

ACCULTURATION OF THE SUDANESE IN FINLAND

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ABSTRACT

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The emergence of globalisation has resulted in easy movement of people across various borders. This has also resulted in individuals or group of individuals getting in continuous first-hand contact with people of different cultures. This research looks at the impacts of this phenomenon, known as acculturation, on Sudanese refugees living in Vantaa – Finland. It brings out the type of acculturation strategies the Sudanese are using in order to acculturate in a dominant Finnish Society.

The models of acculturation such as assimilation, integration, separation, marginalisation, alteration and fusion; and the concepts behind them are discussed in this work. Also, the concepts of immigrant, minority and dominant cultural groups, as well as acculturative stress are looked into with the help of literature.

The effort of the Finnish Government in promoting integration, which is its official mode of acculturation, through various laws is also the focus of this work. Also of interest are the endeavours of the Finnish welfare institutions aided by numerous non-government organisations, which are promoting the welfare of the immigrants and minority cultural groups during the acculturation process.

Furthermore, combinations of qualitative and quantitative research methods are used to elucidate the impacts of the above-cited phenomenon on the Sudanese in Vantaa - Finland. A questionnaire aimed at knowing the model of the acculturation process was developed and distributed to a selected number of the Sudanese in the Vantaa community. It focused on the employment status, the type of interaction and effects of government assistance, in order to determine which model is preferred. The returned questionnaires are analysed with the aid of graphs and charts.

This research portrays a high dependency rate of the Sudanese on government assistance due to high unemployment rate, which is in turn due to lack of necessary working skills and motivation. It also depicts that attitudes of the dominant Finnish population to immigrants and refugees is improving, though at a snail's pace. It shows that it is difficult to generalise the choice of the Sudanese as concerned their preferred type of acculturation. Though from the same country, the Sudanese came from different tribes and thus take different acculturation approaches.

Key words: government policies, minority culture, refugee, interaction, employment, Sudanese, acculturation.

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1 BACKGROUND

Sudan had suffered two civil wars between 1955 to 1972 and 1983 to 2005, respectively. The latter war was a continuation of the former. The wars have the same roots, which are religious discrimination, natural resources, and political and economical domination by the Muslim Arabs from the north.

Prior to independence in January 1956 fear of the northern domination by the southern after independence resulted in a mutiny. This matured into a civil war between the dominantly Muslim Arabs and the mainly Christians/Animists in the south. The Addis Ababa Agreement sponsored by the World Council of Churches put an end to what was latter known as the First Sudanese Civil War.

The rise of General Nimeiry to power in 1983 fuelled the dying fire of the above-cited civil war. He began an Islamisation Campaign aimed at forcefully converting the people of southern parts of Sudan into Islam. Among other vigorous policies was the introduction of the Sharia, laws based on the Koran, in Southern Sudan. This seemed too much for the Southern Sudanese to swallow, coupled with the fact that their demand for federal autonomy was turned down. The upshot was the formation of the Sudan People's Liberation Army in 1983 led by Col John Garang, and the commencement of one of the longest civil war in Africa – Second Sudanese Civil War. It ended with the signing of a Comprehensive Peace Agreement in Nairobi in 9th January 2005 (Valentino Achak Deng Foundation, 2009.)

The outcome of the Sudanese civil wars, and particularly the second one, is more than four million displaced people and approximately two million dead. Most of the displaced people lived in remote villages within Southern Sudan while some escaped to the relatively peaceful northern parts. A greater number of Sudanese sought refuge in neighbouring countries like Egypt – more than five million Sudanese refugees are estimated to live in Egypt alone. Kenya and Uganda also hosted a great number of

refugees from Sudan. Due to poor and unsatisfactory living conditions of most refugees in Egypt, thousands of them moved further to the Americas, Australia, Asia and Europe (The Washington Post, 2006.)

The Sudanese refugees are recognised as such under the UN 1951 Convention on Refugees. Under the said convention a refugee is a person who has received a positive decision on his asylum application and has been given leave to remain in the country where they applied for asylum. The first group of Sudanese refugees arrived in Finland from Egypt between May and October 2001, as part of its official United Nation quotas, numbered 300 (Negus 2001). Since then many Sudanese have gained access into Finland as refugees. It is worth mentioning that most, if not all, of the Sudanese refugees in Finland are from Southern Sudan. The total number of the Sudanese immigrants/refugees with permanent residence is 1,084 (Finnish Migration Service, 2008). The Sudanese in Finland are dispersed all over the national territory, particularly the cities of Kuopio, Oulu, Kouvola, Vaasa and Vantaa have well-built Sudanese communities.

Considering the fact that the Sudanese are among the oldest groups of African foreigners, other being the Somalis, to have settled in Finland, it is pertinent that a research of this kind be carried out on the acculturation of the Sudanese in their new society. This is particularly because Finland is a country quite new to the phenomenon of immigration, as the largest influx of immigrants outside Europe, Vietnam and Chile started arriving Finland only after 1990.

This research depicts the impacts of the perplexing phenomenon of acculturation of the Sudanese immigrants in Finland. The reasons why the Sudanese are chosen for this research come from the fact they are accessible, well organised and collaborative. Their eight years' stay in Finland has taken them through numerous refugee camps within the country. This has enriched their experiences and lives, which this research is ready to explore. Also, the stratification of their population into three distinctive groups of elders, adults and youths makes it possible to measure the degree of the effect of the phenomenon on their community.

It is worth mentioning that acculturation is a budding experience which was introduced by American anthropologists only in 1880 to describe the process of culture change between two different cultural groups who come in contact with each other. The study of acculturation had been championed by anthropologists in the 1930's, with the first major definition presented by Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits in 1936 (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000, 6). Recently, there has been a shift from anthropology to psychology and a new domain has been created and named Psychological Acculturation. It focuses on the psychological impacts of the process of cultural change between two different cultural groups that happen to come in contact with each other. However, little or nothing has been done in the social work domain to better comprehend and appreciate this emerging trend. Social workers nowadays do not only perform the traditional elderly and child care work, but are also working with immigrants and refugees. It is imperative that they should study and understand those changes that affect immigrants and refugees, as well as home based clients, due to their coming in contact with new cultures. It is for this reason this research is carried out.

1.1 Area of Study

This work looks at the effects of cultural contact of the Sudanese culture and that of their Finnish counterparts, as a result of their constant and continuous interaction within the City of Vantaa. The City of Vantaa with a population of 192,522 inhabitants, of which 5.0% were foreign citizens as of 1st January 2008, is located north of Helsinki. The city covers a total surface area of 242.7 km², with 792 inhabitants per km² (Vantaa Kaupunki, 2009). The total number of Sudanese families with permanently residing in Vantaa is estimated to be about 30 in number. They are sparsely distributed around the 61 districts of Vantaa, among which are Tikkurila, Illola, Koivukylä, Hakunila and Myyrmäki. The reason for choosing the City of Vantaa, as an area of study for this research, is because of its multicultural nature. It is a populous immigrant city in Finland, seconded only to Helsinki (Helsingin Sanomat 2006). It is also the residence of the researcher who happens to know a handful of Sudanese citizens.

1.2 Aims of Research

As earlier mentioned, acculturation has, to an extent, been dealt with by other fields of studies and little has been done in the social work field to better understand the acculturation process. This work is aimed at depicting the effects and relationship of the cited phenomenon to social work. It shows the degree to which the phenomenon affects a particular minority group (the Sudanese) within a particular community (Vantaa - Finland). It also depicts what is being done by the minority group, the government and local government where the immigrants reside to ease or hinder the process of acculturation. In this light, the official Finnish government policies are evaluated in relation to the aspirations of the Sudanese in Finland. In doing this, four models of acculturation (assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation) are extensively looked into and analysed alongside the Sudanese situation in the City of Vantaa in particular and Finland as a whole. It also looks at the consequences of the above mentioned types of acculturation on the Sudanese. It observes the models of acculturation which government policies are geared towards, as well as that preferred by the Sudanese. Acculturative stress is also one of the consequences of acculturation, especially when one group is not excelling in the process. The results from this study should be a precedent and pave the way for further studies on the subject, from the social work perspective.

1.3 Research Questions

Although a classical definition of acculturation was achieved only in the 1930s, Rudmin (2003) insinuates that human experiences in acculturation went far back before the birth of Christ. It was in existence when great multicultural kingdoms like the Mesopotamia, Babylonia, Persia and Roman were established. Then rulers like Hammurabi of Babylon and Emperor Claudius of Roman established codes and laws that were aimed at assimilating, integrating, marginalising or separating their subjects, depending on whether they were conquerors or losers, captives or immigrants (Rudmin 2003, 9.) Even if the Sudanese in Finland, who are the subject of this study, are in a different era; they

are also subjected to the laws or codes of the new community. The question here is to what extent they have been acculturated into the Finnish society using Berry (1997a) model of assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation (cited in Rudmin 2003, 4).

Furthermore, the Finnish government policies geared towards acculturating immigrants, including the Sudanese, and the sentiments and preferences of the latter towards these policies is another issue that this research is aimed at finding out. It is important to bring to light the factors that influence the four models of acculturation (assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation). Since it is a give and take process, the influence is expected to come from both ends – the host and the guest. It is not only the Finnish society, which is considered as the dominant cultural group, which influences the process. It has been discovered that some minority groups are very strong and that they sometimes have a great influence on the outcomes of acculturation. A typical example is the case of the white minority in South Africa and Namibia.

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND LITERATURE REVIEW

As little or no research has been done about acculturation in social work, most of the theories and literatures on the subject are geared towards psychology. This does not imply that the phenomenon is totally psychological. As it is a new inclination, many fields of study are getting involved and this includes social work. A close look at one of the oldest and prominent definitions by Redfield, Linton and Herskovits in 1936 hereunder does illustrate the social work gene within it:

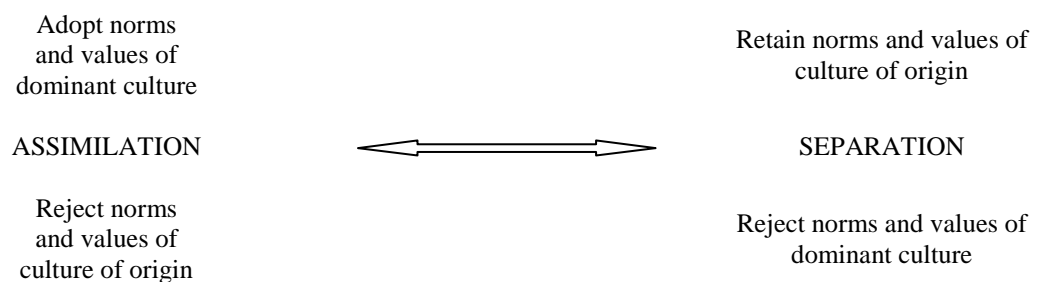
those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of either or both groups (Redfield, Linton & Herskovit 1936, 149 cited in Sam & Berry 2006, 11).

From the definition above, it can be seen that individuals are affected by the acculturation process. There are changes and outcomes which are both positive and negative, and which need to be addressed. The effects of acculturation on individuals are tackled either by effectively resettling them in the new communities or by designing official policies that are conducive to the host (dominant) community and the immigrant (minority) community. For this to successfully take place, social workers must be involved. Hence, a justification for the concern of the social work field of study in the learning of the phenomenon of acculturation.

The definition above has been used by many psychologists including Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) who goes further, stating that it is a continuous process. This implies that the process does not have a 'stop' even when one culture is dominant at a particular time. However, according to Sam and Berry (2006) and Glynis (2005) the term acculturation is sometimes wrongly and/or synonymously used in the place of assimilation. More confusingly, the two terms are sometimes used not as synonyms of each other, but as sub-sets of each other. This is the case with the definition propounded in 2004 by the

International Organisation for Migration (IOM). It defines acculturation as the progressive adoption of elements of a foreign culture (ideas, words, values, norms, behaviours, institutions) by persons, groups or classes of a given culture. It simply insinuates that in the process of acculturation elements of a foreign culture are adopted by persons, groups or classes of the given culture. The IOM definition, unlike the former one, makes acculturation a synonym for assimilation because it does not take into account whether the foreign culture is also influenced by persons, groups or classes of a given culture. This unidirectional approach (two groups come into contact and one group changes to be like the other) considers acculturation simple as a sub-set of assimilation.

This approach suggests that all the other processes (separation, marginalization and integration) end up into assimilation. According to this theory, members of minority culture are either assimilated by, or stay separated from, the dominant culture. The notion here is that one group stays separate or changes to become like the other. Changes take place in one direction, as one group move uni-directionally towards the other group which is considered stationary. Directly linked with the uni-directional approach is the uni-dimensional thinking that individuals lose their original cultural identity as they acquire new cultural identity in line with the second culture (Sam & Berry 2006, 17.)



Uni-dimensional Model of Acculturation

Nevertheless, other theorists view acculturation and assimilation as two separate and distinct processes that may be differentiated on a number of facets. Their stand is that acculturation is bi-directional and bi-dimensional. Individuals or groups that come in contact can change but do not necessary change towards a neutral or a stationary one. It is possible to identify with or acquire the new culture independently without losing the

original culture. Changes can take place in two separate dimensions: one to maintain or lose the original culture and the other to participate or adopt aspects of the new culture (Sam & Berry 2006, 17.) Rudmin (2003) also have faith in a bi-directional approach and classify acculturation into four basic types: assimilation, integration, separation and marginalisation.

2.1 Assimilation

Assimilation is the adoption by an individual or a group of individuals of some or all aspects of a dominant culture. It is usually considered as a socialisation process and it can be a voluntary process, as well as a forced one. In the process of assimilation the members of the minority cultural groups lose their culture in favour of the dominant culture. Assimilation is therefore one of the strategies an individual may use during acculturation. Berry (1990, 1997, 2003) defines assimilation as:

the situation where either (i) an individual turns his back on his original cultural background and identity and chooses to identify and interact with the members of the host society or (ii) a national society expects foreigners to adopt wholly the culture of the larger national society (cited in Sam & Berry 2006, 12).

Assimilation has, until recently, been the priority of many national governments whose view on the subject is highlighted below:

the nation state as his ideal and believes that no polity can be stable and cohesive unless its members share a common national culture, including common values, ideals of excellence, moral beliefs and social practices. As a custodian of society's way of life, the state is assumed to have the right and the duty to ensure that its cultural minorities assimilate into the prevailing national culture and shed all vestiges of their separate cultures (Parekh 2006, 197.)

According to Parekh (2006) the choice before the minority, for an assimilationist, is simple. If they wish to become part of society and be treated like the rest of their fellow citizens, they should assimilate. If they do not want to and wish to retain their separate culture, they should not complain if they are viewed as outsiders and subjected to discriminatory treatment. Backing this view is Bosswick and Heckmann (2006) that it was a popular policy during the 19th and 20th centuries. This is when nationalism, which resulted in ethnocentrism, was endorsed and promoted to create homogenous societies.

But with the fall of Nazism and Fascism, extremist ideologies became taboo and assimilation policies declined. In implementing this policy, the state institutions, more often than not, impose the dominant culture into the laws of the nation.

Furthermore, Parekh (2006) argues that assimilation has failed to bestow its promises of full and unqualified acceptance. Even when one assimilates into the dominant culture after a strenuous effort, there is always the danger that one's slightest difference or past background might be made the basis of discrimination by the whole or a section of the wider society. Yet, adoption of the majority identity, culture, values or language does not necessarily mean rejection of one's own ethnic minority identity, culture, values, or language (Kosonen, 2008). Glynis (2005) adds that it should not lead one to assume that minority-group members have erased any and all signs of ethnic origin. She continues that, although they may have abandoned parts of their own cultural traditions, in their minds, they have only successfully imitated the dominant group through daily rituals and activities.

2.2 Integration

Integration is a loose word used in both social and mechanical sciences. Nevertheless, in acculturation integration is often referred to social integration. Social integration is defined as:

the inclusion and acceptance of immigrants into the core institutions, relationships and positions of a host society. Integration is an interactive process between immigrants and the host society (Bosswick & Heckmann 2006, 11.)

Bosswick and Heckmann (2006) add that integration means two different things to the immigrants and the host society. For the immigrants, integration means the process of learning a new culture, acquiring rights and obligations, gaining admittance to positions and social status, building personal relationships with members of the host society and forming a feeling of belonging to, and identification with, that society. For the host society, integration means opening up institutions and conceding equal chances to immigrants. In this interaction, however, the host society has more power and more prestige.

Integration is assumed to be more positive for both the immigrants and society than assimilation because the members of minority cultural group participate in the new culture while maintaining their own cultural identity. Successful integration can be measured by the level of language acquisition, access to and achievement in training programmes and education, marriage, incorporation in the labour market and use of healthcare and other critical social services. Community attitudes, similarities between the cultures, and a supportive network made of members of the culture of origin will influence integration. The question of language appears to be more important in the integration process of minority cultural groups into a particular society, as Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) asserts:

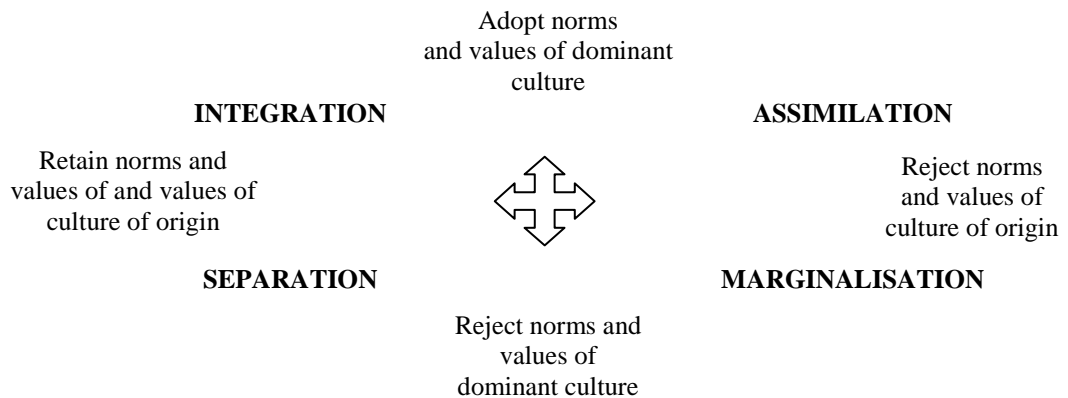
Increased usage of and self-confidence in a second language also makes contacts with the second-language group more effective, and increased interaction will help the individual to identify with this group (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000, 14).

Kosonen (2008) further highlights that though proficiency in the second language is helpful in the integration process, aptitude in own ethnic or minority language is very important. The immigrant, at the commencement of learning the second language, will need to use his ethnic language in communicating with service providers.

However, it is argued that integration does not always have positive results. The reproduction of ethnic identity and integration into an ethnic settlement can result in social segregation from the majority culture, as well as segmented integration into a subculture. This results in urban underclass or in marginalisation from both the host society and the ethnic settlement (Bosswick & Heckmann 2006, 11). Therefore, for the process of integration to be successful, Cabell (2007) insinuates that there is a need for full incorporation. Successful integration depends not just on the minority groups' personal changes, but also on the larger society's willingness to recognise them as members of the community.

2.3 Separation and Marginalisation

Separation occurs when the minority cultural group retain the norms and values of their culture of origin but reject the norms and values of the dominant culture. In the event where the minority cultural group reject the norms and values of both the dominant culture and their culture of origin it is called marginalisation (Rudmin 2003, 4.) In the quest to maintain their own identity and ways of life, some minority groups tend to chose separation to the other acculturation strategies. This can also be a consequence when the minority group are ethnocentric and believe that values other than theirs are bad or inappropriate. On the other hand, those who advocate for marginalisation left the home societies disliking their own culture and hoped that their new destination would provide them with a better culture. But on arrival they discovered that the culture of the new (dominant) society is not worth adapting to. Kosonen (2008) is in unison with Inga Jasinskaja (2000) that separation and marginalisation are the least preferred by both the minority and the dominant culture. It is also worth mentioning that separation and marginalisation, according to Sam & Berry (2006), are responsible for a high level of depression and stress among immigrants. Depression and stress occur when they are unable to actively participate in normal life activities in the new dominant society.



Bi-dimensional Model of Acculturation (adapted from Rudmin 2003, 4)

However, although substantial evidence supports the two dimensional model of acculturation, some theorists have criticised it for being inconsistent by accounting for acculturative change along two cultural dimensions. These dimensions are not orthogonal – one measuring attitudes (what individual prefers and seeks) and the other behaviour (what one is actually able to do) (Kosonen 2008, 24.) Critics of the model also argued that:

It lacks utility and explanatory force and that it should be expanded to include, for example, a greater focus on subcultures, dominant group attitudes, or acquisition of cultural skills (Rudmin 2003, 4).

Rudmin (2003) adds that the bi-dimensional model is focused more on the influence of the dominant culture on the minority group. The minority culture influence on the dominant group should be acknowledged and documented for the enlightenment of the majority. He further challenges that centre of attention on the acculturation of minorities implies that acculturation is something that happens only to minority people and that the cultures of dominant people are somehow colossal, unchallengeable, and without acculturative origins. The model is also said to have failed to distinguish between two modes of integration: alternation and fusion.

Alternation is used by those in the minority group who want to adhere to the norms and values of the dominant culture when they are with members of the dominant culture, but also adhere to the norms and values of the culture of origin when they are with members of the culture of origin. Fusion, on the other hand, is used by those who consistently adhere to a combination of the norms and values of the dominant culture, and the norms and values of the culture of origin. Recent research has provided support for the distinction between alternation and fusion, suggesting that there are at least five acculturation strategies that people may use – assimilation, separation, alternation, fusion, and marginalization (Sam & Berry 2006, 85).

2.4 Acculturative Stress

One of the outcomes of the acculturative process associated with those from the minority culture who fail to either assimilate into or integrate with the dominant cultural group is acculturative stress. These are psychological, physiological, and social difficulties that may accompany acculturation processes. It occurs when an individual's adaptive resources are insufficient to support adjustment to a new cultural environment (Dana 2000, 138). Kosonen (2008) further elucidates that when acculturation experiences are judged to be problematic, acculturative stress results. Eventual adaptation depends on the personal assessment of the stressors (causes of the stress) and the coping resources available for dealing with residual stress. Dana (2000) also attributes the

existence of acculturative stress to the nature of the dominant society. This relates to how the values of the dominant society affect the acceptance or rejection of minority groups. For instance, acculturative stress is less predominant in multicultural societies while more prevalent in uni-cultural societies. The nature of the acculturating group also contributes to its occurrence. It is the willingness, movement towards integration and permanence of the contact that the minority group has with the dominant group. Another reason for acculturative stress is as a result of the mode of acculturation adaptation chosen: minority groups either choose assimilation, integration, separation, or marginalisation. If the mode of adaptation ends up in social exclusion and discrimination, Kosonen (2008) suggests that it is likely to cause acculturative stress and potentially decrease immigrants' psychological and socio-cultural adaptation.

2.5 Minority and Majority/Dominant Cultural Group:

Though the words 'immigrant' and 'refugee' are herein used synonymously as 'member of minority cultural group', they are not always used as such. An immigrant voluntarily leaves his/her country of origin, while a refugee is a person in flight from a desperate situation. The key difference is that an immigrant chooses to leave his/her country of origin to settle permanently in another country, usually for financial, political, or employment reasons (Glynis, 2005). A refugee, on the other hand, is compelled to seek asylum (protection) in another country. In Finland, immigrant is often used as an overall category and as an almost permanent label for all people of foreign birth moving to Finland more or less permanently (Kosonen 2008, 13). Immigrants can see themselves somewhere on a scale between the reactive and proactive extremes of the spectrum, in terms of the reasons for moving. These extremes are linked to what are commonly referred to as push and pull mechanisms. Push factors are associated with some type of exclusion, persecution, war and famine which end up forcing people out of their country of origin. Pull factors, on the other hand, are those that attract immigrants into another country and are associated with some type of supportive, facilitative, or enabling events or situations (Glynis 2005, 12.)

Whether one is a refugee, an immigrant, or a second immigrant (domestic immigrants of foreign-born migrants after their initial arrival into a new country) they end up

constituting part of the minority cultural groups within their new countries. Minority cultural groups are often confronted by historical and attitudinal issues during the process of acculturation. As a result they may choose diversity through integration or avoid it by becoming involved in policies and programmes applicable to assimilation, while some may segregate or marginalise diverse populations within their environments. This is situation confronted by the Sudanese refugees in Finland.

Another category of minority cultural groups are those who are the original ethnic group (non-immigrants) of the country, who are economically, socially, politically and culturally weak or discriminated against. They are characterised by a small population, have their own distinct ways of life, norms, values and understanding of politics. Examples of such minority cultural groups are the Sámi and the Swedes in Finland, and the Indians in the United States.

The dominant or majority cultural group is that which is in position of power within a society. It holds strong control of economic, political, social and cultural resources and as such it determines the economic, political, social and cultural destiny of the minority cultural groups. In this work, the Finns are the dominant cultural group. Positive legislations on minority rights and immigration, coupled with attitude towards immigrants and ethnic minorities determines the level of acculturation of the latter within a society. According to Kosonen (2008), the framework in which immigrants are acculturating and adapting depends on how these creeds are being followed and realized in society by the minority and majority groups.

3 FINNISH GOVERNMENT POLICIES

3.1 Legislation and Social Security Benefits

The official stand of the government of Finland as concerned acculturation is integration. Finland's bicultural ethic was one of the foundations for the Integration Act first enacted in 1999 and amended a number of times, most recently in 2007 to improve the integration of the new minorities and Finnish society (Kosonen 2008, 6). This act has two aims: integration into society and the retention of minority culture and language. In practice, this has meant government support for training courses for adults to provide work skills, Finnish or Swedish language skills, and an introduction to how Finnish society functions. It is thus aimed at persuading members of the minority cultural groups to become part and parcel of social, institutional and cultural fabric of a dominant Finnish society. This is also revealed in government policies and laws enacted after the year 2000, when the phenomenon of immigration showed its beautiful face in Finland. Chapter 2, Section 6-23 of the Constitution of Finland, which entered into force on March 1, 2000 guarantees the basic rights and liberties of everyone residing in Finland, irrespective of one's country of origin. Also, in 2004 the Aliens Act (301/2004, amendments up to 973/2007 included) was endorsed. Its purpose is to implement and promote good governance and legal protection in matters concerning aliens (persons who are not Finnish citizens). In addition, it promotes managed immigration and provision of international protection with respect for human rights and basic rights and in consideration of international agreement.

In the same year, a Non-Discrimination Act (21/2004), as amended in 2006 by Act No 50/2006, was also passed. The purpose of this Act is to foster and safeguard equality and enhance the protection provided by law to those who have been discriminated against in cases of discrimination that fall under the scope of this Act. The Non-Discrimination Act

prohibits discrimination on the basis of age, ethnic or national origin, nationality, language, religion, belief, opinion, health, disability, sexual orientation or other personal characteristics. Both direct and indirect discrimination is prohibited, and so is harassment and an instruction or order to discriminate. As a follow-up, the National Discrimination Tribunal of Finland was created and empowered under the Non-Discrimination Act, and came into force on February 1, 2004. It is an independent organ promoting legal protection. Its decision has the same legal effect as a judgement by a general Court of law. It supervises the implementation of the principle of equality, jointly with the Ombudsman for Minorities.

Apart from structuring the legislative branch of the government to encourage the integration of people from minority cultural groups into the dominant Finnish society, the social institutions have also been prearranged to this effect. All persons living in Finland, irrespective of culture or ethnic group, are entitled to certain resident-based social security – which is decided on the basis of residence in Finland – from The Social Insurance Institution of Finland - KELA. Holders of a temporary residence permit are not qualified for social security benefit. These benefits are offered by the municipality in which one resides and are paid for by the government of Finland. They include unemployment benefit, housing allowances, family allowances, school allowances, sickness allowances and social assistance amongst others. Persons living in Finland are entitled to receive basic health care and hospital services within their municipality and they are also paid for by the government of Finland. These health services range from health advice, medical care, rehabilitation, mental health services, patient transport, dental care, health care for pupils and students, occupational health care, screenings and mass examinations. Also persons with permanent residency in Finland are within the scope of the health insurance offered by KELA if they are in possession of a KELA card.

3.2 The role of Finnish Non-Governmental Organisations and Civil Society in the Acculturation Process.

The May 2009 European Union elections, influenced by the recession at the time and coupled with high level of unemployment among Finns and immigrant alike, saw an

unprecedented high level of public debates on Immigration. Before then discussions on immigration/refugees were limited only to the government. Nowadays, the public and particularly civil society and non-governmental organisations are championing the efforts to bring into the public domain the plight of immigrants/refugees as minority cultural groups in Finland. The plight is responsible for the deceleration of the acculturation process and reasons for acculturative stress. Discrimination is the commonest plight of immigrants and minority cultural groups not only in Finland but worldwide. Euroopan Rasisminvastainen Verkosto (European Network against Racism (ENAR)) says that the most common discrimination against minority cultural groups and an impediment to acculturation processes is racial discrimination, coupled with negative publicity, especially against asylum seekers.

In order to eradicate the cited vice, various Finnish Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have had to step in and contribute immensely to the fight against racism through awareness raising and education campaigns. Many NGOs provide legal or psychological aid to victims of racial discrimination. One of the most important initiatives in the fight against racism is the RASMUS network that was set up in 2002. The RASMUS is a nation wide network that gathers NGOs, immigrant associations, religious communities, labour market organisations and authorities, as well as researchers and individuals together in the joint fight against racism and xenophobia. In RASMUS special focus is put on reducing racism and increasing multicultural interaction in the labour market, in the media, in schools and in youth organisations. Major Finnish NGOs, all members of RASMUS network support group, involved in the fight against racism, include ENAR Finland, the Finnish Red Cross, the UN Association of Finland and the Finnish League for Human Rights. The NGOs play a vital role in combating racism and cooperating with the authorities. They are heard during legislative processes and they can bring up issues that may not be monitored by the authorities.

Furthermore, Finnish NGOs, with funding from the government and municipalities, provides services to individuals from minority cultural groups, who are encountering difficulties in integrating. Services include counselling, networking with service providers like KELA, housing companies, employment offices and the police, with the aim of facilitating the integration of their clients. Vantaa Nicehearts ry is a typical

example of such organisation dedicated to counselling female immigrants/refugees. Integrating cultural activities in Finland are mostly organised by the municipalities with the objective of reviving immigrants and minority cultures. The International Cultural Centre Caisa, under the auspices of the City of Helsinki Cultural Office, organises most educational and cultural events for immigrants/Refugees within the Helsinki Metropolitan Region.

Despite the above-cited efforts, ENAR argues that though formally the Finnish legislation is very comprehensive, in practice many problems are still left unsolved. One of the major problems, according to ENAR, is that many discrimination cases go still unreported. That victims feel that reporting to the police may not lead to anything or that they are not taken seriously. Also, apart of lack of human and material resources which prevents immigrants/refugees from functioning as full members of the society, they may encounter intentional or unintentional discrimination (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000, 3). Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) adds that the mind-set of the Finnish host population towards immigrants/refugees have been found to be rather intolerant compared to many European countries. Also, Kosonen (2008) in her study of Vietnamese in Finland discovers that Finns are more discriminatory to immigrants and minority cultural groups from outside the EU. In addition, she explains that these attitudes also vary, depending how the economy fluctuates: with higher discriminatory attitudes during a recession period.

Though there is a recent surfacing of a public debate on immigrants/refugees, it has been relatively weak. When articles about these issues are published in the media, it is with absolute care. Because of the lack of coverage of minority group's acculturation problems, internet bloggers have entered to fill the space of the media. Prominent amongst them is Edward Dutton of *The Sentinel*, who says that:

The number of non-white immigrants is still small, but Finland's unusual history and traditional ethnic mix have led to almost complete silence about a process that is transforming a distinctive and successful Nordic society. The government hides the truth about immigration, and has succeeded in turning race into one of the most powerful taboos in Finnish politics (Dutton 2000.)

All-in-all, there is a slow but steady progress in the integration of members of minority cultural groups in the dominant Finnish Society. However, little have to be done in the

economic and political spheres. Empowering members of minority cultural groups to be able to run and own enterprises is part and parcel of an integration process. Access to credit facilities by members of minority cultural groups is very difficult, as they do not have the necessary collaterals. According Akhlaq (2005), Finns do not frequent shops owned by members of minority cultural groups, and are still suspicious of accepting immigrants as business partners. Also, the number of non-Finns taken seats in municipal councils is relatively insignificant, while the Finnish Parliament is, as of now, exclusively a Finnish affair. This implies that they are yet to be part of the decision making bodies of the country, even when these decisions affect them.

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research Methods

This work uses both components of quantitative and qualitative research methods. It is hoped that the combination of both methods makes the interpretation of the results easier. Apart from explaining the results of the questionnaires and its analysis, charts and graphs are used to further explicate the understanding of the outcomes of the research. The questionnaire is used because it is very difficult to use other approaches like interview and observation. This is due to the sparsely distribution of the Sudanese within the jurisdiction of Vantaa, and also because they are busy and are not able to schedule time and venue for interviews. With the questionnaires, it is believed that the respondents are able to answer the questions therein at their own convenience, within the necessary time. Also, discussions were held with two of Sudanese in order to get their opinions on issues that came up during the writing of this paper.

The questionnaire was made very simple and easy to read, taking into consideration that the respondents were not too proficient in English. A series of meetings were held with a colleague doing research on the same topic in order to come up with a joint questionnaire. In formulating the questionnaires, emphasis was put at knowing the acculturation level of the Sudanese, the Finns, as a dominant cultural group, and other minority cultural groups. The underneath factors were insinuated and aimed at depicting their influence on the acculturation process of the Sudanese in Vantaa:

Gender: Until recently, the first immigrants into a new country were usually men. However, most Sudanese travelled to Finland as couples or family. It is believed that an acculturation altitude between husband and wife is not always the same. Some males are

very conservative and, often than not, do resist pressure from the dominant culture; especially when it means giving up their own culture.

Employment status: By knowing the employment status among the Sudanese, it is easier to gauge their mode of acculturation in Finland. Also, through employment it is easier to know the level of integration in their workplace, which also helps in the gauging process.

Proficiency in Finnish language: Language, as earlier mentioned, is the most necessary tool in the acculturation process. It eases both assimilation and integration of people from minority cultural groups into the dominant Finnish society. It helps in interaction and communication with authorities, neighbours and persons from other cultures.

The Sudanese ethnic colonies in Finland: This factor looks into the social organisation of the Sudanese community. Some minority cultural groups tend to locate in particular districts, and have cultural associations to which members are registered. These associations act as a meeting point where problems and matters concerning them are discussed and resolved. They also provide counselling and assistance to newcomers, thus easing their acculturative stress. However, too much attachment to such group can be a hindrance to integration and assimilation, as newly arrived immigrants become too attached to their existing 'colony' rather than interacting with the dominant cultural group.

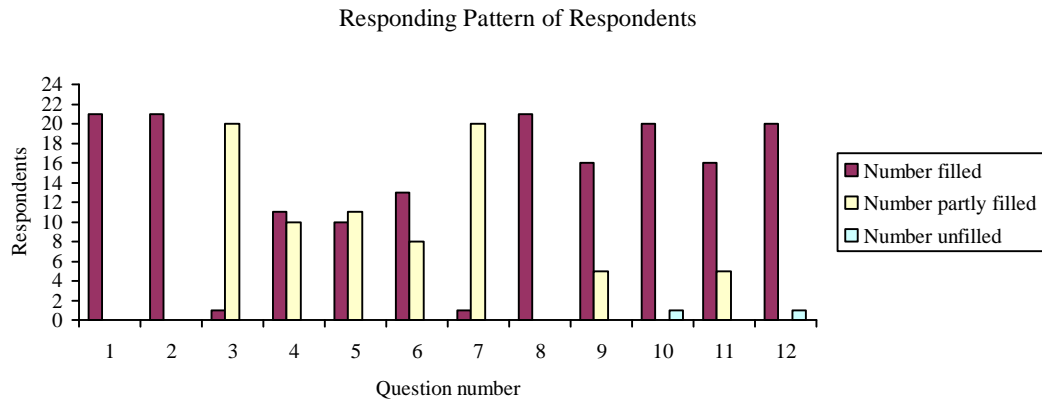
Finnish Government Assistance: A look at the level and type of assistance from the Finnish government to the Sudanese in Finland depict the level of appreciation and the facilitators involved. It also assists in evaluating the degree of empowerment of members of the Sudanese society to manage their own livelihood.

Contact with relatives in Sudan and happenings therein: Frequent contact with relatives in Sudan helps Sudanese in Diaspora to embrace cultural and political events in their country. Depending on the reasons for emigrating, events at home country can accelerate or decelerate the acculturation level; and it can sometimes even change the acculturation modes.

Using these factors, a questionnaire was designed and forwarded to the supervisor for comments and recommendations. This was followed by a formal meeting wherein corrections were made on the questionnaire. These amendments were mainly concerned with the usage of language in the questionnaires. It was agreed that the language should be simple and questionnaire shorter. This is to facilitate the handling of the questionnaires by the respondents. The final copy of the questionnaire is herein attached as an Appendix.

As far as distribution is concerned, it was agreed that 25 copies of the questionnaires should be produced and distributed to the Sudanese in the cited area of study. The respondents were selected randomly but from a group that attend the same church – the Roman Catholic Church Vantaa. Most Sudanese in Vantaa are members of the said church; and my colleague who volunteered to carry out the distribution and collection of the questionnaires is also a member. As most of the respondents could neither read nor write English, care was taken so that such respondents have someone in their household who is proficient enough in English and is willing to help. It is again worth mentioning that 99% of the Sudanese immigrants in Finland are Christians from dominantly Christian/animist Southern Sudan where the wars were fought.

Distribution of the questionnaires proper was done after the Sunday mass. The purpose of the research was explained to the respondents. Twenty-five questionnaires were voluntarily collected by the respondents who pledged to return them to my colleague within the time frame of two weeks in the same venue. Though the time frame for answering the questionnaires was given, we expected late return of some questionnaires because some respondents may not come to church on the scheduled date. Most of the questionnaires were returned on time during the second week, and just a few came in week three. 21 out of 25 questionnaires distributed were collected, making 84%. The answering pattern of the respondents is shown below:



4.2 Analyses of Results from Questionnaires

Though attempts were made in answering all the questions, it was discovered that those with sub-questions were not fully answered. The reasons for the trend, especially in questions 3 and 7 is perhaps be due to the fact that some respondents do not want to reveal their employment status, or do not understand the meaning of multicultural associations. Questions 4, 5 and 6 that sought to know the relationship and interaction level are also partially filled. This maybe due to the assumption that the differences between the words ‘Finns’ and ‘other nationals’, as used in the questionnaire, could have been interpreted as one and the same thing by the respondents. The results of the questionnaires, for easy analysis, are evaluated under the following sub-titles: employment status, interaction, and government supports.

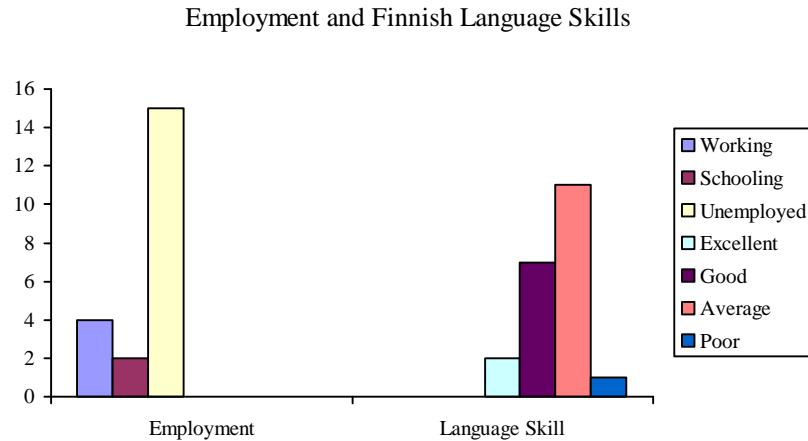
4.2.1 Employment Status

Employment status is used as a gauge for the level of acculturation because it varies between men and women, and the employed and unemployed. Glynis (2005) identifies level of education of immigrants as one of the factors that influenced their employment. More educated immigrants are more liable to have jobs and get settled down in a new country than those who are uneducated. This is because they easily learn the language and the customs of the dominant culture. This is the situation also faced by the Sudanese in Finland.

Out of 4 of respondents who say they are permanently employed, though one is actually a student, none of them is a woman. As concerns proficiency in the Finnish language, 2 respondents say they are excellent in it, 7 are good, 11 are average and 1 admits his skills are poor. It is worth mentioning that while this research perceives 'good' and 'average' to imply spoken and written skills, most Sudanese took it to mean spoken skills only. Lack of sufficient language skills, to an extent, appears to be a reason for the very high unemployment rate among Sudanese in Finland, irrespective of how long they have resided in the country. Although English and ethnic tongues like Dinka and Otuho are spoken by some, Arabic is the common language used in their daily contact among themselves in Finland. This can be the reason for lack of interest in the Finnish language.

However, not all employers in Finland put so much emphasis on Finnish language as an obligatory requirement for employment. Odd jobs like cleaning and mail delivery are among the type of jobs that put less emphasis in language. According a Sudanese bus driver named Franklino (personal communication 31.07.2009) his countrymen are not willing to do odd jobs and are also not prepared to search for jobs. He alleges that they, as refugees, are used to being fed and taken care of by the Finnish government since their arrival in Finland, and therefore expect jobs to search for them and not the reverse.

Furthermore, most Sudanese who made it to Finland had little or no formal education. The lack of education and skills needed in the employment market, especially in lucrative field like electronics, engineering, business, social services and medicines is responsible for unemployment among respondents. The prospects of a positive change in their employment status appear bleak. This is because despite the high rate of unemployment caused by lack of appropriate education, just a few are students.



That above illustrated situation is known to be a cause for high level of acculturative stress. Joblessness among minority cultural groups (Sudanese inclusive) is alleged to be responsible for the stereotype among many Finns that immigrants are in Finland just for their money and women (Six Degrees June 2009, 14). However, the Sudanese may argue that they are not the cause of their dilemma, as other minority cultural groups in Finland face the same problems. Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) and Kosonen (2008) admit that only a few immigrants have been able to fully participate in the economic, social and political life of the Finnish society. Adding that, unemployment, which is three times high than among the larger population, slowed down integration into the workplace. The high unemployment rate, apart from pushing the Sudanese away from the dominant Finnish society, has helped to enforce ethnic group support among the Sudanese, as seen below.

4.2.2 Interaction

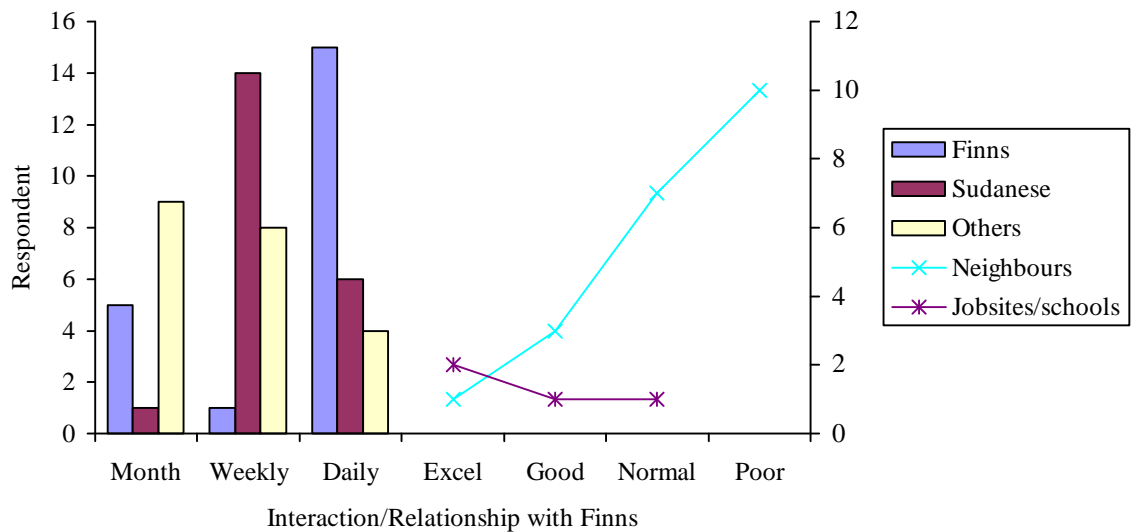
Changes in the individual's behaviour, social and work activities, thinking patterns, values, and self-identification can often come about as a result of interaction with another culture. The degree of interaction is used to measure which model of acculturation is dominant among the Sudanese. Through interaction, the relationship with the Finns, who are regarded here as the dominant cultural group, is explored and that with other nationals and fellow Sudanese is also surveyed. Also, an investigation is made into the level of interaction at the jobsite for those working or schooling.

Analysis of the questionnaires depicts that the Sudanese have more daily interaction with Finns than with fellow Sudanese. This is credited to daily usage and sharing of transportation, shopping, social offices, works and schools. Also, as most of their neighbours are Finns they are forced to interact with them in one way or the other. Weekly meetings are high among fellow Sudanese, and it can be due to the busy schedules and sparse distribution of their population within the Vantaa municipality. This makes it difficult for them to interact daily; therefore it is opportune to meet others at least once a week. Weekly interactions are also due to shared obligations like attending the same church, gathering of members of same cultural and ethnic groups, and the desire to meet fellow countrymen. The degree of contact with other nationals is not frequent. Most Sudanese have the opportunity to interact with other nationals only once in a month.

Furthermore, their relationships with neighbours with whom daily interaction is said to be high, most of whom are Finns, are very poor. This is in contrast with those at work or school, who say the relationship with colleagues are, to a greater extent, good. This survey portrays that interaction with the dominant cultural group does not necessarily mean having a good relationship with them. Meeting people at supermarkets, buses, or parks without having a good relationship with them cannot result in integration or assimilation. Interaction without a relationship can be a type of separation or marginalisation, as it means rejection by the dominant culture with which they interact. This situation is attributed by the Sudanese to the Finnish culture of individualism, which is incompatible with their own culture of collectivism.

In addition, though respondents say their interaction with each other is on a weekly basis, it is likely that they frequently used other forms of interaction. This includes telephone and internet. As a result, it is difficult to accept that they interact daily more with Finns if they are in frequent contact with fellow Sudanese through telephones and the internet. This also applies to other nationals with whom frequent communication is done using the afore-cited methods. Interestingly, those who are working or schooling, despite their small number, have a better relationship with their colleagues. This signifies acceptance of them by the dominant cultural group. It is interpreted as integration if they also accept the dominant culture; or assimilation if they shied away their own culture.

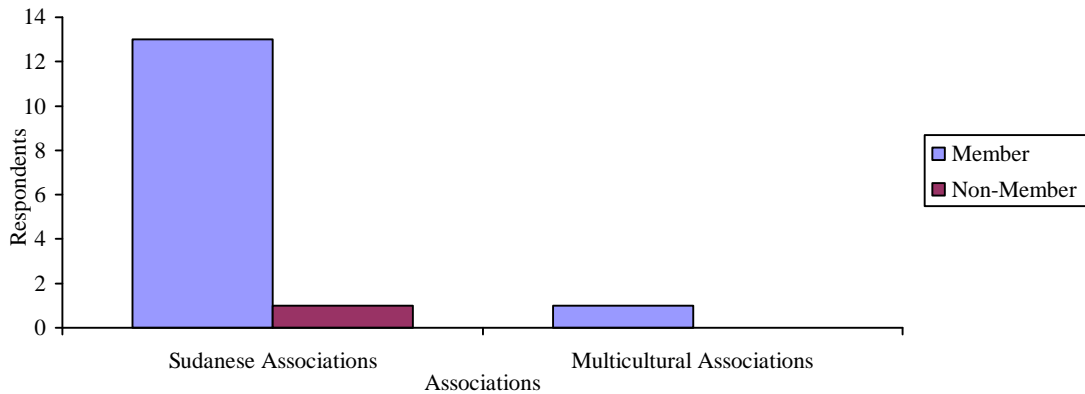
The Interaction and Relationship pattern of Sudanese



In addition, as many of 13 out of 14 of respondents who answered question 6, on membership to the Sudanese association, say they are members of a Sudanese cultural or ethnic association. The building of social support group or network is very useful especially in minority cultural groups where acculturative stress is high. Sharing knowledge on common stressors and problems faced by members, and possible solutions is the objective of such support groups or network. Kosonen (2008) adds that social support and networks provide sufficient room for both diversity and collectivism. Social networks and meetings, such as those of the Sudanese community, provide forums for the younger or second generation to learn their culture and language. Though members of such association and network are usually divided on political lines, as far as home politics is concerned, Kosonen (2008) also says that they nevertheless agree on purposeful development of their homeland.

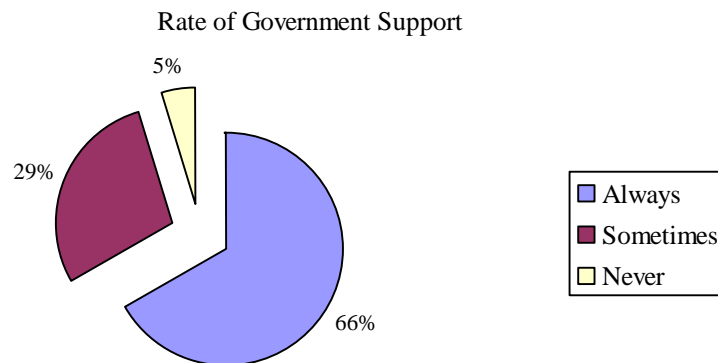
Also, it happens that the Sudanese do not have much contact with other nationals. Just one of the respondents acknowledges belonging to a multicultural association. This depicts a low acculturation attitude. It gives the impression that the Sudanese are isolated to themselves. This situation, coupled with the poor relationship with Finns, give the impression that the Sudanese in Vantaa are not fully integrating with the dominant society.

Social Network of Sudanese in Vantaa



4.2.3 Government Support

Almost all the Sudanese households in Vantaa municipality receive government assistance. This assistance ranges from unemployment allowances, family allowances, school allowances, housing allowances, to sickness and maternity allowances. This is correlated in the report, which depicts that 66% of respondents say that they always receive one or more of the forms of state assistance listed herein. 29% say they often than not receive assistance from the state, while just 5% have never received a cent from the government. State assistance appears to be only source of revenue and livelihood for the biggest majority of the highly unemployed Sudanese population in Vantaa.



The effect of Finnish government assistance on the Sudanese in Vantaa is two sided. Firstly, it has help Sudanese settle in their new country peaceful. Basic and essential needs of families like security, home, food, education and health are well catered for. This helps kill stressors that cause acculturative stress and nostalgia. On the other hand,

some Sudanese, especially the men, feel that it is better to work and earn money than to be fed like dogs. It is discrediting them, especially as they have been accustomed to being the breadwinners of their families, a role they are losing due to prolonged unemployment. They also feel that the process is too bureaucratic, humiliating and it is disabling them. The amount of money received, though appreciable, is too small forcing them to live a hand-to-mouth life, no savings and huge debts, as Owen – a Sudanese student/cleaner said (personal communication 11.08.2009). This discontent is portrayed in the last question of the questionnaire on whether they would like to go back to Sudan if the situation there improves. Only 10% of respondents say they want to stay in Finland because it is safer. Others want to leave because of lack of work in Finland and strong attachment to families and country. To an extent, this depicts the level of nostalgia of the Sudanese and the extent to which their hopes of a better life in Finland are fading away.

However, this cannot totally be regarded as a barometer for the failure or success of government policy in integrating members of minority cultural groups with the dominant society. Members of minority cultural groups have always been free to return to their countries if the situation there improves. A typical example is the Finns from Sweden, Estonia and Russian who after having being settled there, often for generations, have been returning back in numbers (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000, 3). Interestingly, the seriousness of the Sudanese yearning to return is questionable, because most of them have been unemployed since arrival in Finland and are unskilled. Therefore, most will not have the money to restart life and the skills to gain employment in case they return to home. There is also no state social security benefits scheme in Sudan to help resettle them therein. It is for this reason that Franklino (personal communication 31.07.2009) thinks that patriotism has a part to place in the response, and that in reality they will prefer to stay put in their comfortable apartments than to starve themselves to death in Sudan.

Nevertheless, the contribution of government support in the acculturation of the Sudanese in Finland cannot be underestimated. Acculturation is a continuing process. This makes it difficult to assess the success of state support in integrating the Sudanese, coupled with the fact that the Sudanese immigration is only nine years old in Finland.

5 ANALYSIS

The four modes of acculturation are taken into consideration in analysing the Sudanese acculturation situation in Finland vis-à-vis the results of the questionnaires and other research methods used herein. It is worthwhile though, to endeavour to bring forth which modes of acculturation the Sudanese are undergoing and the reasons for it. The experience of the researcher, as an immigrant undergoing an acculturation process like the Sudanese, is also explored in this section.

To begin with, it is alleged that the Finnish government policies aimed at integrating immigrants and minority cultural groups with the majority Finns does not appear to be successful, especially with the Sudanese. It is said to be only on written documents and the policies are not being put into practice. The Sudanese refugees brought to Finland

were not allowed to choose where to resettle, but rather were dispersed into remote cities all over Finland. This is similar to the relocation of Finns in the Soviet Union, during the Stalinist era after World War II, in Siberia and other parts of the former Soviet Union (Jasinskaja-Lahti 2000, 5). This method of resettling the Sudanese is characterised as assimilation, which is aimed at ethnic de-concentration, nationally mixed marriages and mono-lingualism in Finland. In this sort of situation, the Sudanese are isolated from contemporary Sudanese society, and leave with little or no chance of maintaining their own culture and identity.

Furthermore, integration policies of the government are seemed to be geared toward assimilation. This is in line with the un-dimensional theorists who hold that whatever acculturation processes a government practices, the outcome is always assimilation. Integration in the Finnish labour market requires that a Sudanese have Finnish credentials, with more emphasis on Finnish language proficiency. Credentials from Sudan and other countries, especially outside the EU, are not accepted. As a result, the Sudanese are forced to follow the classic theories of assimilation that assumed a unified economy in which immigrants start their careers at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy and gradually move up as they acquired social acceptance (Akhlaq 2005, 17). Starting a new career at the bottom level is often demoralising and dehumanising, and can be one of the reasons why many Sudanese are reluctant to search for jobs. It can be seemed to be a resistance to assimilation, especially when comments like "maassa maan tavalla tai maasta ulos" ("When in Rome, do as the Romans do") often surfaced in the discussions in the media (Akhlaq 2005, 9).

What is more, the research also indicates a low level of involvement by the Sudanese in the economic, political and social fabric of the Finnish society. The causes of the Sudanese isolation, which is an indication of both separation and marginalisation, are government policies, Finns' attitude and lack of zeal by Sudanese. The choice of separation and marginalisation as an acculturation strategy can be said to have been forced onto the Sudanese by the attitude of the dominant cultural group (Finns). As Jasinskaja-Lahti (2000) and Kosonen (2008) put it, Finn's attitudes towards immigrants have not been friendly and in most cases very hostile. There is still a belief among many Finns that many foreigners come to Finland to use the welfare benefits, and that enjoyment of the higher living standard was the right of the Finns (Jaakkola 1999, 67

cited in Akhlaq 2005, 9). This belief, which Akhlaq (2005) stresses that is common among the youngest and the oldest age groups, seems to have contributed to Sudanese preferring to stay separate from the Finns. As for the Sudanese who left Sudan with the hope of permanently staying in Finland, this mind-set is responsible for their choice of marginalisation, since neither Sudan nor Finland seems to fulfil their aspirations. Unfortunately, high unemployment, coupled with soaring dependency on welfare benefits, seems to justify the above cited attitudes against the Sudanese. This insinuates that they, knowingly or unknowingly, prefer separation and marginalisation as an acculturation strategy.

Constant nostalgia, contact with homeland and ethnic colonies in other countries is also responsible for separation and marginalisation as an acculturation strategy. Many Sudanese, as indicated in the results of the questionnaire, still desire to return home. There is an argument that as refugees they were compelled by the situation at the time to come to Finland. Under normal circumstances they would never have left their homeland. As a result, they are just temporary residents waiting for the situation back home to improve. As such they are in constant communication with relations both in Sudan and other countries. This type of relationship does favour neither assimilation nor integration, because they lack commitment to the process. Lack of commitment implies failure to enjoy the benefits of the Finnish government policy of integration. The subsequent effect is not only acculturative stress but isolation.

Additionally, Sudanese support groups are very fragmented and built along ethnicity rather nationality. Almost all the Sudanese in Vantaa belong to an ethnic cultural association, which is a support group. Though ethnic group support facilitated integration, on a general level (Kosonen 2008, 9), it also causes division among Sudanese, especially as they do not have the same political views. The ethnic division is also caused by constant intertribal wars in Sudan. Failure to form a national association to represent them in Finland greatly affects the level of integration of Sudanese in Finland, according to Franklino (personal communication 31.07.2009). The lack of a single voice to speak for the Sudanese makes it difficult to present their grievances to the Finnish government. He continues that ethnic support groups have also caused Sudanese to owe allegiance to their individual ethnic groups. This enforces separation

tendency among Sudanese because they have more trust in individual ethnic groups than in the Finnish government.

One of the features of ethnic support groups is their support for ethnic identity. Ethnic identity includes attributes such as positive attitudes to one ethnic group and a sense to belonging to it, voluntarily and frequent association with members of the ethnic group and ethnic practices. As earlier cited above, almost all of them belong to an ethnic association. This indicates, to a greater extent, that ethnic identity plays a role in their lives. The acculturation rate of Sudanese ethnic groups with a strong ethnic identity will be slow as compare to that with weak ethnic identity. Weak ethnic identity favours assimilation and integration as the individuals can easily discard their identity and attitudes in favour of those of the dominant culture. Strong ethnic identity is conceived to be responsible for the non-existence of contact with other nationals, because there is always the belief that support and comfort comes only from one's own ethnic groups members.

Also, not all immigrants and members of minority cultural groups choose the fourfold strategies discussed earlier. Some Sudanese are likely to benefit from the dominant cultural group without either being integrated or assimilated. They adhere to the norms and values of the Finnish culture when they are with Finns, and also adhere to the norms and values of the culture of origin when they are with fellow Sudanese. This acculturation strategy is referred to as alternation. Others may decide to create a situation known as fusion by consistently adhering to a combination of the norms and values of the Finnish culture and those of the Sudanese culture. The former situation is common among working class immigrants who want to have good working and public relationships without losing face in their original cultural groups; while the latter is popular among the youths and second generation immigrants who are neither well informed on the dominant culture, nor their culture of origin. Alteration and fusion, according to Sam and Berry (2005) is an emerging mode of acculturation.

6 CONCLUSION

6.1 Limitations

Although it is true that the members of the Sudanese community were accessible and friendly, their lack of knowledge and information about the Finnish Society, and what is expected of them by the said society strongly affected their handling of the questionnaires. As a result, some pertinent questions were left unanswered, thus making it difficult to analyse and validate the results. The inability to speak and write English by a majority of the Sudanese also limited the quantity and quality of the questionnaire answers. Many questions were dropped out because of the fear that they were too complicated.

Additionally, whereas there has been research on other minority cultural groups in Finland like the Somalis, Vietnamese and Russians, there is no previous research on the Sudanese. For this reason, it is difficult to get information on the opinions of Finns and other cultural groups about the Sudanese. Hence the researcher has to depend heavily on the questionnaires to extract information.

6.2 Implications and Recommendations

As for implications, the results of this research imply that not enough has been done to educate members of the majority cultural group on accommodating newcomers that form the minority. It further illustrates that Finland is still far from being a multicultural and pluralistic society. That effort has been geared towards acculturating only members of minority cultural groups. The Finnish government and NGOs concerned should as well intensify their efforts in educating and ‘acculturating’ the majority Finns. It will also be helpful if the Finns are aware of their own weaknesses, abhorrence, and animosities towards members of other cultures (including the Sudanese), as only then will they be able to accommodate the latter. This is in conformity with the renowned Chinese philosopher Tao Tzu (Launikari & Puukari 2005, 154) that knowing others is wisdom, knowing oneself is enlightenment.

The domino effect of this research further suggest that successful employment of those Sudanese who have formal education in Finland is, in part, related to developing an understanding of the mainstream culture. A lack of knowledge of the Finnish culture can probably be a reason why the Sudanese have failed to better understand certain employment related factors in order to function more effectively in the new society. Vocational education and intensive empowerment processes are needed for immediate employment by newly arrived Sudanese; whereas further education should also be encouraged.

Additionally, this research is a useful tool for social workers dealing with the Sudanese immigrants, and similar situations. It portrays to the social workers the sentiments and responses of the Sudanese to the services provided by social workers working either

with the government or NGOs. The social workers, acting as advocates for similar minority cultural groups or as service providers, are able to adjust their activities to the prevailing situation (such as unemployment and language incompetence) illustrated in the research. In order to easily understand the said prevailing situation, it is my opinion that social workers with immigrant background or knowledge be integrated into the public and private sectors dealing with immigrants. This is to help establish a quick understanding between the above cited sectors and immigrants minority groups.

Also, this research is also beneficial to community development workers operating in the communities where minority cultural groups prevail. The understanding of the acculturation mode of each minority cultural group within a community enables the community developer to know the priorities of that particularly community. It also helps community development worker to recognise the type of participants needed in certain projects. For instance, a community full of members of minority cultural groups with less education and skills implies the need to spend more money and time in capacity building.

Furthermore, the results of the research suggest that the good intended social security benefits are disabling many adult Sudanese, who before coming to Finland were breadwinners for their families. This is because the money received from KELA by a family is far better than that which a breadwinner will earn hustling odd jobs. It is evidenced that a family with many offspring does not only benefit from child allowances but also from housing, education and health benefits. This is evident on the percentage of Sudanese whose livelihood depends on the Finnish social security, as illustrated on this research. It points up the pressure that such immigrant minority groups have on the resources of the Finnish government; and why Finnish sentiments towards such groups are every now and then hostile, especially during times of recession.

It is further recommended that in carrying out future research on this subject, it will be more effective if the researcher spends more time with the respondents. This is because it was discovered that the questionnaire, as a research method, also has its own shortcomings. There is no contact with the respondents; hence it is difficult to know whether what is being written down is what is actually believed in. It is therefore

recommended that participatory observation should be used as a research method in this type of subject. This method enables the researcher to spend days or even months with the respondents and as a result able to relate findings with them.

In addition, the researcher should have basic knowledge of the language of the respondents and if possible the questionnaire should be in the respondents' first language. This will avoid the use of interpreter in answering the questionnaire, as an interpreter may not fill in the exact words coming from the respondents' mouths.

Personally, this work has had a positive impact on my professional development. It has enabled me to acquire first hand knowledge on the situation of minority cultural groups in Finland. Knowledge acquired during this research is a useful tool in working with refugee or immigrant organisations, as well as government institutions catering for minority cultural groups. As a fellow immigrant with similar experiences, it is advantageous to use the findings in this research to choose the mode of acculturation best to me and my future career in Finland.

Lastly, it is my opinion that acculturation process in a mono-cultural country like Finland is naturally difficult. This is because the level of cultural diversity and fusion is so far very low, and as such there is a big gap between the dominant Finnish culture and immigrant minority cultures. A reduction in this gap does not happen overnight; and if it is to happen will depend on the desire of the majority and minority cultures to accept, tolerate and accommodate each other. Also, it is obvious to see the difference when one compares the acculturation speed in a country just waking up in the light of multiculturalism, like Finland, to countries that have lived for hundreds of years with ever continuing phenomenon like France and Britain. Considering this argument, Finland is slowly moving forward positively in a process that took other hundred of years to achieve. This is evidenced by the increasing number of immigrants migrating to Finland from within and outside Europe.

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APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

This Questionnaire is carryout by the Students of Diaconia University of Applied Sciences Järvenpää Unit for the purpose of research only. Any information obtained herein will be treaty confidentially.

- 1) Gender: Male Female
- 2) When did you leave Sudan?
- 3a) Are you currently employed? Yes No
- b) How long have you been employed?
- c) What is your present occupation?
- d) How is your relationship with your colleagues?
 Poor Normal Good Excellent
- e) Why
- 4a) How is your relationship with your neighbours?
 Poor Normal Good Excellent
- b) Why
- 5a) How often do you interact with?
- i) Finns: daily weekly monthly
- ii) Sudanese: daily weekly monthly
- iii) Other nationals: daily weekly monthly
- b) Reasons:

- 6a) Are you are member of the Sudanese association? Yes No
- b) How long have you been a member?
- 7a) Are you a member of other multicultural associations? Yes No
- b) How long have you been a member?
- 8) How good are you in the Finnish Language?
 Poor Average Good Excellent
- 9a) How often do you receive Finnish government's assistances?
 Never Sometimes Always
- b) What type of assistance do you receive?

- 10) How often do you have contacts with your relatives in Sudan?
 Never Yearly Monthly Weekly
- 11a) Would you like to return to Sudan? Yes No
- b) Reasons:

- 12) What language do you frequently use in daily communication?