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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs & Public Policy (GAPP)

“The Insertion of Syrian Refugees in the Egyptian Labor Market:
with Special Focus on Food and Restaurants Sector”

A Thesis Submitted by

Mai Ali Hassan

Submitted to the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies

Spring 2021

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
The degree of Master of Arts
in Migration and Refugee Studies

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Abstract:

This thesis is about the insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market. It specifically focuses on this insertion in the food and restaurants sector. It reviews the theoretical literature that tackled the economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers. It also examines the legal framework governing refugees in Egypt as well as the legal apparatus provisions related to their employment. Both are factors determining the access of refugees to the Egyptian labor market. The thesis finds that other economic and social factors also determine and facilitate the access of Syrian refugees to the Egyptian labor market. In the food and restaurant sector, demand for and supply of the Syrian products. Another economic factor is the sizable informal sector which despite its disadvantages, offers an opportunity to access the labor market. Syrian investments in Egypt injected capital and created jobs for refugees and Egyptians alike. Social connections in forms of bonds among Syrians and bridges with hosting communities are found to have a fundamental role in their insertion. While the bureaucratic process of obtaining or renewing permits as well as the weak links with the government pose some challenges, thanks to the presence of international organizations, whether IGOs or NGOs, that promote Syrian refugees' resilience through building on their capacities, Syrians are able to meet the labor market needs. The operation of the legal, economic and social factors, in addition to support from international organizations, has favored the employment of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian food and restaurants sector but in the informal sector due to the bureaucratic hurdles of obtaining or renewing permits and of the legal requirements they must fulfill. Despite the numerous challenges they face, Syrian refugees are taking the advantage of their social connections to support themselves and ensure their livelihoods.

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Chapter 1: | 11 |
| 1.1. Introduction | 11 |
| 1.2. Egypt as Destination Country for Refugees | 13 |
| 1.3. Problem Statement..... | 14 |
| 1.4. Justification of the thesis | 15 |
| 1.5. Aim and Objectives | 15 |
| 1.6. Research Questions..... | 16 |
| 1.7. Hypotheses | 17 |
| 1.8. Structure of the Study | 17 |
| Chapter 2: Literature Review | 19 |
| 2.1. Employment as Key Indicator of Successful Integration | 19 |
| 2.2. Social Network's Influence on Refugees' Employment..... | 20 |
| 2.3. Refugee Women and Economic Integration..... | 21 |
| 2.4. The Refugee flows' Impact on the labor Markets of hosting countries..... | 23 |
| 2.5. The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and asylum seekers..... | 25 |
| 2.6. Literature on Syrian Refugees in Egypt..... | 26 |
| Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework and Methodology | 29 |
| 3.1. Theories and Conceptual Framework:..... | 29 |
| 3.2. Methodology..... | 33 |
| 3.2.1.Data Collection..... | 34 |
| 3.2.2.Data Analysis..... | 36 |
| 3.3. Limitations..... | 36 |
| 3.4. Ethical Issues | 37 |
| Chapter 4: Setting the Context of Economic Insertion for Syrian Refugees in Egypt: Historic, Legal, Political, and Economic | 38 |
| 4.1 Historic Context..... | 38 |
| 4.2 Legal Context | 39 |
| 4.2.1 Legal Framework Governing Refugees in Egypt | 39 |
| 4.2.2 Right to Work and Access the Labor Market | 43 |
| 4.3 Policies and Political Context..... | 46 |
| 4.4 Economic context: | 50 |
| Chapter 5: Exploring the Employment Profile of Syrian Refugees in Egypt | 52 |
| 5.1 Employment Status of Labor Force..... | 52 |
| 5.2 Occupations | 53 |
| 5.3 Employment and Level of Education | 54 |
| 5.4 Level of Work Satisfaction..... | 55 |
| Chapter 6: Explaining the Insertion of Syrian Refugees into the Egyptian labor market (in the Food and Restaurants Sector) | 56 |
| 6.1 The insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market through food services..... | 56 |
| 6.2 Factors that Promote Syrian Refugees' Insertion into the Egyptian labor market..... | 58 |
| 6.2.1 Labor Market Conditions..... | 58 |
| 6.2.1.1 Demand and Supply Factors | 58 |
| 6.2.1.2 Informality | 62 |
| 6.2.2 Social Connections | 64 |
| 6.2.2.1 Social Bonds (Social Networks) | 64 |
| 6.2.2.2 Social Bridges | 69 |
| 6.2.2.3 Social Links | 72 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 6.2.3 International Organizations' Support to Access the Labor Market | 73 |
| 6.2.3.1 Intergovernmental Organizations' support | 74 |
| 6.2.3.1.1 UNHCR: Improving the Livelihoods through Economic Inclusion. | 74 |
| 6.2.3.1.2 ILO: Promoting Decent Work for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities. | 76 |
| 6.2.3.1.3 UNWomen: Promoting Refugee Women Economic Empowerment..... | 77 |
| 6.2.3.2 NGOs : Operating Partners on the Ground..... | 78 |
| Chapter 7: Conclusions | 81 |
| Bibliography..... | 84 |
| Appendix A: List of interviewees | 95 |
| Appendix B: IRB Approval | 98 |
| Appendix C: Interviews Questions guide | 99 |

List of Figures:

Figure 1: Number of Syrians registered with UNHCR by year of arrival.

Figure 2: Ager and Strange's Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration.

Figure 3: Conceptual framework of the study on factors promote Syrian refugees' insertion into the Egyptian labor market.

Figure 4: Employment Status of Syrian refugee Labor Force.

Figure 5: Number of Syrian refugee workers by occupation.

Figure 6: Syrian refugee women occupations by sector.

Figure 7: Syrian refugee men occupations by sector.

Figure 8: Reasons of Syrian refugees' work dissatisfaction.

Acronyms:

| | |
|----------|---|
| 3RP | Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan |
| CFW | Cash for Work |
| GIWPS | Georgetown Institute for Women, peace and Security |
| GoE | Government of Egypt |
| IGOs | Inter-Governmental Organizations |
| ILO | International Labour Organization |
| IRC | International Rescue Committee |
| MOFA | Ministry of Foreign Affairs |
| MOU | Memorandum of Understanding |
| NCW | National Council for Women |
| NGOs | Non-governmental organizations |
| OAU | Organisation of African Unity |
| RSD | Refugee Status Determination |
| SMEs | Small and Medium-sized Enterprises |
| UN Women | United Nations entity for Women's Empowerment and Gender Equality |
| UNDP | United Nations Development Programme |
| UNGA | United Nations General Assembly |
| UNHCR | United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees |
| WFP | World Food Programme |

Definitions:

- Refugee** a person who is outside his/her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his/her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself/herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution (Article 1 of the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees)
- Asylum seeker** An individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualized procedures, an asylum-seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which the claim is submitted (UNHCR 2005)
- Syrian refugees** Syrian refugees, in the context of the study refer to Syrian refugees, asylum seekers, and those who are unregistered.
- Durable solutions** Any means by which the situation of refugees can be satisfactorily and permanently resolved to enable them to live normal lives. UNHCR traditionally pursues the three durable solutions of voluntary repatriation, local integration and resettlement (UNHCR 2005).
- Local integration** A durable solution to the plight of refugees that involves their permanent settlement in the country in which they sought asylum (UNHCR 2005). It is multi-dimensional in that it relates both to the conditions for and actual participation in all aspects of the economic, social, cultural, civil and political life of the country of resettlement as well as to refugees' own perceptions of, acceptance by and membership in the host society (UNHCR, Refugee

Resettlement. An International Handbook to Guide Reception and Integration 2002).

Economic insertion The meaning of economic insertion, in this study, will involve that Syrian refugees and asylum seekers are incorporated into and have access to the Egyptian labor market.

Informal sector A group of production units comprised of unincorporated enterprises owned by households, including informal own-account enterprises and enterprises of informal employers (typically small and non-registered enterprises). This definition limits the definition of informality to enterprises (ILO, The 15th International Conference of Labour Statisticians 1993)

Informal employment All remunerative work (i.e. both self-employment and wage employment) that is not registered, regulated or protected by existing legal or regulatory frameworks, as well as non-remunerative work undertaken in an income-producing enterprise. Informal workers do not have secure employment contracts, workers' benefits, social protection or workers' representation (ILO 2003)

Informal economy All economic activities by workers and economic units that are - in law or in practice - not covered or insufficiently covered by formal arrangements (ILO 2015).

Host communities A host community in the context of the study refers to the Egyptian community.

Social networks Sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-immigrants in origin and destination countries through bonds of kinship, friendship and shared community origin” (Castles, de Hass, and Miller 2014)

| | |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Social bonds | Connections that link members of a group (with family and co-ethnic, co-national, co-religious or other forms of group) (Ager and Strange 2008). |
| Social bridges | Relationship between refugees and host communities (Ager and Strange 2008). |
| Social links | The connection between individuals and structures of the state, such as government services (Ager and Strange 2008). |
| Inter-governmental organizations | Refers to an entity created by treaty, involving two or more nations, to work in good faith, on issues of common interest. |
| NGOs | Include many groups and institutions that are entirely or largely independent of government and that have primarily humanitarian or cooperative rather than commercial objectives. |

1.1. Introduction:

Since the outbreak of the political unrest in Syria in March 2011, more than 6.6 million Syrians have been forced to flee their home country seeking safety (UNHCR 2021). Although Egypt does not border Syria, it remains to be a preferred destination country for Syrian refugees, due to the lower cost of living, favourable protection environment, and the fact that some members of the Syrian community already had family ties in Egypt. They also favoured living in urban settings rather than refugee camps, which Egypt provides (Gozdziak and Walter 2013).

According to UNHCR figures, the first influx of Syrian refugees arrived to Egypt in 2012. It was primarily composed of persons with family ties, business connections or personal networks in Egypt (UNHCR 2013), and then the number increased tenfold during 2013, from about 13 thousand in 2012 to 122,173 in 2013. This increase has stabilized since July 2013 when the government introduced visa requirement (UNHCR 2014) (See Figure 1 below).

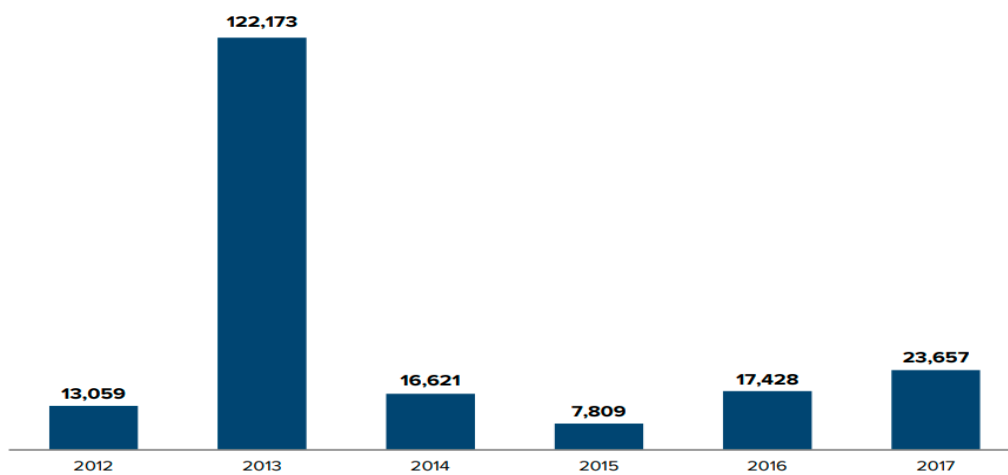


Figure1: Number of Syrians registered with UNHCR by year of arrival. (UNHCR 2018)

As of 28 February 2021, there are 131,235 registered Syrian refugees and asylum seekers, representing 50 percent of total registered refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt (UNHCR 2021);

however, the estimates of the Egyptian government indicate that the actual number of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers at 300,000 (Ahram 2017). They mostly reside in urban areas alongside Egyptian communities, and are mainly concentrated in Giza, 6th of October, Cairo, and Alexandria (UNHCR 2017). The number of severely vulnerable Syrian refugees households increased to 57.91 percent in 2017; an increase of 8 percent compared to 2016 (UNHCR 2017). Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt are economically active either engaged in some form of employment or actively looking for work.

In most studies conducted, primarily at the national level, there is a wide range of factors that promote, constrain, or mediate refugees' access to labor markets. These factors differ from one country to another depending mainly on the policies and labor market conditions. In light of this information, this study attempts to explore how Syrian refugees were inserted into the labor market with particular focus on the food and restaurants sector. It explores legal provisions and context of right for employment determined by the 1951 Convention on the Status of Refugees, to which Egypt is party. Discovering the factors that promoted their insertion into the labor market and challenges they face, it examines the labor market conditions in terms of demand and supply factors, and the sizeable informal sector, which despite its disadvantages presents an opportunity for refugees and asylum seekers seeking employment. The study recognizes the fundamental role of Syrian social networks, social bridges with host communities, and links with the government as promoters for economic insertion. It also examines how international organizations whether IGOs or NGOs are promoting Syrian refugees and asylum seekers' self-reliance through putting in place several skills-related interventions to support their access the labor market. Given that women make up almost half of the global refugee population, the study takes into account the additional obstacles refugee women face in their economic integration. It presents the experiences of Syrian refugee women participated in the study in order to get access to the labor market.

It is important to note that this study approaches the process of integration with respect to Ager & Strange's (2008) conception and understanding of integration as "insertion of one group amidst another", taking into account that Egypt is not in favour of local integration as one of the three durable solutions. Hence, the study uses the term "insertion" since integration denotes to a status that does not appropriately describes the majority of the target group of the study as well as the rights are granted to them.

The study includes registered and non-registered refugees who share the socio-economic background of self-reliance and 'doing it yourself strategy'. Thus, the term refugees in the study includes refugees and asylum seekers with yellow cards and those who are non-registered.

1.2. Egypt as Destination Country for Refugees

Throughout history, Egypt has opened its door to refugees. It has been and remained to be a place of exile by refugee population, as well as a transit country in migration routes by Africans crossing the Mediterranean towards Europe. During the events of the World War I, Egypt hosted Armenians in a camp in port Fouad (Yehia 2016). It opened its door as well to the Greeks and other European refugees (Poles and Yugoslav) in 1941, during the events of the World War II. In the 1950s and 1960s, Egypt was host to the exile from liberation movements across Africa and the Middle East. A further influx of refugees started arriving to Egypt in early 1990s because of wars and conflicts in the Horn of Africa especially from Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Somalia. It also hosts a large number of Iraqis and Palestinians (Grabska 2006).

Currently, Egypt hosts refugees and asylum seekers from 57 countries (UNHCR 2020). The Egyptian presidency during the 75th United Nations General Assembly, mentioned that Egypt hosts nearly five million immigrants and refugees who were forced to leave their countries due to

wars, political instability and difficult economic conditions (Egypttoday 2020). UNHCR figures (2021) depict that the total numbers of refugees and asylum seekers who are registered with UNHCR Egypt is 260,287 those from Syria representing 50% from total refugees and asylum seekers (131,235), followed by Sudan (49,378), South Sudan (19,853), Eritrea (19,280), Ethiopia (16,101) and others (24,440). It is true that the estimate numbers by the Government and UNHCR will never be similar since the unregistered numbers usually unknown, but still the difference between the two figures is huge. This raises the question of who are the five million forced migrants and refugees in Egypt. Here is a point of view says that the five million forced migrants and refugees are mostly Sudanese. It views that the figures in millions have been around for decades announced by the government largely referring to Sudanese refugees (Karasapan 2016).

1.3. Problem Statement

In theory, international responses to refugees should pass swiftly from emergency assistance to the implementation of “durable solutions” (Betts et al. 2014). Yet, in fact, these durable solutions are rarely achievable for Syrian refugees in Egypt. Local integration is not a recognized durable solution according to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) signed between the Government of Egypt (GoE) and UNHCR in 1954. There is a very little likelihood of voluntary repatriation given that the conflicts are still ongoing in Syria, and resettlement is uncertain as it depends on many considerations. The result is that Syrian refugees are left in a *de facto* situation in which they are neither fully integrated nor excluded from the society, with limited socio-economic rights. This situation, in turn, forces the majority of Syrian refugees to work in the informal sector accepting inadequate working conditions in order to sustain their livelihoods. UNHCR’s livelihoods programs are constrained when it comes to refugees’ employment due lack of job opportunities as well as the restrictive requirements to achieve formal employment. Despite these constraints, Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt showed their potential in turning

these challenges into opportunities and excelled in various sectors including the food and restaurants sector by creating ways to gain economic benefits.

1.4. Justification of the thesis

The existence of many Syrian restaurants in Egypt have spurred debates about Syrian refugees' access to the labor market. Their visible participation in the labor market comes in favourable historical, political, and economic contexts, and some supporting factors. Although research on the integration of Syrian refugees is increasing, studies tackling their economic insertion in Egypt is very limited. This study aims to fill in this gap, through the analysis of the determinants of their access to the labor market and the factors that promoted their successful insertion. It aims to contribute to other studies that tackled the economic insertion of Syrian refugees in Egypt, through an in-depth exploration of “labor market conditions”, “social connections”, and International organizations support.

1.5. Aim and Objectives

The study aims to examine how Syrian refugees were inserted in the Egyptian Labor market especially focusing on food and restaurants sector. It explores the factors that promoted their insertion and the challenges they face through presenting the historical, legal, political and economic context, analysing the importance of local labor market conditions in determining Syrian refugees' employment in Egypt, and the significant role of social capital in facilitating this insertion. It also highlights the support they receive from International organizations (IGOs and NGOs) to have access to the labor market. Accordingly, there are six research objectives:

1. Analyse the historic, legal, political, and economic context for Syrian refugees' insertion into the Egyptian labor market.
2. Identify the factors that promoted their insertion into the Labor market.

3. Examine how labor market conditions supported Syrian refugees' economic insertion.
4. Address the fundamental role of "social connection" in driving the process of Syrian refugees' insertion, pointing out bonds between Syrians, bridges with hosting communities and links with the government.
5. Highlight the role of International organizations in supporting Syrian refugees to access the labor market.
6. Foreground the key challenges Syrian refugees face in accessing the labor market.

1.6. Research Questions:

The central question of the study is the following: how were Syrian refugees inserted into the Egyptian labor market, specifically in the food and restaurants sector? The following are the sub questions:

1. What is the historic, legal, political, and economic contexts of Syrian refugees' insertion into the Egyptian labor market?
2. What is the employment profile of Syrian refugees in Egypt?
3. How did local labor market conditions promote Syrian refugees' insertion into the Egyptian labor market?
4. What is the role of social connections in providing access to employment for Syrian refugees in Egypt?
5. How do international organizations help Syrian refugees access the Egyptian labor market?
6. What are the challenges facing Syrian refugees while accessing the Egyptian labor market?

1.7. Hypotheses:

The demand on Syrian food services provided by Syrian refugees derived a demand for Syrian labor with expertise in Syrian cuisine. Therefore, some Syrian refugees had the right profile and necessary skills to contribute substantially to this sector. The role of social connections is significant and strong in providing and facilitating access to the labor market. International organizations actively work to insert Syrian refugees into the labor market through improving and building on their capacities. Altogether, the aforementioned elements promoted the insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market. On the other hand, the lack of asylum policy and adequate legislation governing the rights and entitlements of refugees, and the existence of rigorous legal requirements that refugees must meet to obtain work permits hinder their access to wage-earning employment in the formal sector forcing them to seek informal employment whether in informal or formal registered enterprises.

1.8. Structure of the Study:

After this introductory chapter, this study is divided into six chapters:

- The first chapter includes extensive literature review highlighting some key issues relevant to the area of study. This literature review focuses on the following issues: employment as key indicator of successful integration, social networks' influence on refugees' employment, refugee women and economic integration, the refugee flows' impact on the labor market of hosting countries, the economic impact of Covid-19 pandemic on refugees and asylum seekers, and literature on Syrian refugees in Egypt.
- The second chapter elaborates on the main theories and concepts, which the study builds upon, as well as the conceptual framework developed for the study and the methodology.
- The third chapter sets the context of the economic insertion of Syrian refugees within the Egyptian labor market; analysing the legal framework which governs refugees in Egypt

and the legal apparatus provisions related to their employment. It also presents the government's policies and practices as well as, the economic and historical contexts that are all principal determinants that have a wide impact on the economic insertion of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

- The fourth chapter explores the employment profile of Syrian refugees in Egypt including the employment status of labor force, occupations, employment and level of education, and level of work satisfaction.
- The fifth chapter explains the factors that promoted the insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market, specifically in the food and restaurants, sector and the challenges they face.
- The sixth chapter includes the conclusions of the study.

2.1. Employment as Key Indicator of Successful Integration

Integration has long been the focus of academic debate. Many scholars wrote about the need to explore integration as a multidimensional process in which individuals, migrants, refugee community organizations, institutions and society all have a role. They also argued that integration is a two-way process based on mutual rights and corresponding obligations of refugees as well as host societies in the adaptation of newcomers (Ager and Strang 2008; Klarenbeek 2019). This perspective of integration asserts that the attainment of integration does not only depend on the commitments, efforts, and achievements of refugees, but also on the structure and openness of the receiving society. Ager and Strange (2008) outlined access to education, health services, gaining employment, and housing as key markers and means of successful integration. In agreement with Ager and Strange, Entzinger and Biezevels (2003) addressed the importance of accessing the labor market as a key indicator for successful integration. Another view of integration includes several factors related to the context of reception that can affect the settlement of refugees in a country. Among these factors are the policies of the host government and the attitudes towards immigrants in the larger society (Alencar 2018). Jacobsen (2014) emphasized that livelihoods' assets are more than simply material possessions (land or money), but they include human and social capital. She argues that refugees must be able to utilize their human capital such as skills and experience, and be able to work or own businesses or property. UNHCR global strategy for Refugee livelihoods and economic inclusion (2019-2023) has also identified economic inclusion of refugees as key component of achieving protection and solutions for refugees, showing that it promotes self-reliance and economic independence of refugees, and empowers them to meet their needs.

2.2. Social Network's Influence on Refugees' Employment

Before reviewing the substantive literature on social networks, it is important to define social capital. Bourdieu (1985), one of the first social theorists to discuss the concept of social capital viewed it as a “durable social network that enables individuals to gain access to resources ” clarifying that capital represents “the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance or recognition”. Boyd (1989) made the link between family networks and social capital explicit. He explained that migrants are motivated to move together as a family unit in order to establish economic security in their new home and improve their capital base. Social networks are defined as “sets of interpersonal ties that connect migrants, former migrants, and non-immigrants in origin and destination countries through bonds of kinship, friendship, and shared community origin” (Castles, de Hass, and Miller 2014). Such networks affect the decisions which refugees make before displacement such as when to leave their home countries and where the destinations for asylum should be, as well as various decisions along their journey (Hanley et al. 2018). Most importantly, Bourdieu (1986) viewed that the volume of social capital possessed depends on the size of the network connections the agent can mobilize and the volume of the economic and cultural capital possessed by each of those to whom he is connected. He also showed that these networks are products of investment strategies, consciously or unconsciously aimed at establishing social relationships that would be beneficial in the short or long term. In line with this approach, Lin (2001) defines social capital as an “investment in social relations with expected returns in the marketplace”. Hence, both refer to the resources embodied in social connectedness

The studies which tackled how membership in a social network can be advantageous for labor market outcomes presented different views. Some studies showed the importance of social capital in facilitating integration of refugees into labor market by providing different kinds of

support in terms of information or employee referrals. Moreover, they mentioned that these networks are key source of support when refugees are faced with financial, personal, housing, and health problems (Gericke et al. 2017; Lamba and Krahn 2003). Social networks can also provide emotional support, which is vital in terms of refugees' sense of wellbeing and health (Massey et al. 1993). Munshi (2003) found a positive relationship between the number of network members and successful labor market outcomes for Mexican migrants in the U.S. Another study which explored Syrian social networks in Canada and their contribution to their access to employment revealed that there is strong evidence of bonding networks that are mobilized to find housing, employment, and provide emotional support (Hanley et al. 2018).

On the other hand, there is an argument by Beaman (2011) which states that having such a large network may result in negative labor market outcome due to competition among unemployed members, showing that this competition effect does not necessarily arise because of increase in the labor supply in the face of fixed demand, however, this effect could occur when an individual's probability of receiving job information is constant, irrespective of network size. Furthermore, Marten, Hainmueller, and Hangartner (2019) explained that refugees who get a job through ethnic networks can get trapped in a low-wage job or have fewer incentives to learn the host country's language, and therefore receive lower long-term returns to human capital than refugees who find work outside of the immediate social network (Marten, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2019).

2.3. Refugee Women and Economic Integration

Refugee women face a "double disadvantage" due to their status as women as well as refugee (Liebig 2018). They are usually confronted with more obstacles to access employment and integration services than their male counterparts. Gender discriminatory laws combined with the complex laws that regulate refugee access to the labor market, diminish their equal chances of

making decent lives, and impact their employment, earnings, and entrepreneurship (International Rescue Committee 2018). According to European commission (2018), asylum adds an element of vulnerability for refugee women. As it was pointed out, refugee women take more time to gain a position in the labor market compared with refugee men, and even when they are employed, refugee women are frequently in part time positions. They often experience multiple forms of discrimination based on factors including gender, race, ethnicity, religion, and immigration status, putting them at a higher risk of experiencing violence, poverty and social exclusion.

Before the war in Syria, most Syrian women were supported by the men who headed their household (UNHCR 2014). But after the conflict broke out in 2011, their lives have completely changed. Some of them have lost the adult male who was providing social and physical protection. Due to these circumstances their feelings of insecurity, harassment or exploitation increase. Moreover, their refugee journey obliged them to play the new role of heading their households, with primary responsibility for the family and becoming in their hands (UNHCR 2014). A report jointly published by the Georgetown Institute for Women, Peace and Security (GIWPS) and the International Rescue Committee (IRC) entitled “Unlocking Refugee Women’s Potential” demonstrated that law’s defending women’s equal opportunities for employment and entrepreneurship are often weak in hosting countries with high refugee population. It found that these hosting countries impose legal barriers in most areas, and those refugee women suffer high legal barriers and many face discriminatory norms. According to this report, “just two of the 10 highest refugee hosting countries mandate equal pay for work or equal value; just three of the top 10 mandate equal rights to inherit assets; and seven of the top 10 restrict women’s participation in certain industries” (Kabir and Klugman 2019). In Jordan, most Syrian women’s business are based in their homes, because of their dual responsibilities to their family and children (UNWomen 2018). Interestingly, Hunt, Samman, Mansourille, and Max (2018) shed light on “the gig

economy” as type of work that is newly emerging in Jordan which offers potential to integrate vulnerable communities, including refugee women, in the labor market. The gig economy refers to labor market activities that are coordinated via mobile platforms, which bring together workers and purchasers of their services locally and globally. Syrian refugee women are involved in this platform in Jordan particularly in sectors such as catering and beauty supply, in which Syrian experience is recognized.

Social networks are gendered in nature (Kabir and Klugman 2019). It is well known that women’s networks are composed of stronger and more kin-based ties than men (University of Delhi 2017). The International Rescue Committee (IRC) has found that social and business networks can increase women’s ability to generate, use and control resources, and also have the potential to advance women’s economic empowerment. In Lebanon, the UNHCR showed that broadening social networks of Syrian women and girls helped in increasing their access to information, material resources, advice, and support (UNHCR 2017). It is important to note as well that social capital helps Syrian refugee women in Lebanon maximize the use of their limited resources so, for example, it could improve each other’s access to livelihoods by looking after each other’s children, thus allowing parents to work (Uzelac et al. 2018).

2.4. The Refugee flows’ Impact on the labor Markets of hosting countries

Literature on the impact of economic integration of refugees on host countries recognize that refugees can positively contribute to host countries’ economies. They bring new skills as well as stimulate trade and investment. Refugees may also create employment opportunities and attract aid and humanitarian investments that benefit refugees as well as the society as a whole (Yasar 2019). Another argument asserts that an inflow of refugees may imply costs for the host country, especially in the short term. As argued, it places a burden on public expenditures and may have

negative impact on labor market outcomes such as wages, employment and labor force participation of host population (Ximena and Mathis 2015).

A study on refugee flows from Burundi and Rwanda to western Tanzania shows an increase in the prices of non-aid food items and price effects for aid-related food items (Garcia and Saah 2009). Another study about Uganda revealed that humanitarian assistance for refugees created significant economic benefits for the local economy, and that these benefits are greater when the assistance is in the form of cash transfer and for agricultural production (Taylor et al. 2016). Maystadt and Verwimp (2014) limited the positive impact of refugees on the labor market for the part of the host population that is relatively well off, and argue that the negative impacts were found for agriculture workers with decrease on wages.

Number of studies focused on examining the impact of Syrian refugee flows on the wages and employment of native workers in the neighbouring hosting countries like Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon. It was found that Syrian refugee flows have had considerable effects on the employment of Turkish natives, and no significant effect on wages. Informal employment have been affected the most because Syrian refugees are not allowed to work formally (Del Carpio et al. 2015). Yasar (2019) showed that the Turkish economy is benefiting from the presence of Syrian refugees, he showed that Syrians deposits in Turkish banks reached 1.5 billion liras by 2015, and that Syrian entrepreneurs have also contributed to job creation and economic growth with around 10,000 companies established by new comers, emphasizing that there is no evidence to suggest that Syrians have caused any decrease in employment among Turkish citizens. Despite the massive influx of Syrian refugees in Jordan, Fakhri and Ibrahim (2014) find little effect of Syrian refugees in the Jordanian labor market. In contrast, Stave and Hillesund (2015) find that Syrians caused a loss of employment for Jordanians, and that they increased unemployment and competition for

existing jobs. In Lebanon, ILO (2013) revealed that the Syrian crisis had negative repercussions on the economy and the labor market and that the employment situation has worsened with the increase in labor supply.

Hosting countries fear that employment of refugees can decrease the employment of native workers, assuming that there is a given number of job existing in the economy, and that if one of these positions is taken by a refugee, that job is no longer available for a native workers. As opposite opinion by Mcconnell, Brue, and Macpherson (2017) stated that this does not cause substitution for native workers and that this assumption is misleading. Pischke and Velling (1997), when studying the substitution effects between immigrants and natives across local labor markets in Germany, found little evidence for displacement effect due to immigration particularly for unemployment rates.

2.5. The Economic Impact of Covid-19 on Refugees and asylum seekers

Refugees and asylum seekers are among the social groups most affected by the Covid-19 pandemic, and are still suffering from its social and economic consequences. The crisis has intensified the vulnerability of refugees and asylum seekers in urban, rural, and camp context, while negatively impacting humanitarian assistance (ESCWA, UNHCR, and ILO 2020). Refugees, due to the pandemic, live and work in harsh conditions. Undocumented refugees are often excluded from national health programmes or social protection schemes that could facilitate their access to health and social services (WHO 2020). Moreover, there is a widespread fear of deportation among those who are undocumented, which prevents them from seeking health care (Ozvaris et al. 2020). In addition, many of them experienced various delays and suspension in resettlements programs because of the irregularity of flights and travel restrictions.

ILO documented the labor market impact of Covid-19 pandemic on refugees, which included loss of income and jobs in particular for those who work in the informal economy and are at higher risk of being laid off or face pay cut because of the crisis. In addition, women's over representation in the services sector which has been hardly hit by the crisis, makes them greatly affected (ILO 2020). ILO also listed that the lockdown and containment measures impacted refugee entrepreneurs who own micro, small, and medium enterprises as it affected their access to finance. While those who lost their jobs are likely to experience more vulnerability and face considerable difficulties in finding alternative employment due to the economic climate triggered by Covid-19 (ESCWA, UNHCR, and ILO 2020).

In Egypt, refugees and asylum seekers have been significantly impacted by the pandemic, increasing their vulnerability and dependence on humanitarian assistance. According to UNHCR, this is expected to continue in 2021 (UNHCR no date). The Regional Refugee and Resilience Plan in response to the Syria Crises (Covid-19 Response) revealed that the pandemic is exacerbating vulnerabilities among Syrian refugees in Egypt. While poverty and unemployment rates were already high prior to the onset of Covid-19, and that they face greater challenges in earning livelihoods to cover basic needs such as food, or accessing healthcare services (UNHCR, 2020).

2.6. Literature on Syrian Refugees in Egypt

Literature on the economic integration of Syrian refugees in Egypt is limited. Yet, there is a variety of literatures on Syrian refugees in Egypt, but most of them focused on policies and legal instruments. They presented the laws and regulations that affect foreigners in Egypt with particular focus on refugees, including the rights of residence, work and education. In addition, they elaborated the restrictions the government place on foreigners' work in the formal sector, the requirements needed for obtaining work permits, and Egypt's reservations on the 1951 convention

(Badawy 2010; Grabska 2006; Sadek 2016; Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). Elshokeiry (2016) examined the public policy of the Egyptian government to respond to the Syrian refugee influx, showing the changes in policies towards Syrian refugees throughout different precedencies. Ayoub and Khallaf (2014) described the socio-economic conditions of Syrian refugees in Egypt. Furthermore, they outlined the history between Egypt and Syria, protection issues face Syrian refugees, including registration with UNHCR; documenting challenges faced by Syrian refugees amidst political changes. Importantly, they showed that the existence of families, businesses, and some personal networks encouraged many Syrians in 2011 and 2012 to consider Egypt as destination country and that these networks were prominent actors supported Syrians to find employment opportunities.

Kagan (2012) shed light on the responsibility transfer from the state to the UN agencies. He clarified that UNHCR acts largely as a “surrogate state” performing a “state substitution role” and the result is that it become unable to assume its original role, which is to supervise the state and ensure that the state is implementing 1951 convention to the fullest. A gendered approach by Ayoub (2017) asserted that, contrary to the widespread belief that exile deprives refugees and renders them helpless; the exile experience of Syrian women in Cairo increased their resilience and changed their role in society, exposing them to new ideas and opportunities.

Significantly, UNHCR and ILO conducted a Market Systems Analysis for Syrian refugees in Egypt; this analysis covered the socio-economic environment for refugees. It focused on three main economic sectors where Syrian refugees work in: Food (restaurants and food processing), furniture production and textile. The analysis showed the key challenges facing refugees’ employment in the food service sector in terms of lack of support services, and unstable business environment given the majority of Foodservice enterprises are in the informal economy. UNDP,

ILO, and WFP (2017) in their report entitled “Jobs makes a difference: Expanding Economic opportunities for Syrian refugees and host communities” revealed that Syrian businesses have contributed significantly to Egypt’s economy by investing nearly \$800 million in the country and that their business created job opportunities for both Syrians and Egyptians.

This section presents the main theories and concepts the study builds upon, the conceptual framework developed for this study as well as the methodology.

3.1.Theories and Conceptual Framework:

“**Demand for labor theory**” is one of the main theories that will be used to frame the study, it argues that the demand for labor, or for any other productive resource, is a derived demand; meaning that the labor market demand for labor depends on, or is derived from the demand for the product or service it is helping to produce or provide. According to this theory the strength of the demand for any type of labor depends on (1) The productivity of the labor in helping to create certain product or service (2) the market value of the product or service provided. So, if any kind of labor is highly productive and the product he/she provides is highly valued by society, a strong demand for this type of labor will exist (McConnell, Brue, and Macpherson 2017). These determinants will provide guidance to examine the demand on food services provided by Syrian refugees in Egypt that derive a demand for Syrian refugee labor and in turn promote their insertion.

Both “**Migration network theory**” and “**Migration systems theory**” depict that migrants’ agency creates social and economic structures that provide feedback mechanisms which tend to perpetuate the migration process. They consider that through individual and collective agency, migrants can actively challenge structural constraints such as poverty, social exclusion and government restrictions (Castles, de Hass, and Miller 2014).“**Migration network theory**” focuses on the role of social capital, and explains how migrants create and maintain social ties with other migrants leading to the emergence of social networks. Such networks help new migrants through providing them with information, contacts, finding work, and assisting in adaptation to a new environment (Castles, de Hass, and Miller 2014). Migration network theory also argues that

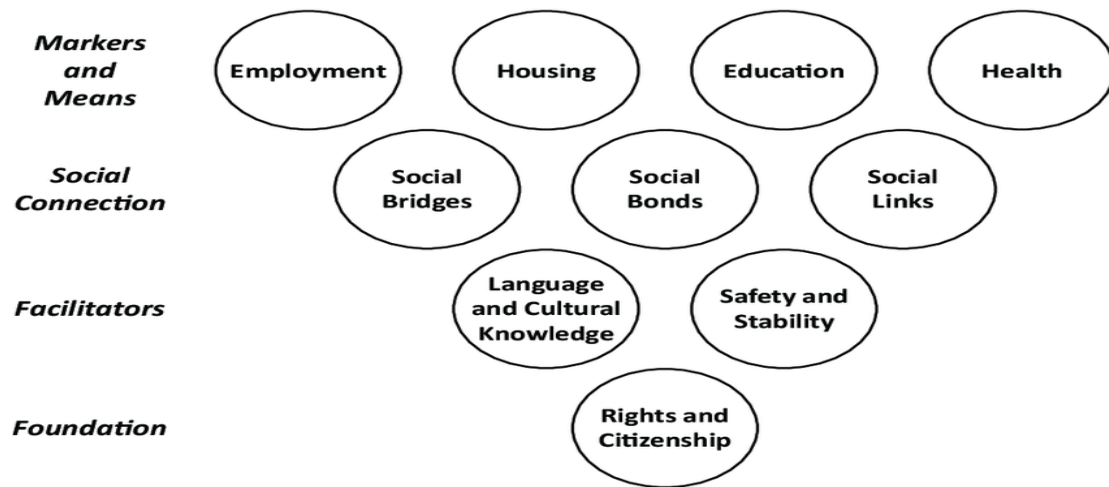
when migrant groups develop their own social and economic infrastructure (Associations, shops, professionals) particular places become easier to reach and more attractive as destinations. It also shows that such social processes embrace non-migrants because employers will stimulate recruitment seeking to retain capable workers (Massey et al.1993).

“Migration systems theory” looks at how migration is basically linked to other forms of exchange (flows of goods, ideas, money) and how this has an impact on determining where migration takes place, in both origin and destination countries. The key implication of migration system theory is that “one form of exchange between countries or places such as trade is likely to engender other forms of exchange such as people, in both directions”. It argues that Migratory movements generally arise from the existence of prior links between sending and receiving countries, based on colonization, political influence, trade, investment, or cultural ties (Castles, de Hass, and Miller 2014). In this study, it would be interesting to highlight the historical bilateral relations between Egypt and Syria and how it influenced the perception of Syrians when the crisis in Syria started to choose Egypt as destination, where there is a Syrian community exists with businesses, and personal networks.

Ager and Strange’s conceptual framework Defining Core Domains of Integration (2008) identifies four domains of refugees and asylum seekers’ integration which are employment, housing, education, and health. Ager and Strange (2008), consider social connection fundamental in driving the process of inserting refugees amidst hosting communities presenting three kinds of connections that all together foster the insertion process. These connections are “Social Bonds” among refugees themselves, “Social Bridges” between refugees and host communities, and “Social Links” that connect refugees and structures of the state, such as government (Ager and Strange 2008) (See Figure 2).

Figure 2: Ager and Strange Conceptual Framework Defining Core Domains of Integration

(Ager and Strange 2008):



Additionally, **Betts and Collier’s “Development based approach to refugees”** acknowledges refugees’ skills, talents, and aspirations. In their view refugees do not have to be considered as inevitable burden but instead can help themselves and add to their communities. This approach supports refugees’ full participate in the socio-economic life of the host states to become self-reliant and empower them to contribute to host communities and in the eventual reconstruction of their home countries. It offers employment, enterprises, education, and healthcare aiming to create “an enabling environment that nurtures rather than debilitates people’s ability to contribute in exile and when they ultimately go home”. This vision offers important insights that jobs and markets that are created to help refugees must also benefit host communities as it called for policies that move community/refugee relations from a zero-sum relationship to positive sum relationship (Betts and Collier 2018).

Kuhlman (1991) proposed a comprehensive model address the components of economic integration of refugees. He recommended four criteria to assess the economic integration of refugees: (1) Adequate participation in the economy; (2) an income which allows an acceptable

standard of living; (3) access equal to that of the host population to those goods and services to which access is not determined solely by income levels; and (4) the impact of refugees on the host society. The criteria identified are difficult to be measured and many scholars failed to address whether the income received is sufficient to “acceptable standard of living” but the model emphasizes the integration of Syrian refugees and their presence on the Labor Market (Kuhlman 1991).

After this systematic review of pertinent theories, frameworks, and concepts, I developed the conceptual framework shown in Figure 3 to provide guidance in addressing the research questions proposed for the study. The framework connects relevant concepts and theories and integrates them into one framework aiming to understand the key factors that influenced the insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market.



Figure 3: Factors promote or hinder Syrian refugees' insertion into the Egyptian labour market

This framework envisages different combinations of factors that can promote or hinder Syrian refugees' insertion in the Egyptian labor market. These factors are: (1) labor market conditions (2) Social connections (3) International organizations support. Labor market conditions constitute perhaps the most important factor in relation to other factors. These include the demand for Syrian labor that is derived from the demand on food products and services they provide, skills supply of

Syrian refugee labor in the food and restaurants sector, in addition to the sizeable informal economy. The second key factor in the proposed framework for this study is social connections. Seeking to explore how social connections could be a pathway that maximizes and facilitates the insertion process of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market. It includes three kinds of connections previously elaborated in Ager and Strange's conceptual framework. Social Bonds or Social networks among Syrian refugees themselves, social Bridges between Syrian refugees and Egyptians, and Social Links that connect Syrian refugees and the government. The proposed framework counts as well the role of international organizations (Intergovernmental and non-governmental) to help Syrian refugees in gaining access to employment, through building on their capacities to be able to meet the market's needs. The operation of the three sets of factors results in strong insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market but in the informal sector due to bureaucratic process of obtaining or renewing permits and the legal requirements they must meet.

3.2. Methodology

Based on the exploratory and descriptive nature of the research questions, how were Syrian refugees' inserted into the labor Market? How did local labor market conditions promote Syrian refugees' insertion into the Egyptian labor market? What is the role of social connections in providing access to employment for Syrian refugees in Egypt? How do international organizations help Syrian refugees access the Egyptian labor market? What are the challenges facing Syrian refugees while accessing the Egyptian Labor market? Additionally, since this study will focus on different individual journeys of self-initiatives undertaken by Syrian refugees to understand their insertion into the labor market, the study uses qualitative method of analysis as a research method.

For an in-depth understanding of Syrian refugees' insertion into the Labor market, In-depth interviews with Syrian refugees provided deeper understanding of the factors that promoted their insertion into the labor market from the Syrians 'point of view. Individuals who work at international intergovernmental organizations, livelihoods projects for Syrian refugees at NGOs, and Syrian associations were interviewed to explain how they support Syrian refugees to access the labor market.

3.2.1. Data Collection

To answer the research questions of the study, primary and secondary data were collected. In exploring the context of Syrian refugees' insertion into the labor market, the study relied on secondary sources, data statistics, reports, TV shows, UN figures and previous academic studies. Primary data was gathered through 16 in-depth interviews with Syrian refugees working in the food and restaurants sector. I supplemented this information with meeting Syrians work in Syrian associations in Egypt, Intergovernmental organizations, NGOs; noting that NGOs helped me to get in contact with the Syrian refugees I was targeting. To mitigate the risks of fieldwork during Covid-19 pandemic, a number of interviews were conducted over the phone. In addition, I ensured appropriate Covid-19 safety consideration in face- to – face interviews by maintaining social distance and using face masks.

Quota sampling is the sampling method used for collecting the primary data from Syrian refugees. It is a non- probability sampling method, involving the selection of a portion of the population being studied. According to this method, the selected sample is based on the subjective judgement rather than random selection and its basic idea is “to set a target number of completed interviews with specific subgroups of the population of interest” (Battaglia 2011).

Although quota sampling has been criticized because of the risk of researcher's bias that can skew the sample and make it non-representative of the entire population unlike a random sample, some scholars believe it has various advantages. It saves time as this sampling process is straightforward, ensures accurate representation of the population of interest by improving the representation of any particular group, and makes no room for over-representation (Times 2020). Furthermore, Crawford (1997) considered that if fieldwork has to be done quickly, it might be, for instance, the only possibility to obtain immediate public reaction to some event (Crawford 1997).

In order to determine the quotas in the sample selected for this study, I first bifurcated the entire sample of Syrians into mutually exhaustive subgroups based on their gender. Then, I determined the weights of the two subgroups, which is 50 percent for each group. According to UNHCR Vulnerability assessment of Syrian Refugees in Egypt (2017), Syrian women represent 16 percent of the total Syrian refugee labor force while Syrian men represent 84 percent. I attempted to apply these percentages as weight of the two subgroups in the study. However, I found that there would be underrepresentation for Syrian women who greatly contribute to this sector in particular.

Afterwards, to ensure that the sample represents different employment status of Syrian labor force. I relied on ILO Key Indicators of the Labor Market (KILM) that included an indicator for status in employment (2015). This indicator distinguishes between two categories of total employment which are: (a) wage and salaried workers (known as employees); and (b) self-employed workers. Accordingly, the sample of eight Syrian men is divided between five employees and three employers, given that the overall number of Syrians who are self-employed in the food and restaurants sector is less than the employees (UNHCR 2017). As for Syrian women, due to the cultural values and traditions of Syrians, that make the majority of them work from

homes and deliver home cooked meals; the eight women interviewed were not selected based on employment status.

3.2.2. Data Analysis:

The data obtained from Syrian refugees, Syrian associations, UN agencies and NGOs through interviews conducted as well as the secondary sources were analyzed in order to provide better understanding of the factors which facilitated the economic insertion of Syrian refugees in Egypt. Coding was helpful in identifying and labelling the broad ideas and concepts. Then, I made connections looking at the most common responses to questions. The analysis discovered the labor market conditions, the role of social connections, and the support they get from international organisations (intergovernmental and Non- governmental) to access the labor market.

3.3. Limitations

While literature on the economic integration of refugees and asylum seekers is abundant, literature on the topic of research is very limited, particularly that pertains to labor market conditions as factors, which played an important role in the insertion of Syrian refugees in the food and restaurants sector in Egypt. There were significant limitations with the unwillingness of Syrian refugees interviewed to talk about their relationship with the government answering very short answers to any question in this regard.

Additionally, there was considerable limitation to reach out and speak with government officials about the topic. The measurements to contain the spread of Covid-19 virus and the lockdown also posed a challenge affecting the fieldwork of the study. At a certain point, i was forced to suspend data collection from Syrian refugees.

3.4. Ethical Issues

Participation in this study was based on informed consent. Before starting interviews, I fulfilled the requirement of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtained their approval certificate. The confidentiality of the information shared by the participants is completely assured.

Chapter Four analyses the context of the economic insertion of Syrian refugees in Egypt; showing the historic context, the legal framework governing refugees in Egypt as well as legal apparatus provisions related to their employment. It also presents the government policies and practices, and the economic context, which are all principal determinants, and have a wide impact on the insertion of Syrian refugees in the labor market.

4.1 Historic Context

The Egyptian-Syrian relations have historical roots. The peak of these relations was in 1958, when the United Arab Republic formed and President Gamal Abdel Nasser and Shukri Al-Kuwatli announced the merging of two countries as single country (Hassanet al. 2018). Although the created republic was short-lived and collapsed three years later in 1961 following the 1961 Syrian *coup d'etat*, many Syrians remained in Egypt after the termination of the United Arab Republic. Moreover, people from Syrian descent are living in Egypt maintaining ties to their homeland until today (Amelia 2015).

There were two other major waves of Syrian immigration to Egypt prior to the influx of 2012. One between 1730 and 1780, when Syrians arrived in Egypt among immigrants from what was known as “Bilad Al-Sham” which included today’s Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. They were traders and succeeded to gain the Egyptian ruling elites’ confidence. The other wave of Syrian immigrants was due to the deteriorating economic situation in Syria in the mid-nineteenth century when Egypt’s economy was booming (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). Many Syrian families succeeded in the business sector in Egypt and excelled in many occupations like cotton trade entrepreneurs and restaurant and hotel owners. Those who were well educated found employment opportunities created by the modernization plan of Khedive Ismail (Mahmoud 2017).

This historical context influenced the perception of Syrians when the crisis in Syria started. It was a pull-factor for Syrians to choose Egypt as a destination where there is a Syrian community already existing with businesses and personal networks (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014).

4.2 Legal Context:

4.2.1 Legal Framework Governing Refugees in Egypt

Egypt has no national policy or an established asylum system that deal with refugees or asylum seekers (Kagan 2012; Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). However, it is noteworthy to mention that in September 2019, a high-level official at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced that Egypt had started to draft a national asylum legislation (Sharafeldin 2020). As explained, the main reason behind Egyptian government decision to draft an asylum law is economically motivated because the numbers of refugees registered with UNHCR does not reflect the actual number of refugees residing in Egypt and thus, Egypt does not receive adequate and sufficient funding.

There is a number of references to refugees at different constitutional documents. The first explicit was in Article 5 of the constitutional declaration 1953 (Elshokeiry 2016). Article 91 of the current constitution, which has been in effect since 2014, is the only provision addressing non-nationals. It stipulates that Egypt “shall grant political asylum to any foreigner who has been persecuted for defending the interests of people, human rights, peace or justice”. According to Zohry (2003), this text seems to reserve granting political asylum for specific high profile of applicants such as Shah of Iran, Jaafar Nimeri of Sudan, or Fatimah as-Senussi the wife of the last king of Libya. In order to regulate the legal status of refugees and foreign nationals residing Egypt, the Egyptian authorities have adopted a number of domestic legislative initiatives pertaining on

land ownership¹, access to education², residency permits³, nationality⁴, and work permits⁵ (Elshokeiry 2016).

One of the initiatives taken by the government to create a national mechanism for Refugee Status Determination (RSD) was the creation of a "permanent committee for Refugees' Affairs" to assess asylum requests based on presidential Decree No. 188 in 1984, which further resulted in the establishment of the Department of Refugee Affairs within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Kagan 2012). However, this committee later incorporated into the Department of Refugees, Migration, and human trafficking at Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) in year 2000. Under the MOU of 1954 signed between the government and UNHCR, the government delegates all responsibility of determining the asylum claims to UNHCR. Noting that UNHCR relies on refugee definition according to 1951 Convention and OAU Refugee Convention and not with reference to Article 91 (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

Egypt is a party to 1951 Convention. It was one of the only two non-Western participating states in the drafting of the Convention. It has acceded it and its 1967 protocol in 1981, with reservations on five provisions 12.1; 20; 22.1; 23 and 24. These cover personal status, rationing, access to primary education, public relief and assistance, and labor legislation and social security;

¹ Laws No.104 and No.124 of 1958 prevent foreigner persons from owning agriculture land in Egyptian territory. However, Law No.15 of 1963 makes Palestinian refugees an exception to this.

² The Egyptian Minister of Education issued Ministerial Decree No.24 in 1992, allowing the children of recognized refugees from Sudan and the children of Sudanese, Libyan, and Jordanian political asylum seekers to attend public schools. As per 2012 presidential decree, allowed Syrian refugees to have access to public education at an equal level of Egyptian nationals.

³ According to Decree No.8180 of 1996. Refugees generally receive a three-year temporary residency permit, issued by the ministry of interior. For Palestinian refugees, they may receive longer residency permit depending on when they arrived. Palestinians who arrived in 1948 receive residency permits renewable every five years; while those arrived in 1956, their residency permits are renewable every three years.

⁴ Law No.154 of 2004, which amended law No.26 of 1975 on nationality, prohibits giving the Egyptian nationality to the children of foreigners who are born on Egyptian soil, but grants the nationality only based on descent.

⁵ Article 11 of Ministerial Resolution 390 of 1982, issued by the Ministry of Manpower and Migration requires the employer prove that no Egyptian national able to do that work.

stating by these reservations that refugees will not benefit the same rights as nationals but rather preserves its discretion on these matters (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014).

In 1980, Egypt ratified the Organization of African Unity's Convention governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problem in Africa (OAU Convention), which adopts a broader definition of a refugee and it again made reservations with regard to social services and labor market access in order to protect nationals who face poor social services and high unemployment (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). In addition, it ratified the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights that provides the right to seek and obtain asylum. Egypt is also party to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of Child and according to the convention, the rights given are applied to refugee children including access to education and psychological recovery after war (Guindy.N 2021).

The Egyptian refugee and asylum system is based on a memorandum of understanding (MOU) was signed between the GoE and UNHCR in February 1954. In a deep analysis and critique of the MoU, Badawy (2010) demonstrated that this MOU is outdated and the reliance of UNHCR on it can lead to negative results. He considered the reliance on the MOU spreads confusion among refugees in Egypt and that it forced UNHCR to engage in political commitments that undermine the organization's legitimacy (Badawy 2010).

According to the MOU, UNHCR's protection mandate was expanded to carry out RSD functions on behalf of the government in exchange for the government's issuance of residence permits to recognized refugees. In the case of Syrian refugees, due to the mass influx of asylum seekers, resulting from prolonged conflict, the Refugee Status Determination (RSD) was unfeasible. As such, Syrians in Egypt do not go through the RSD process. However, they are given

the asylum seeker card (Yellow Card) upon registration, which provides them protection and assistance. Once received the yellow card, Syrian refugees become like other refugees and asylum seekers who need to register at the MOFA and have their card stamped for residence every six months (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). Syrians who are considered extremely vulnerable are the only one who can undergo the RSD interviews and thus can be entitled to possible resettlement. As for those who undergo the RSD interview and their files are rejected (closed file) usually continue to live in Egypt with no legal status and are left in extremely vulnerable situations (Amelia 2015).

The non-existence of national policy for refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt makes the legal and institutional structures seeking to regulate their issues subjected to strategic ambivalence. As Montaser (2019) elaborated, “it’s a policy that aims to neither drive out nor to entirely include refugees into a host society but instead aims to maintain the “status-quo”. Similarly, Yifachel (2009) proposes the concept of “gray spaces” that interprets the struggles of urban refugees. These spaces do not endeavour to neither integrate nor eliminate, but they form people on the margins, who exist outside the gaze of state authorities and city plans (Yiftachel 2009). In the same vein, Kagan (2012) suggests that ambiguity in refugee policies regarding refugees’ integration are faced with the contradiction between the presence and non-integration of refugees (Kagan 2012).

This is the status of Syrian refugees in Egypt. Durable solutions continue to remain elusive for the vast majority of them. Local integration is not an option for refugees in Egypt. The MOU between the government and UNHCR excluded this solution providing only voluntary repatriation and resettlement as durable solutions (Badawy 2010). In addition, with the uncertainty of resettlement and little likelihood of voluntary repatriation as the conflicts are still ongoing on in Syria, local integration became the de facto situation for most Syrian refugees in Egypt (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). This de facto situation leaves refugees in Egypt in denial of local integration

and rights associated with this integration (Badawy 2010). Thus, they become obliged to apply informal practices, seeking to create their own agency and spaces neither as citizenship nor as refugees, but as social actors (Montaser 2019).

4.2.2 Right to Work and Access the Labor Market:

For refugees, the right to work and access the labor markets is a vital prerequisite for reducing vulnerability, enhancing resilience, securing dignity, and enhancing the potential for sustainable livelihoods. To this end, the right to work for refugees is recognized by articles 17-18-19 of the 1951 Convention providing opportunities for wage-earning employment, self-employment, and for employment in liberal professions.

Moreover, the convention obliges to grant refugees (not asylum seekers) the same treatment as nationals concerning remuneration and working conditions, as well as social security (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). The right to work is also recognized within a wider framework of protection for all categories of workers under international law (applicable to refugees). In Article 23 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 6-8 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, in addition to different ILO conventions that offer comprehensive protection of Workers' rights (Zetter and Ruaudel 2016).

As mentioned in the legal framework section, Egypt declares reservation on Article 24 of 1951. However, this does not mean that refugees in Egypt do not have the right to work. Egypt made no reservation on articles 17 and 18 that protect refugees' right on wage-employment and self-employment. In an attempt to understand the benefits that Syrian refugees could get from Article 17 and 18, it is important to highlight Hathaway's conception about refugees' attachment to the states and how this attachment determine refugees' right of work. According to Hathaway

(2005), the rights of refugees and their host countries' obligations expand as the refugees' attachment to the state deepens. This attachment is measured by the nature and duration of stay in the host country (Hathaway 2005). There are two categories of attachment that determine the right to work of refugees which are "Lawfully staying in" and "Lawfully in". The category of lawfully staying in includes refugees with the highest attachment who were recognized through positive RSD procedure and Prima Facie, while lawfully in indicate to lower level of attachment contains both refugees and asylum seekers (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020).

The right to wage-employment in Article 17 is granted to "Lawfully staying in". Thereby, it does not apply on the 123,693 Syrian asylum seekers in Egypt who represent 94% from the total Syrian refugees and asylum seekers registered with UNHCR (UNHCR 2021). Pertaining to Article 18 on self – employment that protects the right of any refugee "lawfully in", it applies to Syrian refugees in Egypt as it includes those who are under temporary protection or asylum seekers with pending cases. It allows them wide range of entrepreneurial activities including establishing commercial and industrial companies, and it grants them the most favourable treatment given to foreigners regarding employment, with the condition to fulfil the requirements needed, as any other foreigner, to start their businesses (Kagan 2011). While those who gained the refugee status and reside in Egypt for three year, or have a spouse of children holding the Egyptian nationality should be exempted from most restrictions on the employment of foreigners (Kagan 2011).

Therefore, theoretically speaking, Syrian refugees are allowed to apply and obtain work permits like other foreigners in accordance to labor code⁶, the Ministry of Manpower and

⁶ Law No.12 of 2003 which aims at regulating the relationship between employers and employees in the private sector.

Migration Decrees on work permits for foreigners⁷, the companies' law and the Investment Law (Hetaba, McNally, and Habersky 2020). However, the criteria for obtaining work permit is both very difficult and expensive. The employers should ensure that foreigners should not exceed 10% of their employees at all times. The following are among these criteria that need to be fulfilled by foreigners to obtain a work permit:

- His/ her qualifications should match the work requirements.
- Acquisition of work experience no less than three years.
- He/she must not compete with Egyptians for work opportunities.
- If the law in Egypt requires having a license to work in a specific profession, so he/she has to have this license.
- There has to be economic benefit of hiring a foreigner at the vacant position, upon his/ her employment.
- Two Egyptian assistants should be hired and trained by this foreigner.
- Priority should be given to foreigners who have been born in Egypt and permanently reside in it.

In addition, the fees for a work permit are very high. It is estimated at 3000 Egyptian Pounds per year for the first three years, then the fee rises to 5,000 Egyptian Pound for the fourth year with a yearly increase by 1000 Egyptian Pounds, up to a maximum fee of 12,000 Egyptian Pounds (Sharafeldin 2020).

These legal requirements are difficult to be fulfilled by most of refugees in Egypt. Consequently, the overwhelming majority of Syrian refugees in Egypt are either unemployed or covertly employed in the informal sector, where a majority of the national workforce is to be

⁷ Decree of the Ministry of Manpower and Migration No. 305 of the Year 2015 on the Rules and Implementing Measures Surrounding Work Permits for Foreigners. Ministry of Manpower and Migration Decree No. 485 of 2010 concerning Foreigners Work Licensing Rules and Executive Procedures.

found. So, despite the fact that Syrian refugees are legally having the right to work, the rigid provisions related to their employment make their access to the formal labor market very limited.

4.3 Policies and Political Context:

The legal provisions for the right to work are always strongly mediated by political economy and security concerns that motivate protectionist policies to limit refugee access to labor market (Zetter and Ruaudel 2016). These restrictive policies sometimes based on the fear that refugee participation will distort labor markets by reducing jobs available to citizens and drive down wages and working conditions for all workers (Ceritoglu et al. 2015). Additionally, governments fear the protracted conditions of displacement and participation of refugees in the workplace encourage refugees to remain and settle in their country of first asylum (Zetter and Ruaudel 2016).

Based on Betts et al. (2014) assumption for refugee economics, “markets function in the context of states policies”, meaning by that refugees’ access to market-based opportunities is highly sensitive to the political context (Betts et al. 2014). This part will show how the Egyptian government has the power to influence Syrian refugees’ economic insertion through policies and how since Syrian refugees’ arrival, every change in the political scene, had its reflection on their insertion into the labor market and their economic activities, whether in a positive or negative way.

Syrian refugees in Egypt witnessed different precedencies with evident shift in policies and government since their arrival. They came into Egypt in late 2012 in a political setting that quickly shifted and almost completely altered their situation in the country (Elshokeiry 2016). The period between 2011 and June 2013 was described in some literature as “golden age” for Syrian refugees, especially for elites and intellectuals (Yehia 2018). It started by the extremely friendly environment and welcoming attitude of Egyptians when Syrians had begun to arrive in 2011, as

well as the institutions and associations which provided material and moral assistance. Then, the support increased further when former president Mohamed Morsi came in power and the government maintained an open-door-policy pertaining to the entry of Syrian nationals.

There were four different administrative routes for Syrian refugees after entering the country at that time: first to extent the tourist visa, second to obtain a work permit, third to provide proof of study, and fourth to approach UNHCR for registration (Elshokeiry 2016). Work and residence were secured easily, and no restrictions were imposed on their private business. This policy-encouraged Syrian businessmen to continue their business in Egypt (SANA 2015), and Syrian refugees managed to reach a moderate degree of self-reliance (Wolf 2013). Syrians accessed the labor market and embarked on entrepreneurial ventures in different industries including food and restaurants; just as earlier generations of Syrian immigrants who had opened businesses and formed communities in parts of Cairo and Alexandria (Yehia 2016). Health and education were provided for free, including post-graduate education. Thus, this considered advantage in comparison with other states, which propelled more Syrian refugees to come into Egypt as they can share the most important aspects of life from residency to schools, hospitals and market places (Shahine 2016).

With the change in the government and political system occurred in Egypt in June 2013, this magnanimous climate shifted. In particular, when President Morsi declared Egypt to cut relations completely with the Syrian regime announcing the withdrawal of Egypt's diplomatic mission in Syria and the closing of the Syrian embassy in Cairo (Elshokeiry 2016). Then, followed by the regime change in July 2013, the arrival of military-led, and the subsequent sit in Rabaa square. This period stirred xenophobia against Syrians with spread of negative segments by media perceiving Syrians as supporters to the Muslim Brotherhood (Primo 2015). In this period, the

government imposed tighter security measures on Syrians in Egypt requiring all Syrians to have a valid visa and security clearance prior to entering Egypt. Syrians with expired visas were considered as irregular by the national security (Amelia 2015). Authorities have placed Syrian refugees under security scrutiny and there have been incidents of Syrians being arrested, detained, and deported for not having valid residency (UNHCR 2013) even those who were hesitant to register with UNHCR proceeded to do so in order to guarantee some forms of protection (Elshokeiry 2016).

This insecure climate had a negative labor market outcome on Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees suddenly found themselves the target of suspension, and their ability to find employment lessened (Wolf 2013). The anti-Syrian rhetoric affected, in particular, those who lack degrees or specialized skills as many of them were fired. This tense situation also pushed many Syrians to cease their commercial and industrial activities and to leave Egypt transferring their business to Turkey (Yehia 2018).

As illustrated by Montaser (2019), neither political economy nor cultural embeddedness were having conspicuous impact on the Egyptian policies towards refugees at that time. However, the security factor was the main determinant for the Egyptian policies (Montaser 2019). The economic and social implications of changed policies contributed to the departure of many Syrian families in 2013 and 2014, especially revolutionary activist intellectuals, who sought refuge in Turkey or Europe (Yehia 2018). Also, UNHCR appealed to the Egyptian Government requesting to “ensure that any precautionary measures in light of the current security situation in the country do not infringe upon fundamental human rights principles and the country’s international responsibilities to provide asylum and protection to refugees” (UNHCR 2013).

The situation of Syrian refugees improved after the moderate political stability experienced in June 2014, when presidential elections were held and President Abdel-Fatah Al-Sisi was elected (Elshokeiry 2016). However, due to increased security threats, there were increased visa restrictions on refugees, coinciding the increase in cost of living due to government subsidy reduction, decreased household purchasing power and increased cost of services like transportation (UNHCR 2014). This made many Syrians face greater economic pressure, and resulted in increases in the number of refugees and migrants trying to leave Egypt in irregular way (UNHCR 2016). It has been reported that 1,000 Syrians were arrested from January to mid-September 2014 and faced detention, most of them were released and some were resettled in a third country. On the other hand, the government proceeded in a protection sensitive attitude towards Syrian refugees. Even most of the detained have been released after their arrest for period between 5-20 days, without charge or legal consequences, and the majority were allowed to remain in Egypt and regularize their residency (UNHCR 2014).

Egypt returned to attract Syrians, whether refugees or investors and the number of factories in Egypt have become representing 80 percent of the Syrian factories established abroad, concentrated mainly on textile and food (SANA 2015). Syrian investments consolidated by the creation of Syrian Businessmen's Association in 2014, uniting Syrian businessmen who decided to continue their business in Egypt (Yehia 2018). The expansion in the Syrian investments enabled Syrian businessmen to help Syrian refugees through providing them job opportunities (SANA 2015). The association beside the social bonds helped entrepreneurial refugees in establishing their own business by providing guidance and counselling to new ventures regarding official rules and regulations, market trends, asset management, and networking with government officials (UNDP, ILO, WFP 2017).

In a live television interview with President Al-Sisi during the “Nation’s Story” conference in January 2018, a question about refugees who are residing in Egypt was raised mentioning that refugees are “takers” of economic opportunities and that they make their own businesses and gain profit without benefiting the country. President Al Sisi replied that he does not agree with this statement illustrating that Egypt continues to provide services to refugees with equal footing as Egyptians and that Egypt has always been a destination for refugees giving Armenians as a historic example for that. He highlighted the positive side of refugees’ work saying, “It’s great that they work and to be self-reliant.... Egypt is their country”.

4.4 Economic context:

The economic situation in Egypt is increasingly challenging for all residents through price increases, high inflation, and fewer employment opportunities (ILO 2018). According to the Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics, unemployment rate reached eight percent in the fourth quarter of 2019 (ECES 2020); that was seen as an indicator for the country’s economic recovery after the economic transformations that Egypt has undergone since 2011 (UNHCR 2020). However, some scholars noticed that the low unemployment in Egypt is a misleading indicator of labor market health and that there are other labor market measures, such as underemployment, types of employment (especially the informal work), hours of work, and level of earnings that are better measures of labor market health (Assaad and Krafft 2014).

The supply-driven education system shackles the labor market with a huge workforce annually that exceeds its ability to generate new job opportunities. The proportion of population in the working age has increased, which puts a pressure on available opportunities (ECES 2020). The high informality presents both opportunity and disadvantage for Syrian refugees. It offers a relative ease of entry, especially that their chances to work in the formal sector is very limited.

The Egyptian labor market has gone through several external and internal economic shocks, which have negatively affected the quality of its performance. The latest was the Covid-19 crisis, which had immediate consequences on the informal economy. Since Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in Egypt are highly involved in the informal sector, the curfew and lockdown measures adopted by the government in its plan to combat the spread of Covid-19 have had a negative impact on their livelihoods.

Despite the numerous challenges in gaining employment, 51 % of working age (15-59) Syrian refugee in 2017 were economically active; either engaged in some form of employment or actively looking for work (UNHCR 2017).

5.1 Employment Status of Labor Force

According to UNHCR Egypt Socioeconomic Assessment report 2017, among the Syrian refugee labor force⁸ that counted 27,955 from the total surveyed sample⁹ (23,466 men and 4,489 women), 50 percent of labor force has full time wage employment, while 23 percent has various types of temporary wage employment (daily- occasional- order based). Three percent of labor force is engaged in self-employment, and 24 percent are unemployed but actively looking for work (figure 5) (UNHCR 2018).

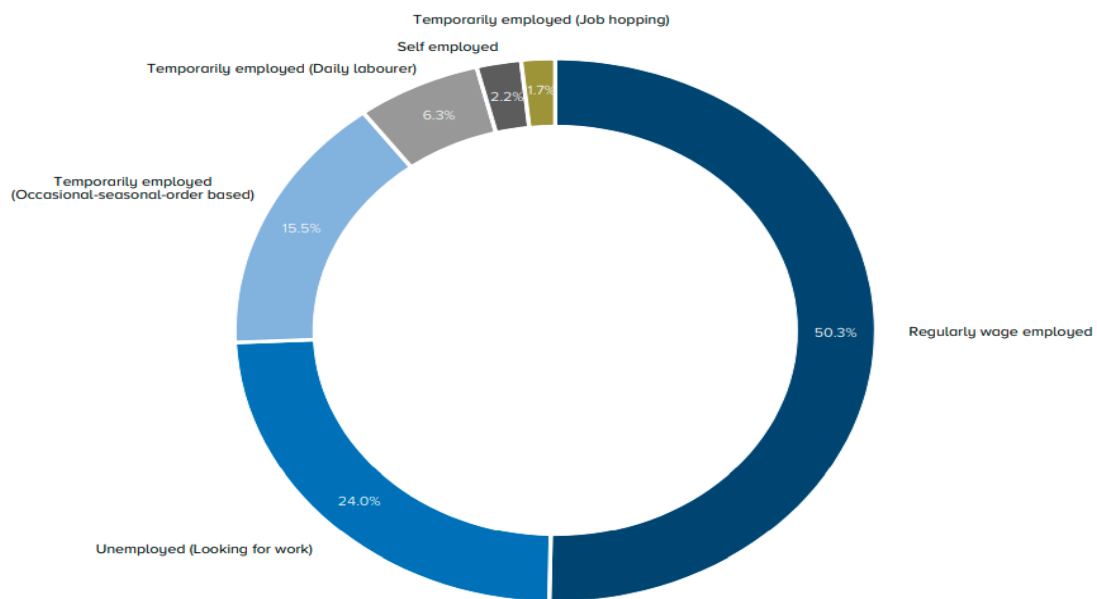


Figure 5: Employment Status of Syrian refugee Labor Force (UNHCR 2018)

⁸ Defined as the number of working age (16-60) employed workers and those unemployed but able and actively look for work

⁹ The assessment surveyed 26,585 Syrian refugee households amounting to 108,597 Syrian individuals

5.2 Occupations:

The vast majority of Syrian refugees working in Egypt are employed in the skilled trade¹⁰ and services sectors and the breakdown of the number of workers per occupation according to UNHCR Egypt Socioeconomic Assessment report 2017 is found in figure 6.

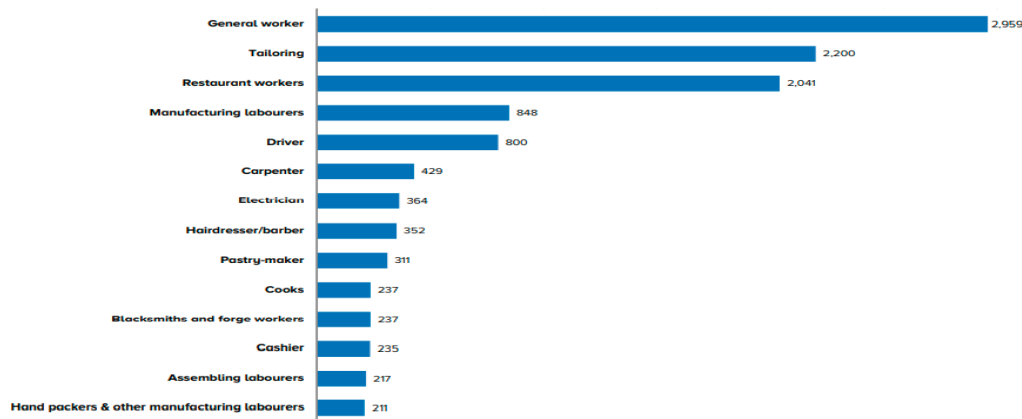


Figure 6 number of Syrian workers by occupation (UNHCR 2018)

Fifty-eight percent of employed Syrian refugee women work in the skilled trades and services largely in tailoring, cooking, hairdressing, and domestic services¹¹ (Figure 7). The second largest sector employing Syrian refugee women is education, which employs 15 percent.

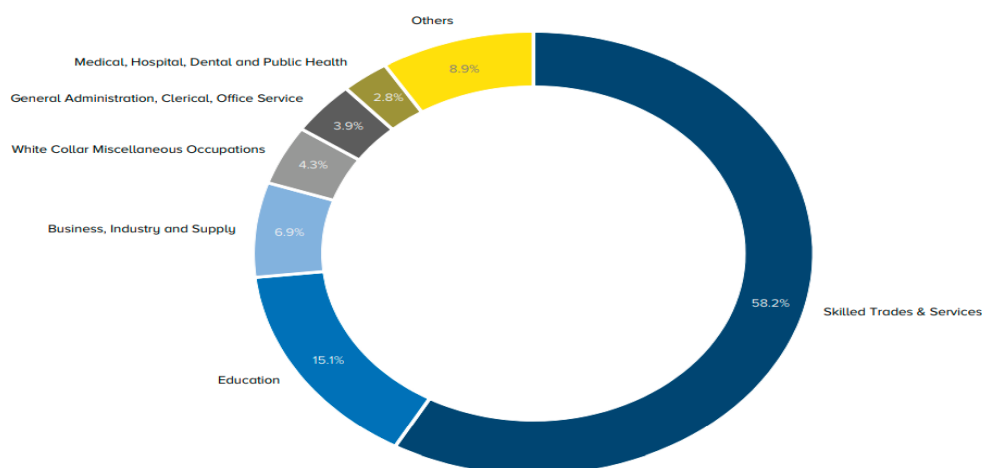


Figure 7 Syrian refugee women occupation by sector (UNHCR 2018)

¹⁰ A skilled trade is a career path that requires hands-on work. Skilled trades' workers build and maintain infrastructure like homes, schools, hospitals, roads. They keep industries running and perform many services we rely on every day, like hairstyling, food preparation or social services (Ontario 2019).

¹¹ Services and activities performed for the household. The term includes cooking, cleaning, shopping, household maintenance (Law Insider n.d.).

As for men, the largest percentage (77 percent) are employed in the skilled trades and services sector largely in restaurants, as drivers, and in sales, tailoring, and carpentry (figure 8).

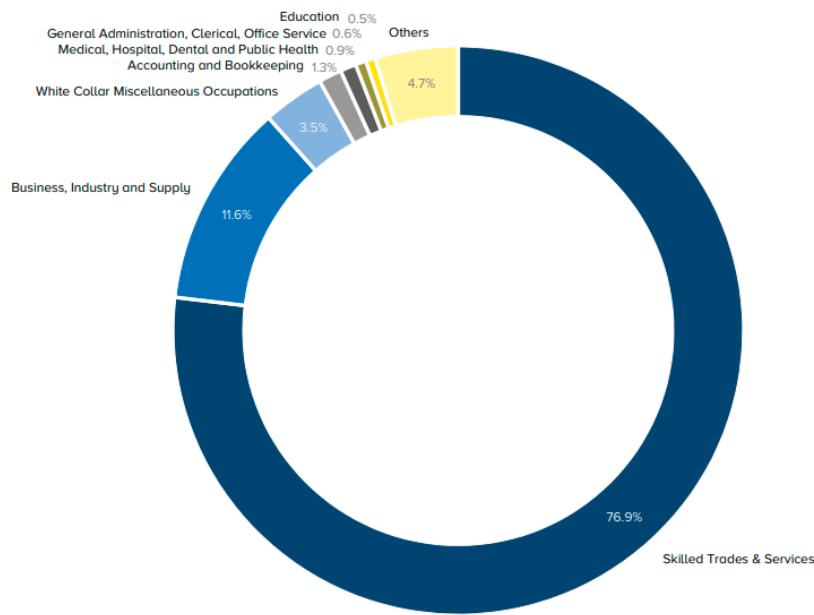


Figure 8: Syrian refugee men's occupation by sector
Source (UNHCR 2018)

5.3 Employment and Level of Education:

Many Syrian refugees in Egypt have prior work experience. Many further equipped with education certificates, high school diplomas as well as some vocational training. The sub-sectors that hire the largest percentage of higher educated Syrian refugees are the legal, science, engineering and architecture, and sciences sectors. Higher-educated Syrian refugees face challenges in finding occupations that match their level of training. Opportunities in the medical and education sector are slightly better than other sectors. For those Syrian refugees with no formal education, primary or preparatory education, there are more opportunities in services sector and food and restaurants industry (UNHCR 2018).

5.4 Level of Work Satisfaction

Levels of work satisfaction is relatively low. Both Syrian women and men define inadequate earnings and working hours as the main reason for low work satisfaction. Non-fulfilling jobs and weak security and stability of employment are among other reasons for low work satisfaction (figure 9).

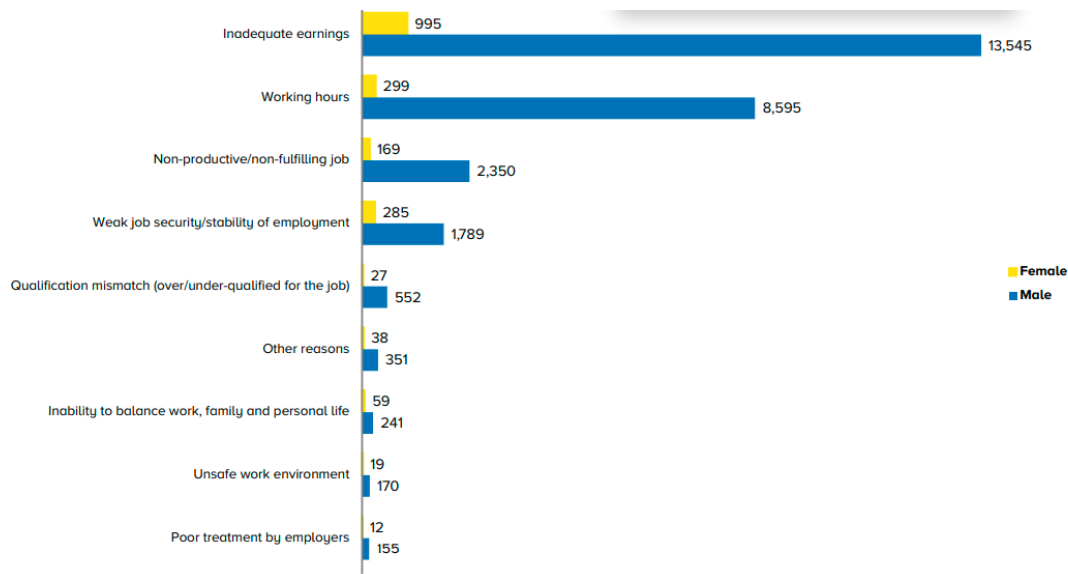


Figure 9 Reasons of work dissatisfaction (UNHCR 2018)

6.1 The insertion of Syrian refugees in the Egyptian labor market through food services

For many Syrians in Egypt, food services are an entry point to the labor market. Their services vary between catering and delivering homemade food, street vendors, and big popular Syrian restaurants offering different kinds of Syrian food and sweets. They also have small Syrian grocery shops that sell Syrian cheese and other Syrian products which cannot be found in other Egyptian grocery shops, along with pickles and spices that are currently made in factories in Egypt (El-Gundy 2016).

Egyptian population liked the Syrian cuisine's variety and taste. Their diversified businesses from small catering services to restaurants have spread widely in Egypt and succeeded to make a food industry on its own (Gundy 2016). In 6th of October City there is a street known as "Little Damascus" in front of Al-Hossary Mosque full of Syrian shops and restaurants. There are many popular successful Syrian restaurants in Greater Cairo¹². Each has its own specialty. One is known for shawerma, another for fresh hummus, and others for its oven-baked mana'ish. This success has historic roots. Abo Heider Shawaerma is a take-away Syrian restaurant that started in Heliopolis since the 1960s.

For Syrian refugee women, the food services sector was an excellent opportunity for them to find source of income. Due to their cultures and traditions, they prefer to work from home.

¹² Abo Ramez in Dukki, Abu Ammar in Heliopolis, Anas Al Dimishqui in Nasr city, Dar Ward in New Cairo and El-Sh-eikh Zayed, El Hatty El Soury and A'rous Demeshq in Alexandria, Khayrat El Sham in Maadi, Dar El Kamar in Zamalek, Bab Tooma in New Cairo and El-sheikh Zayed, Atyab Shami in 6th of October, Ibn El Sham in New Cairo, and many more.

Some of them also have experienced harassment, which discouraged them from seeking jobs and made their work home-based (Mohamed and Elhusseiny 2014). That was noticeable during the fieldwork done for this study, as the women I saw working at Syrian restaurants were Egyptians.

Syrian refugee women started their home-based catering journeys by making pastries and sweets as these are long –lasting foods that take a long time to expire. As a Syrian refugee woman explained in one of the interviews conducted for the study, in the beginning, some of them were relying on the products they could purchase via UNHCR food vouchers to make food and sell it. Afterwards, when their products started to sell widely, they expanded their menu offering other kinds of Syrian dishes and easy to make frozen meals to Egyptians as well as student migrants from Libya, Iraq, and Jordan (personal communication, 18 November 2020).

6.2 Factors that Promoted Syrian Refugees' Insertion into the Egyptian labor market

6.2.1 Labor Market Conditions:

Refugees and asylum seekers have limited ability to select the state of the labor market. While host countries can select migrants based on their qualifications, and migrants can select their destination based on higher demand for their skills and opportunities offered, such selection is not possible for them (Fasani, Frattini, and Minale 2018). Several scholars observed that refugees' economic integration is very dependent on the labor market conditions at time of arrival. It was found as well that the conditions of high probability of unemployment could lead to long-term scars for refugees, if employers took their past unemployment as an indicator of low productivity, or if unemployment period leads to skill losses (Aslund and Rooth 2007; Azlor, Damm, and Nielsen 2020)

Despite the fact that Syrian refugees arrived in a period in which the Egyptian labor market was suffering the impact of two major events both have had negative impact on job creation: political instability following the January 2011 revolution and the slow down in global growth subsequent to the 2008 economic crisis, (Barsoum, Ramadan, and Mostafa 2014). They have been able to pursue employment immediately upon their arrival (Hassan et al. 2019). This section explains two labor market conditions that facilitated and promoted their insertion: Demand and supply factors and informality.

6.2.1.1 Demand and Supply Factors:

Scholars who examined the labor market conditions and refugees' employment have found a significant impact for demand and supply factors. They also observed that refugees are more sensitive to local demand fluctuations than those who are native-born (Azlor, Damm, and Nielsen 2020). Likewise, others highlighted that refugees should be able to self-select locations where

there is a demand on the services they provide in order to facilitate their employment (Hoynes 1996 ; Bevellander and Lundh 2007; Borjas and Monras 2017).

ILO and UNHCR (2017) in their Approach to Inclusive Market Systems (AIMS) for refugees demonstrated that **the demand and supply sides of the labor market** are the core elements that govern refugees' access to the labor market. It was illustrated in order for any refugee to build sustainable livelihood, two conditions need to be fulfilled. First, existence of demand for certain product or service on the market in case of self-employment, or demand for labor in case of salaried employment. This condition is allied with the "Demand for Labor Theory" which is previously explained. Second, people should have the necessary skills and competencies to access the existing market opportunities (ILO, UNHCR 2017)

The two afore-mentioned conditions are applied to the case of study. ILO and UNHCR market system analysis for Syrian refugee in Egypt (2018) revealed the existence of a demand for Syrian food products showing that this demand is combined with high level of customer satisfaction with relevance to food quality, taste, hygiene, variety of food and prices. According to this market analysis, 38 percent of a random sample of residents perceive the Syrian food as excellent, 29 percent perceive it's a very good, and 24 percent rated as good (ILO, UNHCR 2018).

This demand is also reflected in the numerous popular Syrian restaurants that started and maintained success until the present time. Rosto restaurant is one of the largest and most famous Syrian restaurants that opened its first branch in Giza in 2016 and today it has six branches employing more than 150 Egyptian and Syrian workers (Noureldin.O 2019)

In addition to the high customer satisfaction, the demand on Syrian Food products may have been affected by the growing demand on food products in Egypt due to population growth and the change in food consumption habits (EU 2019). The rise in prices with 20 percent price hikes and decline in household income made Egyptian consumers pay attention to prices (EU 2019). A requirement that Syrian restaurants provide. Al-Monitor's report indicated that Egyptians started to branch out traditional meals and order from Syrian restaurants seeking cheaper prices (Awad 2019). Nasser El Prince, the owner of one of the most famous Egyptian restaurants, raised this point while explaining the competitiveness between Egyptian and Syrian restaurants, stating that "Egyptian restaurants have already lost their customers in favor of Syrian and non-Egyptian kitchens because they raised meals' prices" (Mohsen 2019).

In addition, the fast-food chains in Egypt witnessed growth during the past years (ILO, UNHCR 2018) providing a space for Syrian restaurants to accelerate. Egyptians' familiarity with Syrian cuisine because of prior links between the two countries and already existing Syrian restaurants positively affected the demand. It is also worth noting that among Egyptians are customers who get attracted by unknown and foreign products on the domestic market, this type of customers is accustomed to different food and drink cultures and they could present fruitful opportunities for the non-local food products offered (EU 2019).

The existence of Syrian restaurants consequently derived a demand for Syrian labor with expertise in Syrian cuisine. This in turn created job opportunities for many Syrian refugees and facilitated their access to the market. Ads demanding Syrian labor in restaurants became common not only on Syrian community Facebook pages in Egypt (Gundy 2016), but also in websites posting job opportunities. An example of these ads is the following: "For all Syrians who are with us in Egypt, there is a job opportunity in a food factory in October with a salary 1400 L.E, and the

accommodation will be covered by the company, if interested please call....” (Job for Eng 2013). Further Adds on Tanqeeb’s web site¹³ for jobs in Egypt mention: “In a Syrian restaurant in Giza, a Syrian Shawarma man is needed.... It is necessary to be Syrian with experience...The number of working hours is 12” (Tanqeeb 2021). “Syrian Youth are needed to work in a Syrian restaurant...previous working experience is not necessary...with the condition of commitment and near residence” (Tanqeeb 2021).

While speaking with a Syrian refugee who owns a restaurant, he illustrated that Egyptian customers prefer Syrian chiefs in order to ensure food authenticity. He explained: “Egyptian customers want Syrians only to work in the restaurant...if they found an Egyptian works, they might not come to us or order again” (Personal communication, November 17, 2020), Keeping in mind that this man employs both Syrians and Egyptians in his restaurant.

Given the fact that many of Syrian refugees were already engaged in income generating activities in the food sector in Syria before their arrival (ILO, UNHCR 2018), they had the necessary skills to contribute substantially to this sector. Their experience, hard work, punctuality, and productivity also created demand on their profiles from restaurants’ owners. Additionally, Syrians’ attitudes through their cheerful disposition, kind words, and welcoming smiles enabled them to achieve their goals in a short period of time (Kandil 2019). It is true that skills supply is extremely important for any refugee and play a key role in their employment. However, what was influential and promoted Syrian refugees in Egypt is the Labor demand and supply match that allowed them to utilize their skills and experience in this sector.

¹³ Tanqeeb is one of the biggest job search engines on the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region that gather job vacancies from the recruitment sites and list them on its website (Tanqeeb n.d.)

6.2.1.2 Informality:

The sizeable informal economy in Egypt was an important factor for Syrian refugees to be economically active, allowing them to be employed. Although refugees' job opportunities in the informal sector marked by exploitative and discriminative work conditions, low wages, increased work hours and lack of job security (Mencutek and Nashwan 2020), sometimes they are ways of gaining employment (Mansour 2018).

Informality is a feature of the Egyptian economy (Mahdi 2002) that long pre-dates the Syrian crisis. Based on a study published by the Economic Research Forum, the informal sector in Egypt constitutes more than 58.3 percent of the total employment (Abu-Ali and Rizk 2015). The food-industry in Egypt is known as one of the most profitable sectors for investment (Hennawy 2020). According to Hafez (2018), Food and beverage companies belong to one of the “defensive sectors” that tend to be largely immune to cyclical economic performance and is therefore favoured by investors. As he stated “Such popularity created a strong informal food business that range from street vendors selling factory-discarded foods to unregistered producers of packaged snacks and beverages sold at small vendors national wide” (Hafez 2018). The large informal food market in Egypt absorbed the products and services provided by Syrian refugees. Moreover, it offered them opportunities to develop their own businesses like other Egyptian restaurants that operate informally to avoid industry regulations and taxes, unconstrained by labor law (Hlasny and Al Azzawi 2020).

On the other hand, it is important to note that this informality exposes refugees to higher vulnerabilities and risks during crises, such as what happened during Covid-19 pandemic. Since Food and restaurants sector was directly affected by lockdown measures and reduction in working hours (Breisinger et al. 2020) Syrian refugees who work in that sector have been profoundly

affected economically like other workers employed in the informal sector and suffered great loss of work and income. In addition, they did not benefit from the income support distributed by the government to informal workers whose incomes were severely impacted because of the pandemic, that included 500 Egyptian Pounds in three payments, totalling 1,500 Egyptian Pounds (Maarouf 2020)

Lockdown and other containment measures have been problematic for Syrian refugee entrepreneurs who own small businesses as they suffered reduced sales and revenue loss. Under these conditions, it was very difficult for them to keep paying the wages of their employees. According to personal communication with Syrian refugee owns a small restaurant,

“Covid has caused huge loss for us... We were opening the restaurant without receiving any orders...in 3 months we have lost 150,000 Egyptian pounds...we were paying salaries and rent costs with no job...we reduced the workers’ working hours instead of laying them off” (Mohamed Haytham, November17, 2020).

The reduction in working hours for both Syrian and Egyptian labourers have translated into substantial losses in their income particularly, those who are paid on a daily or weekly basis. At the same time, many Syrian refugee labourers have been hit by layoffs. They became unable to provide basic needs for their families (Reliefweb 2020).

All Syrian refugee women participated in this study revealed that their home-based food businesses and kitchens were intensely affected by the Covid-19 pandemic due to enforced regulations for social distancing, and reduced sizes or gatherings. The orders they receive have largely been reduced compared to before the pandemic and some businesses were unable to

survive. As mentioned by a Syrian refugee woman who was managing a prominent Syrian catering business:

“The kitchen was mainly relying on providing food for weddings, embassies, Ramadan gatherings, and business events...due to restrictions on gatherings...the number of orders reduced gradually and then the kitchen is currently closed” (personal communication, November 5, 2020). Another refugee woman explained, “It’s been a year now since I last received an order and my son was working in a restaurant and he got laid off” (Samar Garah, January 24, 2021).

6.2.2 Social Connections:

This section discusses different kinds of connections that all together influenced and were favorable to the insertion of Syrian refugees in the labor market. These connections are “Social Bonds” among those in a refugee and asylum seekers community, “Social Bridges” between refugees and host communities, and “Social Links” that connect refugees and structures of the state, such as government services.

6.2.2.1 Social Bonds (Social Networks):

Whether refugee or resident, social networks increase the probability of finding a job (Beaman 2012). They are considered to be one of the very few resources available for refugees in the country of asylum, compared with migrants who may have human capital, such as Education and training recognized in the country of destination, or available financial resources (Lama and Krahn 2003). Considerable research tackled social networks and its significance on facilitating migrants and refugees labor market integration provided evidence that these networks are being a coping strategy that largely support refugees in improving their livelihoods during displacement (Piracha, Tani, and Lucero 2013; Marten, Hainmueller, and Hangartner 2018).

According to UNHCR Egypt socio-economic Assessment report (2017), the majority of employed Syrian refugees and asylum seekers of the surveyed sample found their jobs through contacts with family and friend (83 percent). Independent searching and community contacts were found to be the second and third most successful job finding channels, each accounting for roughly seven percent. One percent of working people found jobs through NGOs or UNHCR, while the rest found jobs on the internet, through newspapers, or community-based organizations (UNHCR 2017).

Social networks are one of the most efficient pillars on which Syrian refugees in Egypt depend (Montaser 2019). This was noticeable in the interviews conducted for this study as the vast majority stressed the importance of their family and friends in their asylum journey. In particular, the closer family members were mentioned as a motivation to choose Egypt as a destination where they can easily get support to find job opportunities. In describing the socio-economic conditions of Syrian refugees in Egypt, Ayoub and Khallaf (2014) showed the prominent support Syrians get from these networks in finding employment opportunities after their arrival. Interviews conducted for the study elucidated the strength of these networks and its support in accessing the labor market. A manager of a Syrian restaurant in Rehab city explained:

“The Maximum period in which a Syrian can stay in Egypt without Job is a month...The Syrians who already live in Egypt, once a Syrian arrive, they tell him come and work with us, with no conditions.... for me It took two days to find a job” (personal communication, November 16, 2020).

Bourdieu (1986), outstandingly, made an essential distinction between the networks themselves and the resources of such networks. He pointed out that the volume of social capital possessed by a person depends on (1) the size of the network connections he can effectively

mobilize and the (2) volume of the economic, cultural, or symbolical capital possessed by those to whom she or he is connected (Bourdieu 1986). In the same vein, de Hass (2009) shows that social capital has been classified as “capital” because “It is a resource that can be converted into other forms of cultural, human, and economic capital”.

Building on Bourdieu’s (1986) words in describing economic capital as a source of power and the root of all the other types of capital, we can understand how Syrian networks in Egypt gained power and became influential in the process of Syrian refugees insertion into the labor market. The General Authority for Investment and Free zones data indicates that Syrian investments in Egypt ranked third among Arab, foreign, and African investments in 2018 (Emam 2020). ILO, WFP, and UNDP (2017) demonstrated that the volume of their investments in Egypt is estimated at \$800 million since the start of the Syrian civil war in 2011. In addition, the American Chamber of Commerce in Egypt (2019) reported that there are more than 3,300 Syrian-registered business, with 30,000 plus Syrian investors operating in Egypt since 2011. It has also been estimated that there are 500 Syrian workshops and small factories operating informally in Obour industrial City, where they have rented ready to operate spaces in the industrial park. (UNDP, ILO, WFP 2017).

The volume of Syrians’ investments strengthened their social networks in Egypt and built a concrete economic infrastructure allowing businessmen and entrepreneurs in the network to help tens of thousands of Syrian refugees in finding job opportunities (Noureldin 2019). Likewise, Dagnelie, Mayda, and Maystadt (2019) found the employment probability of refugees in the United States to have been positively affected by the number of business owners in their network. They suggest that network members who are entrepreneurs hire refugees from the same country of origin for different reasons including: (1) shared language or business culture which could

enhance productivity; (2) it could be easier for managers to communicate with workers with the same background; (3) job search network may provide useful information lowering the cost of information acquisition; (4) and it could also be discrimination of preference (Dagnelie, Mayda, and Maysta 2019).

Syrian community organizations and volunteering platforms provide activities which offer refugees the chance to find income opportunities. They play vital role as mediators between job seekers and businessmen in their network. A Syrian woman who works as a coordinator at Tafawuq Soory centre illustrated that the centre has a database for Syrian refugees containing their profiles, ages, and qualifications. Therefore, when a Syrian restaurant communicates with the centre and informs that there is a need for labor, the institute matches the job opportunity offered with the available profiles and put them both in contact with each other (personal communication, 24 November 2020).

Syrian networks boosted Syrian refugees' chances to access the labor market, utilizing the advanced communication tools (various social media platforms like Facebook) to their benefits and, connecting them together to expand the circulation of job opportunities within their network. Fouad Tahan, a Syrian refugee work in Zain Sham restaurant in Rehab City mentioned:

“There is a strong bond between Syrians in Egypt through Facebook, all Syrians help each other by posting job opportunities and their phone numbers....the largest group is “The Syrian community in Egypt” that includes Syrians from 6th of October city, Jesr El-suez, 10th of Ramadan, Damietta, and other provinces....also there is another group called “Job opportunities for Syrian community in Egypt”, through this group, owners of Syrian restaurants post that they need Syrian workers when they need” (personal communication, 16 November 2020).

These Facebook groups with thousands of members include owners of restaurants who post job advertisement among their network to reach potential applicants. Syrian refugee women use these platforms to advertise for their homemade food products. Hence, this connectivity has created a social space for Syrian refugees in Egypt that enables networking and dissemination of information about available job opportunities among geographically dispersed people in their social network. Alencar and Tsagkroni (2019) shed light on this issue demonstrating the increasingly important role digital technologies play as a tool for addressing discrepancies between refugees' information and integration needs. Other studies by Kaufmann (2018) and Leurs (2017) tackled Syrian refugees usage of smartphones in Austria and Netherland, also found that networking technologies are a key tool for refugees nowadays, that can foster refugees' exchange of information among refugee network in both home and host countries (Alencar and Tsagkroni 2019; Yang, Lee, and Kurnia 2009).

Some scholars highlighted the risk of social networks collapse during displacement due to financial and emotional strain by the long displacement. Their argument implies that as it is a source of strength and support, it is likely to be impeding and negatively affect job-finding rates. In another words, refugees might compete instead of supporting each other, as new arrivals could substitute other refugees and increase unemployment (Demiri 2020; Brell, Dustmann, and Preston 2020; Dagnelie, Mayda, and Maysta 2019). Beaman (2012) examined the implications for labor market outcomes of refugees resettled in the United States and found that an increase in the number of social network members resettled in the same year or one year prior led to deterioration in outcomes. While increase in the number of returned refugees in the same social network improves the probability of employment and raises wages (Beaman 2012).

As for the Syrian social networks in Egypt, the majority of those who were interviewed consider their networks as a source of strength and support to find employment. While there was a Syrian woman who has a small Syrian catering business in 6th of October area, pointed out the competition between Syrians, mentioning that the large number of Syrian restaurants in the area where she lives affected her home businesses. According to her words:

“Syrian restaurants provide the same products I offer with lower prices The cost of production is higher for me as I work in small quantities compared to the restaurants Also the restaurants do not use the same quality of meat products like Kobeba which differ in price” (personal communication, January 19, 2021).

At the end, the positive effect of Syrian networks dominated the interviews as number of participants in this study, both men and women, mentioned that Syrian restaurants offer income opportunities for many Syrian women by ordering large quantities of frozen products and popular Syrian desserts served at restaurants.

6.2.2.2 Social Bridges

There are strong historical ties between Egyptians and Syrians given the long history of relations between the two countries. Egyptians felt sympathy for the precarious situation of many Syrian refugees, therefore, they showed friendly and welcoming attitude towards Syrians when they first arrived (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014) and in return, that was greatly valued and appreciated by Syrians who participated in the study. Moreover, there is a study on Syrian refugees’ social integration that indicated that Egyptians are keen on supporting Syrians and that they treat them more favourably than they treat each other (Hassan et al. 2018).

Even though there was a noticeable change in Egyptians' attitude towards Syrians in 2013 with changes in political scene and accusations that Syrians were supporters to the Muslim Brotherhood (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014), this attitude did not last for long. Syrian refugees participated in this study praised the generosity and welcoming attitude of Egyptians towards them with no reference to any kind of discrimination or racism against them.

“We do not feel alienated in Egypt....the Egyptians supported us and gave us a helping hand... there is no discrimination against Syrians in Egypt, in contrary, we live with dignity and receive best treatment by Egyptians” (personal communication, November 5, 2020).

This does not mean there is no social sufferings among Syrian refugees. It was reported that Syrian refugee children are subject to bullying at local school because of their Syrian accent (Noureldin 2015). Furthermore, friendliness from Egyptians was very important and helpful in making Syrian refugees to feel secured and “at home” compared to other hosting communities.

“Syrians live in Egypt feel comfortable more than those who live in other countries like Lebanon, Turkey, or Europe.... the best country that hosted Syrians is Egypt and its people... Egyptians are kind and hospitable...none of the Arab countries like Egypt in hosting Syrians” (personal communication, November 18, 2020).

Negative sentiments include the claim that Syrians have taken jobs from Egyptians exist, but this not dominant. The hashtag titled “Syrians are welcome in Egypt”, which spread across social media websites when lawyer Samir Sabry filed a complaint to the public prosecutor's office calling to impose tighter supervision over Syrians' assets, accusing them of taking jobs from Egyptians (Megahid 2019) reveals strong social bridges and real support for Syrian refugees in Egypt. Khaldoun al-Mouakeh, the head of the Syrian Businessmen's Association in Egypt considered this public response an official referendum on Syrians' presence in Egypt (Mohamed

2019). Awad (2019) also wrote about this incident clarifying that the total number of Syrian refugees in Egypt as a proportion of the labor force could never affect in anyway the employment of Egyptians.

Television programs that presented successful stories by Syrians in the food sector in Egypt showed acceptance and encouragement to Syrian refugees in Egypt. One of these television programs is “Sahibet Al-Saada” that dedicated full episode named “Syria Street” in April 2018. The episode focused on Syrians’ accomplishments in Egypt after the civil war, providing them the opportunity to say their stories, and simultaneously, show their diversified food products and market for it.

Such bridging capital is crucial in bringing economic benefits for Syrian refugees. It is evident that it had positive impact on the insertion. In the interviews, four Syrian women out of eight illustrated that they have joint home-based catering businesses with Egyptian Women. Through these partnerships, they share experiences and teach each other new recipes. “SooMasry” restaurant in Maadi is a further example of Syrian Egyptian restaurant that combines the flavours and recipes of both Cuisines.

These bridges with host community are very important as Syrian refugees often establish partnerships with Egyptians to mitigate difficulties in registering their firms, by registering small enterprises under Egyptian names (ILO, WFP, and UNDP 2017).

6.2.2.3 Social Links

While social bonds (social networks) showed connections within Syrian community in Egypt serving as an important function for providing and transmitting information on job opportunities, and social bridges with hosting communities provide support, the links and connection between Syrian refugees and the Egyptian government's services when it comes to employment and finding job opportunities is very weak.

“Syrian refugees’ relation with the government can be summarized in granting the residency permits” (personal communication with livelihoods coordinator at INGO, March 5 2021), which is the main problem that faces Syrian refugees in Egypt. Although the right to obtain residency permits for refugees and asylum seekers residing in Egypt is guaranteed through Article 6 of the MoU signed between UNHCR and the Egyptian government, the process of issuing it is exhausting and insufficient. The residency permit is only valid for only six months and then it should be renewed. It requires two month and sometimes more to be issued (Ayoub and Khallaf 2014). This means that Syrian refugees are forced to repeat this procedure every four month to have a valid residency at all times.

The government is unable to offer a positive legal path to the labor market, which exacerbates their vulnerabilities putting them at the risk of exploitation and abuse. While Syrian refugees are fully aware that the government allows them to access the labor market and understand that it sometimes turns a blind eye when they work informally.

“The labor market is opened for Syrians, whether they have the refugee status or not.... At Al-Hossary, sometimes, if there is inspection, other policemen inform us and give us time to packing up our stuff and leave” (personal communication with Syrian refugee, November 18, 2020).

Interviews undertaken with Syrian refugees for this study indicated that there is no communication between Syrian refugees and the Egyptian authorities. As stated by Syrians about their relationship with the government and its support in finding employment:

“The Government does not interfere” (personal communication with Syrian refugee, November 18, 2020).

“We do not communicate with the government...there is no relation with the government...Neither near nor far” (Personal communication, November 5, 2020).

This weak link could be interpreted as a consequence of UNHCR’s involvement in RSD process and all other matters related to refugees’ protection. Syrian refugees who participated for the purpose of this study might preferred to avoid speaking about the government. According to Norman (2017) “The state is aware of the presence of refugee groups, but choose not to engage with them, and turns a blind eye, relying instead on international organizations and NGOs to carry out engagement on its behalf” (Norman 2017, 28).

6.2.3 International Organizations’ Support to Access the Labor Market

International organizations, whether intergovernmental or non-governmental, aim to shift the paradigm from a humanitarian to a development approach in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. In Egypt, these organizations are putting in place several skills-related interventions to support Syrian refugees access the labor market and contribute productively to the economic life.

6.2.3.1 Intergovernmental Organizations' support

6.2.3.1.1 UNHCR: Improving the Livelihoods through Economic Inclusion.

The mandate of UNHCR is to provide international protection and assistance to asylum seekers and refugees, as well as find solutions to their problems. As mentioned previously, UNHCR in Egypt continues to support the GoE by carrying out its mandate responsibilities. It focuses on providing registration, documentation, RSD, and legal and basic needs assistance. It also pursues durable solutions for refugees and asylum seekers of different nationalities. As a means to improve the livelihoods of refugees, UNHCR provides support to refugees and asylum seekers through extending economic empowerment and inclusion opportunities (UNHCR 2018).

However, it is worth to note that UNHCR livelihood programs are constrained when it comes to providing work opportunities. Its role in mitigating the effects of the lack of access to formal labor market is limited. This has resulted in most of the work opportunities it provides through livelihood programs being limited to mere training or volunteer contracts. These contracts are usually very short and do not guarantee any benefits to refugees. In addition, it does not protect them from exploitation by employers (Sharafeldin 2020).

Given that wage employment is hardly accessible for refugees in Egypt, self-employment is an important component to UNHCR in supporting the economic inclusion of Syrian refugees. UNHCR targets two scales of businesses: start-ups and SMEs, by providing necessary trainings, workshops, guidance, and monitoring their implementation (UNHCR 2018). Start-up business support usually is provided to cases that have no existing businesses in the country of asylum and have capacities, skills, and/or previous experience. SMEs support is extended to the profiles of experienced entrepreneurs, higher skilled persons. UNHCR supports these businesses through diversified business development services (BDS) and/or financial support. Coaching and

mentorship are services that is provided for both scales of self-employment (UNHCR 2019). According to UNHCR data, the total number of supported businesses to all refugees in 2018 is 610 divided between 494 start-ups (261 Women and 233 men), and 116 SMEs (52 women and 64 men), in addition to 560 grants (UNHCR 2018).

Furthermore, UNHCR provides skills development and vocational trainings to increase self-reliance of both refugees and host communities. This, in turn, facilitate the setting-up of businesses, expand economic opportunities and job creation. According to the annual report of the 3RP 2018, UNHCR and its partners provided capacity development support for livelihood purposes to over 2,700 male and female Syrian refugees (3RP 2018).

While promoting the economic empowerment of refugee women, UNHCR has worked together with the National Council for Women (NCW) and UN Women, to establish a kitchen in one of the refugee-hosting areas in Cairo at the benefit of both, refugees and Egyptian women. The kitchen was renovated and equipped in the premises of the NCW. In addition, a private sector social enterprise (Mumm) that is specialized in high-quality home-based food was contracted to develop a business model and to set up a management structure through which the kitchen can operate as a production and training facility. The Kitchen was delivered formally at the NCW management by end of 2018 (UNHCR 2018).

In light of the COVID-19 crisis, UNHCR livelihood partners carried out quick assessments to measure changes in the economic situation of refugees and asylum-seekers. While UNHCR assists an average of 10,400 families per month (comprising approximately 41,600 refugees and asylum-seekers) with cash grants under its regular program. As part of its COVID-19 response, in 2020, UNHCR extended temporary cash assistance to additional 7,845 vulnerable families to meet

their basic needs. Also more than 59,000 refugees and asylum-seekers received support to procure hygiene items (UNHCR 2020).

6.2.3.1.2 ILO: Promoting Decent Work for Syrian Refugees and Host Communities.

The ILO in Egypt works to promote decent work for refugees and asylum seekers as well as host communities, aiming to improve living standards and inclusiveness of refugees and asylum seekers in the community (ILO 2021). As part of PROSPECTS program¹⁴, it focuses on two specific areas that enable refugees and asylum seekers to overcome their specific vulnerabilities, and for host communities to pursue their own development efforts. These two areas are: (1) Education and learning (skills development), which includes technical and vocational programs, career guidance, employability skills¹⁵, and apprenticeship program¹⁶. (2) Employment with dignity, which includes employment services and job matching programs, value chain analysis to identify potential promising sectors for refugees to further market inclusion, entrepreneurship skills programs, in addition to promote a safe work environment (Personal communication with ILO official, 17 April 2021).

With the support of ILO, there are 100 refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities who developed technical and vocational skills, 500 refugees, asylum seekers and host communities benefiting from career guidance counselling and improved job search skills, and 124 people with access to business development services and entrepreneurial support. Furthermore, it is concerned

¹⁴ An international partnership programme for improving prospects for hosting communities and forcibly displaced persons. The partnership has a four-year initial time (2019-2023). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands financially supports it and it includes together the World Bank, International Finance Corporation (IFC), UNICEF, UNHCR and ILO. The programme will be implemented in eight countries: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Ethiopia, Kenya, Uganda, and Sudan (ILO 2019).

¹⁵ soft skills, communication skills, leadership skills, personal development...etc

¹⁶ Allow young people to receive on-the-job training with an employer, usually in partnership with a school or training provider, are viewed by the ILO as a key means of boosting youth employability by enhancing young people's professional skills while helping companies and organizations find the labor they need for the future (ILO 2018)

with building on the capacity of national and local partners working on specific needs of refugees, asylum seekers, and host communities (ILO 2021).

Moreover, the ILO held nine training of trainers (TOT) workshops on several business development service programs from October to December 2020 in Cairo and Alexandria. In these trainings, 171 NGO professionals were trained with the aim to support the integration of Syrian refugees and host communities into the Labor market (ILO 2021)

For promoting social dialogue and inclusion of Syrian refugees and ensuring better understanding from employers on the issues of refugees and their economic inclusion in Egypt, it conducted two employer capacity building workshops in collaboration with the Federation of Egyptian Industries (FEII), including a session in Corporate Social Responsibility (CRS) targeting over 90 participants (ILO 2021).

6.2.3.1.3 UNWomen: Promoting Refugee Women Economic Empowerment

Through its regional program, Women's Leadership, Empowerment, Access & Protection in Crisis Response (LEAP), UN Women seeks to empower and enhance the capacities of women affected by the Syrian conflict while creating an enabling environment for them to respond, mitigate and recover from crisis. This regional program is currently being implemented across Iraq, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey. The Egyptian component is focusing on the economic empowerment of displaced and vulnerable women, and the protection of displaced women and girls against all forms of exploitation (UNWomen n.d.)

UNWomen in Egypt implements this program through partnerships with other UN agencies, government, and civil society partners. In this framework, two women's protection and vocational

training centres were established in Giza Governorate, one in Haram run by the National Council for Women (NCW), and another in 6th of October City run by INSAN foundation, where the majority of Syrian refugees reside. These centres provide vocational training and Sexual and Gender Based violence (SGBV)/ women's rights awareness training to Syrian refugees and Egyptian women from host communities (personal communication with UN Women official, 18 April 2021).

In addition, Syrian and Egyptian women received direct cash assistance in response to the COVID-19 outbreak to meet their basic needs during the lockdown. In collaboration with NCW, number of Syrian and Egyptian women received Cash for Work (CFW) income generating opportunities for the production of facemasks and ear savers that were used by NCW employees (Personal communication with UN Women official, 18 April 2021).

Five out of the eight Syrian refugee women interviewed for this study mentioned that they participated in technical and vocational trainings conducted by UNWomen and the NCW. These trainings included start-up management, calculating profits, marketing, cooking, food presentation, and cake decoration techniques providing Syrian women with different skills that helped in starting their catering businesses.

6.2.3.2 NGOs: Operating Partners on the Ground

International NGOs in Egypt are involved directly with the UNHCR in alleviating the suffering of refugees and asylum seekers and helping refugees and asylum seekers to secure the right of asylum, to find jobs and housing, access educational, health, and psychological services to integrate in the new societies. These INGOs include Catholic Relief Services (CRS), CARE, Caritas, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes (TdH), and many more.

NGOs partnership with UNHCR dates back decades. As Berthiaume (1994) clarified, NGOs played a vital role in the establishment of UNHCR. Following the massive migration triggered by the Balkan wars in 1912, it was the NGOs which demanded that an international organization be set up to protect and assist refugees. 30 NGOs took part in the drafting of the 1951 convention. Cooperation between NGOs and UNHCR was enriched in Article 8 of the high commissioner's statute, which states that UNHCR must seek solutions to the refugees' problems in collaboration with, among others, non-governmental organizations (Berthiaume 1994).

International NGOs cooperates closely with UNHCR in Egypt as operating partner on the ground in the areas of livelihoods and economic inclusion. They work on providing opportunities that promote refugees' self and wage employment. To this end, they support self-initiated and managed micro and small entrepreneurial activities through providing technical trainings (start-up management, financial cost, marketing, calculating profits, and communication skills), vocational trainings, start-up grants (seed funds) range from 8,000 Egyptian Pounds to maximum of 20,000 Egyptian Pounds to create micro-businesses. Further, they provide Legal awareness about the laws and regulations governing the labor market, and finally coaching and mentoring services (personal communication with Former livelihood officer at international NGO, March 2, 2021).

It was found though interviews undertaken with Syrian refugees and livelihood coordinators at NGOs that when it comes to support for businesses at the food and restaurants sectors, Syrian women benefit more compared to Syrian men. According to livelihoods coordinator at NGOs:

“NGOs cannot target Syrian refugee men the financial grants given are insufficient and will not enable them to buy even used tools which is basic and necessary for a restaurant...very few Syrian men who work in this sector benefited from the livelihoods projects compared to Syrian women” (personal communication, March 5, 2021).

Nahla El-Emam is an example of a Syrian refugee woman who received support from these NGOs and benefited from the capacity building programs they provide. She managed to open her kitchen providing income opportunities to other Syrian refugee women as well as Egyptian women. When her kitchen impacted by Covid-19 pandemic, she produced facemasks to help generate income (Personal communication, 16 March 2021)

In this light, it is important to recognize that, through operating on the ground with both refugees and hosting communities, NGOs has positive impacts on strengthening social bridges between Syrian refugees and Egyptians that also feeds on their economic insertion.

This study has focused on the insertion of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers in the Egyptian Labor market especially focusing on food and restaurants sector. It highlights Syrian refugees' right to work according to 1951 Convention relating to the Status of refugees and the wide range of factors that facilitate, constrain, or mediate access to labor Market.

The study has shed light on the ambivalence in policies towards refugees and asylum seekers residing in Egypt that neither fully integrate nor eliminate, but instead result in contradiction between the presence and non-integration of refugees. Although ambivalence gives Syrian refugees the ability to participate in the informal economy, the absence of any formal state protection can also mean that refugees are subject to exploitative and discriminative working conditions as well as lack of job security. It is important to note that even when the governments open up its market for refugees and maintain tolerant policy towards who work in the informal sector, this can be changed with any change in political scenes. Exactly as what have been done with Syrians and the limitations imposed on their economic activities in 2013.

The legal provisions and constraints on Syrian refugees' formal employment are notable. Whereas Syrian refugees are entitled to work, this right is constrained by wider framework of labor law governing the work of foreigners residing Egypt. Work permits are required; this requirement may de facto limit the right to work for Syrian refugees because permits are usually granted under certain restrictive criteria. Their issuance imposes cost that may be difficult to afford. Moreover, to obtain work permit, a valid residency permit is required and this is the most common problem was indicated from Syrian refugees interviewed for this study. The result is that Syrian refugees' reach to formal employment is very limited.

The findings emphasize that even though the legal right to work is necessary as the basis for access to work, it is rarely sufficient condition since access to labor market is associated with other political and economic conditions. The study showed that the labor market conditions have significant impact on the insertion and entry of Syrian refugees in the food and restaurants sector. It refers to the interventions of the market demand for Syrian labor, and the supply of their skills and expertise they brought with them. Syrian refugee labor work in the food and restaurant sector do not suffer the problem of either having skills that do not match the needs of the labor market, or they duplicate existing labor supply. Nevertheless, the skills match is an important dimension for accessing the labor market. The size of the informal economy also increased the probability of obtaining employment for Syrian refugees and asylum seekers.

The study presents evidence on the importance of social connections in influencing the insertion of Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. It acknowledges the role of Syrian social networks as “protective shelters” in times of crisis. Access to a large social network of established previous migrants and large number of businessmen was helpful in transmitting information and distribution of job opportunities among Syrian refugees and asylum seekers. These bonds assist as well in adaptation to the new environments, with the ultimate goal of creating improvements to refugees’ livelihoods. It is important to add that accumulating and maintaining strong Syrian social network rises in proportion to the size of the network and the volume of capital it possesses, which fuelled the growth of productive businesses in Egypt.

While social bridges between Syrian refugees and hosting communities found to be important in bringing economic gains for Syrian refugees, as partnerships have been developed in food businesses whether in small or medium enterprises or home-based businesses between Syrians and Egyptians and this is important for Syrians to alleviate administrative difficulties in starting their businesses. Syrian refugees’ links with the government is limited and they suffer the

administrative inefficiency, as well as the excessively and complicated process of obtaining or renewing permits to live and work in Egypt which puts a major challenge when it comes to finding employment. However, Syrian refugees aware that it turns a blind eye when they work informally.

The analysis highlight that International organizations (IGOs and NGOs) actively work to support Syrian refugees to access the labor market through providing entrepreneurial and vocational trainings as well as start-up grants to enable Syrian refugees to start micro-enterprises or small income-generating activities that provide means of livelihoods and lead to self-reliance. They support and empower refugees by serving as facilitators and advisors in the field. Moreover, IGOs and NGOs through their work that bring together refugees and host communities, they reinforce social bridges, which results in positive economic outcome. This role can be an important addition to Ager's and Strange's framework as a facilitator to the process of integrating refugees, particularly in the developing countries highly dependent on international organizations aid and support.

To conclude, these factors associated with the prior historic ties between the two countries, language proficiency, and same culture fostered the economic insertion of Syrian refugees. Syrian refugees are resilient in their new life in Egypt. They managed to achieve their goals in the food and restaurants sector despite the challenges they face taking the advantage of all social connections they can maintain and build to sustain their livelihoods.

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Appendix A: List of interviewees

| Interview with Syrian refugees and asylum seekers | | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------------|--------|-----|-----------------|--|---|-------------------------|-------------------|
| | Name | Gender | Age | Year of arrival | Current job | Job before coming to Egypt | Location | Date of interview |
| 1. | Moamar Mohamed Galal El-Sabagh | Female | 60 | 2015 | Home-based food business | German tutor in a German language institute | 6 th October | 18/1/2021 |
| 2. | anonymous | Female | 45 | 2013 | Manage a kitchen | Manager- public relations office | Obour | 5/11/2020 |
| 3. | Ghazal Abdul- Wahab | Female | 47 | 2012 | Home-based food business | Unemployed | 6 October | 16/1/2021 |
| 4. | Samar El-Gharah | Female | 54 | 2012 | Home-based food business | Unemployed | Maadi | 24/1/2021 |
| 5. | Om-Ammar | Female | 60 | 2013 | Provides frozen food products to restaurants | Unemployed | Tagamoa | 25/1/2021 |
| 6. | Anonymous | Female | 40 | 2012 | Manage a kitchen | Unemployed | Maadi | 10/2/2021 |
| 7. | Nahla El-Emam | Female | 50 | 2012 | Owens an kitchen | Teacher | Mohandseen | 16/3/2021 |
| 8. | Anonymous | Female | 45 | 2013 | Street vendor | Unemployed | Tagamoa | 12/4/2021 |

| | | | | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------------------------|------|----|------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| | | | | | | | | |
| 9. | Abu-Montaser (Employee) | Male | 50 | 2011 | Manager at Syrian restaurant | Own a restaurant at Syria | Tagamoa | 16/11/2020 |
| 10. | Fouad Tahan (Employee) | Male | 22 | 2020 | Employee at a restaurant (Administrative work) | Accessories Imports and exports | Rehab | 17/11/2020 |
| 11. | Abdulrahaman Kharat (Employee) | Male | 23 | 2016 | Employee at a restaurant | Employee at a restaurant | New Cairo | 17/11/2020 |
| 12. | Mohamed Haytham (Employer) | Male | 42 | 2016 | Own a restaurant | Own a thread store | Tagamoa | 17/11/2020 |
| 13. | Anonymous (Employee) | Male | 26 | 2016 | Shawearma Man | Member in the national karate team | Zayed | 16/3/2021 |
| 14. | Anonymous (Employee) | Male | 28 | 2013 | Employee at a restaurant | Employee at a restaurant | New Cairo | 17/3/2021 |
| 15. | Anonymous (Employer) | Male | 52 | 2012 | Own a restaurant | Own a restaurant | Rehab | 20/11/2020 |
| 16. | Abou- Ali (Employer) | Male | 48 | 2012 | Own a restaurant | Own a restaurant | Zayed | 16/3/2021 |

| Interviews with Syrian community organizations | | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------|--|------------|
| 1. | Maysaa Abdel Nafea | Female | Volunteer at Rabetat-Souryat | 18/11/2020 |
| 2. | Ola Abdullah | Female | Volunteer at Tafawouq Soury | 24/11/2020 |
| Interviews with UN Officials | | | | |
| 1. | Rasha Arous | Female | Former UNHCR Official | 12/2/2021 |
| 2. | Anonymous | Male | ILO official | 17/4/2021 |
| 3. | Anonymous | Female | UNWomen official | 18/4/2021 |
| Interviews with livelihoods Officials at NGOs | | | | |
| 1. | Anonymous | Female | Former livelihood officer at international NGO | 2/3/2021 |
| 2. | Ammar Alhasn | Male | Capacity building coordinator at international NGO | 5/3/2021 |
| 3. | Abdallah Mostafa | Male | Program officer – Economic empowerment and livelihood at international NGO | 7/3/2021 |
| Interview with National NGO | | | | |
| 1 | Abouobaidah | Male | Livelihood officer at Fard Foundation | 31/1/2021 |



To: Mai Hassan
Cc: Dr. Ibrahim Awad
From: Atta Gebril, Chair of the IRB
Date: June 24, 2020
Re: IRB approval

This is to inform you that I reviewed your revised research proposal entitled "The Modes of economic integration of Syrian refugees in Egypt : with focus on Textile and Food & resultants sectors" and determined that it required consultation with the IRB under the "expedited" category. As you are aware, the members of the IRB suggested certain revisions to the original proposal, but your new version addresses these concerns successfully. The revised proposal used appropriate procedures to minimize risks to human subjects and that adequate provision was made for confidentiality and data anonymity of participants in any published record. I believe you will also make adequate provision for obtaining informed consent of the participants.

This approval letter was issued under the assumption that you have not started data collection for your research project. Any data collected before receiving this letter could not be used since this is a violation of the IRB policy.

Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor, Dr. Ashraf Hatem. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.

This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

Thank you and good luck.

Dr. Atta Gebril
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Appendix C: Interviews Questions guide

To All Syrian Refugees:

- How long have you been in Egypt?
- Why did you come to Egypt and prefer not to stay in Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey?
- Did you register with UNHCR? Yes? No? Why?
- From your point of view, what is the value of registration?
- What was your job before leaving Syria?
- What is your current employment status?
- How did you find your job?
- What help have you had to get employment?
- How did you start your own business? From where did you get help?
- What are the challenges you face?
- Do you have work experience from your country of origin? If so what kind you have? Is it relevant to your current work?
- Do you have a university degree? Is it relevant to your current work?
- What is the role of Syrian social networks in providing access to employment?
- How do you see the attitude of the Egyptian society towards Syrians?
- Do you feel any kind of discrimination against Syrians in your daily life?
- what kind of support do you receive from the government to get employed?
- Have you been able to obtain skills training? If so, what kind of training did you receive and from which institution/organization?
- what are the main challenges do you face to get inserted into the labor market?

Added questions for Syrian women:

- What are the main challenge Syrian women face in the Egyptian community?
- Have you experienced any kind of harassment in your workplace?

Interviews with NGOs :

- How do you see the economic integration of Syrian refugees in the labor market?
- How you assist Syrian refugees in Egypt to find job opportunities?
- Does your organization receive any support from UNHCR?
- What kind of assistance you provide to Syrian refugees to sustain their livelihoods? (financial, trainings,...)

Interviews with Syrian associations:

- How do you see the economic integration of Syrian refugees in the labor market?
- How you assist Syrian refugees in Egypt to find job opportunities?
- Does your organization receive any support from UNHCR, any international organization?
- How the organization is funded?
- What are the problems your organization face?