

**Do the integration policies in Germany understand the
specificity of the situation of young male refugees? Life
challenges of young Syrian male refugees in Germany**

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Abstract:

In 2015 and 2016, Germany received over one million asylum applications, the bulk of which came from Syrians, particularly young men fleeing war or detention or who refused to join the military or be implicated in the murder. With many Syrians applauding Germany as a haven that promised freedom and dignity and many German's taking pleasure in their country's humanitarian approach and welcoming culture, the refugee stream peaked with great optimism. However, since then, many sources of concern have surfaced, mainly concerning local citizens' fears of dangers to their country's national culture and newcomers' grievances with the German state bureaucracy. In addition, some of them had to deal with stereotyping based on their cultural and religious backgrounds and other difficulties. This study outlines the

sensitive nature of these young people's predicament and the challenges they faced, such as bureaucracy concerning legal status, housing, work, and relationships with governmental organizations and employees.

1. Introduction

Background on the political and historical situation in Syria

Since the middle of the twentieth century, and after independence from foreign occupation, the leadership in the Arab countries has been taken over by governments that illegally seized power, either through heredity or military coups.

President Mohamed Morsi in Egypt, regardless of his political and religious affiliations, is the first elected president in Arab history. He took office in 2012 after the Arab Spring overthrew President Hosni Mubarak through democratic elections. But unfortunately, he was arrested after a while, and a military coup took place, bringing Arab countries back into the same vicious circle of dictatorships.

Syria, which floundered politically after independence from the French occupation, was where the Minister of Defense, Hafez al-Assad, came to power in 1970 through a military coup. And he remained in power illegally until the year 2000, until he died. After that, the constitution in Syria was amended so that his son Bashar took power illegally after him.

Bashar ruled Syria with the exact military grip that his father led.

Although he presented himself as a doctor who studied and lived in the democratic West and made many promises about reform, development, and openness, he soon showed his true face. He imposed his control over the Syrian people with military and security forces.

Like most other Arabs, Syrians were all productive because there was no governmental social support system. People were preoccupied with their livelihoods so they couldn't think about the country's political situation before the Syrian revolution in 2011. There was a complete absence of freedom of expression and political parties. A small number of cultural monuments and government hospitals were established compared to the 2,000 mosques built during the era of Bashar al-Assad, according to his statement in one of the press interviews. Moreover, Rami Makhlouf, the president's cousin, has seized 60 percent of the Syrian economy. Even private capital trying to set up universities or private companies was forced to share projects with the president's cousin. Favoritism and corruption persisted, and anyone who dared to criticize or demand that the situation be improved was incarcerated. In a nutshell, people were boiling.

The Syrian revolution and fleeing Syria

On December 17, 2010, revolutions in the Arab world started in Tunisia and spread to several other countries. The revolutions toppled the Tunisian, Egyptian, Libyan and Yemeni presidents, but the Syrian revolution did not succeed in overthrowing Bashar al-Assad, and later turned into a brutal war.

Syria's revolution began with the arrest of children from Daraa by Syrian regime intelligence. On the walls of their school, these students scrawled words calling for the regime's overthrow. As a result, children were tormented, their nails were taken out, and some were tortured. These incidents sparked unrest in Daraa, and demonstrations spread throughout Syria. Popular demands at the time included civil liberties, the repeal of the emergency law, and the release of political prisoners. The regime, on the other hand, reacted to the upheavals by killing demonstrators and arresting some of them. As a result, the ceiling of demands was raised to include the regime's overthrow and Assad's prosecution.

The regime arrested everyone it believed opposed it, especially intellectuals, seculars, writers, artists, media professionals, and doctors who were treating the victims of the regime's bullets and raids because they did not fit the image that it was promoting, which is that the revolution aims to establish an extremist Islamic state that threatens the entire world. Terrorists and Islamic fanatics who had been held in his jails for years were released at the exact time. The dictatorship had previously sent them to fight in Iraq against the US and then jailed them when they returned. It was the perfect bait for discrediting the Revolution, first and foremost. Second, the administration also expected them to form extreme Islamic organizations, which they did. Third, it provided an excellent justification for the authorities to drop bombs on cities and use chemical weapons.

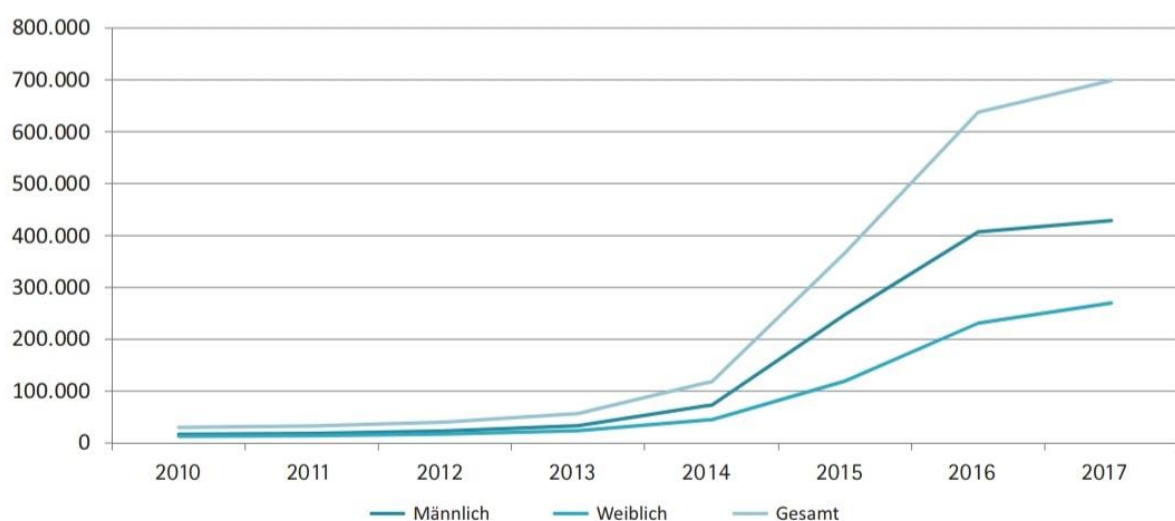
Many males were required to join the army and security forces, forced to choose between joining the army and bombing their cities and families or fleeing the country. People who did not want to join the ranks of the moderate opposition and take up arms against the regime because they did not want to be involved in the bloodshed, as well as people who did not want to belong to Islamic organizations which did not fit with their secular orientations. People began to flee Syria due to city bombings, arrests, torture, and limited options.

Consequently, Syria has become the site of one of the most significant humanitarian and refugee crises. According to a United Nations report, since 2011, 6.9 million people have been displaced within the country. In addition, more than 5.6 million people have fled abroad in search of safety in neighboring countries such as Turkey, Lebanon, and Jordan. Most of them live in camps with inhumane conditions. Many fled to Europe; most were young males fleeing arrest, enlistment, or death. Germany was the most prominent destination because it accepted asylum applications and suspended the Dublin Convention. Thus, according to the data of the Federal Office for the first half of 2015, Syrians constituted the most significant proportion of the number of asylum seekers in Germany at 20.3%.

According to estimates by the Federal Office for Migration and Asylum, nearly 700,000 Syrian citizens were living in Germany at the end of 2017. Within a few years, they became the third-largest group of foreign nationals in Germany. Due to the very high total number of asylum seekers who entered the country in 2015 (890,000), it was not always possible to accept the asylum application immediately in all cases. More than a third of asylum applications in Germany between 2015 and 2016 came from Syrian nationals, and in 2017, a quarter of all applications. In

2015-2016, most refugees were initially granted refugee status under the Geneva Convention. However, in 2017, the so-called subsidiary protection prevailed, which included certain restrictions on the legal status, including the suspension of family reunification between March 2016 and August 2018, which was settled later. After 2015, the average age of Syrians residing in Germany decreased compared to 2010 from 29.0 to 24.2 years: thus, this population group tends to become “younger” and “more male,” which is undoubtedly a direct result of refugee migration and among them there are many young males who traveled alone (Worbs, S., Rother, N., & Kreienbrink, A. 2019). More than half of all Syrian refugees in Germany were under the age of 25 at the end of 2017.

Grafik 2 Syrische Staatsangehörige in Deutschland, 2010–2017



Worbs, S., Rother, N., & Kreienbrink, A. (2019)

Table 1: Syrian refugees in Germany, 2010-2017

2- Germany and the absorption of the large number of refugees and efforts to integrate them

Germany, notorious for its prudent decision-making, policy development and implementation, and massive bureaucracy, had to accommodate many people, secure their new lives, and learn from past mistakes with Palestinians, Lebanese, and other immigrants. Germany did not want to make the same mistake it did when it failed to integrate Turks who arrived as guest workers. When searching for Arab clans whose sons formed criminal gangs in Germany, it turns out that Germany did not work to integrate these refugees. They did not learn German and didn't get work permits. Their children were not allowed to attend schools or universities because the German authorities hoped they would return to their homeland, but what happened was that some of them became a burden on the country later, which Germany has tried to avoid with .Syrian refugees

Since the arrival of refugees in large numbers, Germany has talked about their integration into German society. It was a joint activity

between the refugees themselves, the state, civil society organizations, and many German volunteers. Based on the asylum law in the German constitution and the integration law that Germany promulgated for the first time on April 14, 2016, basic health care and solidarity with refugees, especially women, were provided, providing the necessary conditions that enable them to live in dignity. Housing, medical care, and minimum living expenses, as well as job training, language, and integration courses paid by the state, also created 100,000 job opportunities, and encouraged employers to employ refugees. Despite all the efforts made by Germany to implement the integration law and the efforts of German activists and civil society organizations to welcome refugees, facilitate their lives and provide them with assistance, significant problems have begun to appear. E.g. inadequate staffing led to a massive backlog in processing asylum applications in 2015. As a result, only half of the refugees who entered the country could apply for asylum, and many refugees stayed for years in gyms that lacked minimal privacy. (Nanette Funk 2016)

Delays in processing asylum applications, especially in big cities like Berlin, have disrupted the lives of many young people. They were not given work permits and were not allowed to take German language courses (initially only). In addition to the deadly loneliness experienced

by some who came alone with no family members or friends and long leisure time, many young males eventually fell victim to alcohol or drug addiction. Some job centre's employees were insensitive or intolerant of young people, meaning they did not consider the individual circumstances or background from which these young people came. Family reunification was delayed for many young people, and some Germans were eager to help the refugees, but on their terms or as they saw fit. In many cases, males from Syria were stereotyped as powerful and domineering from the Middle East, which is known to be a patriarchal society. Perhaps out of good intentions, some assumed that they did not need much support and help. Therefore, many activities and programs were directed at women and children, but in fact these young men needed a helping hand just like the others.

Many male refugees were also embarrassed by the need for others (most young men in Syria were supporting their families or at least knew how to move and where to start or who to seek help from). (Nanette Funk 2016). Several examples of refugees being attacked by radical Germans occurred, causing terror among some refugees. Apart from the personal situations and psychological challenges that migrants carry, they started to worry about their legal status after German politicians started discussing deportation. Most of these young guys had been

hidden for months or years, either escaping bombing or detention or being pursued by security agencies. Some of them fled because they did not want to serve in the Syrian military or were afraid of armed groups or the terrorist group ISIS. Many have lost their university places, family members, and close friends, and some have been tortured, raped, or received chronic ailments while incarcerated. Furthermore, many of them spent months traveling to asylum in deplorable conditions. Some arrived with debts, leaving behind destitute families who required financial assistance. In addition, some feel inferior to Europeans due to living under a dictatorship.

At the beginning of 2020, four Syrian youths died in their early thirties. Their families announced that the death was natural, but during the search for the real causes, it was found that they committed suicide. Their families did not announce the actual cause of death, either out of fear of stigma because killing oneself is forbidden in Islam or for fear of being said to have mental illnesses in the family, or because it is easier for them to know that their son died naturally than suicide after suffering.

In the light of the above described state of affairs in refugee integration practices in Germany, my research question is the following: **Do the integration policies in Germany understand the specificity of the situation of young male refugees?**

2. The daily mechanisms of refugee integration in Germany

What German law allows and what not is very clear, but this law leaves a margin of freedom for the employees of the Job Centres to assess exceptional cases and grant exceptions. For instance, every refugee must go to German language courses. If the refugee does not attend these lessons regularly, part of the social assistance he receives will be cut off. However, there are cases where some refugee youths were not psychologically ready to learn the language and face society and preferred to join the labor market in their mother tongue. Such cases were not considered - refugees must join these classes, and sometimes thousands of euros were spent without benefit. Perhaps it would have

been better to let a refugee act as he sees fit for his situation and start working, earning money, and paying taxes to feel accomplished. Then, when he stands on stable ground and his condition improves, he can partially go to language courses. Also, in typical cases, the labor office does not pay the costs of specific studies, i.e., certificates that do not guaranteed that the recipient of assistance from the job center will find a job after obtaining it from the job center's employee point of view or even the rigid law. But from the refugee's point of view, this study could be his way of salvation and the best means for his integration. However, such cases were not considered.

Aside from that, young Syrian men come from various ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds. Moreover, they belonged to different social circles and religious backgrounds. Among them are atheists and believers, Christians and Muslims, educated people, and especially those who were in their early teens when the war broke out and fled due to the bombing of their cities or the persecution of their families, did not enroll in middle school. Those who believe in public liberties, social justice, and women's freedom are among them, as are those who have no idea what these concepts represent. In fact, the German bureaucracy put these young men in one basket and treated them in the same way

sometimes. As if they were elementary school children who should learn how to obey the law.

We can not overlook the great efforts that Germany is trying to make so far to integrate refugees. It paid a lot of money for German courses, also known as integration courses. In addition to psychological and social support, the government issued several policies to facilitate the refugees' access to the labor market. the government has allocated places for them in German universities and given them study loans, similar to German citizens. In addition, the government encouraged German citizens to help refugees and funded many humanitarian and social organizations to assist and support refugees. The field of work of these organizations is vast, starting with assisting in searching for German language courses or searching for a job and providing psychological care. There is a tea club in almost every neighborhood, where Germans and refugees gather to break barriers and exchange conversations. These organizations supported the women and made them aware of their rights and the legal protection they received once they entered Germany. Many free cooking, dancing, modeling, story-writing, and sewing courses were allocated with the integration courses.

The large number of young refugees who arrived with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which has been found to be common among asylum seekers in Germany, with a prevalence rate of 40% should be also taking into account. Some were tortured or raped in Syria, while others felt guilty because they lived while others died. Fear for their remaining family members. They had to adapt to new laws and social issues, as well as emotional and socio-psychological adjustment with the host community. Particularly, young people who used to support themselves or their families, or at least take this gender role in which they were trained, lost social support, studies, or work, and became victims of feelings of inferiority, guilt, and uselessness as a result of their sense of inability to help themselves or their families, as well as the shame of not being able to prove and appreciate oneself in front of Germans or other Syrians. (Zbidat, A.; Georgiadou, E.; Borho, A.; Erim, Y.; Morawa, E. 2020)

Over time, Germany has modified many policies to improve the situation of refugees to speed up their integration into German society. For example, at the end of 2018, the Foreigners' Office in Berlin began granting exceptions to Syrian refugees. It allowed them to enroll in German language courses before they were given the right to asylum or subsidiary residency and expedited the reunification of their families. It

went even further later when it amended the previously passed law that prevented refugees from moving from the cities in which they were registered as refugees. Each city had a particular share of refugees, but it was not understood on what basis the refugees were sorted. As a result, many refugees found themselves alone without acquaintances or friends in distant cities, and to make matters worse; the refugees did not have any knowledge of the German language. this increased the severity of the isolation and depression of some.

Moving to other cities was permitted in specific cases, such as finding a work contract, university admission, or vocational schools. Finding this type of contract was a difficult and complicated process because it does not depend only on finding work or academic acceptance but rather on communicating with the municipalities of new cities and registering for housing. Then the approval of the job center must be obtained in the original city. The refugees sighed with relief after amending this law, finally allowing them to move where their acquaintances and friends were. However, Germany, which relies heavily on taxpayers, has realized the importance of the huge young workforce that has entered its territory.

Talking about the integration of refugees into society was one of the issues that preoccupied the German authorities with the influx of many Syrian refugees to Germany in 2015. Besides absorbing more than 800,000 refugees who have entered the country, most of them are male Syrians who have fled the war, forced military service, extremist groups, or detention. They came seeking humanitarian asylum and dreaming of building a safe life. But most of them suffer from PTSD and are tired of the dangerous asylum route.

A study conducted by the scientific institute of the German health insurance company AOK in 2018 that included interviews with 2021 refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan who had been in Germany for up to two years who were still living in reception facilities showed that about three-quarters of them experienced various forms of violence. Often, they suffer from multiple trauma and report more than twice as many physical and psychological complaints compared to refugees who have survived similar experiences. Compared to the German population, an additional two-fifths of respondents showed depression. The results of this study demonstrated an essential relationship between traumatic experiences and the prevalence of health complaints, as refugees who have experienced war, violence, and persecution frequently report physical and psychological problems. (Schröder & Zok & Faulbaum 2018).

Post-war turmoil is not the only issue the refugee youths had to deal with after arriving in Germany. But also, the long and complicated bureaucratic process of applying for and obtaining asylum. Then the integration requirements are according to the conditions of the host community. And other issues related to housing, study, and work. Once again, it must be mentioned that the Syrian people are considered to be fully productive. This is due to the absence of social assistance, and therefore everyone or a single-family member must work. Therefore, finding decent work was one of the obstacles to the stability and integration of refugees.

According to the survey included in the study conducted by the Scientific Institute of the AOK Company, the educational level of the Syrian refugees who participated in the survey is relatively high with an average of 9.4 years of schooling because access to educational institutions was guaranteed until 2011. More than 93 percent answered a question about their recent occupation, the majority of these refugees were recently working in paid jobs in their home countries, 57.4 percent. Most were employed in skilled occupations, or as unskilled workers 10.6 percent. While 30.8 percent had no income of their own (pupils, students, houseworkers, retirees). And one in ten was unemployed, or 9.5 per cent. (Schröder & Zok & Faulbaum 2018).

The employees of the German Ministry of Immigration and Refugees and job centers were responsible for managing the affairs of these young people based on clear German law. Still, at the same time, there is a margin of freedom for the employee to assess exceptional cases. In the beginning, the asylum application must be studied to determine whether the applicant deserves the right to asylum. Often everyone has obtained the right to asylum or the right of subsidiary protection. In some small cities, the process did not take more than two to three months, but in Berlin, for example, in 2015, it took two to three years to study most of the asylum applications. In the meantime, most young men were spending their time in a deadly void and great loneliness, especially since they were forbidden to work or go to language schools during that period. The authorities amended the law at the end of 2016. Syrians were allowed to obtain exceptions from the Foreigners' Office and register for language courses pending a decision on their asylum application. As soon as the asylum is approved, the registration procedures begin at the Job Center.

After the refugee registers himself in the Job Center, his file becomes under the supervision of a specific employee. The employee's first thing is sending the refugee to the German language and integration course; this period usually takes a year. After completing the language learning, the employee begins sending job offers to the refugee. Or he can go to

one of the profession-related training schools (ausbildung) in German language, where refugees can learn some professions or office tasks determined by the job center, which requires the employee's approval; otherwise, the refugee will not be able to complete his study.

But things do not always go according to what the rigid law or an inflexible job center's employee requires. Refugees during this time are not just machines that operate according to the employee's desire or the law, which causes some problems and confrontations between the refugee and the employee responsible for him. There is a list of issues that some staff did not consider; first of all, some young people suffer from post-crisis trauma; some of them were in a state of constant concern for their families who were under bombardment or had lost family members during the war. Besides, they often live in collective housing with no stability or privacy. In addition to the arduous search for private accommodation or a shared apartment, which is challenging because many do not want to rent to refugees, or some do not wish to rent their apartment to someone receiving social assistance (Hartz 4 in German). In some cases, the young men found housing, but the amount specified by the rental company did not correspond to what was determined by the Job Center.

Some were unable to adhere to the language courses because they were not psychologically ready due to the above-mentioned circumstances. And some who finished learning the language were not satisfied with the quality of the job opportunities offered to them, which were often cleaning services, washing dishes, or the like.

Furthermore, many refugees were compelled to enroll in a one-year course (known as Maßnahme in German). They learn the basics of computer programs, how to write a curriculum vitae, and many unimportant topics. Those who enroll in these classes are deemed not jobless. It is, however, a waste of time in their view, and many migrants regard it as a punishment. In 2018, when the German government found out what these courses were about, it caused a big scandal. They estimate that they cost the government 190 million euros per year. It jeopardized refugees' immediate integration because the personnel of the job center in charge of sending refugees to these courses did not consider their best interests and did not allow them to look for work, but instead forced them and sent them directly to those courses. The reason behind forcing refugees to participate in these courses is due to two factors: first, it lowers the number of unemployed. The employee gets a bonus; and second, the job center purchased many vouchers for these courses. As a result, they had many openings, and to avoid taking any

chances, they compelled the refugees to join them (Hoffmann & Honey 2018).

Directing young people to the labor market

There was a tendency for young people (both males and girls) to work in service jobs that kept them from finishing their academic courses. This process starts when many are obliged to take German professional language training (beruflich). Everyone begins with the introductory classes (A1, A2, B1), then moves on to the B2 level, where the language is mastered professionally. These fall into two categories: German (B2 allgemein), which expands on the German language in general, and the grammar required to complete university and academic degrees. The second category is (B2 beruflich), which focuses on teaching and understanding language and expressions relating to the labor market and how to submit job applications; hence, German grammar is not emphasized. Most young men were forced into the second category against their choice, with little regard for their interests or future ambitions. This contradicts the popular belief that integration occurs on both sides, with the host society and its institutions on the one hand and the refugees on the other. Many young people are dissatisfied since they are unable to obtain decent employment or complete their university

degrees. Some believed they were being utilized to serve the Germans rather than live together, which some saw as an indication of bigotry or a low opinion of refugees.

Entry to German universities usually requires a high level of the German language, C1. Despite the excellent facilities provided by the state to refugees, German is a challenging language, and not everyone can learn it quickly. In addition, many refugees who had obtained a high school certificate in Syria and dreamed of completing their university studies in Germany could not realize their dreams because of language barriers. Also, for many young men who finished university studies in Syria, their entry into some jobs was very complicated and required a high level of German. For example, many Syrian teachers who learned the German language well from teaching in German schools or working in jobs in their field of specialization were not allowed because their language or practical experience in German was insufficient. All of this could have been understood as being within the law or market conditions that apply to everyone had it not been because the Syrian refugees felt frustrated after many Ukrainians entered Germany after the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The refugees were allowed to enroll in German universities without completing high school certificates (Abitur in German) in Ukraine and without learning the German language. It also

facilitated their entry into teaching in German schools without extensive knowledge of the German language. Even the quality of the work offered is different and similar to that provided to Germans. As a result, many refugees felt they were treated with racism and stereotyping.

Another aspect is relatively problematic: it may be worth paying attention to when the stakeholders evaluate it. It is evident from the questions that some Germans pose to Syrians. It encapsulates what it means to be a Syrian man. It's easy to see the disparity between what Germans believe and what is happening in Syria. In some cases, the black-haired young man from the Middle East is perceived as authoritarian and controlling, and the host community must educate him on the ideals of German society and how to respect women. Syria is still a patriarchal culture in general, yet religions, political viewpoints, and liberal or conservative tendencies contribute to the country's diversity.

Furthermore, the reality of women varies from one city to the next and from one household to the next. Some families abuse or control their daughters, enforce a tight tradition, and limit their mobility. Some families forbid women to work, but there are also homes where women have practically unlimited freedom, yet social limitations on the street are still in place. However, the Germans overlooked that patriarchal society affects both men and women, not just the latter.

In most circumstances, patriarchal society forbids a guy from dressing as he pleases and marrying the lady of his choice if she is not of his faith or social class. It also inhibits him from openly expressing human emotions like depression and sobbing. Instead, the strong hero who guards his family, works hard, and invests in his home must maintain his tautness; otherwise, the men and women in his community will mock him. This is what dictatorships glorified when they used religion to oppress women and did not provide legal protection for women. As a result, what has been discussed so far does not imply supporting a man against a woman, nor does it overlook the tyranny and double oppression that women in Syria face. Religion, patriarchal culture, discriminatory laws, and dictatorships, on the other hand, silenced them.

Here lies one crucial point: the Syrian family and society train the boys since childhood to protect their families and to work hard to secure their needs. When seeking refuge in another country, young men completely lose their compass. they find themselves helpless in the face of language barriers and mistrust in the eyes of some of the host society. The young men who support their families in solving their problems in Syria, in Germany cannot meet their basic needs. In addition, the war exhausted them and left many wounds besides the trauma in their soul. Consequently, they are being judged by values hundreds of years old that German attribute to Syrians. Additionally, they do not find the

appreciation that any human being deserves—instead they are seen as coming to change the values of German society. Therefore, he must be subject to what is imposed on him by the German duty station employees or volunteers who wish to help on their terms.

This symbolic threat often associated with immigrants and refugees is that they will reject local beliefs and customs, thus bringing about changes in values and norms that hinder their integration and their settling down in the new country. These concerns are closely linked to anti-Muslim attitudes; therefore, attitudes toward Muslim refugees are more damaging than toward refugees from other religions. Integration rules help or hinder integration for all newcomers, but refugees are particularly vulnerable to changes in their social and political backgrounds. First, refugees are more vulnerable than other migrants when they arrive. For example, refugees are less likely than voluntary migrants to speak the local language, have fewer economic and capital resources, have fewer social networks and support, and many have experienced trauma before and during migration (Hynie, M. 2018). At the same time, considering the sensitivity of this point does not mean dealing with refugees as if they were victims to be pitied or who are useless or not waiting for them to take their responsibilities towards the country of asylum.

Despite the above, many places have been reserved for Syrian students in German universities to facilitate their entry. Furthermore, some exceptions have been granted regarding the level of German language required, especially during the years of asylum.

Small towns and villages and integration

The authorities transferred the files of many young refugees to sparsely populated villages with little social life. Often, young people of these rural villages are left to study or work in the big cities. These villages may be a double-edged sword. The asylum procedure is often fast; Young people are granted asylum and quickly start German language courses and may work afterward. But they suffer from loneliness and severe depression. Some of them may be unable to leave their homes to attend language courses or work due to their tired mental state and lack of social support. In addition, there were villages known for their right-wing orientation and unwillingness to live with refugees in the same area, which exposed some refugees to hateful, racist attitudes. Complicating matters further was the law that prevented refugees from moving from their cities to other cities where their friends and family members were. This law caused isolation and a bad psychological state that was a stumbling block to the refugees' stability and integration. A previous

study conducted in Vermont, in the United States, shows how the population's resistance has hindered the resettlement of refugees (Bose, P. S. 2018).

The results of the interviews lead to several axes, the first of which is the dispute over the concept of integration as seen by these young people and how Germans see it and the official German institutions.

3.The interactions of refugee support practices and the target group

Data and Methodology

To get a comprehensive view and different perspectives, I interviewed male Syrian refugees from various professional, academic, and cultural backgrounds and social workers working with refugees. The interviews were conducted in Arabic and English. My findings are based on qualitative interviews conducted by telephone and zoom calls and email. Qualitative data provides an in-depth understanding of human behavior and allows for a better examination of the situation's complexities using open-ended questions with flexible interaction throughout the interview. (Flick 2014).

Young people are not a priority

The question about the priority of one group of people over another may be unethical at first glance because all people are equal, especially

before the law in Germany. But one could argue that the youth group, male and female, was the largest group that entered Germany, especially males, who are the vast majority. This does not mean they are preferred over exceptional patients or children. It can be taken into account that many of them do not have emotional familial support around, such as the people who arrived with their families.

If the process were quicker, it would reflect on their private lives and the host country. Instead, this age group can quickly start building their lives, integrate, learn the language, pursue academic studies, and enter the labor market.

In general, there was unanimity in the answers that the young people that Germany needed as a workforce, academically and socially, were not a priority; on the contrary, the asylum procedures were slow, tedious, and disappointing. Lothar Dunkel¹ is German social workers we interviewed, who has been working with refugees in Berlin, told us:

"Of course, speedier asylum procedures for young people would improve their chances for positive integration. However, I assume it is legally challenging to make regulations to prefer younger people to older people. In general, the asylum procedures take way too long, and it is not transparent why there are so many differences due to

¹ Lothar Dunkel, born in 1948. Psychologist, Master of Educational Psychology, Professional Teaching Certificate, Supervisor (BDP), Psychological Psychotherapist, Psychological Child and Adolescent Psychotherapist.

refugees`/immigrants` country of origin and different procedures amongst the country".

Asmaa Hweja² is a Syrian social worker with refugees in Berlin said:

"There is no priority for young people, of course, but to be fair, in the first and second year of asylum, there was great chaos in the big cities, but the authorities tried to avoid it after a while. I see that they gave all age groups their right, and German institutions provided many refugees, but the number was large, perhaps and caused with a little bit of confusion. Still, the majority of the activities that the organizations provided were for women and children, and they were much larger than the organizations that support the young man."

Ali Khoder, a young Syrian participant in the study, brought up a crucial point: "The young men in their early twenties", Those who were forced to endure tremendous hardships throughout the war. Some of them may have dropped out of school at the start of the revolution due to the devastation in their cities, where they witnessed the slaughter and damage firsthand. Their journey to Germany was also difficult. As a result, several people arrived broken and unsure how to manage their affairs. Suppose their matters are not addressed immediately, and they are not psychologically and socially rehabilitated. Work with them step

² Asmaa Hweja graduated from the Faculty of Electrical Engineering in Aleppo in 1995. She studied and trained in social work in Berlin.

by step to learn the language and enter social life and the labor market.

In that case, some of them may be a "time bomb" that will lead to violence and socially odious behavior.

Slow Asylum Procedure

All the interviewed young people whose asylum claims were taken for a long time asserted that this delay caused great disappointment, hindered their lives and their integration according to their definition of integration, and increased and caused their isolation and a bad psychological state. It is worth noting that the asylum procedures were very fast in cities and villages that did not enter a large number of refugees compared to other cities like Berlin, for example.

One of the participants of this study his name Kais sh 1991, indicated that:

“Many young people arrived excited about building a new life and hoping to get asylum to start learning the language and then study and work. But what happened, especially in Berlin, is that young people fell into the pit of bureaucracy, followed by disappointment and depression. They had to wait a long time and provide proof of identity, which is very difficult to obtain. Some have reached the point where they cannot

respond to the authorities' demands or integrate; even learning the language became more difficult after sitting for two years at home”.

Integration

The most favorable policies to support refugee integration challenge these stereotypes by creating opportunity and independence and building positive relationships with members of the communities in which refugees reside or settle. Policies at the level of political bodies, social institutions, and organizations create social contexts that can facilitate or impede refugee integration. (Lamping2018 ,) Integration is not just about the skills and efforts of the refugees themselves. A central aspect of the integration process is the public opinions and attitudes shaped by government policies that define opportunities for integration and participation by refugees. Hynie, M. (2018).

One of the meanings of integration in the Arabic language is (to complement), which means that each one complements the other. Not to melt in it and adopt its values. In general, there was disagreement about the meaning of the word integration through interviews, as the state considers that integration means respect for the rules and values of the

host community and its social environment and adherence to German law, including working and learning German. the Syrian social worker Homam alsheikh khuder argued for another meaning of integration from his point of view:

“I understand integration as the ability to use resources, a process by which both the host community or host system must provide the resources and the refugee who makes the best use of these resources to be able to run his life”.

While the Syrian young man Mohammed Almer Ibrahim 1987, who is studying driving trains in Hamburg said:

"I am against this term; there is no such thing at the social and cultural level called integration. In my opinion, integration means the loss of the assimilated racists part of their characteristics to integrate among themselves and form a new element that allows the convergence of the positive aspects of all parties. However, because these racists live A terrifying existential crisis, they are trying to maintain their existence as they used to, and therefore it is impossible to integrate with them”.

Stereotyping and work orientations:

Although one of the young refugees, Ghaitha Zarour who studies medicine in Berlin, pointed out that the asylum policies in Germany have greatly improved compared to their previous experiences, through direct financial support to the refugee, which is the first step on the way to his independence, and allowed Syrian students, like Germans, to apply for the (bafög) system, which is monthly loans study. Even though language courses, integration, and easy access to the health system. And that the significant change needs time, but the rest of them all said that the treatment in the job center and the official government departments depended on the mood of the employees; some job center's employees were very helpful and positive, while others were dealing with superiority and negative. And the treatment of refugees also differs according to their profession; a doctor, for example, is treated better.

The Syrian social workers Homam alsheikh khuder said, "Syrian youth feel that there are economically and socially inferior professions to which they are directed to cover the shortage within certain services, even though these young people are humanitarian refugees with clear rights. There was a view that the employees were thinking about how to benefit from this refugee to serve the Germans. There are Young people who arrived at the age of 18 and did not obtain a secondary certificate in Syria were forced to repeat two or three years of schooling and were

directed in secondary school to the (ausbildung) craft schools under the pretext that it is difficult for them to enter universities."

while the Syrian young man Kais said, "Some employees had a viewpoint that was difficult to change, and They justify the law for not responding to the refugee's desire, even if it is reasonable. For instance, it was difficult to convince the employee that the refugee wanted to study a particular branch or change his field of specialization. On the other hand, one employee could change a life. The refugee is complete and contributes to his psychological and practical stability, or it may impede it, we were not given the opportunity to experiment and choose, they wasted a lot of our time and effort that we could have used to build our future.

Kais pointed to a phrase that was hanging in the employee's room in charge of his file at the Job Centre and was behind his chair completely above his head: (Asyl ist keine Arbeit. What is in English: Asylum is not work), which suggests a preconceived view of the refugee that he is coming to exploit Germany and sit at home without work. This view in itself is disturbing and disappointing.

The Syrian social worker also Homam mentioned that the Germans were preoccupied with guiding young people to meet the needs of the German market at the service level and to integrate at the level of social

values. The Germans were trying to focus on the fact that women are oppressed in Syria and that there is violence; therefore, this must be changed. He says: "Certainly, there is an important battle to change the reality of women, gender equality, and social justice that Syrians must work on while they are aware of it. But violence and oppression of women are not Syrian social values. When the German tries to mention them, the refugees feel superior in dealing and that the Germans feel that he is more qualified and educated than The refugee and that he wants to reform Syrian society. The social worker adds, "No one fixes another society; every society fixes itself. The German mission is not to reform Syrian society but to provide the refugees with psychological, social, and economic stability. And it is the task of the children of the Syrian community, which they will certainly start working on when they are settled in decent homes and have a job, obtaining their basic rights."

This was confirmed by the social worker who told us: "of course there is stereotyping and prejudice towards young male and female arabs but i don't believe it is any stronger or worse compared with other ethnic groups such as Asians, black Africans, east Europeans, people from turkey etc. we only see it more presently and focus on it because people with Arab background make the majority of foreign people in this country at the moment".

Many Syrian refugees felt the ambivalence of the West, and it was discussed on social media. On the other hand, the Ukrainians have gained so much sympathy that they have been dubbed "white European refugees." Although German researcher Sabine Hess, a professor at the University of Göttingen's Institute for Cultural Anthropology/European Ethnology, said in an interview with the German newspaper Der Spiegel that we must be careful with this accusation because, in 2015, German civil society had a high level of sympathy for Syrian refugees. She went on to say that global refugee policy is rife with discrimination and unfairness (Der Spiegel 2022). However, despite this discrimination, all of the Syrian young men we spoke to expressed satisfaction with the compassionate treatment and welcomed given to Ukrainians in Germany and stated that the same treatment should be extended to all refugees.

One young man we interviewed from Berlin, who preferred not to be named, said: "Certainly, we males from Syria are stereotyped as authoritarian males who need rehabilitation - unlike the Ukrainians who do not need a change of values and are not coming to serve from the German point of view. The way the Ukrainians were treated is wonderful and necessary, but it should apply to all refugees and migrants."

Difficulties finding accommodation:

Housing is a fundamental human requirement. Housing status impacts physical and emotional well-being, and it can help refugees feel at ease in their new surroundings. (Ager & Strang 2008 , ‘ Allen & Goetz 2010 , ‘). Housing and its location also significantly impact society's attitudes towards refugees. (Aumüller, 2018).

The housing situation of refugees varies significantly between cities as well as between refugee groups. Therefore, the legal status of each of them, whether refugee status has already been awarded or whether the asylum process is still underway, is a critical aspect. Although legal circumstances differ by country, asylum seekers typically have fewer rights and access to fewer resources than persons who have been given refugee status. (Flatau et al.‘2015 , Fozdar & Hardley‘2014 , Francis & Hiebert‘2014 , Murdie 2008).

Therefore, finding private or shared housing is one of the fundamental and challenging issues that young people must face. However, some Germans do not want to rent or share accommodation with refugees due to concerns about their preconceived notions or the precarious economic situation of the refugee. In addition, the Job Center sets a certain amount of money for housing, which is often not enough because some company owners have raised the rent of their homes to take advantage of people’s needs. Moreover, there is a shortage of housing

in Germany. New apartment buildings are not being built fast enough to keep up with the increasing immigration, which presents a significant challenge to the adequate housing supply for refugees in Germany (BBSR, 2017b).

Housing is a fundamental human requirement. Housing status impacts Many refugees in Germany, including young people, have spent several years in refugee camps, some of which lack the slightest elements of privacy, such as sports stadiums. Furthermore, municipal administrations face significant rivalry between refugees and the native population. (Adam & Föbker & Imani & Pfaffenbach & Weiss & Wiegandt 2021). Refugees and other low-income groups struggle for affordable housing in a tight market. As a result, they took a long time to understand the mechanism of applying for housing in companies, especially with the language barrier. Consequently, housing and the search for it were fraught with disappointments. It has also delayed the settling down of refugees and started to build their lives in places where they feel comfortable and private and belong to them.

H. Hammody 1991, one of the Syrian youths we interviewed, told us: “I wasted three years of my life in Germany looking for housing. I wanted to move with my girlfriend to an apartment; we were living in a room in a shared flat, which caused some tension. So, I postponed my desire to

Study and started to work anything I could to save money and be financially independent to find housing. Applying to German housing companies was frustrating. Companies offered me apartments, and after that, I knew that these apartments were obtained by people who paid a lot of money illegally to an intermediary. I did not want to pay the intermediaries. So the search process took three years until I found an apartment and moved to live with my wife, in addition to a long time in the asylum procedure. During all this time, I lost a lot of my energy and passion and left the dream of continuing my studies forever. Now I work in a restaurant despite the fact that I studied at a tourism institute in Syria".

5. Discussion

Our research findings reveal that Germany attempted to learn from its mistakes in the past by avoiding repeating the mistakes it made when it failed to work as hard as it needed to integrate refugees who had previously entered its territory. Thus, some of them become a burden on the state later. Therefore, the authorities have devoted a great deal of effort and large sums of money to the integration of Syrian refugees and tried to amend their policies and provide facilities for Syrian refugees, such as facilitating quick access to the health system and funding German language courses. In addition, it reserved specific places for them in German universities and encouraged German citizens to help refugees. But the difficulties faced by young Syrian refugees in Germany are excellent. They are starting from the start of submitting an asylum application, passing through the search for a place to live, work, study, and daily dealings with the host community and state departments. Studying the asylum application by the competent authorities in large cities takes a long time until the refugee is finally granted asylum. After

that, the journey of learning the language and searching for housing begins in light of intense competition for cheap accommodation and language barriers if there are no German volunteers to help young people apply for housing companies. As a result, refugees often can not choose the places or types of housing where they live. Instead, they were obligated to accept any accommodation.

It's possible that dealing with some of the Job Center's personnel will be difficult. For example, if the employees are not cooperative, they may prefer their interest and comfort over the refugee's interest. Therefore, they may not listen to the refugee's desire and determine their future against their will, which imposes a specific study or work.

Some young refugees from Syria may also face underestimation. They may be told indirectly that their capabilities will not help them enter German universities. Therefore, they have to go to vocational schools or go to service jobs that Germans do not desire because they are socially or economically inferior, such as cleaning and washing dishes and the jobs that Germans want. It takes a lot of muscle effort. As in the case of housing, many refugees could not choose their professions or studies. Moreover, there is stereotyping in dealing with some young males as they are of Islamic origin and therefore authoritarian, violent, and oppressive to women and do not accept differences without any knowledge of Syrian society's diversity and its children's different

affiliations. Consequently, some young men do not receive the necessary respect, are treated with superiority, and are viewed with suspicion as if they are coming to change the values of German society.

Some state institution employees did not consider the wounds these young men carry with them from their countries of origin and the identity crisis that surfaced after moving to a completely different society with its customs, traditions, and language. In addition to the setbacks, these young people faced when they found themselves unable to meet their basic needs without the help of others. This stereotyping was evident when the Ukrainians entered Germany, and the double standards began to appear through the different treatment that the Ukrainians received by describing them in some German media that they do not need to integrate like other refugees.

We found during this study that integration was a problematic term.

Some believe it should be assimilation into German society. Some state employees and some German citizens demanded that refugees blindly follow German customs and traditions. In comparison, some refugees saw that the integration should carry humanitarian meanings and consider the values of the refugees and the host society together.

Perhaps integration policymakers should focus on housing and the illicit intermediaries that German housing corporations deal with. R. Ali 1999,

stated during our interview that he had been looking for accommodation for the past two years without luck. he referred to illegal housing brokers who ask for huge sums of money for their housing offers. "Often, the relevant authorities focus on finding accommodation for families, and I understand and realize their priority. However, finding accommodation for young people is quite tough, and we receive no assistance. Perhaps housing can be provided for all young people, not just refugees. Finding a room in university housing in Berlin is so difficult that I'm considering leaving the city I'm used to and living to go to a place where I can settle down and concentrate on my studies".

Our findings further demonstrate, refugees will be unable to reevaluate the ancient customs they brought with them from their home country until they meet their basic needs. Individuals' social and economic comfort and safety in their new nation, as well as their location of home and work, are essential for their integration and starting to create their lives.

6. Conclusion

Our findings derive from a case study of several refugees in the city of Berlin. It is reasonable to assume that its results also reflect the situation in other German cities. It sheds light on the difficulties male refugees face regarding their psychological state, stereotyping in dealing with them, and sometimes underestimating their capabilities. It also focuses on directing refugees in general and youth, in particular, to service work and craft studies, more than opening the horizon for them to choose their field of study or work. It addresses the difficulties they face in searching for a job or housing.

It also discussed the role that the staff of the Job Centre may play, which may contribute to facilitating the refugee's life or hindering it ultimately.

It also underlined the specificity of the condition of male refugees arriving in Germany fatigued from war, suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, and the difficulties of dangerous asylum routes. Those young people who had hoped to create a stable future and obtain a good

job but who instead found themselves unable to make ends meet due to language and socioeconomic barriers. Especially considering that Syrian young men have been raised to support their families since childhood. Furthermore, after leaving their families and the community they are accustomed to, they are frequently alone in Germany without any familial emotional support.

It also examines the negative impact of a long time in deciding on asylum, which causes disappointment, worsening psychological state, and isolation.

The study looked at youths' integration from two perspectives: German legislation and society on the one hand and refugee perspectives on the other. Integration is respecting the values and differences of others. It does not mean that the refugees abandon their customs and traditions and assimilate into the host society. Especially since the outdated customs carried by refugees from their countries of origin need some time to be treated, re-evaluated, and changed in line with the requirements of the era in which we live. The change is carried out by the Syrian community and not anyone else.

First and foremost, the refugee must be helped, and the way is facilitated for him to meet his basic needs so that he can begin to build his life in a decent, humane way. It is necessary to inform him of his

rights and open the horizon for him to choose his field of study and work. This requires political and social responsibility and not dealing with double standards with refugees based on their skin color or ethnic or religious background. German organizations must set up serious and thoughtful activities and programs that target the youth category, like their counterparts that target the elderly, women, and children.

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Sample page – School of Public Policy

Author's Declaration

I, the undersigned Ghaiithaa Tawfek Alshaar hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

Date:

17.06.2022