Perceived Challenges Living and Integrating into Finnish Society

Introduction

1. What is the research question?

What type of challenges do immigrants experience integrating into Finnish society?

1. Who would especially benefit from the research?

The paper says the study is crucial for the Finnish government, NGOs, public authorities and other stakeholders in their effort to facilitate and improve integration services for developing policy. (MM: Obviously, the immigrant themselves will benefit from the research if policies are developed to address the issues).

1. How was the survey conducted in terms of data collection and analysis?

The study utilizes open-ended surveys as an instrument for data collection and thematic analysis as an analytical strategy to answer its research question.

1. Who were in the sample?

A sample of immigrants from more than 40 nationalities living in Finland.

Integration Theories

1. What is assimilation vs. integration?

Assimilation has evolved to mean giving up one’s culture of origin while taking the culture of the host society, and integration is seen as a way of maintaining a close distance in both directions.

Integration in this paper is conceptualized as an adaptation strategy to mean adjustment and feeling at home. It is the process of socialization and change, through which the newcomers to the society cope with the new surroundings in all its dimensions (segments), such as the people of the country, languages, different ethnic groups, customs, laws, the climate of the country, education system and labor market, to list a few.

1. How is transnationalism, segmented assimilation, and social capital and social networks defined?

Transnationalism describes communities with such tight relations that cross national and geographic borders. Members of these communities are considered to belong to both the country that they reside in and to the place from which they emigrated. Immigrants invest in their relations and status in the host society by not abandoning similar relations in the country of origin, thus, benefiting from double citizenship possibilities and resources available to citizens, also paying the high-effort bill of living in the juncture between two or more cultures.

Segmented assimilation focuses on the notion that immigrants take a different path in how they adjust to life, and they adapt differently into different segments of society. Newcomers to society usually adopt the behaviors that are most relevant to their everyday lives, such as clothes, language, and other routines. Individuals will keep components of their culture and will not shed their socialized identities

Social networks are communities through which individuals can obtain benefits and find solutions to problems through membership in it. For instance, newly arrived immigrants oftentimes rely on their immediate ethnic communities for reference or other needs.

Immigration in Finland

1. What were the most important facts here?

The immigrant population in Finland has shifted from about 0.8% of the total population in 1990 to about 7% of the total population in 2019. Estonian and Russian immigrants are the two largest immigrant groups in the country.

Integration and policy in Finland

1. What is Finland’s integration policy like?

The Finnish integration policy can be described as being “labor market-oriented.” The Ministry of Employment and the Economy oversees integration issues in the country. Integration training is only offered to those unemployed. The different municipalities are responsible for the initial assessment of integration needs for each immigrant arriving at their municipality and for the development of a personal integration plan in collaboration with the local employment office. The personal integration plan serves as an official agreement between the immigrant and the official of the local employment office on the type of education and language and vocational training the immigrant will need to take in order to support their integration process.

1. Who qualifies for the integration support provided by the state?

You must be 18 years old and above. You must be unemployed and be registered as a recipient of unemployment benefit.

Method

1. Why did the researchers use an open-ended survey to collect data?

Open-ended questions can offer the researcher rich, unconstrained participant responses to broad questions and allow participants to express their perspectives using their language, terms, and expressions, potentially encouraging them to share more personal and genuine perspectives.

1. Describe the sample.

A total of 103 immigrants from 41 countries. Participants didn’t include asylum seekers and refugees, but students, work permit holders, permanent resident, and those who have acquired Finnish citizenship. The mean age of participants was 33 years. A majority had master’s degree, a third bachelor’s degree and less than 10% had high school certificate and doctorate degree.

1. How is thematic analysis done?

The phases of thematic analysis followed by the researchers are: 1) Familiarization – multiple readings of the responses to get familiar with them. 2) Coding – the responses that were similar to each other were grouped together. 3) Searching for themes – the patterns that emerged from each code were categorized as themes. 4) Reviewing themes – making sure that the responses/codes were placed in the appropriate theme. 5) Defining and naming themes – choosing suitable words to ensure conceptual clarity. 6) Writing the report – drawing analytical conclusions across themes.

Findings

1. What were the four main themes identified in the survey?

1) Language barrier, 2) discrimination in employment opportunities, 3) racism and inequality, and 4) fewer opportunities for integration.

1. In what way was Finnish a barrier to integration?

Respondents felt that not knowing the language caused them difficulties. The Finnish language is difficult to learn, and if you work in Finland, you have to learn it. Immigrants think that they miss out on a lot of opportunities related to employment because of language. (MM: Consider that the Finnish integration policy is founded on the belief that if immigrants can enter the labor market, the social and cultural aspects of integration will subsequently follow).

1. In what ways did the survey participants felt discrimination in employment opportunities?

They felt that preference is given to Finnish-speaking individuals. Individuals not only face the problem of finding work opportunities that are suitable for their qualifications and field of expertise, but they also face prejudice and discrimination when it comes to being in competition with a more established local. They are reduced to cleaning jobs even with a higher qualification. The Finnish employment office tries to push you into the two fields they have openings in, nursing and cleaning. Progressing in the field becomes the next challenge once you find a job. Immigrants feel unwelcome in offering their expertise in employment opportunities. Neither their qualification holds any value, nor do their skills.

1. How did the participants experience racism?

Immigrants conveyed their feeling of being treated unequally. They feel that they are treated as lower than the Finns or that they are considered 2nd class resident, even by the authorities. They’ve experienced different treatment in work recruitment and in housing rental applications. Individuals feel that they are the victims of racism, whether at the workplace or at a general level.

1. The last theme, fewer opportunities of integration, talks about what?

Having few opportunities for integration in the perceptions of respondents makes the process of adaptation and adjustment difficult. Respondents have the impression that Finns do not welcome immigrants, making it difficult for the immigrants to integrate into the society. Finnish nationals are regarded as difficult and not so special. Finnish society is conservative and closed, where immigrants are not welcome.

Discussion

1. What do other studies say about Finnish employers? Name at least 3.

1) Finnish employers have confirmed that immigrants do face labor market discrimination and that ethnicity plays an important role in securing employment in Finland. 2) Finnish employers devalue foreign work experience. 3) A foreign-sounding name may also decrease the chances for job seekers to be called for an interview. Employers preferred Finnish applicants over ethnic applicants; they preferred candidates with European names over non-European names.

1. What is the unemployment rate of immigrants as opposed to the general population of Finland?

The number of immigrants who want to work but are unable to do so is almost four times more than that of the general population.

1. How do social networks of immigrants pose as a barrier to integration?

Immigrants depend on their network of family, friends, or immigrants from the same ethnic group to find a job, which are generally lower ranks in the occupational stratification. Ethnically homogenous ties can diminish the opportunities for upward social mobility, providing employment in niches or ethnic enclaves that natives do not occupy. (MM: Integration requires comingling with the natives, so if immigrants are working alongside their fellow immigrants, their integration is slower).

1. How can transnationalism be a barrier to integration?

Being transnational and keeping a very strong tie with one’s own country of origin may result in difficulty of getting to learn the destination language and socialize in the first place. When immigrant communities choose to socialize in their ethnic groups in the destination country, which may offer some ease, but it may distance them from the larger population, lowering the chance of interaction and language practice.

1. What do other studies say about language as a barrier?

One study conducted in North America confirms that immigrants are ignored and prejudiced because of their English language level, which is below the native speaker’s level. Language use is intrinsically related to the processes by which individuals fit, or fail to fit, into their social environments. Finnish is a tough language to learn and is one of the most difficult languages in the world. In Finland, Russian immigrants perceived the absence of language competence as one of the major impediments to employment.

1. In what ways can the language barrier be overcome?

More innovative ways of learning or gaining Finnish language competence, such as teaching the language through Finnish songs project, initiated by the Finnish Intercultural Community, increasing the number of language cafes organized by other NGOs, could be explored and adopted. Possibilities to extend the intensive language training freely offered by the municipalities to all types of immigrants, not just to those who are unemployed, also the voluntary and long-term types, could be investigated. Create more opportunities for socialization between immigrants and Finns.

1. How can discrimination in the workplace be overcome?

Employers should be encouraged to employ immigrants when they are qualified for the job. There should be mandatory training for employers in Finland on issues related to ethnic discrimination.

Limitations

1. What were the limitations of the study? Mention 4.

1) The sample size was small. It did not represent all the different types of immigrants in Finland. 2) Data were collected online through social media, so generalizations about the entire immigrant population should be made with care. 3) The instrument that was used. A qualitative survey does not provide an opportunity for the researcher to ask follow-up questions for clarification or elaboration. Also, some participants may not be willing and competent in writing.

Grammar:

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/irregular-verbs-exercise-3.html>

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/irregular-verbs-exercise-4.html>

<https://www.perfect-english-grammar.com/past-perfect-exercise-3.html>