often for reasons of enforced cultural loss), and little interest in having relations with others (often for reasons of exclusion or discrimination) then marginalization is defined" (Berry, 1997, p.5).

II.5.3   The integration strategy

The integration strategy is seen as option and elucidated by Berry as "when there is an interest in both maintaining one's original culture, while in daily interactions with other groups" (Berry, 1997, p.5). Thus, the integration strategy can only takes place under specific conditions. In this context Berry assumes that "Integration can only be freely chosen and successfully pursued by non-dominant groups when the dominant society is open and

inclusive in its orientation towards cultural diversity" (Berry, 1991, p.619). According to Berry the integration strategy can only be pursued in societies that are explicitly multicultural, in which certain psychological pre-conditions are established (Berry, 1997, p.7). The perception of psychological pre-conditions manifests in high levels of tolerance and acceptance of others all at once with low levels of discrimination and segregation.

II.6 Adaptation

In a new society with different culture, immigrants are exposed to various alternatives and challenges. It was mentioned previously that immigrants are able to choose a form of acculturation yet they may be forced explicitly or implicitly to accept a particular model. As an outcome of the acculturation strategy, immigrants may obviously experience adaptation. "Adaptation refers to relatively stable changes that take place in individuals or groups in response to environmental demands" (Berry, 1997, p.16). Furthermore Berry (2005) admits that "those who pursue and accomplish integration appear to be better adapted, and those who are marginalized are least well adapted." (Berry, 2005, p.709)

It has been acknowledged by Berry that immigrants are exposed to three different forms of adaptation. The first one is a set of psychological adaptation and it "refers to a set of internal psychological outcomes including a clear sense of personal and cultural identity, good mental health, and the achievement of personal satisfaction in the new cultural context" (Berry, 1997, p.10). In other words, psychological adaptation is basically the process of sustaining balance and the success of adjustment to new a culture emotionally, physically and intellectually.

The second one is a sort of socio-cultural adaptation and it differs from the psychological adaptation with a more focus on how an immigrant deals with daily life issues. "Is external psychological outcomes that link individuals to their new context, including their ability to deal with daily problems, particularly in the areas of family life work and school."(Berry, 1997, p. 10)

The third type of adaptation is called economic adaptation and it refers to "the degree, to which work is obtained, is satisfying and is effective in the new culture". (Berry, 1997, p.10) Actually, finding a job is an important challenge that immigrants face when they move to a new country. Besides, they may become rapidly dissatisfied and disappointed when they do not find a job or when they feel over qualified for their current jobs.

II.7   Multiculturalism

 Diverse societies promote the concept of multiculturalism. The concept can be defined as "a system of beliefs and behaviors that recognizes and respects the presence of all diverse groups in an organization or society" (Rosado, 1996, p.2). The two terms, multiculturalism and integration are usually used together because both concepts advance diversity in societies. Clyne & Jupp, (2011) believe that multiculturalism and integration are related to each other.

II.8 Immigration and immigrants

The Oxford dictionaries (2016) defined the word immigration as "the process of coming to live permanently in a country that is not your own" and the word immigrant as "A person who comes to live permanently in a foreign country". People leave their countries for many reasons. Most of them are searching for better live conditions (job opportunities, education) but also for security and safety.

Among a lot of definitions attributed to immigration it is possible to refer to the version proposed by Merali (2008) arguing that immigration is the "Movement of people from one nation-state to another" (Merali, 2008, p.503). Another definition is employed by Diivell (2008) "Immigration is the arrival of citizens from one nation-state who plan on taking or do take up long terms or permanent residence in another country" (Diivell, 2008, p.478). This essay supports the second definition because it gives a more detailed explanation of the phenomenon of immigration.

II.9 Integration of immigrants

The integration of immigrants can be classified into four fields which are according to Entzinger & Biezeveld (2003) the socio-economic domain, the cultural domain, the legal-political domain and the attitudes of recipient societies. In this work, there is only a focus on the socio-economic field and the cultural integration field because the thesis is not studying political issues.

II.9.1 Socio economic integration

A successful socio-economic integration is widely connected with the efficacy of some indicators. It cannot be deniable that the degree of participation of immigrants in the labour market can illustrate the effectively of integration procedure. "The first and most widely recognized indicator for successful integration is connected with participation of migrants in the labour market" (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003, p.19). According to Entzinger and Biezeveld, another important indicators is "the level of use of social security, welfare and other social policy instruments" (Entzinger & Biezeveld, 2003, p.19).

II.9.2 Cultural integration

Immigrants in the receiving country are exposed to a new culture with sometimes totally different concepts then they are used to. Therefore, it is essential to be tolerant and accept others culture including beliefs, religion, sexual orientations and opinions. The role of the host country is to protect the human rights and freedom of expression to ensure a harmony in society. According to Sardinha a successful cultural integration is marked by the environment where "ethnic minority cultures so that members of ethnic minorities can live as equal partners in the host country and yet at the same time maintain contact with their country of origin" (Sardinha, 2009, p.40).

II.10 Immigration to Sweden

The OECD (2014) announced that in 2013, Sweden is one of the OECD countries with the largest foreign-born population with around 16%.Taking into consideration this statistics and the explosion of the numbers of refugees in 2015; it is clear that immigrants have a great impact in the Swedish society, socially, culturally, economically and even politically.

II.10.1 Historical overview

The growth of immigration in Sweden started after the Second World War Two when the country began to receive his first wave of refugees arriving from other European countries. The first period started after the Second World War and known as the labour immigration period (1945-1975). Some European countries were socially and economically disrupted and left with a largely destroyed infrastructure. In contrast, in Sweden the infrastructure and production capital were intact. These conditions, together with a low production costs and high consumption demand, played a major role in making of Sweden a favorable destination for immigration and marked the economic transition and growth in the country.
The second period started in the mid 1970's and is known as the refugees' period. People from non-European countries, mainly from the Middle East and South America, flee their countries escaping from wars and seeking for security and stability in Sweden.

II.10.2 Recent immigration Trend (2010-2015)

Since this study is focusing on the integration of immigrants' belonging to the Arab countries the figures below illustrates the noteworthy enlargement of number of immigrants and refugees coming from different Arab countries. The figures cover the citizenships of Tunisia,Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, Egypt, and Iraq.
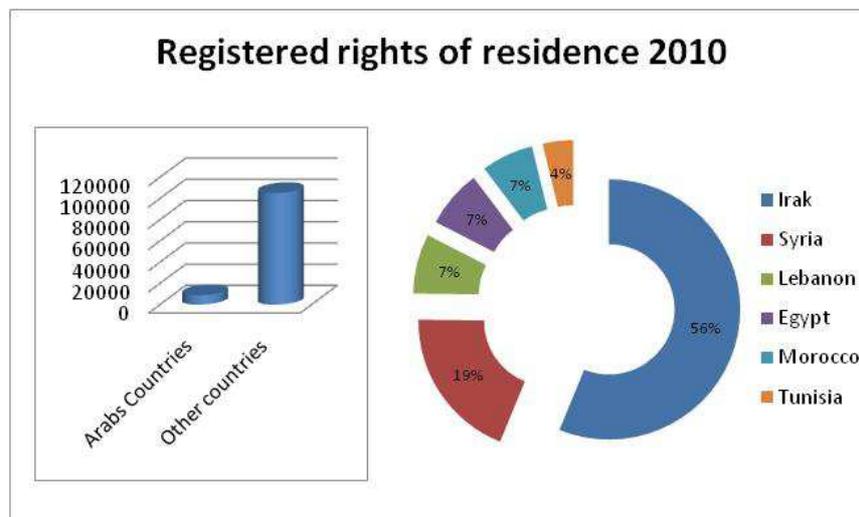
Figure 2: Registered right of residence 2010
Sources: Swedish Migration Agency website/Statistics 2016
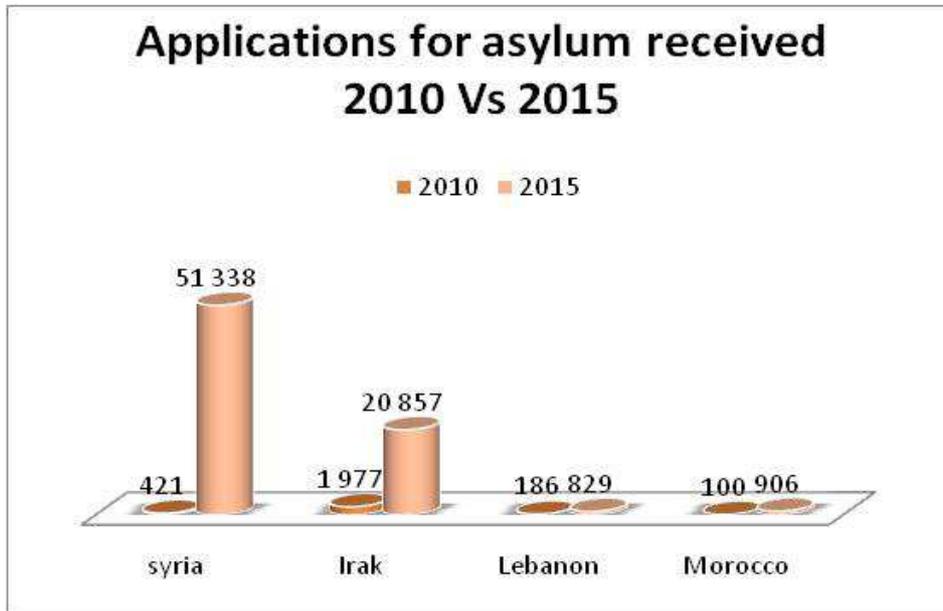
Figure:3 Applications for asylum received 2010 Vs 2015,
Sources: Swedish Migration Agency website/Statistics 2016

Statistics taken from the Swedish migration board highlights the extreme increase in the numbers of people, coming from the Arab countries, applying for asylum in Sweden. The escalation of violence in Syria pushed thousands of people to leave their country and seek a better life conditions in Sweden. Actually, in 2010, the migration board registered only (421) Syrians asylum seekers while in 2015, the number augmented to attain (51338). Even in some other Arab countries, the situation is also terrible and according to the Swedish migration board, the number of people coming from Iraq and applying for asylum escalated from (1977) in 2010 to (20857) in 2015. The figure and the table below cover the citizenship of, &Syria, Irak, Tunisia, Algeria,Egypt, Lebanon, Lybie,Yemen, Jordan, Kuwait, Mauritany, Maroco, Saudi Arabia, Sudan.
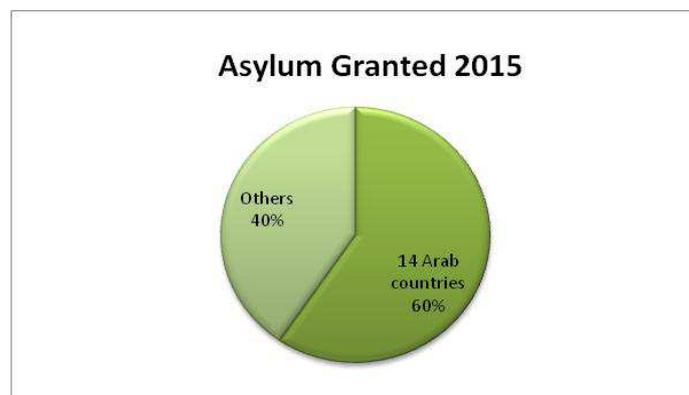
Figure 4 : Asylum granted status 2015
Sources: Swedish Migration Agency website/Statistics 2016

Countries	Granted Asylum
14 Arab countries	19421
Others	13210
Total	32631

Table 3 : Asylum granted status 2015
Sources: Swedish Migration Agency website/Statistics 2016)

II.11 Integration measures in Sweden

From 1960's, the Swedish government starts to take significant initiatives to deal with the complex issue of integration in the society. The subject is challenging as it also attempts to guarantee equality between citizens and reduce feelings of pressure and underestimation among immigrants.

II.11.1 The immigration policy (1960-1997)

In the mid 1960's, Swedish government starts to experience the necessity for an established "*immigration policy*". It is the best procedure that enables the government to reduce discrimination in the labour market and obviously in other areas.

The proficiency in Swedish is strongly recommended and required to get rapidly more active and involved in the society. According to OECD (2007), the year 1970 marks the decision of the government to propose the language free training programme and in 1972 a Government bill was passed to provide new comers immigrants the right to 240 hours of free language training.

II.11.2 The integration policy 1997

In 1997, the government figure out that *"the immigration policy"* established in the mid 1960's made the migrants visible in the society which motivates the Swedish authority to re-examine their goals and formulate the immigration policy into *"the integration policy"*. The integration policy accentuates equality between native-born Swedes and immigrants and takes part in enhancing democratic values in a culturally diverse society.

II.11.3 SFI, Swedish for adult immigrants

The government continues to follow the strategy, already started in 1970, of providing new comers with courses in Swedish language. It is known as SFI, *Svenska för invandrare,* (Swedish for immigrants). In 1965, some educational associations supported the right of immigrants to attain Swedish courses during working hours without a reduction in salary. After two years, the authorities accepted the request and workers start attending SFI courses.

For around 40 years, the Swedish authorities continue to give Swedish courses for immigrants but also continue to develop further the SFI curriculum. Hence, besides language training, SFI gives the opportunity to new-comers to learn Swedish and discover the culture and traditions of the country. Moreover, it is a first step towards entering the labour market in Sweden. Today SFI courses are provided by the municipality.

II.11.4 The Ministry of Integration

The procedure that the Swedish government follows in advancing integration is manifested by the creation of the "Minister of Integration and Gender Equality" in 2007. The ministry of integration and gender equality (2009) has produced a fact sheet that deals with policy of integration. The paper includes aims and strategies that the government administered to successfully reach the goal of integration policy for the years 2008-2010. Moreover, the fact sheet determines once again that ameliorating the socio-economic integration of immigrants and new arrivals is under the responsibility of all municipalities, all ministers and all government agencies in Sweden. The government overall approach was to improve the process of integration in the country by settling adequate strategies. (Ministry of integration and gender equality, 2009, p.1) described seven fundamental strategies are identified and are the following:

- Fast introduction for the new arrivals,
- More in work, more entrepreneurs,
- Better results and greater equality in school,
- Better language skills and more adult education opportunities,
- Effective anti-discrimination measures, development of urban districts with extensive social exclusion
- Common basic values in a society characterized by increasing diversity.

In 2010 the ministry was dissolved and the integration questions and solutions were moved to the Ministry of Employment.

II.11.5 The role of the Public Employment Agency (Arbetsförmedlingen)

The OECD (Organizations for Economic Co-operation and Development) "Review of the Swedish system for labour market integration of migrants, conducted in 2004, found their outcomes to be unfavorable in an international context" (OECD, 2014, p.4). Accordingly, the review of OECD accentuates the obligatory requirements for innovative measures and updated method in Sweden. The government realized the necessity to review the policy of integration through introducing a new law in December, 2010. It is a programme for introduction of new arrivals in Sweden.

After the law of 2010, the municipalities start organizing other activities to support the process of integration. For instance, Gothenburg municipality established the social orientation courses (samhällsorientering) to provide immigrants with crucial information about for example health care and educational system. The first good option is that these courses can be given in different language. The second good option is that there is a possibility to take distance courses.

> *Samhällsorienteringen syftar till att underlätta de nyanländas etablering i arbets- och samhällslivet. Samhällsorienteringen ska ge en grundläggande förståelse för det svenska samhället en grund för fortsatt kunskapsinhämtande.*
> (Regeringkansliet, 2010, p.1)

> In English: Civic orientation is designed to facilitate the integration of new arrivals of working and social life. Civic orientation provides a basic understanding of Swedish society and a foundation for continued acquisition of knowledge.

Furthermore, after the decision of 2010 taken by the government to promote integration, the Public Employment Agency starts to be responsible for introduction activities. In fact, the agency together with immigrants set an introduction plan and an introduction guide (etableringslots) that has for aim giving the immigrants essential information regarding the labour market and Swedish society.

> "*I och med att lag (2010:197) om etableringsinsatser trädde i kraft den 1 december 2010 fick Arbetsförmedlingen ett utökat och samordnande ansvar för etableringsinsatser för nyanlända flyktingar och deras anhöriga. Lagen syftar till att underlätta och påskynda vägen mot ett arbete eller högre studier och därmed ge individen förutsättningar för egen försörjning.*" (Arbetsförmedlingen,2012, p.12)

> In English: The Act (2010: 197) about the introduction activities for certain newly arrived immigrants established the 1 December 2010 the Employment agency increased and coordinated responsibility for introduction activities for newly arrived refugees and their families. The law aims to facilitate and accelerate the path to a job or higher education and thus give the individual conditions for self-sufficiency.

This procedure is not obligatory but is beneficial and profitable since participants get paid for doing introduction activities. *Sverige Riksdag* established the act of establishment (SFS 2010:197) Act on introduction activities for certain newly arrived immigrants;*Lag (2010:197) om etableringsinsatser för vissa nyanlända invandrare* :

> "*15§ En nyanländ som deltar i aktiviteter enligt en etableringsplan har rätt till etableringsersättning och under vissa förutsättningar även etableringstillägg och bostadsersättning. Detsamma gäller en nyanländ som medverkar till upprättandet av en etableringsplan och som inte har rätt till bistånd enligt lagen (1994:137) om mottagande av asylsökande m.fl. Regeringen eller den myndighet som regeringen bestämmer meddelar föreskrifter om ersättning till nyanlända som omfattas av denna lag*"(Sveriges Riksdag,2016)

> In English: 15§ A new comer who participate in activities under an introduction plan has the right to benefit of introduction benefits and under certain conditions even from supplementary benefits and housing allowance. The same applies to a new comer that contribute to the establishing of an introduction plan and who does not have the right to assistance according to the law (1994:137) about reception of asylum seekers. The government or the authority that the government chooses announces regulations about benefits to new comers concerned by this law.

In addition to the introduction benefit, there is an interesting initiative taken by the Swedish government which is subsidized employment (Subventionerade anställningar). "Subsidized employment programs provide jobs to people who cannot find employment in the regular labor market and use public funds to pay all or some of their wages"(Bloom,2013,p.1).

> "*Instegsjobb infördes 2007 och regleras i förordningen (1997:1275) om anställningsstöd.För att kvalificera sig till instegsjobb ska den nyanlända ha fyllt 20 år, vara anmäld hos Arbetsförmedlingen och inom de senaste tre åren ha beviljats uppehållstillstånd eller uppehållskort. Den arbetsgivare som anställer någon som uppfyller kriterierna får stöd med 80 procent av*

lönekostnaden, dock högst 800 kronor per dag. För ett instegsjobb kan arbetsgivaren också få ett handledningsbidrag på 50 kronor per dag under stödets första tre månader."(Sveriges Riksdag, 2014, p.5)

In English: Step-in jobs was introduced in 2007 and regulated in the regulation (1997: 1275) about employment support .To be qualified for entry-level jobs, the newcomers have to be 20 years, registered in the Employment Service and in the last three years have been granted residence permit or residence card. The employer who recruits someone who fulfills the criteria is supported by 80 percent of the wage bill, a maximum of 800 per day. For an entry-level job, the employer can also get a manual premium of 50 kronor per day during the first three months.

III. Methodology

In the previous section, there is a presentation of the concepts related to intercultural communication as well as strategies applied by the Swedish government since 1960' to develop further effective integration policy in the country. Also, there is an overview about early and recent immigration in Sweden in addition to some information about integration strategies in France and Denmark.

In this section, the methodology used in this study is presented. The section consists of four parts. Firstly, the study design is a sort of a general overview. The second part is about the method for data collection and participants. It includes elementary information about the selected method for conducting the research that consists of interviews with Arab immigrants in Sweden. It also includes a description of the participants' profile and ethical consideration. The third part, the analysis, it is consecrated to introduce the running of the interviews and the chosen process to analyze the collected data. Finally, the fourth part is the limitations and delimitations of the research.

III.1 Study design

The method adopted in data collection is conducting a mixture of face to face interviews and phone interviews. The participants are male and female immigrants from the Mena region. The interviews' process and questions take into consideration certain ethical issues. The interviews took three weeks and were audio recorded. I did not know the participants before. In order to conduct the interview I choose settings in which immigrants from Arabic background are usually gathered. I went to *Lernia* School in Gothenburg and a few oriental café also located in Gothenburg. I started by approaching people and using Swedish language in interacting with them. Participants were asked if they can speak Arabic and if their answers were positive the language used in interacting with them switched to their mother tongue (the Arabic). Later on, their answers were transcribed and translated directly into English. In the case of this research I opted for a qualitative methodology based essentially on semi-structured interviews. Below, I present in details various components of the data collection and analysis.

III.2 Method for data collection and participants

III.2.1 Interviews

 Face to face interviews are used for data collection. It is an adequate strategy to interact with immigrants and examine their beliefs and views. The face to face interviews process is preferred because of some advantages below some of them are mentioned in (Becker &UBA-Team, 2011, p.5).

- – Interviewer can help the participant to understand the question
- – Employment of different techniques is possible
- – Open-ended questions, visual aids, answer scales, etc.
- – Longer interviews are tolerated
- – Additional questions can be used to collect detailed information.

In addition to face to face interviews, telephone interview is also used twice for data collection. The two calls were audio recorded. Actually, a telephone interview displays some advantages such as the synchronous communication of time but the asynchronous communication of place.(Oppdenaker, 2006, p.4) states some advantages of telephone interview presented by Mann and Stewart (2002). Below, some of them are mentioned:

− Hard to reach populations. It enables researchers to contact populations that might be difficult to work with on an FtF basis for example mothers at home with small children, shift workers, computer addicts and people with disabilities.
− Wide geographical access. People from all over the globe can be interviewed of course if they have access to telephone or computer. FtF interviewing can be very expensive and takes too much time.

Interviews are audio recorded, developed in English but conducted in Arabic. The main reason behind choosing to conduct interviews in Arabic is because people are usually more comfortable in interacting using their mother tongue. In order to examine the research questions and find answers to them, the interviews take the form of semi-structured interviews.

"They provide access to perceptions and opinions, they are effective for gaining insight into problems that are not immediately perceptible but that nonetheless cause concern in certain areas or in certain segments of the population". (Laforest, 2009, p.1).

Besides, the choice of semi-structured interviews seems to be appropriate because of the type of desired information and its sensitive nature. Accordingly, it usually results in a rich feedback that can be comprehensively connected and compared to the theoretical discussion.

III.2.2 Interviews structures

"Even though semi-structured interviews are flexible, they require rigorous preparation. It is essential to define their objectives, devise an interview plan and draw up a consent form". (Laforest, 2009, p.3)

The interview is divided into six sections. See (Appendix2)

1. General information about the participant
2. Questions concerning learning the Swedish language and language courses
3. Questions about the employment agency
4. Questions about social orientation courses
5. Questions about integration policy in Sweden
6. Question about cultural differences, adaptation and own integration

The interview initiates by asking participants to introduce themselves without going into deep details about their identities. Hence, participants declare their age, nationalities and how long they have been in Sweden.

In order to find answers to the first research question, participants are asked to express their point of view concerning integration strategies and programmes applied by the Swedish

government and institutions responsible for promoting integration. These programmes are SFI, the public employment agency and social orientation courses.

In an attempt to find answers to the second research question, interviewees are asked about their opinion concerning SFI. Respondents are interrogated if they did attend Swedish courses and if the programme was helpful in getting familiar with the Swedish culture.

Cultural diversity is an important subject when tackling the issue of integration challenges. As an attempt to answer the second research question, I highlight cultural differences between the Swedish and Arabic cultures. On that account, participants are asked about different cultural taxonomies, the five acculturation model and the three form of adaptation.

The third research question focuses on presenting immigrants' suggestions about further policies that can help in improving integration. Therefore, I asked participants to suggest updated procedure to improve the work of the employment agency, SFI and social orientation courses.

Eventually, participants are asked if they have anything to add because according to (Laforest, 2009, p.4) "semi-structured interviews do not consist of closed questions; it may be hard to end them. When interviewers feel that all topics have been discussed and that the time set aside for the interview is up, they can ask the respondent if he/she has anything to add."

III.2.3 Ethical considerations

In a scientific research it is important to consider ethical issues. The interview initiate by introducing myself as an attempt to gain their trust. Evidently trust is an essential key to make an individual self disclose. The target group for this research is immigrants with Arabic background. In the beginning of the interview, it is announced that the interview language is Arabic since it is the mother tongue of participants as well as mine. Then, the participants are provided with some essential knowledge about the research project. This information consists essentially in declaring that the interview is audio recorded and therefore their permission is needed. Later on, in the research, these participants are described anonymously and some information are declared about their profile. However, the description is not going to reveal specific information about interviewees that can result in identifying them. Indeed, privacy is taken into account because "researches must respect participants' right to control the amount of information they reveal about themselves" (Aguinis & Henle, 2002, p.40). Confidentiality is different from privacy because it is about research data and I also take it into account since "participants should have the right to decide to whom they will reveal personal information". (Aguinis & Henle, 2002, p.41).

In fact all the information concerning the conduction of the interview is summed up in a permission request. See (Appendix1).

III.3 Participants

	Age	Gender	Nationality	Time in Sweden	Interview duration
P 1	33	F	Morocco	1.5 year	15 min
P 2	37	M	Syria	2.5 year	10 min
P 3	36	M	Palestine	8 year	22 min
P 4	44	M	Syria	2 year	32 min
P5	35	F	Egypt	11 year	16 min
P6	60	M	Palestine	25 year	12 min
P7	32	F	Palestine	3 year	18 min

Table 4 : Background information of participants and interviews duration

The choice of participants was not made randomly. All respondents are immigrants from Arabic background and moved to Sweden as adults (over 20 year). The average age of participants is 30-60. Although the culture of Arabic countries is quite similar, I preferred to select a variety of nationalities. Even though, gender differences are not taken into account when analyzing the finding, I also preferred to interview female and male participants to enrich the reliability of the interview. In other words, I wanted to collect opinion of both female and male Arab immigrants about their journey of integration.

Total N° of participants	Total N° of female participants	Total N° of male participants	Total interviews duration
7	3	4	135 minutes

Table 5 : Total number of interviewees and total interviews duration

III.4 Data analysis

One of the purposes of this research project is to discuss the role of intercultural communication in improving the socio-economic and cultural integration of Arab immigrants

in Sweden. Therefore, the discussion cannot be fulfilled without examining the dynamic between Swedish integration policy and outcomes. The method of collecting data is interviewing Arab immigrants in Sweden. The second step, is transcribing the relevant and interesting answers into English. Examples of these transcriptions are mentioned in the result section.

In order to conduct a valuable research that assists in assembling required facts to examine the flow of integration in Sweden, a qualitative method based on an inductive as well as a thematic analysis have been chosen. Unlike the quantitative research based on numbers and deductive reasoning to base its interpretation, qualitative research focuses on the description of the facts and content, through the analysis and understanding of specific phenomenon "data conveyed through words have been labeled qualitative, whereas data presented in number form are quantitative" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015, p.105).The qualitative research can be defined as "an approach for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to social or human problem" (Creswell, 2007, p.4).It is also related to the inductive approach "Qualitative research is often said to employ inductive thinking or induction reasoning since it moves from specific observations about individual occurrences to broader generalizations and theories" (Soiferman, 2010, p.7).In this research project the qualitative method is applied to examine a socio economic and cultural issue related to the adaptation of Arab immigrants in Sweden.

Correspondingly, in a qualitative research it is recommended to adopt a thematic analysis instead of a content analysis. In fact a content analysis is partially a quantitative research and as Joffe and Yardley (2004) claimed "most content analysis result in a numerical description of features of a given text or series of images." (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p.56). The thematic analysis is estimated to be more advantageous in a qualitative research because "it is able to offer the systematic element characteristic of content analysis, but also permit the researcher to combine analysis of the frequency of codes with analysis of their meaning in context'. (Joffe & Yardley, 2004, p.57).

III.5 Limitations and delimitations

Although the research was carefully designed, it still has been influenced by some conditions difficult to control. Getting in contact with Arab immigrants was not difficult however convincing them to participate in the research study was challenging. People refuse to collaborate may be because the interview is audio-recorded. Sharing the same culture background make me believe that, these last periods of time, war circumstances, terrible life conditions and the strong feeling of insecurity drive people to refuse self disclose about delicate and emotional issue such as their integration in Sweden.

The limited number of participants can not reflect the status and reflections of all Arab immigrants in Sweden especially with their continuous growth number. The interview questions do only cover a few issue related to the problematic dilemma of integration. Indeed, the mentioned limitations can be assembled under the umbrella of time limitations. The time

consecrated for conducting the research was around three weeks, and participants did not show any readiness to talk more than 15 min.

In like manner, this research contains certain reliability. The fact of having Arabic as mother tongue was an advantage to interact with the target group effectively and efficiently. Participants did appreciate that the interview is carried in Arabic and did not hesitate to mention typical Arabic citation that highlights their point of view. The methodological procedure is the quantitative approach and semi-structured interview. The semi-structured strategy allowed collecting amplified information and increased the flexibility of the interviews. The qualitative approach based on facts and content created a discussion that can smoothly relate the results to theories.

IV.   Results

In the previous chapter there is an explanation of the choice of research in terms of methodological approach and the data collection process. Also, there is a description of the profile of interviewees as well as the interview layout. As it was mentioned before, the interviews were conducted in Arabic, audio recorded and then transcribed into English. Actually, the aim behind conducting the interviews is the use of participants' responses as sources and guides for analyzing the process of socio-economic and cultural integration of Arab immigrants in Sweden. Additionally, the aim of the interviews is to evaluate integration strategies in Sweden from the perspectives of Arab immigrants. The answers of participants provide the necessary material for the in-depth analysis of the data. My methodological research applied is a continuation to the reflection initiated at the theoretical framework and used to find answers to the research questions.

Before, starting to present the results, it is better to declare that the anonymity of participants is preserved following what is standard in the context of qualitative research. Therefore, there is no deviation from the rules and participants are codified through giving them a code i.e. (P.N°).

IV.1 Cultural differences and integration challenges in Sweden

In this section the participants are about the differences in terms of values, norms and traditions between the Arabic culture and the Swedish one. Additionally, they are asked to evaluate their own integration and adaptation.

IV.1.1 Cultural differences

(P.5) comes from Egypt an Arabic country with strong uncertainty avoidance. According to Hofstede (2016), Egypt has a high uncertainty avoidance index (UAI) (80) comparing to Sweden with only (29). Respondent 5 appeared to prefer the way Swedes deal with unusual situation. (P.5) appreciated low uncertainty avoidance and affirmed that it is really depressive for a person to have a profession that he or she doesn't like but has to since it is uncommon in the society to change the career suddenly. Another cultural factor that differs between Sweden and the Arabic world is the tendency toward masculinity. The level of masculinity in Sweden is much lower than in the Arabic world. According to Hofstede center (2016), the level of masculinity in Sweden is only (5) whereas in many Arab countries (MAS$\geq$ 45). These numbers are motivated with the point of view of (P.6) from Palestine since he claimed that unfortunately in the Arabic world many women suffer from physical and emotional abuse. Compared to Sweden, in the Arabic world people opt for a more flexible time and feel that relationship is more important than tasks. (P.3) appreciated the long term orientation mentality and he added that the Arab in general, focus only in the present and are disorganized. (P.1) preferred high power distance and believes that the parents in Sweden have to be more authoritarian with their children. (P.2) preferred collectivistic society and claimed that the Arabic culture in the best culture ever. However, five participants appreciated cultural characteristics of low context culture like the culture of Sweden. (P.3)

preferred (LTO) and making plans for the future. He added that the Arab in general, focus only in the present and are disorganized.(P4) and (P.7) preferred low power distance and the absence of hierarchy within a society and they believe that it improve human equality. (P.5) appreciated low uncertainty avoidance and affirmed that it is really depressive for a person to exerce a profession that he or she doesn't like but has to since it is uncommon in the society to change the career suddenly. (P.6) liked the low level of masculinity in Sweden and claimed that unfortunately in the Arabic world many women suffer from physical and emotional abuse.

Below, it is a table that illustrates the opinion of some participants concerning different cultures taxonomies.

P.code	Dimension of national cultures	Responses in Arabic	Reponses in English
P.1	(PDI), مسافة السلطة	علاقة الوالدين بطفلهما في السويد:الشيء الذي زاد عن حده انقلب إلى ضده	"If something crosses the limits, it turns against it" (children/parents, relationship in Sweden)
P.2	(IDV),الفردية	علاقة الفرد بأقربائه وطيدة في العالم العربي وبطبع أحسن	Relatives' relationship is stronger and better in the Arabic world.
P.3	التوجه طويل (LTO) المدى	أنا معجب بطريقة تخطيطهم للمستقبل	I like how they make plans for the future.
P.4	(PDI),مسافة السلطة	ليس هناك شيء إسمه سلطة بالسويد،لا فلعمل ولا فالمنزل وهذا يعطي نوع من الحرية	The life in Sweden is not based on power, It improves freedom.
P.5	(UAI) مؤشر تجنب عدم اليقين	يعجبني في السويد أنه من السهل تغيير المهنة و هو أمرٌ غير شائع في العالم العربي	In Sweden, there is a possibility of changing a career and attending university whenever a person desires. In the Arabic world it is not common at all.
P.6	(MAS/FEM), الذكورة / الانوثة	فالعالم العربي حقوق المرأة منسية. في السويد المرأة تتمتع بكل حقوقه. المجتمع العربي ذكوري أما السويد فالمجتمع أساسه التسوية بين الجنسين	In the Arabic world, women's rights are often lost. In Sweden, the situation of women's right is much better. The Arabic society is a masculine society and the Swedish society is based on gender equality.
P.7	(PDI), مسافة السلطة	لا تعجبني طريقة أتواصل بين الاستاذ والطالب فالعالم العربي.في السويد يعجبني تواضع الناس	I dislike communication barrier between teachers and students in the Arabic world. In Sweden, I like peoples' modesty.

Table 6 : Responses of participants about differences between the Arab culture and the Swedish culture.

To sum up, participants seemed to have different opinions concerning culture differences between Sweden and the Arabic world. In general most of participants appreciated the Swedish culture characteristics and tended to criticize implicitly the Arabic culture. Only one participant showed a xenophobic attitude and expressed that his culture is the best culture ever.

IV.1.2 Integration and adaptation strategies

(P.3) expressed that he finds himself well adapted, saved and integrated in the Swedish society. He argued that he chooses to use both cultures norms in his daily life and refuses to reject his own cultures since after all every culture has a negative and positive side. He claimed that of course he misses his home country but it is also very pleasant to leave in Sweden and he is satisfied with his life. Economically, (P.3) said that he drives his own company, has his own car therefore he is financially comfortable and enjoys his life in Sweden. (P.3) declared that he is also well adapted personally and psychologically since he can manage to deal with daily life problems without trouble or stress that can contribute to some health diseases.

(P.4) claimed that he succeeded to adapt into the Swedish culture but he did not enjoy anything since he misses his children who still live in Syria. About the psychological adaptation (P.4) said that it is different now comparing to when he first arrived to Sweden. In this context he added, that in migration agency, refugees are treated like numbers not like person which made him feel sad. (P.4) stated that now he has a job and he is financially comfortable and feels secure. However when he arrived in Sweden he had not lot of money and he had to ask several times to get a bus card for free because he refuses to break the law and uses public transport without paying. He added that he never did it in Syria and he did not want to do it in Sweden. (P.4) prefers the model of integration since it promotes cultural tolerance.

(P.5) felt that she is well integrated in the Swedish society adding that her husband is form Sweden. When I asked her about her personal, cultural and psychological adaptation, she answered that she is satisfied and she would probably face more daily life problems in her home country than in Sweden. Concerning her economic adaptation (P.5) argued that the situation changed from when she first arrived to Sweden until today. She was a student but today she runs her own company and she is financially comfortable. About her own integration, (P.5) saidvthat she prefers integration over assimilation since it is the best model in Sweden, a multicultural society, that creates a cultural harmony and thereby a new mixed culture.

(P.7) declared that she has no problem in discovering the new culture; she is satisfied with her new life in Sweden. However, she had a little of difficulty to accept the health care system in Sweden which makes her feel sometimes psychologically insecure. (P.7) explained that in her home country, a patient can immediately be examined by specialist but in Sweden it takes months. (P.7) claimed that she will never forget her own cultural heritage and referred

to the concept of assimilation but there are some factors in Swedish values that she appreciated and applies in her daily life.

To sum up, four participants out of seven expressed clearly their opinion about the acculturation model. No one of them mentioned the separation, marginalization and segregation models. All of them declared that they use integration features in their life in Sweden and do not appreciate the assimilation model. All participants except two (P1,P2) declared that they feel personally, psychologically and economically, adapted in the Swedish society I could not ask the first participant (P.1) to answer the question about adaptation because of time limitation. She was in hurry and I did not want to make a pressure on her. I did not ask the second participant (P.2) to answer the question about adaptation because he already answered it implicitly. I felt that the last question is inappropriate as (P.2) expressed his pessimistic attitude about all form of adaptation in Sweden. In fact he literally said: "May be I will learn Swedish language but it will be late because at that time I have already decided to leave the country, I'm not happy here and I will never be".

IV.2 The role of SFI courses

One of the most important steps in integration is learning the host language. In this context, the Arab immigrants are asked about the SFI courses provided by municipalities in Sweden.

 (P.1) is still attending SFI courses and claimed that the course is very helpful, since it presents a great opportunity for immigrants to learn the Swedish language. (P.1) added that immigrants' own motivation determines the time he or she spends on learning the host language. (P.1) said that learning Swedish is extremely important and crucial since "the best technique to approach a native Swedes and to create a good impression is communicating in Swedish". About the role of Swedish courses in improving integration, (P.1) stated that teachers informed her of the possibility of doing practical training. "It is indeed, a good chance for me to interact more in Swedish and to start the work experience in Sweden.

(P.2) is still studying the Swedish language and he said that learning Swedish language is extremely important to integrate in the Swedish society and is helpful, but under certain conditions. These conditions are related mostly to teachers. Some teachers have elaborated experience in interacting with immigrants. Others do not care about refugees' feelings and do not make effort in helping students grasp the language easily. (P.2) added that actually some teachers are Arab and he does not appreciate their way of teaching. According to him, the Swedish teachers are better, because they show empathy toward refugees, an attitude that Arab teachers do not have. (P.3) said that learning the host language is crucial and SFI helped him in learning the language i.e. (grammar, words structure etc…). However the course had nothing to do with improving other forms of integration.

Similarly to the answer of (P.2), (P.4) affirmed that learning Swedish is the first effective strategy to integrate in the Swedish society. He added that The SFI courses are really helpful but the effectiveness of the course varies from one school to others. (P.4) claimed that he

studied in a school located in Lerum and the teachers followed strict rules and schedules. According to (P.4), the teachers' commitment created a positive atmosphere in classrooms that helped him to feel comfortable and learn the language rapidly. When (P.4) was asked about his own strategy to learn the language rapidly, he answered:

> The problem of many people is that they are convinced that learning a foreign language depends 80% on what they get from the course that they attend. However it is completely the opposite in that sense 20% is related to information acquired at a language course and the rest, 80 %, depends on the own motivation of the person. Also, Arab people appreciate a lot when a person greets them using Arabs word such as "Marhaba" "مرحبا" meaning "hello" in English. The same in Sweden, it is much more appreciated to speak Swedish instead of English since it is indeed Sweden not Great Britain.

(P.5) had a different opinion concerning SFI. She believes that the course was not helpful at all and that it was a waste of time. (P.5) claimed that she was in the same class with elderly people and with people with very low educational background whereas she was only 25 year and has two magister degrees, one in accounting and one in law.

(P.6) affirmed that language is the most important tool of communication and the key of life therefore learning Swedish is important. Similarly to a container full of valuable objects, other tools of communication are based upon language. A person who lives in Sweden and cannot speak Swedish does not have any potential and it is a worthless person. (P.6) said that in 1991, he attended SFI course and it was very helpful. He added that it helped him a lot since he never used a translator when he first arrived to Sweden, he used to speak English but when he started SFI he started to use Swedish.

(P.7) argued that there is no doubt that learning Swedish is the initial effective strategy of integration and SFI was in overall good. She said that during SFI, immigrants learn the Swedish grammar but the negative side is that an immigrant can attend SFI and finish the course without learning to communicate in Swedish. She developed further her ideas mentioning that SFI course focuses mainly on teaching immigrants grammar and neglects the essential need of immigrants which is using the language in practice. According to (P.7) some people do not care about grammar theories and they are not planning to continue studying, they just need to learn lot of vocabulary.

To sum up, all participants argued that learning Swedish is the most first important strategy to integrate into the Swedish society. In addition, all participants attended SFI courses and have different opinions about it. Two participants (P.1, P.6) believed that the course was really helpful Four participants (P.2, P.3, P.4, P.7) believed that the course is helpful but under certain conditions. These conditions are mostly related to the structure of the programme and teacher's effectiveness. Only one participant (P.5) said that the course is not helpful at all.

IV.3 The role of the Swedish employment agency

In the theoretical discussion, there is a description of the significant role of the employment agency in Sweden. Also, there is presentation of laws and rules applied by the Swedish government to improve labour market integration. Therefore, questions of this section are meant to investigate the effort made by the Swedish employment agency to assure an efficient cultural and socio economic integration.

(P.1) claimed that all citizens in Sweden have the same opportunities and finding a job quickly depends on the effort produced. (P.3) and (P.6) mentioned few positive initiatives such as paying around 80% of the salary of an immigrant for the first year. Yet, they added that an Arab immigrant needs to struggle everyday searching for a job and the only effort that employees in the employment agency do to help is printing jobs offers.

(P2) affirmed that he did not have an idea about the labour maket in Sweden since he did not start looking for a job yet. However, he affirmed that the Swedish employment agency do not want to offer job for immigrants and that the Swedes are prioritized.(P.4) had a completely opposite idea and stated that in Sweden, everyone has the same opportunity but may be immigrants needs to prove their competence and make efforts to find jobs more than the Swedes.

(P.5) believed that the employment agency work is not effective at all. She affirmed that when she came to Sweden, 11 years ago, no one told her that there is a course for people who already have high educational background like her, stressing that she is convinced that it was the duty of the administrator who worked in the employment agency. (P.5) added that even though employment agency is the mirror of the country and one of the first organizations that an immigrant starts interacting with yet the role of the agency is extremely limited. (P.5) stated:

> I felt terrible when, after a meeting of one hour with a person working in the employment agency and supposed to help me find a job with my two magister degrees, in accounting and in law, suggested that I can work as a stable women since my hobby is horse riding.

(P.6) stated that the employment agency does not help a lot. They do not find jobs for immigrants but they may guide. According to (P.6), it is the role of immigrants to find a job and the employment agency can help by paying the biggest amount of the salary. (P.6) believed that it is a really good opportunity that was not applied before and it helps a lot in reducing unemployment. (P.7) claimed that she cannot give her opinion about the employment agency she is not planning to find a job until she finish her master studies and improve her Swedish language.

To sum up, the answers of (P.3) and (P.6) were similar. The two interviewees argued that the role of the employment agency in helping immigrants to integrate in the labour market is

really limited but they appreciated the regulations about drafting an introduction plan and the role of guidance provided by the agency. (P.5) believed that the role of the employment agency is not only limited but also minor and frivolous. (P.1, P.4) had an optimistic opinion concerning the labour market in Sweden and the role of the Swedish employment agency whereas (P.2) had a pessimistic opinion.

IV.4 Social orientation courses

Social orientation courses are established to improve integration. This section is meant to evaluate the effectiveness of the programme.

(P.3) claimed that he attended an introductory programme when he arrived to Sweden. It is driven by Gothenburg municipality. (P.3) expresses that the programme was helpful more than SFI when it comes to integration. (P.3) explained that the programme was in easy Swedish but also the Arabic language. He found it effective and practical to ask questions and get answers in Arabic.

(P.4) participated in the introduction programme arranged by Gothenburg municipality and he mentioned that is was 20 lectures. According to (P.4) it is a good programme in general but then he started to talk about many negative points. Firstly, he did not appreciate that Arab immigrants felt obliged to attend the introduction programme otherwise they lose some money from their introduction benefit. This condition pushed immigrants to be present at the introduction programme but without interest. A second negative point is even though teachers share the same background with immigrants; they do not take into account the feelings of immigrants especially of refugees. The third negative point is related to information presented in the courses. (P.4) believed that it is not the priority of Arab immigrants to learn about the history of Sweden in the introduction programme. (P4) claimed that the main information needed by immigrants was not covered by the programme during the 20 lectures. As an example, (P.4) said:

> Many immigrants, even though they have been in the country for more than one year, they still do not know how to read the time table of buses and trams, they don't have any idea about the public transport in other region in Sweden, I had a difficulty when I went to Stockholm, I lost a lot of time trying to understand how public transport work in the capital of Sweden, it is not similar to Gothenburg.

Another simple example but significant is about the online payment method in Sweden. (P.4) affirmed that immigrants need to learn how to pay their bills with their mobiles and how to use the mobile bank ID.(P.4) suggested a whole reformation of the programme with new measures that take into consideration all the negative angles identified by him.

To sum up, only two interviewees participated in the social orientation courses provided by Gothenburg municipality. (P.3) affirmed that the programme was helpful more than SFI

however (P.4) believed that the programme requires improvement. (P.1 and P.2) did not know that the social orientation courses actually exist. (P.7) was informed about the course but choose to not attend it. (P.5 and P.6) arrived to Sweden before the courses started to exist so and they were already familiar with Swedish culture and were not among the target group to attend the social orientation courses.

IV.5 Suggestions from the Arab immigrants for improvement of integration strategies

This section is devoted to note the reflection the Arab immigrants concerning integration policy in Sweden.

According to (P.1), the Swedish government is of course paying good attention to the process of integration but it is not enough since she stated:

> I consider immigrants as guests, when you receive guests at home you have to warmly welcome them and do your best to make them feel comfortable and welcomed. Sweden accepts to have immigrants on its territory; therefore, the government needs to make more effort and work harder to efficiently take care of those immigrants.

The interviewee (P.2) argued that the strategy applied by the Swedish government changed from the time he arrived to Sweden. According to him, dealing with immigrants especially Syrians was marvelous and unbelievably good. (P.2) said that he was surprised about the generosity, kindness and honorability of Swedish people. According to (P.2) "the attitude of generosity declined this last year, financially and psychologically maybe because the excessive numbers of Syrian refugees". I continue the interview by asking him to give some suggestions to improve integration in Sweden. (P2) insisted that the most important is integrating immigrants in the labour market taking into consideration their educational background. (P2) said that it is not acceptable that a highly educated person work for example as a bus or taxi driver. He said:

> I'm not underestimating any type of job but we, Arab immigrants, spent lots of time studying and preparing for a nice future. In addition, our universities studies cost lots of money, for example I'm graduated from the business school of Riadh (Saudi Arabia) and it costed me a fortune.

(P.7) affirmed that the rapid a way toward ameliorating integration starts by a special focus on the labour market integration. She added: "It is sad that people, who have high educational background from their home countries and long experience of work, find themselves starting from zero. All their effort and dreams fall apart.

On the contrary, the third participant (P.3) characterized the Swedish policy in dealing with the Arab immigrants as "generous more than it has to be". (P.3) suggested that the government changes the method through restraining financial assistance for immigrants. He believed that immigrants are lazy and do not want to work because they already get enough money from the government and without doing efforts. Correspondingly, they can often choose to gain extra money through black work. In this context, (P.3) said:

> If the government creates more work opportunities, push immigrants to work through restraining financial assistance as a result many problems can be solved for instance black work, gang formation and drugs selling. Immigrants will go to work in the morning, work hard and get tired, go back home and sleep. They will not feel segregated and marginalized since they are at list economically active.

(P.4) claimed that the integration strategy is good in Sweden and does actually work but of course it is not enough since the number is huge. According to (P.4) the main problem is the lack of communication. (P.4) stated:

> I know a lot of Swedes, more than 60 persons, who want to help but do not know how to start and what to do. At the same time, there are lot of people living in camps and need support, emotionally and financially. The main issue here is to connect those two parties and make them communicate.

(P.4) added that among other solutions for improving integration is to facilitate the communication and build a bridge to link non-profitable and charitable organizations with immigrants.

(P.5) insisted that the government need to change the way of dealing with the immigrants' issue. According to her the government needs to start evaluating the work of many agencies responsible of integration processes essentially the employment agency. (P.5) suggested that the government does an investment in human resources. (P.5) affirmed that some people working in the employment agency are not well qualified for their jobs since their performance are in general negative.(P.5) believed that one essential way to improve integration is that the government concentrates in putting right persons in the right seats.

To conclude, all participants agreed that integration strategies in Sweden are really good. However they believed that more consideration to the labour market integration is required in addition to improving communication between immigrants and Swedish authorities. A focus on improving human resources in agencies responsible for the integration of immigrants such as the public employment agencies is also suggested.

V.   Discussion

The purpose of this thesis is to assess the integration strategies applied by the Swedish authorities according to immigrants with Arab background perspectives. This thesis aims also to highlight cultural differences between the two culture but also to present challenges related to socio economic and cultural integration that the Arab immigrants experience in Sweden. Moreover, this thesis aims to identify suggestions for possible integration strategies which can improve the process of integration in Sweden.

In the previous chapter the presentation of results exposes diverse opinions of the Arab immigrants concerning the issue of integration as well as cultural adaptation. Also, it is an opportunity to collect their suggestions about possible initiative to improve integration policies in Sweden. The method for data collection applied in this project is conducting semi-structured interviews with the immigrants with Arabic background living in Sweden.

Intercultural communication is often one of the results of migration (Samovar et al, 2014, p.5).Additionally; Allwood (1985) and Ting-Toomey (1999) argue that intercultural communication is sharing of meaning and information between people with different cultural background. Therefore in this chapter there is a focus on highlighting the fundamental role of intercultural communication in improving interaction between Swedish public organizations and Arab immigrants.

Below, the answers the three research questions of this project are presented. To initiate, there is an analysis of differences between the Arabic and the Swedish culture as well as integration challenges of the Arabs in Sweden. There is Also a discussion of the participants' answers concerning their own adaptation and integration in the Swedish society and relate the participants' answers to theories presented in the theoretical background chapter.

Further, there is a presentation of socio-economic integration of the Arabs in Sweden. Based on the opinions of respondents, an analysis of the effectiveness of SFI and the functions and roles of the employment agency are considered. The reliability of information provided by social orientation courses in Gothenburg is also discussed.

V.1 Answers to the second research question

This section aims the answer the second research question, *RQ2: How do people from the Arab countries experience cultural differences between their home countries and the Swedish culture? How do they experience their integration in Sweden?*

Every group of people has its unique culture and proud of their cultural heritage. Allwood (1985), Hofstede (1984) and Sir E B Tylor (1871) agree that culture is the characteristics and habits of group of people that distinguish them from others.

However, nowadays cultural differences become a controversial issue especially in a multicultural society. In globalized world, rapidly and more easily than in previous centuries, people take the decision to immigrate. However, nowadays cultural differences become a controversial issue especially in a multicultural society. In globalized world, rapidly and easier than in previous centuries, people take the decision to immigrate. Merali (2008), Divelii (2008) and the Oxford dictionaries (2016) agree that immigration occur when a group of people decides to leave their home country and move to settle in another country temporally or permanently.

Moving from the North Africa or the Middle East to Sweden does not take more than five hours. In other words, moving from one continent to another does not take more than one day. However, integration of people coming from the MENA region i.e. (Middle East and North Africa) to Sweden can take months, years or do not occur at all. Usually, from the first days in a new society people start comparing cultures. Between Sweden and the Arabic world there are many cultural differences. According to the research of Hall (1976) and Hofstede (1983), Sweden and Arab countries have completely opposite culture and the answers of participants in the research confirm it. The respondents commented about cultural factors and all of them mention examples that demonstrate differences between Arab culture and Swedish culture. For instance, (P.6) claimed that masculinity dominates the Arabic societies whereas gender equality characterizes Swedish society. Also, (P.5) from Egypt said that in her country, the index of uncertainty avoidance is high (80), people cannot change their career easily whereas in Sweden, the index of uncertainty avoidance is (29) and to change profession is very common.

Hofstede (1976) made a classification of culture according to five dimensions. Participants gave examples of cultural differences between the Arabic world and Sweden. For instance, three participants talked about Power distance. According to the Hofstede center (2016), the power distance index (PDI) in Sweden is (31) comparing to (70) in Morocco and (80) in Syria. (P.1) expresses her negative point of view concerning the flat relationship between parents and their children in Sweden. (P.4) is from Syria and had a different point of view from (P.1).He seems to appreciate the low level of power distance in Sweden.

Hall (1976) believes that in low context culture such as Sweden time is highly organized and tasks are more important than relationship. These factors can correlate with the cultural dimension proposed by Hofstede (1983) long term orientation Vs short term orientation. According to Hofstede center (LTO) in Sweden is (53) while in some Arabic countries (LTO) ≤30. Even though (P4) is from Palestine, a short term orientated culture; he prefers to be well organized and makes plans for the future.

Though the participants belong to a collectivistic culture characterized by masculinity, short term orientation and high uncertainty avoidance, the answers of some of them depict that they prefer the opposite.

In fact, the answers of the respondents indicate that individuals differences exist, and the classification made by Hofstede (1983) and Edward T. Hall (1976) can be considered as general, not applicable to everyone. An individual may come from a country characterized by a high context culture but may choose to prefer low context characteristics in daily life.

The analysis of respondents' answers about their adaptation shows that in general all participants except one are satisfied with their life in Sweden. They mentioned certain details

related to their experience when they first arrived in Sweden but these situations were temporally. For instance, (P.7) expressed that she did not appreciate the health care system in Sweden but now she is getting familiar with all the procedures. Also (P.4) said that when he arrived in Sweden he had not enough money to buy buss tickets which made him feel sad and depressed.

Berry (1997) admits that there are three different forms of adaptation, psychological, cultural and economic. The analysis of the answers of participants reveals that integration challenges that participants experience are mostly related to economic adaptation rather than cultural and psychological adaptation. In a matter of fact, as soon participants started to be comfortable financially, they also started to feel less pressure and to become better integrated.

The acculturation model firstly presented by Berry (1980) and discussed further in Berry (1997) and Berry (2005), depicts five acculturation strategies; assimilation, integration, marginalization, separation and segregation. In general, the participants prefer the integration strategy which has a harmonious relationship with integration like argued by Clyne & Jupp (2011).

The second research question focuses on differences between the Arab culture and the Swedish culture but also focuses on the integration of Arab immigrants in Sweden. Only one participant expressed that there is segregation but it is mainly related to socio economic integration and economic adaptation rather than to cultural integration. In fact, cultural integration as it was referred to in Sardinha (2009) is related to tolerance and equality in a host country. (P2) believed that in Sweden immigrants can never get the work they deserve because Swedes are privileged. However (P.1) affirmed that all citizens in Sweden have the same opportunities.

Participants did not mention marginalization or separation which can lead to a positive conclusion. Multiculturalism and integration are characteristics of the current Swedish society. Participants talked about integration challenges related to psychological and cultural adaptation but their feeling of satisfaction and integration depended on economic adaptation and labour market integration. Almost all respondents argue that integration is the best model that fit in a multicultural society such as Sweden.

To sum up, the answers of the participants show that no one of them prefer the assimilation model since they do not accustom themselves to the host culture and reject their own culture. The segregation felt by (P.2) is related to labour market integration and not to cultural integration. All most all respondents declare that they feel integrated in the Swedish society or at least making effort to improve their integration.

V.2   Answers to the first research question

The Swedish integration policy derives from the Swedish immigration policy established in the mid 1960's. The fact sheet drafted by the ministry of integration in (2009) determines that integration is the role of all municipalities. The first research question has for aim identifying the effectiveness of important integration measures followed by the Swedish government to advance integration in the country. *RQ1: What are the integration strategies provided by the Swedish government? Are they effective?*

In this section, there is a discussion of the role of certain programme in the development of integration in Sweden.

V.2.1 SFI, Swedish for adults immigrants

Language is the essential tool for communication. It is the key to culture and thereby the key to integration. In Sweden, even though the majority of citizens speak English fluently, the Swedish language will always dominate and be preferred in every communication of course because it is part of the identity of the country. Nowadays, there are various policies applied to ameliorate integration in Sweden. One of the most known integration programmes proposed by the Swedish government is the Swedish free language training organized by municipalities. It is as old as the immigration policy. It was launched in 1970 and today is known as SFI (Swedish for immigrants).

The answers of participants about their experience with SFI, show that the programme does help new comers to learn the language but the programmes' structures need to be revised. It is the responsibility of municipalities to improve the structure of the most important integration's programme. (P.7) and (P.3) affirm that SFI focuses more on written communication than on spoken communication. Perhaps, one of the first aims of most immigrants is to speak Swedish and not to write texts with correct grammar in Swedish. Two interviewees claim that the effectiveness of SFI vary between schools and municipalities and it even depends on teachers engagement .On that account, municipalities may collaborate and focus more on evaluating the structure of SFI provided by their schools. Besides, the content of the programme may also be improved through adding lectures that introduce intercultural communication. Since the programme aims to teach the immigrants the Swedish language, lectures can consist also of informing the immigrants about the non verbal communication and body language in Sweden. Obviously, the knowledge of these concepts may help to avoid any inconvenience related to cultural misunderstanding.

V.2.2 The public employment agency

Socio-economic integration of immigrants is based essentially on labour market integration. Entzinger and Biezeveld, (2003) state that the success of integration is related to the involvement of migrants in the labour market. On that account, the Public Employment Agency takes also the responsibility of improving integration in Sweden.

Labour market integration is the common raised integration challenges by almost all interviewees. (P.7) affirms that the rapid way toward ameliorating integration starts by a special focus on the labour market integration. Also, (P.5) has an interesting suggestion since she believes that the Swedish government has to revise the work of many agencies responsible of integration processes especially the public employment agency.

Some participants recognize the good initiative taken by the Swedish government to apply the subsidized employment (*Subventionerade anställningar*) which is according to Bloom (2013) providing jobs for people financed by public authorities. Nevertheless, opinions about the role of employment agency was in overall not positive and pessimist. Almost all interviewees agree that the basic key to improve integration starts by improving labour market integration. (P.2) and (P.7) insist that the Arab immigrants with high educational background are not treated as they deserve to be treated. (P.2) and (P.7) say that the Arab

immigrants with high educational background spent years studying and planning for their future besides high education in Arab countries cost lots of money. Sometimes, in Sweden, they are judged not qualified to continue exerting the profession they used to do in their home countries.

The social orientation courses (*samhällsorientering*) are an initiative taken by some municipalities in coordination with the Swedish public employment agency. The act (2010: 197) determines that the employment agency has to organize introduction activities that have for aim introducing the Swedish culture to new comers. In effect, after examining the responses of interviewees, it is possible to assume that the programme was helpful but there were certain factors needed to be adjusted. In fact, the answers of participants about their opinion concerning the course were limited since only two out of seven did attend the course therefore it is difficult to fairly evaluate the courses. The social orientation courses are driven in various languages which is a positive initiative. However the contents of the courses do not seem to attract the attention of new comers. The programme can focus more on introducing concepts of intercultural communication. For instance, provide immigrants with a minimum knowledge about theories established by researchers in the intercultural communication field such as factors of high and low context culture developed by Hall (1976) or cultural taxonomies developed by Hofsede (1983). Hence, in the social orientation courses, cross culture comparison workshops may be considered and it can help in discovering traits shared by the arab culture and the Swedish culture or highlighting differences between the two cultures. In addition, intercultural communication workshops can make immigrants more familiar with the Swedish culture characteristics and stimulate their awareness of how to interact with Swedes.

Furthermore, one participant mentions that immigrants feel obliged to attend the course to benefit of introduction benefits as it is determined in the act of establishment (SFS 2010:197).May be it is better to not to relate money with the social orientation programme like it is decided in the act (SFS 2010:197). Immigrants have to attend the courses because it is actually beneficial for a rapid integration and not because of financial reasons.

Immigrants express their dissatisfaction toward the employment agency framework. Thus, the Swedish authorities and municipalities have to reconsider and revise the settled goal of the employment agency. A more focus on communicating with immigrants, older and newer, may be fruitful. The importance of communication is underlined by (P.4). He evokes that promoting integration requires a focus on advancing communication between immigrants, charitable organizations and Swedish public institutions. Surprisingly, one interviewee (P.3) believes that the Swedish government is too generous with immigrants. He is convinced that the generosity of government financial support for immigrants is slowing integration procedure and augments laziness among the Arab immigrants.

The suggestions of immigrants may lead to the establishment of new adequate procedures that may help in changing the judgment of new comers about the employment agency. Actually, these procedures can rely essentially on enhancing communication between the Arab immigrants and the Swedish public organization that can lead to elaborated

understanding about the crucial needs of new comers.Moreover, the staffs of public organizations have to acquire the basic knowledge of intercultural competence. Intercultural competence matures the skills and abilities of staff and makes them prepared to communicate appropriately with people with different culture backgrounds.

V.3 Author's suggestions for integration strategies improvement

Integration requires effort from the two concerned parties that are immigrants and the host country's' government. For that reason, there is a need for recreation of the Ministry of Integration. The ministry of integration and gender equality was created in 2007 and dissolved in 2011. Maybe before five years ago there was no need to a Ministry of Integration but nowadays perhaps it can create a difference. A ministry devoted for integration may dispose of better opportunities and readabilities to improve the social welfare and integration based on effective intercultural understanding. The suggestion can be motivated through referring to the rapid escalating number of immigrants that enhance the issue of cultural and socio-economic integration. According to OECD (2014) in 2013, Sweden is one of the OECD countries with the largest foreign-born population with around 16%. In fact, according to the Swedish migration board statistics, the number of Syrian immigrants in Sweden was only 421 in 2010 but in 2015 it is 51388.

The third research question has for aim identifying possible suggestions that can promote integration in Sweden based on intercultural understanding. *RQ3:How should Sweden improve integration?*

The study of the interviewees 'answers emphasize the assumption that intercultural communication is crucial in enhancing cultural understanding thus contributing to updated efficient integration policies.
Intercultural communication has for aims making people with different background considering and exchanging their cultural diversities. For that reason, intercultural communication is fundamental and helps in understanding the mentality of immigrants in general and the Arab immigrants in particular in Sweden. The focus on the understanding of Arab culture is crucial since one of the most famous anthropologist, Edward T. Hall claimed in (1966) that Western and Arab could not understand each other even after two thousands year of contact.

The use of intercultural communication concepts to understand the Arab culture characteristics is important. Indeed, the presence of the   Arab immigrants in Sweden is significant even before the refugees' crisis and before the start of what is called the Arab Spring in the late 2010. Actually, statistics retrieved from (migrationsverket, 2016) show that in 2010, 44% of people who had registered right of residence came from 5 Arab countries. In 2015, 60% of the granted asylum was given to Arab immigrants with 19421 whereas the total number of granted asylum was 32631.

To sum up, the suggestions that come out from this thesis that may help in improving integration of the Arab immigrants in particular and in general improving the integration strategies in Sweden are the following:

- Creation of a Ministry of Integration
- Revising the content of social orientation courses: organizing workshops on intercultural communication and organizing cross cultural training workshops.
- Canceling the social orientation courses connection with the benefit of introduction plan benefits
- Revising methods of teaching Swedish language in SFI courses: focusing more on spoken communication then written communication.
- Adding lectures about non-verbal communication and body language in Sweden
- Developing intercultural competence of SFI teachers
- Advancing communication between immigrants and charitable foundation
- Advancing communication between immigrants and the Swedish authorities
- Revising the effectiveness and the role of the public employment agency
- Developing intercultural competence of public employment agencies' employees
- Improving labour market integration.
- Improving labour market integration of high educated rab immigrants.

VI.   Conclusion

The focus of the Swedish government on integration started in the mid 1960's. After the World War Two, immigrants started to see Sweden as one of the safest countries in the world and the country with the highest job opportunities. The Swedish government established the immigration policy in the mid 1960's that changed into an integration policy in 1997.In the last five years, Sweden still one of the most secure and democratic countries in the world and the most attractive destination for immigrants especially for people from the Mena Region i.e. (Middle East and North Africa).The rapid deterioration of life conditions in many Arab countries forced thousands of people to immigrate and they choose Sweden to start a new secure life. In 2015, According to the Swedish migration agency, (Swedish Migration Agency, 2016) the number of granted asylum to immigrants from 14 Arab countries is 19421 whereas the total number is 32631.These statistics underline the immense presence of the Arab people in Sweden.

The study consists of discussing integration strategies applied by the Swedish government and evaluating the effectiveness of these measures through the perspectives of the Arab immigrants. Moreover, the research presents differences between Swedish culture and the Arabic culture. The opinions of seven immigrants coming from four Arab countries were collected through the conduction of semi-structured interviews and analyzed using qualitative approach method.

The research highlights the fundamental role of intercultural communication. There are many reasons to consider the importance of intercultural communication in improving integration. In Sweden, a multicultural society, individuals interact daily with people from different backgrounds. Thus, integration in a multicultural community requires the coordination of civil society and government.

The results show that most of interviewees prefer the model of integration over others acculturation models and are, to some extent, adapted in Sweden. Participants declared several differences between the Arab culture and the Swedish culture. However, these differences do not represent cultural barriers to communication since they opt for mixing both cultures characteristics in their strategies for interaction. Concerning integration measures, participants had both negative and positive opinions. In general, the Swedish language courses, SFI, and the social integration courses are advancing integration.

Nevertheless, participants had interesting suggestion for improving the two courses. They insisted that the best alternative is improving labour market integration, considering intercultural communication and sharing ideas and information with the Arab immigrants to understand their attitude and perspectives. About the role of the public employment agency, the interviewees argued that the regulation (1997: 1275) about subsidized employment is really very good initiative. However, they claimed that the role of the public employment agency is still minor in helping the Arab new comers, especially high educated people for finding jobs. Participants believe that improving Arab integration depends strongly on

improving labour market integration but a deeper understanding of intercultural communication is crucial.

Intercultural communication or in other words communication between people with different backgrounds is an issue that requires a significant attention especially in an environment of multiculturalism like as Sweden. When two people from different culture backgrounds communicate, they may interpret the messages based on different expectations, beliefs and values. This is why the awareness about intercultural communication is one of the best solutions to avoid culture misunderstanding .Employees in the Swedish institutions, interact daily with Arab immigrants; it is recommended that they have a basic knowledge about Arabic culture. For instance, these employees should be aware that in Arabic culture the meaning is embedded in the information therefore they should try to read between lines to understand what an Arabic person really wants.

The research came out with suggestions to advance the process of integration in Sweden. Today, because of the rapid escalation of the numbers of immigrants in Sweden, the creation of a Ministry of Integration may be an advantage decision. Including intercultural and cross cultural lectures in SFI and social orientation courses can help in informing the Arab immigrants and all immigrants in general about Swedish culture characteristics. It can also help in avoiding inconvenient situation related to cultural misunderstanding. Communication is basically the interaction between at least two individuals. Therefore, not only the immigrants need to develop their knowledge about intercultural competence but also the Swedes that interact daily with the immigrants such as SFI teachers and employees of the public agencies.

To conclude, an elaborated knowledge of intercultural communication principles can be a key among others effective measures to improve integration. The willing to ameliorate integration with considering intercultural communication and the awareness of cultural differences is an advantage to create a harmonious society where citizens respect each other's culture, identities and ethnicities.

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Appendices

Socio-economic and cultural integration of Arab immigrants in Sweden

Thank you for accepting to participate in this interview with the subject "integration of Arab immigrants in Sweden". The research is part of my Master's Thesis in the field of communication at the University of Gothenburg.

All data gathered in this interview will be used exclusively for academic purposes. All data will be treated anonymously. No information about your identity will be collected, retained or shared.

For further information about this research or any questions concerning your participation, please contact the researcher Manel Saidi at gussaidima@student.gu.se or the supervisor nataliya.berbyuk.lindstrom@ait.gu.se

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Consent to the audio recording of a study on intercultural communication

I have been verbally informed of the study and I'm aware that my participation in the interview is completely voluntary. I have received the opportunity to ask question and have them answered. I can, at any time and without explanation, cancel my participation. If I regret my participation and I want that the recorded interview to be deleted, this will be done.

Please tick one of the options below:

- o   Yes, I accept that the interview are audio recorded

- o   No, I don't accept that the interview are audio recorded

Thank you!

Interview questions

General information:

Where do you come from?

Age:

Gender:

How long have you been in Sweden?

What is your occupation today?

Questions concerning learning the Swedish language

Can you speak Swedish?

Did you attend Swedish courses?

If yes, what kind of courses and for how long?

To what extent you think it helped you in learning Swedish?

Did the courses help you in getting familiar with the Swedish society and culture? Is it helpful for integration?

Can you tell me your personal opinion about the course and what can be done to enhance the outcomes of the courses?

Questions about the arbetförmedlingen

What is your strategy to find job in Sweden?

Where did you or do you get help to find job in Sweden?

Did you use or do you use arbetförmedlingen?

Can you tell me your opinion about it?

Questions about other integration programmes

Did you participate in other introduction programme (social orientation courses)

If yes, was it helpful?

What are you personal integration strategies and challenges?

Was it helpful for your cultural and socio-economic integration?

Questions about integration policy in Sweden

How can you evaluate strategies applied by of the Swedish government?

Can you tell me your personal opinion? What is efficient and effective and what is not?

What is your general overview about the issue of integration in the country today?

Can you suggest further procedure?

Questions about Cultural differences

Long term Vs term orientation:

Do you always makes plans for the future or you just focus on your present?

Do you believe that your success or failure is only related to your level of productivity? Or do you believe that luck does matter a lot in your life?

Power distance:

How do you experience hierarchy?

Should children accept authority and obey their parents without expressing their opinion because it is not important?

In organizations, do you prefer that only the boss decides? There is no place for criticism; subordinate must follow his or her order?

Individualistic Vs Collectivistic:

Do you show a strong loyalty to your family, people with whom you share the same background and culture?

Are your choices based on your free willing or influenced by a certain group (it can be family, friends…)?

Can you change your mind even if you are not convinced but only for the benefit of a certain group?

Uncertainty avoidance:

Can you change your carrier easily?

Do you think that it is important to follow certain rules or you can reject them?

Masculinity Vs femininity

Do you agree that women should be tender and more concerned about morality whereas men should be more tough and assertive? Do gender distributions of tasks need to be equal or distinct?

Questions about adaptation and own integration

Personal and cultural adaptation: Are you satisfied with your new life in Sweden?

Psychological adaptation: Do you find it difficult to face and deal with new daily problems in Sweden?

Economic adaptation: Did you find work easily? Are you satisfied with it?

How can you describe your integration in Sweden? Do you feel : assimilated /integrated /marginalized /separated or segregated?

What is your own strategy?

Do you have anything to add?