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Early Childhood Education of Refugee Students in Lebanon: Teachers' Perspectives.

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ABSTRACT

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According to (International Rescue Committee, 2018), International Rescue Committee (IRC) is offering emergency services for about 1.5 Syrian refugees in Lebanon who fled their homelands since 2011. A large number of the refugee population are categorized as children under the age of 18. The small country Lebanon has been called to respond to this humanitarian crisis, and some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) responded to offer educational services for those children. Taking into account the increasing need for refugee education support and especially during the last few years, this study attempts to understand the integration process for refugee students into the Lebanese curriculum, through early childhood education, based on teachers' perspectives.

In this qualitative research, interviews were conducted with teachers who are directly contacting refugee students, within an early childhood education care (ECEC) program in January 2020 at three different schools in Northern of Lebanon. One of the NGOs in Lebanon provided the ECEC centres, and all the services were free of charge for refugees.

The findings that were extracted from the interviews through content analysis, made it possible to explore the barriers that affect the learning process of refugee students. However, content analysis is a common methodology that is used to study cases in qualitative research. It helps to find out the meaning of text within the quantification of the meaning of spoken or written language (Renz et al, 2018).

New methodologies will be mentioned in the study such as, the play-based environment that was used by teachers, to mitigate challenges in the classroom, and support children's integration process in the Lebanese curriculum, and the motivation chains to which participants had access for academic and attitude cases within the ECEC classes.

In addition, the findings denote the various issues and system interconnections that shape the reality facing refugees at local communities. There are techniques such as creativity, open

discussions and dialogues that outline the integration process of refugee students, which challenges their learning, development processes, and overall academic experience. ECEC, however, could have a positive impact the children through the support that teachers received through training as well as the academic support by the NGO.

Key words: early childhood education care, integration process, learning development, refugee.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
IRC	International Rescue Committee
ECEC	Early Childhood Education Care
UNICEF	Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

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1 INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE OF STUDY

In March 2017, the Syrian crisis completed its seventh year consecutively, continuing an unexpected phase of suffer and daily conflicts, changing communities demographically and geographically. Not only in Syria which led to an estimation of 4.8 million Syrian refugees since 2011, but also countries such as Yemen and Iraq whom also have people seeking refuge (Sirkeci, 2017). Making them as the largest refugee group in the Middle East (El Chmali, 2017).

During the Syrian crisis, Lebanon, the small country in the Middle East with a population of about 4 million, has hosted more than 1 million Syrian refugees (UNHCR, 2017). Due to the high number of Syrian refugees in addition to the Palestinian that entered Lebanon in 1948, it became very challenging for the Lebanese government to respond to these vigorous influxes of refugees and their needs, which affected the completely Lebanese community (El Chmali, 2017).

Refugee families are an important element of many societies, and incorporating them into any educational system, means that they may enrich the environment with new cultural views that can be beneficial to early learning programs. However, if we talk about the state of refugees we also need to think about their rights. Many people think or ignore the rights of refugees and exploit them or treat them badly, but the universal declaration of human rights assured these rights (UNHCR, 2019). Nonetheless, the United Nations (UN) define the refugee as the person who has serious fears due to some reasons. Such as, race, gender, religion, nationality and a membership in a particular social group or political opinion (Amiel, 1993).

Thus, the universal declaration of human rights (1948) suggests the following “Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit” and “Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.” (Article 26). Declaring education as a right for everyone including every child, making it easier for people around the world to understand the necessity of education and the way that it affects humans’ lives.

However, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), refugees are people who fled their homeland due to reason such as civil war, violence and persecution (UNHCR, n.d.).

The 1951 Refugee convention as well introduces refugees as people with serious fears of being expelled due to some reasons based on gender, race, religion, nationality, colour, belonging to a special social group or being included in some political parties (UNHCR, n.d.). Being forced to leave their homelands, is a reason that makes the refugee population vulnerable and directly affects the lives and development of children looking for a safe environment. There are about 22.5 million refugees around the world (UNHCR, n.d.), and this number is unfortunately rising every day, which means that every day more children are living without proper shelter, education or access to even basic needs.

Moreover, the International Rescue Committee (IRC) is one of the NGOs that is helping refugees in many countries including Lebanon, IRC is offering emergency services for about 1.5 Syrian refugees who fled their homelands since 2011 (International Rescue Committee, 2018). The IRC started the support chain in 2012 as refugees were entering Lebanon seeking a safe environment, and IRC started providing Education, Shelter and Protection for most of the families who are considered as vulnerable families (International Rescue Committee, 2018).

The IRC focused on education as a tool for development and to help children avoid the negative consequences of war especially children who are still in the early childhood period (International Rescue Committee, 2018).

The main goal of this study is to find out the integration of refugee children into the Lebanese curriculum through the early childhood classrooms, based on teachers' perspectives in order to understand the success that occurred and the reasons that made the success. Following the beginning of the Syrian crisis and the shocking numbers of refugees that entered Lebanon starting from 2011, educators have to be well prepared for a new teaching environment. They needed to be ready to come up with a welcoming environment for the children who are already traumatized because of the civil war back in Syria. Taking into account the fact that kids were exposed to violence as well. Investigations in the science of brain development have revealed that early childhood is the most important period for children development (Britto et al., 2017). The first two years of the child's life are related to the evolution of intelligence, character, and social attitude (UNICEF, n.d.).

Moreover, in this research, I will talk about the teachers' professional agency which is an important factor with the ECEC programs, especially for refugee students. Teacher agency is the ability of teachers to act and find suitable solutions in a challenging environment, where refugee children need a special care in ECEC classes. It is discussed as a skill that help in the students' learning process to make it easier, and help them develop their learning skills and achieve integration. Thus, it is all about supporting their development and integration (Rose, 2019).

The current research is divided into parts; the first part is including the introduction, which is giving a general idea along with abstract to the reader about the main goal of the research, moving to the other part, which is considered as the theoretical background. The second part starts by explaining the importance of early childhood education and education in general for the refugees who fled their homeland to the civil wars that are happening in the Middle East and a framework that is explaining the reality of refugees and their state globally and Lebanon follows this.

(Ambert et al, 1995) suggest that the qualitative research is a strategy that can be used to form a deep understanding about the case that is being observed. It is a process to gain deep and accurate information about a smaller group of people. The focus of the qualitative study is to focus and find out the reason behind behaviours, and the way of thinking for the people who are a target of the study, this process can be conducted through interviews or even a survey that include questions about such a topic

The data collection was done using the interview process, through which educators answered the questions that were already decided. Teachers were given the option to choose the place and time that is suitable for them. Additionally, they were already informed about the confidentiality of their names and all other details related to them.

The concentration was then put on the case of the Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) such as the International Rescue Committee and the impact that it provided to the ECEC in Lebanon during the Syrian crisis starting from 2011. The third part in the research focuses on the methods that have been used concerning the practicalities of the study. However, I will use the qualitative method in my research in order to get the best results based on the interviews with participants in the study.

Moving to the last part, which is discussing the results, or the findings that have been issued based on the interviews with the teachers. The research ends with a discussion that is explaining the findings based on a theoretical framework.

2 Education as a holy right for refugee children

2.1 Every child learns.

According to UNICEF (2019), children all over the world have the right to education. Despite the fact, that many children have access to education than before and enrolled in schools and different education institutions, the responsible people who are appointed to ensure this right for every child should keep the development continuously, because any failure can have terrible consequences on children. Many children lose knowledge and skills to recognize their whole opportunities and broaden their contribution to their communities.

However, the differences between the children based on the learning that is insured by education systems which is creating different levels is increasing. This is considered as a global crisis due to the impact that it can cause for humanity, this is challenging and can be a barrier for children development, in life, work and in their belonging to their communities. Moreover, UNICEF set the strategy, which is called “every child learns”, this strategy, is working on three goals in order to find solutions for critical issues in education for children in particular cases. All children have the same right to access education, in addition to the efficient education service that should be improved and provide technical learning skills, and good quality education in cases such as emergencies, civil wars, displacement and vulnerable context. The strategy emphasizes the importance of bringing better results concerning the learning process by focusing on continuous improvement, taking into account strengthening span of skills that grant the new generation the ability to adapt and turn into decent citizens that are able to deal with personal, social, commercial and environmental barriers (UNICEF, 2019).

Moreover, the strategy of UNICEF, which is ensuring the right of education for every child, will hopefully develop equality and children enrolment in education, and thus mitigate the challenges for them. The strategy is undoubtedly focusing on children who have no education opportunities due to some reasons such as, gender, those who suffer of disabilities, the vulnerable, those who are excluded based on ethnic background and most importantly children who are affected by emergencies such as civil wars that happened in the Middle East as an example. UNICEF strategy is giving a part of its project to support children in the early stages such as the early childhood stage for children between 3 and 5 years old (UNICEF, 2019).

However, this strategy is highly appreciated for the technical improvement to education globally and especially for children in early stages who suffer from trauma. In addition to those who are exposed to terrible situations such as, refugee children in Lebanon who fled their homeland in Syria and Iraq.

2.2 The refugee case in Lebanon.

The United Nations (UN) define the refugee as the person who has serious fears due to some reasons. Such as, race, gender, religion, nationality and a membership in a particular social group or political opinion (Amiel, 1993).

In 2011, the Syrian crisis started and people started to suffer. However, Lebanon as a neighbouring country witnessed difficult humanitarian issues because of the refugees that crossed the borders seeking refuge due to the war in Syria. The number of Syrian refugees who entered Lebanon is about 1.5 million Syrians according to the Lebanese government, which means that Lebanon is hosting the biggest number of Syrian refugees out of the total, which is 6.7 million. The number of Syrian refugees stayed as the biggest share compared to other countries, hosting the biggest number in a small country. Moreover, Syrian refugees kept on facing many difficulties and lacking access to basic services. It is challenging them to renew their legal documents to stay in Lebanon legally. Being without legal documents that prove their stay in the country causes them many troubles and challenges on different aspects. Refugees are not able to find shelter, or even renting a house because they do not have documents. They used to face the risk of being arrested for such reason, children are victims for this reason, and parents

are not able to send children to schools which means that they do not have access to one of the most important rights; education, missing the opportunity to be enrolled in schools for children is the worst scenario that faces them (UNICEF, 2019). According to UNICEF (2019), children who are enrolled in the education system are decreased from 16% in 2018 to 13% in 2019, and this can be explained due to the limited chances for refugees in Lebanon to renew their legal documents and so on.

Furthermore, according to (UNHCR, 2010, p. 14), the convention of the United Nations concerning the refugee status was taken into consideration in 1951 and having been put to be in power in 1954, and in 1967, the protocol has decided the hierarchy that requires an individual to qualify and gain the status as a refugee. And the convention defined the refugee as the following: "...owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it."

In this case, it is clear that refugees are forming particular groups that are legally recognized and having some rights and a protection criterion that are mentioned and warrantied by international law). Contrary to the refugees that form a clearly recognized group, the definition of the asylum is not available in any international legal convention or agreement. Furthermore, asylum has been shown as a case of protection, as the individual can be in good conditions concerning health and shelter, and a safe environment. Thus, they can get enough protection against different factors, and this is undoubtedly different from the case of refugees, which is explicitly viewed as the group of individuals recognized to follow international law (Reed et al, 2012).

In the next pages, early childhood education from a global perspective and the situation of Lebanon concerning the same issue will be discussed from different aspects and points of views. However, this section will end by discussing the case of child development in early childhood from a global perspective.

2.2.1 Quality in Early childhood education, global perspective.

Education is quality. The continuous development of education is necessary and especially in the early childhood stage which is the core stage of children in the learning process. According to (Penn, 2011), Hrdy's quotation clearly denotes nurseries, which are related to new techniques of bringing up children. In countries such as Belgium and France, children aged 3 to 5 years old had the opportunity to get a full-time nursery education hundreds of years ago. Day nurseries are meant for the main house or education center of young infants, and they are very commonly used in different countries to provide children with educational services in early childhood period, and to prepare them for later advanced stages in their academic and actual life. The well-organized nursery centers were not really put in use efficiently until the last 25-50 years or even less. It can be said as well, that in some countries, it is still not systematically used or put on the verge to be included as a part of an official curriculum.

Moreover, talking about Early Childhood Education Classrooms (ECEC) and testing different ECEC systems of different governments is basically a comparative test. In order to check the effectiveness of a government, this can be possible by assessing and exploring the domestic and local evidence only, this statement can be implemented in many aspects of government and in the ECEC as well. Nowadays, we can find many comparative data in the ECEC field; global organizations have already taken into consideration the scrutiny of early childhood services (Penn, 2011).

The OECD, UNESCO, UNICEF and the EU have all created instructions on the quality system process and advancement, based on the differentiations and ratings between different countries. There are different reasons why arguments have altered from individual countries to the international level. Economic analysis is taken into consideration as highly important globally where economies are bilateral. Offering ECEC service has been seen as a developing factor for the economic well-being of countries. Thus, the availability of ECEC can create a competitive environment in different ways. However, by supporting young children by training to be effective and charismatic citizens, or by helping mothers of young children to take the initiative and provide to the economy, another aspect is by alleviating later consumptions on organizing confusion, eventually there is a convincing result to build it up internationally (Penn, 2011).

Moreover, ECE teachers are exposed to face many challenges based on cultural, social and educational changes (Urban, 2008). The changes that happen socially, culturally and in communities push the change forward concerning ECE teachers. In many countries around the world such as Australia, and other European countries, new pedagogical approaches have been used to develop the practices that can affect the ECEC programs generally (Miller & Cable 2008; Miller, Dalli & Urban 2012). However, these new professional needs, contributions and continuous professional progress can clearly show the major role that is occurring, when developing the competencies of ECE teachers, this can show another prove about that continuous development that is happening around the globe (Ukkonen-Mikkola & Fonsén 2018).

These inferences were behind OECD and EU concerns in ECEC generally. Another reason is that children's rights are becoming more obvious and recognized in different countries. Children all over the world should get their rights by benefiting from the properties and money of nations, and not just a part of them (Penn, 2011). This is giving an ample example of the humanitarian work that is done in some places of the world. The middle east as an example, where many humanitarian NGOs are supporting children who are displaced, due to wars in their countries, and this is strengthening the point of view that children and all of children should benefit for the world wealth and not only particular parts of the world because the world belongs to all of us as human beings. The UNICEF Innocent research centre has been observing the development of the rights of young children in wealthy countries for a while now. UNESCO as well has its own concerns in the issue because they have a responsibility to develop Education for all (EFA) with vulnerable and powerful or wealthy countries, and this proves the justification that early childhood education and care is the main and fundamental for the continuous process of learning for children (Penn, 2011).

Thus, all organizations are continuously advising their members, service providers and those who are interested as volunteers or partners about the best and successful practices to conveying and conducting the services in early childhood. The advice might not be clear enough, but it is surely available. Furthermore, the effectiveness of early childhood facilities is related to the global social and economic status. The successful early childhood services can be easily affected by the general status of the world, the more vulnerable and lack of equality means that fewer services can be offered and more children are suffering. Additionally, it is important for governments to recognize the demand of mothers and fathers to keep the balance between work

and family life, because the lack of balance in this case can affect the life of children due to the lack of services provided. Anyway, depending on the ECEC services as the only solution, is not the best way to solve the universe troubles in this domain. That is not a reason to skip the importance of ECEC as a great and sufficient service, which can keep the pace of development, or to underestimate the role of governments (Penn, 2011).

UNICEF has gone deep into the early childhood perspective, because it is determined and seriously concerned about the well-being of children. It has picked to focus on the wellbeing and economic issues in which children are being treated as highly prominent and important. According to (Penn, 2011), the UN convention of the rights of the child defined, the duties of governments are as the following:

- ‘rendering appropriate assistance to parents, legal guardians and extended families in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities’ (articles 18.2 and 18.3)
- ‘including assisting parents in providing living conditions necessary for the child’s development’ (article 27.2)
- ‘ensuring that children receive necessary protection and care’ (article 3.2). (p. 75).

Moreover, the UNICEF research sector, which is the Innocent Research Centre (IRC) that is located in Florence, has begun a huge program of work in early childhood, built on the explanation of UNCRC. It shows that the ability and profits of governments may not be the same between one nation and another, as wealthy and poor society, and between countries such as those that witnessed a transitional stage like (former soviet countries and their supporters) and Western Europe. However, it regards the importance of the roles of wealthy countries, for the contribution and serious determination to meet UNCRC goals. According to (Penn, 2011), the Innocent Research Centre published a booklet in 2008 in which they mentioned four key aspects in setting measures for ECEC:

“A national commitment to early childhood services, access and inclusiveness, quality of early childcare and education, and the social and economic context into which the child is born”. (p. 76)

The general harmony, obviously, is that governments have a duty to develop early childhood approach, for the sake of accomplishing services with high quality. However, high quality denotes the basis, taking into consideration both education and care with decided goals for the number of places. It means targeting the weak children at every stage of the service. In addition,

having an idea about the curriculum implementation from all aspects including the pedagogical aspect. It is highly important to follow up using technical measures in order to keep sustainable development for children through these services. International organizations are not enough to control this issue, but takes us all as governments and individuals all together to keep the quality, as parents are considered as well as a key solution for development in ECEC (Penn, 2011).

2.2.2 Early learning opportunities for children at risk of social exclusion.

ECEC experience is important for all children all over the world, and through it, process children have the opportunity to develop many skills on different aspects, some studies talked about the impact that can occur to the developmental process of children due to quality ECEC experiences.

According to (Brilli, Del Boca, & Pronzato 2011; Felfe & Lalive 2018) children who belong to vulnerable families that are suffering due to different reasons in life such as migration, are able to benefit from the ECEC programs which can have a positive impact on their development and wellbeing. Thus, ECEC has been portrayed as a critical tool that can help children achieve learning development during the early years of their life and have equal opportunities which is the main goal of quality ECEC experiences (European Commission 2018; Marope & Kaga 2015; OECD 2017).

Furthermore, language acquisition process for children in early childhood is critical and can affect the rest of life for children, it is simply crucial (Becker, Klein & Biedinger 2013; Magnuson et al. 2004).

Moreover, (Hedges & Cullen 2012) suggests that children tend to learn proactively through active communication in everyday situations with other students in a class, their parents and even their direct and indirect interaction with their educators. The acquisition of general skills and the language skills in particular, depends on the passion of children to understand what is going on within their environment. Additionally, their willingness to share meaningful knowledge, emotions and discuss it with others, in this type of interaction between children themselves or even with adults, the role of adults such as teachers in the classes is crucial (Duru-Bellat 2004; Fillmore & Snow 2003; Hattie 2008).

Nonetheless, the expectation of teachers based on their linguistic background can play a critical role in motivating the development process of children (Pulinx, Van Avermaet & Agirdag 2017).

2.2.3 Early childhood education in Lebanon

According to (Yarak, 2014), 72% of the children in Lebanon are enrolled in ECEC classes, which is a higher percentage than any other countries in the Middle East. ECEC classrooms are distributed randomly in Lebanon between different cities and villages, and only 26.9% of educators have qualifications or suitable degrees to be in ECEC classes. The educational environment in terms of infrastructure and equipment is not available in many formal kindergartens, especially those in the most disadvantaged areas. It is obvious that the quality of teachers who are not really trained, is affecting the education in general, teachers without qualifications are not providing the quality education for the kids, and this is affecting their academic performance in the future.

Moreover, the education system in Lebanon is divided into private and public education, and since the government is not really supporting the educational process with suitable tools and even training for the service providers, this is creating the gap between the students who came from public and private schools. Thus, affecting the education system generally (Yarak, 2014).

Furthermore, some evaluation studies of early childhood development programs state that: The key to success is embodied in providing high quality care in early childhood development programs, through the low ratio of children to teachers in the classroom, and the provision of teachers with high levels of experience and science. This means that the actual class should be provided with two teachers at least instead of one, because in Lebanon there is always one teacher in a class of 20 children. This is not logical if we are looking for a high-quality education. Early childhood development programs that include the parent education and participation component have proven to be more successful than programs that only provide the child education component. Program success rates increase when early intervention is done to discover children at risk in disadvantaged societies. The benefits of early childhood development programs are realized in the end. Additionally, children learn most and acquire languages

efficiently at this age 3-5 years old, which means taking care of the little details in this stage is necessary for a successful education system (Yarak, 2014).

The ministry of education considers ECE period as one of the most important for children in order to succeed. However, according to MEHE the early childhood period is the main period of every child where they can develop their skills from different aspects, such as social, emotional and other learning skills. Thus, the concentration is on all the core aspects in order to contribute to the development of every child. Making sure that children are getting a good, quality education not only prepares them for a good academic life, but also helps them to build positive relationships with their parents and the community (Yarak, 2014).

The Ministry of Education in Lebanon is working on the early childhood program. One of the main goals is to increase the number of children who are enrolled in it, until they cover all Lebanon through the following steps (Yarak, 2014): Improving the learning environment infrastructure. Developing the kindergarten and learning resource curriculum. Start a vocational training program for kindergarten teachers with the aim of increasing the proportion of teachers and qualified staff. Additionally, Increasing family awareness and parent participation in kindergartens through conducting awareness sessions.

Yarak (2014) found that setting an organized plan and implementing it considered as a paramount, in order to improve the services that are offered in the ECEC program, and especially in the rural areas, that requires a special care and development. Furthermore, rehabilitation of kindergartens within existing spaces (no new building).

Developing the Education system is always important, and many countries are working on the school reform including Lebanon, in order to keep updated. Anyhow, (Yarak, 2014) states that the Lebanese curriculum witnessed three stages:

First, the curriculum is based on content and its core 'what do we know? The evaluation process aims to measure the student's abilities in recollecting knowledge in the classroom, and applying it in positions close to those that have been learned.

Second, the curriculum is based on educational objectives, which are based on a behavioural approach, after which the selection of objectives begins and then starts from their educational culture in view of the individual characteristics of the learners.

Third, building the curriculum based on an approach with efficiency. Educational systems have found that leading the development of a country must take into account the needs of

society, the needs of individuals, the cognitive, technological development, the theories of knowledge, and building without focusing solely on cognitive content. It is a trend in many educational systems to focus on the use of the knowledge that a student acquires in school in situations of daily life.

However, Yarak (2014) mentioned that the curriculum development is a continuous process. Hence, children can be enrolled in the ECE classrooms from three to five years old, and the development of the curriculum is necessary concerning many aspects. such as, developing the resources that are efficient for their development, and developing children socially and emotionally, through adding more creative activities, and by adding the play-based environment which can give more opportunities for kids to participate and get engaged positively. Additionally, the safe environment is one of the aspects to be developed, the fact that can have a positive impact on the children for future stages and prepare them for the higher grades in the public school with all its parts.

The Lebanese Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) realizes that training teachers is very important in order to keep them updated with the changes, especially the ECE educators who face many difficulties in the classes such as, autism, dyslexia and so on. Thus, proving the education curriculum with new methods of teaching that can respond to these challenges is important and recruiting trained teachers is a core solution for this. Moreover, creating the referral system is another solution that can help teachers follow the special cases and screen them in order to help experts interfere and help children overcome such learning difficulties. Furthermore, MEHE is working in parallel with parents through awareness sessions, and offering support for children who are suffering from health issues that can affect their learning process such as, vision or hearing problems and so on. This is important for parents who have no access for health care services especially that the medical system in Lebanon does not cover all people (Yarak, 2014).

However, Lebanon is facing currently the impact of the Syrian crisis, where 50% of the children who entered Lebanon are between 3 and 6 years old. This is affecting Lebanon due to the lack of the basic services, and the financial trouble that is already happening in Lebanon. That is why the government is trying to see more help from the international community through different NGOs (Yarak, 2014).

2.3 Child development in Early Childhood (Who cares for the children?).

According to Lokteff & Piercy (2012), the financial situations have changed in many countries, it is becoming for people to cover all expenditures in their life, and it became very necessary to stay at work even while children are in an early stage. Presently, 56% of females are employed in the countries that are participating in the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD 2005). This fact is affecting the single and two parents' families, and people are looking to find a way that can help them offer a good service for children, but they need to stay at work at the same time in order to provide the income that can cover their expenditures. Many countries have also suffered to come up with a policy that can help to cope with the various needs for children, and the families that are working. Anyway, the national approach concerning childcare is not only commanded by the requirements of the single parent families. Other factors that led to it such as, ideologies and the historical background. By observing childcare approaches from all over the world, it is obvious that countries respond to childcare in different ways, asking the question "Who cares for the children?" can show that the answers differ between one country and another due to financial, political and historical considerations for each country.

The general assembly of the United Nations, declared the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1989, a kind of a certificate or a legal document that was signed by 191 countries. A step forward, to help protecting children through getting their basic rights for a better life and to take advantage of their skills in the future. The CRC invited the nations that participated to help the families, in order to create a healthy environment for children and their development such as institutions, services and facilities that can be helpful for children (CRC, Article 18). Moreover, the CRC as well obliged the state to ensure childcare facilities for parents who have no job opportunities. However, the UN childcare arrangements have been identified as policies that support families to help children, considering the child rights as the core of the human right, countries are requested to come up and update systems that keep this support chain updated for parents and children (Lokteff, & Piercy, 2012)

Referring the work of Davis & Powel (2003), Lokteff & Piercy (2012) states, that the child development in early childhood requires a childcare policy, which can be defined by society's ethics. Many western countries and advanced communities keep on morals and habits of the traditional approach considering fathers as the jobholder and the mothers as the main safety

keepers of children. Furthermore, Lewis, (2008) states that the necessity and need to get more than one salary and the development of the single parent family have altered these duties within the same families in many modern nations. Thus, testing the programs that were put into use by countries in order to protect the child care, have led to observe the continuous overlap between old habits, and the logical need for child care access for families (Fagnani 2007; Lambert 2007; Lewis 2008; Murphy-Lawless 2000; Won & Pascall 2004).

However, the process of childcare can change between the policies that permit “time to care” against those that are backing “time to care” (Lewis, 2008). The policies of the “time to care” concentrate on helping parents by giving them leave time to look after children as the newborn or even kids who are adopted, meanwhile “time to work” approaches consider working families, mainly a working mother’s demand for out of home child care. Correspondingly, Leitner (2003) claimed that childcare approach could be considered as familialistic or defamiliarizing. Familialistic approach can be related to the process that helps the family as the care supporter. While, defamiliarizing approaches can be those that take into consideration “time to work”, or offer options to family care. However, the majority of defamiliarizing systems are identified as the ones in which the case offers child care facilities that are reachable and with suitable prices (Szelewa & Polakowski 2008).

Furthermore, on a global perspective, developing countries have created different childcare approaches according to anticipated demands and common ideological thoughts. Thus, explains the interplay between local ideology and childcare system by nation, adopting the classification of familialism (Lokteff & Piercy, 2012). Furthermore, most importantly, that both familialistic and defamiliarizing processes have been built out of the assumption that suitable childcare and access to early learning is important to reduce hardships such as, financial hardships. Ensuring suitable childcare to the vulnerable and single parents has been a paramount that many eastern and western countries have considered for about a century (Durst 2005; Kremer 2006; Ono 2009).

However, approaches around the world that raised from this foundation emphasized mother care as a perfect and endless to move the public childcare into the field of being an important evil for those who could not last in their houses with their children Lokteff & Piercy, (2012). Moreover, Belgium gives an example about how childcare approaches are important historically and currently, and tried to enhance life of children through early care and education (Kremer

2006; Vanderbroeck 2006). Belgium as an example of the country that believed in the power of learning. It helped us to understand more about the importance of this period of the life of children. Moreover, how the early education can be the engine that create the change, and build for a better future for those kids, especially the kids who suffer of civil wars and moved as immigrant to different countries Lokteff. & Piercy (2012).

Furthermore, as the international economy develop continuously in the 21 century. Then every nation should be ready to adapt for changes, and face these changes with suitable systems and approaches, to handle the increasing demands of children and families and contribute for the humanitarian right to access necessary services easily as they are their basic rights and especially concerning childcare. Motivating the childcare approaches that perfectly meet the demands of working families can promote the creativity of the future generation (Bogenschneider & Corbett (2010) as cited in Lokteff & Piercy 2012). Thus, everybody should have responsibility for children. It is not a duty of one nation, government or group of people, the importance of generalizing this concept is all about telling the world that all children, including refugee children have rights, and whenever they live, they should get these rights as basics.

2.3.1 A new attitude to Refugee Children based on new experiences.

Many circumstances happen to life and force people to change, during the changes people take time to settle down. Anyway, in cases such as war, people flee their homelands seeking peaceful places out of war zones, and they become refugees who form a group of people that have to adapt to new situations in a different country, this fact can affect many things in their lives. Thus, the new situations that led to these changes should be taken into consideration, because it can affect the development and wellbeing of refugees. Bronfenbrenner's ecological approach can show the theoretical plan, which can help to set a better understanding of the changes that happened for refugees after relocation. Being in a new background, which is different from theirs, and the impact that can occur to children who are considered as the most sensitive concerning development in an early stage (Anderson et al, 2004).

The various stages and experiences that happen within different levels of the life of refugee children, can affect the development of children from different aspects. Changes can happen during different experiences. The stage that come before migration, the second period that is

during the migration process (trans-migration). The third stage, which comes after migration and this, is the period where parents and their children settle down in a new environment and start the process of adaptation as well, in order to get used, and keep on in a new environment (Anderson et al, 2004).

As Bronfenbrenner, he created a system for each stage, which can be interconnecting all of them together, and these stages are the microsystem, the mesosystem, the exosystem, and the macrosystem (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). The first one denotes the liaison between two main factors, the person and the current place, such as the classroom when it comes for children as an example. On the other hand, the second phase indicates the connection that takes place in the individual settings such as the background and the school. Moving to the ecosystem that includes the connections that link the systems to create such a relationship, which does not require participation from the individual, as in the family's workplace and school. Eventually, the macrosystem that engage all the other relationships and denotes to a wider communication context that includes cultures, subcultures and other various systems with different assumptions and belief concepts (Anderson et al, 2004).

Despite the fact, that the concentration of the study is on the microsystem of the stage the follow the migration phase and more precisely within the school field. However, other sides within this phase (post-migration) as the housing and experiences that happened in former phases can all be taken into account to insure such an integrated vision concerning the development and the adjustment growth of the child. On the other hand, looking at a different theoretical context that has been put in use for the sake of this research, which in relation to Bronfenbrenner's ecological plan, can offer a wider awareness of the impact that can occur due to the migration waves on children. Thus, talking about traumatic cases that accompanied the pre migration process, and caused mental disorder and stressful attitudes that affected refugees and especially children (Eisenbruch, 1988; Frater-Mathieson, 2004; Gadeberg, 2017; Hamber, 2019; Kirmayer et al., 2011; Reed et al., 2012; Summerfield, 1999; Anderson et al., 2004.)

Watkins and Mortimore (1999), suggest that pedagogy is the process of professional implementation that is organized in order to support the learning process, in a way that can be suitable for the current academic environment which might vary according to the situation. It can also be recognized as the teaching process that takes into consideration the learners'

characteristics. Especially, children who need a flexible process that can cover their needs in a learning environment with different levels (Robin & Callan, 2009).

Moreover, the fundamental principle of ECEC pedagogy is based on the common activities and relationships between children themselves when they share knowledge and activity implementation, through proactive work and between children and adults from the other side which is important for their academic development as well (Siraj-Blatchford, 2008; Urban, 2008).

Based on these facts, pedagogy is referring to the technique that is formed based on personal thinking and experiences which is linked to the professional background that can drive this process (Ukkonen-Mikkola & Fonsén 2018).

Thus, the space of freedom is important for teachers to build on their academic skills in relation to personal experiences and their own thoughts, which can be suitable for such a scenario in a challenging environment such as the ECEC.

2.3.2 Trauma as an outcome of an ongoing military violence.

According to (Veronese, Pepe, Jaradah,, Al Muranak, & Hamdouna, 2017), a lot of researchers have described in their reports, that children who witnessed a continuous political violence are more expected to increase mental health problems. Especially posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), some of the common results of trauma in such cases are depression and somatic disorders (Attanayake et al., 2009, Dimitry, 2012).

Studies that were implemented in the middle east, have found that 50%-80% of children were diagnosed with post traumatic disorder, due to the ongoing war as in Palestine (Dyregrov, Gjestad, & Raundalen, 2002; Elbedour, Onwuegbuzie, Ghannam, Whitcome, & Hein, 2007).

Moreover, the harshness of the post-traumatic stress confusion is related to personal cases of traumatic situations. Psychological troubles can become worse, when it is associated with terrific situations such as wars, and individuals suffer more. As an example, a research by Lai, Hadi & Llabre (2014) that was about psychological impairment in parents and children after the wars concerning the Gulf crisis, this study showed various fields of distress between children after they have been exposed to traumatic cases, as the PTS, anxiety and depression signs. Furthermore, concentrating on the traumatic issues and the negative impact that can occur and happen to children because of it, can lead to a better understanding of these cases, and help to

find solutions to adapt to trauma, and enhance the ability to adapt and motivate development (Barber, 2013, Veronese & Castiglioni, 2015).

However, (Khamis, 2015) suggests that war trauma is identified because of intensively traumatic cases during the state of war. Anyway, the study adopted the APA (2000) interpretation of height trauma as immediately trying, witnessing or learning about situations that include definite or certain death or even inevitable damage, or even other risks that can seriously affect the person physically.

Furthermore, this concept of the traumatic war is derived from the experience from the Palestinian experience and children everyday life in such circumstances. Children who live in a place of a continuous and complicated war such as, Palestine are exposed for an endless and severe types of trauma that can affect all aspects of their lives, and let them face terrible consequences that affect their development as well (Nguyen-Gillham, Giacaman, Naser, & Boyce, 2008). More precisely, kids in Palestine are living in a very dangerous environment, where they face the continuous fight on a daily basis. The vulnerability of people is prominent financially which makes life unpredictable and political violence is another factor which makes it harder for children, in addition to the family issues as well which is another reason for severe trauma with children (Barber, McNeely, Olsen, Belli, & Dotty, 2016) (Guido et al, 2016).

Furthermore, this study revealed that Palestinian children who have good conditions and subjective wellbeing such as the life satisfaction, can face such traumatic problems and show less symptoms, as a respond to the traumatic cases that they face while being in a warmongering environment (Morina & von Collani, 2006, Ronen & Seeman, 2007; Schnurr, Lunney, Bovin, & Marx, 2009). Linking this to my own experience in the ECE classes of refugee children in Lebanon, I can see that relationship and the impact that safe learning environment within the classes on the children, who has been exposed for traumatic cases in Syria due to the war in their country. This is showing the importance of ECE period as well as a positive intervention and helpful tool for kids to maintain a positive development in education and life. Thus, ECE classrooms can be a suitable response and a positive resource to move children from a traumatic case to a better life in such cases, as refugee or any other immigrant case all over the world.

2.3.3 The role of teacher agency in refugee education

According to the United Nations Human Rights Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of people who left their homelands and moved to other countries as refugees, making the highest record since the beginning at 59.5 million (2015). Research shows that, the statistics are like a warning about the huge crisis that is affecting the whole world. The statistics indicate the duty of schools and teachers to face such a crisis and help children, especially since children will face many technical difficulties and be in a multicultural environment at schools, which makes it harder for them to develop academically. Australia is one of the countries where refugees are moving in large numbers and despite the fact that the education system is supported with policies and steps that help teachers and facilitators to behave accordingly, the attitudes concerning education of refugees can still vary between schools and individual educators sometimes (Miller et al, 2018).

Teacher agency is an important technique that can be helpful in supporting refugee students in their education. Teacher agency is the strength of the educator to be flexible and ready to act in different situations, and respond to the critical needs of students who face difficulties in classroom especially the refugee students who might have had traumatic cases (Biesta et al. 2015, 2017; Biesta & Tedder 2007; Pantić 2015; Priestley et al. 2012, 2015).

Moreover, teacher agency is necessary to support students in making the learning process easier, encourage academic growth, and participate in the learning and development of curriculum and learning process in schools (Toom et al, 2015). Furthermore, the role of teacher agency concerning the teachers offer for refugee students who belong to a refugee status is still under supervision regarding its development, effectiveness, and this still requires further inspection (Rose, 2019).

The focus on schools and especially the leaders who are taking decisions in education systems to keep on providing suitable services, teacher agency and the duties of educators are becoming highly important concerning refugee education, since the numbers of refugees are increasing which put teachers in front of a big responsibility. The role of teacher agency is very critical in the learning process of refugee students, whether as an individual teacher or a group or teachers all together, this role is very important and without the teacher agency, the refugee students lose a big opportunity of development.

However, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) provided an ample explanation of agency, it is not just considered as the ability of teachers to respond, but it is the ability to reach the needs in a challenging environment. To Emirbayer & Mische, agency is an active process of social engagement; it is the connection between the past and future. The experiences that motivate teacher agency in the present (Emirbayer & Mische 1998). Emirbayer & Mische (1998) suggests that agency is an active process of three directions: iterative in which teachers can make decisions based on previous experiences, projective in which they can make decisions based on future anticipations, and practical-evaluative through which the decision can be made in the present, from different aspects to answer the current needs (Rose, 2019).

Based on this, the teacher agency is recognized as the ability of the teacher to perfectly behave and take decisions that can be suitable for the work environment (Biesta et al. 2015, 2017; Biesta and Tedder 2007; Pantić 2015; Priestley et al. 2012, 2015; Robinson 2012). Talking about the capacity of teacher means that skills and qualifications, and the ability to handle tough scenarios based on experiences, an educator may not own the suitable capacity; rather their agency is a developing case of the ecological situations in which it is achieved (Priestley et al. 2015).

Furthermore, a teacher may be in school armed with enough skills and talent, but there might be some challenges that affect their agency such as the general process that might differ one school from another, or the type of teaching based on the students and their background. Their performance can also be affected by external and internal factors as well such the school leadership (Biesta et al. 2015).

Additionally, in order to have a better understanding of teacher agency, Emirbayer and Mische (1998) describe it as a collaborative process that is related to school approaches and teachers' performance. More precisely, (Biesta et al. 2015) developed practical-evaluative elements concerning three aspects: The cultural element that includes belief, thoughts and the language factor. The structural element concerning the importance of relationships in the social concept, duties and the authority and trust. The third element, which is about material, in which physical environment and resources included. Thus, going through these elements is helpful to understand the role of leaders in schools concerning refugee students and their response to such an emergency case, particularly their crucial role while forming the structure of the curriculum and their contributions in the new methodologies as an answer for the current needs in the field.

However, implementing this concept in the academic field that is represented by schools with refugee students. The belief and roles of teachers concerning refugee students (cultural element), and the duty of the teacher is always important. They are the core point when it comes to the real implementation even if they are not in the leadership spot, which represent the cultural element, the resources, and materials are playing a major role as well. The availability of the suitable materials is considered as a major factor that affect and motivate both children and teacher agency and, in this way, opening the gate for the development of refugee students and creating an environment with less challenges. Creating a safe educational environment is not only about the teacher agency, it is a complete network that requires leaders, teachers and students to cooperate together to achieve success and real education (Rose, 2019.). who might have had traumatic cases (Biesta et al. 2015, 2017; Biesta & Tedder 2007; Pantić 2015; Priestley et al. 2012, 2015).

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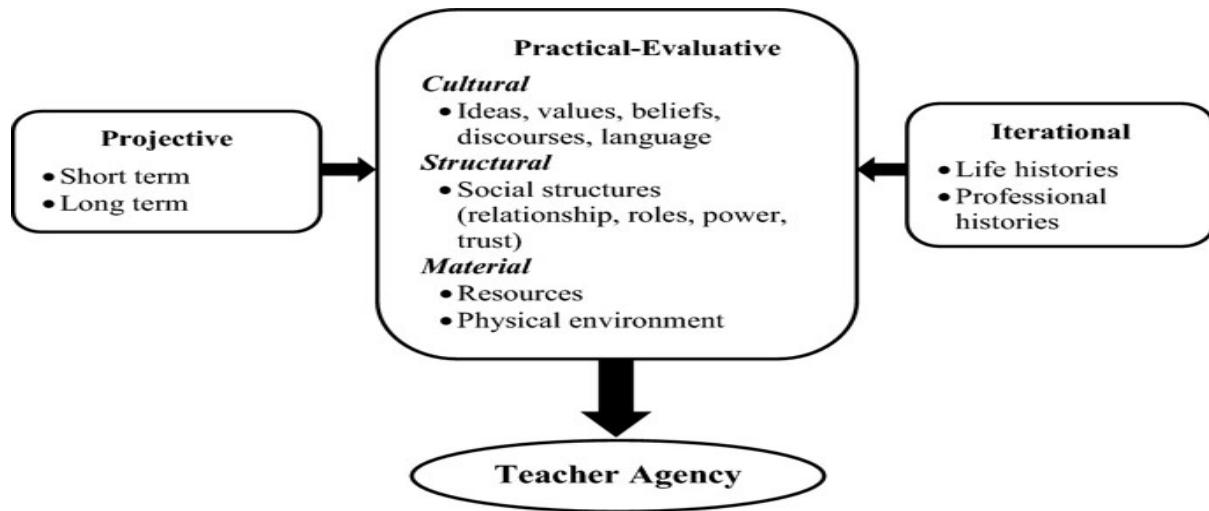
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agency and, in this way, opening the gate for the development of refugee students and creating an environment with less challenges. Creating a safe educational environment is not only about the teacher agency, it is a complete network that requires leaders, teachers and students to cooperate together to achieve success and real education (Rose, 2019.).



Picture 1. Model for understanding the achievement of agency as proposed by, and adapted from, Biesta et al. (2015).

In addition to that, based on what I have read concerning the importance of teacher agency in this research. I can relate it to my previous experience with refugee students in Lebanon, where children are the main goal of development, and it was clear that the successful experience required a group effort between leaders, teachers and refugee students along with parents who were a part of the success achieved. It is always important to respect the agency of every factor in any project, especially when it comes to education where every detail can have a big impact overall development process, thus creativity is always welcome and creativity is in the core of agency and development.

3 Research Design

This part of the study introduces the aim and the research questions of the study, the background of data collection, and the participants with whom interviews were conducted, in addition to the method, quality, analysis of the research and the ethical consideration.

3.1 Aim and research questions

The overall goal of this research is to examine the integration process of refugee students into the Lebanese curriculum through the early childhood education care. The two research questions discussed are:

- RQ 1: How are the ECEC classes of refugee children organized?
- RQ 2: Challenges and success of ECEC program for refugee children?
- RQ 3: What are the ECEC teachers experiences of the integration process of refugee children?

The process of the research involves some international perspectives that are related to the main points of the study, which is integration of refugee children in the education system. The research focuses on the integration process of refugee children in the Lebanese curriculum based on teachers' perspectives. The training of teachers was considered as the main point that helps children through the best practices of the curriculum. The ECEC program itself is a tool and a plan, which is contributing to the learning development of children and thus, their integration. The process of data collection is explained in detail in the next section.

3.2 Methods

In the current section, I will go further into a discussion about the methods that I practiced concerning the current research, which is the qualitative research method. I will start this part of the research by explaining the options of the time and place of where and when the data survey

were practiced, and by explaining as well the instructions that were followed in order to meet the participants in a suitable time that can suit them in order to get the best results from the interviews.

Moreover, I will talk about the participants who are the teachers, that participated in the study and helped me understand and analyse the results of my qualitative research. Then, I will discuss the data collection process particularly, which was conducted in cooperation with the teachers who participated in the interviews.

Furthermore, I will describe data, based on the mechanism that is followed for the qualitative research. In addition to the analysis, which is designed based on the related literature review, that can be compared to the teachers interviews and some personal experiences in my previous job as an early childhood education officer.

In the following parts, I will give more information about the population of refugees and more precisely about the children who are the essence of the study, and who are considered the target for teachers during the learning cycle where teachers had been in direct contact with them seeking development and success in the project. However, I will also summarize the profiles of teachers who participated in the research, and explain the steps that were followed to interview them especially that they are working which created some challenges to find the suitable time and place. Then, I will describe the mechanism used to explain and interpret data. In the end, I will talk about the importance of the ethical aspects, which I believe are followed and respected during my study process.

3.3 Qualitative research process

This study is based on the qualitative research process. According to Fossey, Harvey, McDermott, Davidson (2002) Qualitative research methods mean to discuss questions that are related to developing and having deeper insight about people's interactions and social activities. In any research process, understanding the concept "paradigm" explains a chain of notions, or global understanding, by a number of scholars who are developing knowledge about a particular issue. It suggests research process and policy for experiences that are shared, those scholars can even easily collect them, but the results can be effective and lead to new views about the development of such issues especially in education. Going through paradigms, it is important to

mention three types of paradigms in qualitative research that they produce different ways of seeing the cases based on researchers, this includes selecting various attitudes to mentor and estimate the case that is being under supervision. The first method within the qualitative research is the scientific method, which is connected to the natural science; it is derived from an empirical-analytical approach based on a philosophical state denoted to as positivism. The scientific process depends on deductive logic, which is mixed with direct inspections in the field and empirical experiences, in order to infer accurate explanation about the phenomena that is being discussed.

Another type is the interpretive research process, which focuses on recognizing and taking into consideration the effect of human background and activities. The critical research method, is another strategy within the qualitative method. It is a paradigm that allows me to understand the insights about the world, and the effect that can occur on it through historical and societal concepts and general restrictions (Elie et al., 2002).

Nonetheless, I will use the interpretive paradigm in my study. Thus, I can analyse the data based on teachers' perspectives, and taking into account the different studies that talked about ECEC for refugee students.

Moreover, any research should follow an organized process. The qualitative research should follow a well-organized, strict process to the plan, practicality of the research, the data collection and interpretation of information, and the analysis and reporting of results. In order to get the best results, the researcher should make sure to stick to the assessment procedure, and should be persistent with the philosophical paradigm, and not only depending on a precise method or process on its own. Qualitative research takes into consideration the participants with whom the interviews are conducted as a paramount and a key to success in the research process. Thus, getting correct and accurate view from participants is the main point. Moreover, it is necessary to create a strong relationship between the interviewer and interviewee, and be open for transparent discussion taking into account the neutrality of the researcher, who should not blame or show any feelings that might be offensive for any of the participants (Elie et al., 2002).

However, I used the qualitative in my study, taking into consideration the limits that make teachers feel comfortable. I set a plan that includes the timing which is suitable for teachers. Additionally, I provided them with all information that they need in order to understand the

process with all its details, and I told them that everything in the process is going to be confidential, their names, locations and any other related personal issues.

Furthermore, qualitative research is all about getting information from participants that can be exactly describing the situation and being transparent and out of personal biases, the questions can be defined as purposive which is guiding to a particular point, and aim to explore a decided case in order to get the best analysis. Furthermore, the research procedure might include a small number of interviewees, but it might contain a large amount of information throughout the process (Elie et al., 2002). Thus, I was neutral, and allowed teachers to freely describe their opinions and feelings without any intervention. In this way, teachers were encouraged by these facts to participate and express their feelings and perspectives about the ECEC programs.

Qualitative research means to have a clear idea about participants' ideas and opinions about their lives concerning the case study that is leading to completing the research. Thus, analysing the qualitative data is about explaining and reviewing participants' answers, and point of views to get a deep understanding about the phenomena in a systematic way (Elie et al, 2002).

However, this process, which might seem complicated, is meant to give an accurate understanding, and to develop the meaning based on many aspects within the experience such as, the participants' views or even the methods that are used. Thus, developing knowledge that can build for positive consequences in the future (Elie et al, 2002).

3.4 Research Process and Background

The data collection was conducted during January 2020 in the Northern area, which is located to the north of Lebanon, this area, is hosting the biggest number of refugees in Lebanon compared to another area because it is located on the Lebanese-Syrian borders. However, this area in the north of Lebanon is divided into villages, and the focus of my study was in some villages of the region, where the data was collected with teachers who have been volunteering with NGOs in order to run the education programs that were provided by these NGOs.

According to the (UNHCR, 2019), after eight years in the Syrian crisis, a lot of people left their homeland seeking safe places for them, and they became refugees. Lebanon is considered as the country that is hosting the highest number of refugees per capita. About 950,000 Syrian

refugees are recorded on the lists of UNHCR in Lebanon, despite the fact that the Lebanese government is talking about a different number, which is about 1.5 million. This means that some refugees entered the country through illegal ways and did not register with UNHCR. In addition to that, Lebanon hosts other refugees from Iraq (18,000 refugees), from Sudan (1941 refugees), and from other nationalities about (1996 refugees). The data was collected in the Northern area, because it is reachable and full of Early Childhood Education learning centres. The teachers have been working in these centres for at least two years, which means that they have witnessed two learning cycles each with refugee children in the International Refugee Committee (IRC), which is mainly working in the north area offering education services for refugees to help in development of displaced community represented by refugees.

The data collection process was decided while taking into consideration important details that can add more accuracy to the research. Teachers are all experienced in the Early Childhood Education for refugee students, which means that they have been through the process, and they have witnessed the challenges and success throughout the process. The interviews were conducted with teachers at the time of their choosing, in order to let them feel that they are ready and give me enough information to allow me analyse the little details. Additionally, the privacy issue was mentioned as a part of the research, so teachers were able to feel more comfortable and their identities are hidden for safety reasons.

For the sake of getting a profound understanding of the educators' perspectives about the integration process of children, through the different learning activities that are implemented in the curriculum, interviews were organized with educators who have been teaching refugee children in Early Childhood Classrooms at the International Rescue Committee (IRC) in the north of Lebanon in February 2020.

The teachers were requested to answer the questions below:

- Do you have any previous experience in teaching refugee children?
- How many years have you been teaching? (General experience not only the current experience)
- Do you have challenges in teaching refugee students? How do you cope with that?
- If you are provided with training by the organization, what were the aspects that the training supported you in? answer can be about (Social emotional learning, classroom management, language and Math skills)

- To what extent do you think that being a refugee can affect the learning process of the child?
- What are the changes that happened to children at the end of the learning cycle?

The interview process was challenging because the teachers were all busy at work, but I was able to do it in the end. Another challenge was that teachers were not encouraged to give answers, because they thought that everyone could obtain the answers easily through videos and articles. As a result, we aimed to make it a more objective meeting to let them feel that they are at the centre of the interview.

3.5 Participants

The ten teachers of the Early Childhood Classes who participated in the interview were all females, and they have worked with refugee students for at least two years at the time of the interview. As part of the ethical considerations of the study, it is necessary to keep the identity of teachers unknown, for this reason, I have kept their names and anything related to them hidden by using fake names (which follow) instead of real names. Yara had been teaching for about seven years, including two years with refugee students in ECE classrooms. Carla, Reina and Wafaa had been teaching for almost four years each, two out of four years were in ECE classrooms for each one of them with refugee students. Sara, Hanaa and Rouba had been teaching for three years each, and each of them had one-year experience in ECE classrooms with refugee students. Additionally, the rest of the teachers Malak, Ghina and Suzan had been teaching for 10 years in different places with different schools. Each teacher had 3 years of experience with ECE classrooms as well as refugee students.

The teachers who participated in the study were not only educators. Some of them have had other experiences, and not all of them studied education as a profession. For instance, Yara had a bachelor's degree in Economics and she worked as a social worker as well. This is because, in Lebanon, the Education system allows people to join in the teaching profession with any bachelor's degree even if it is not related to the teaching field. Yara said that she received some training with different institutions and NGOs about teaching and refugee students in order to have the skills to be in a challenging environment such as the ECE classrooms for refugee

students. Another example is Warda, who is working currently as a teacher in ECE classrooms of refugee students, despite the fact that she does *not* have the qualification to be a preschool teacher yet she has a master's degree in Business Administration. She did, however, mention that she has been to many training sessions about Early Childhood Education that gave her skills and knowledge about the field in addition to the continuous training with the current NGO that is helping refugees in Lebanon.

Moreover, Carla who had been teaching for 4 years and has no qualification or a bachelor's degree in any field besides her high school education. Nonetheless, she has been teaching in an informal day care centres in different places in Lebanon, and then she applied for a job opportunity in this NGO where she got a chance to be an ECE teacher for refugee students. Now, she has been an ECE teacher for a year, and she stated that being an ECE teacher especially with refugee students requires actual experience through the real interaction with such students in addition to the training that can be offered by specialists, through which teachers can deal with challenging cases. This is very common and NGOs consider those able to continue help refugees in such educational centres.

However, I will use my own experience to support some ideas within this study. I worked as an ECE officer in the ECEC program in Lebanon for more than 2 years. The program was offered for refugee children. Besides, I had am experience in teaching refugee children in Lebanon for 3 years, and a three years' experience as an English teacher in different schools between Lebanon and Saudi Arabia. The following table shows teachers' divisions based on experience of ECE and years of experience (Table 1):

Table 1. Teachers and their experiences

Number of participants	Total years of experience as a Teacher	Years of experience as a teacher of Refugee Students.
10 Teachers	-Yara: 7 years -Carla, Reina and Wafaa: 4 years. -Sara, Hanaa and Rouba: 3 years.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 years in ECE of refugee students. • 2 years in ECE of refugee students. • 1 year in ECE of refugee

	-Malak, Ghina and Suzan: 10 years in total.	students. • 3 years in ECE of refugee students.
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3.6 Data Analysis

I analysed the data using qualitative content analysis. Content analysis is considered as one of the most important techniques that can help researchers to proceed in their studies in different aspects such as social studies. This technique means to interpret data in a typical topic, in order to reveal the meanings someone, a community or a culture attribute to them. However, communication, messages and even concepts may vary from such situation, individuals, properties or groups of people, in a way that they might deliver information about some things other than themselves; they admit some properties of their inventors or conveyors, and they have rational results for their senders, their responders and the organizations in which their thoughts embedded. However, by the time that most of the research are considering response or answers based on observation, interpreting such behaviors, finding the differences between individual features or even assessing social assumptions, content analysis goes beyond the direct noticeable physical means of communication, and focus on their symbolic signs to follow the antecedents, interact or recognize the results of such communication (Krippendorff, 1989).

In addition, Qualitative content analysis is a method that can be used by researchers to interpret data and get such results. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) suggests that there are three different approaches within the qualitative content analysis.

In my thesis, I have used a directed content analysis approach, which I felt that it is helpful within the process. Potter & Levine-Donnerstein (1999) refers to the main goal of the directed content analysis approach, which is to make use or to broaden conceptually a theoretical scope of such case or theory. The theory which is available can give the researcher a bigger chance to concentrate on the questions of the study. This approach can support as well the anticipations about the changes that might take place within the interest, or the connections that happen between these variations. Thus, it helps to decide the original coding mechanism or relationship between these codes. This has been classified as a deductive group case by (Mayring, 2000).

Moreover, according to (Hickey & Kipping, 1996) the directed approach is simply led by a well-organized process than in any other approach such as the conventional approach. In this theory, it is common the researchers use theories and previous researchers, they start by introducing the main points or the occurring changes as initial coding categories (Potter & Levine-Donnerstein, 1999).

However, the definitions that are happening are based on each case within the theory. In addition, if the interview questions were collected prior to the process, an open-ended question can be used, and they can be followed by directed questions that can help to get them into the main point which is targeted through the process (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

Nonetheless, this approach helps me throughout the research process, using the open-ended questions helped me to give more flexibility for my participants, and they were able to feel the autonomy of freedom to answer. Moreover, following a directed process as well, help me to keep tracking the findings and compare them to other related issues within the research.

Moreover, according to (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), content analysis is a common process that is used in qualitative research to find out results about a specific study. Instead of being a single method, content analysis shows that it can stand for three different approaches within the qualitative research. These approaches are meant to analyses the meaning from the original data, and stick to the naturalistic paradigm.

During my research process, I have used the content analysis mechanism based on the steps that are mentioned by Krippendorff. However, (Krippendorff, 1989) suggest six steps that form the content analysis process. Design phase can be considered as the first stage in which the researchers can clearly define their context, what they seek, and the information that they need to know but are not able to find out by implementing a simple observation or reading. This phase gives the opportunity to recognize the origins of related data that might be available, and admit an interpretation model that customizes the knowledge available in relationship with the context.

The second stage in the content analysis is the unitizing. It is considered as the stage of defining and broadly recognizing the units of analysis in the volume of the data that is being in use. Sampling units within this phase makes it very obvious because it is extracting the information that is useful for the research process and leads to better results. In addition, Sampling phase is an important stage that helps the researcher to avoid biases that can occur in the majority of the symbolic material analyzed. It is important to help to make sure that the

conditional hierarchy of selected sampling units turns to be representative of the organization of the symbolic case that is put under assessment (Krippendorff, 1989).

The approaches of content analysis are classified as coding schemes, origins of codes, and threats to trustworthiness. Coding categories are denoting the ideas that are directly extracted from the original data. In the origins of codes, the analysis occurs based on a theory, or related findings that are concerned with the approach. In addition, researchers define analytic mechanisms that are related to each approach that are denoting trustworthiness, based on hypothetical examples that are extracted from the area of end of life care.

Coding is a main point within content analysis, it can help to tell more about the recording unit and categorize them, based on the classification that is chosen by the analyst. This step can be implemented by the following clear instructions that are set to human coders or even by computer coding. Human coders prefer to be not realistic but they are good and mostly accurate while interpreting semantically from a typical contact. Nonetheless, drawing inference is the most important phase within content analysis. Drawing inferences denote the stable information about how the different opinions through the study of coded data, are still related to the same phenomenon that the analyst needs to know about. Validation is another step within the content analysis, which is an important technique that can be used to infer and find out about what cannot be observed immediately and for which the validating proof is not clear (Krippendorff, 1989).

The content analysis research process is presented in figure 1.

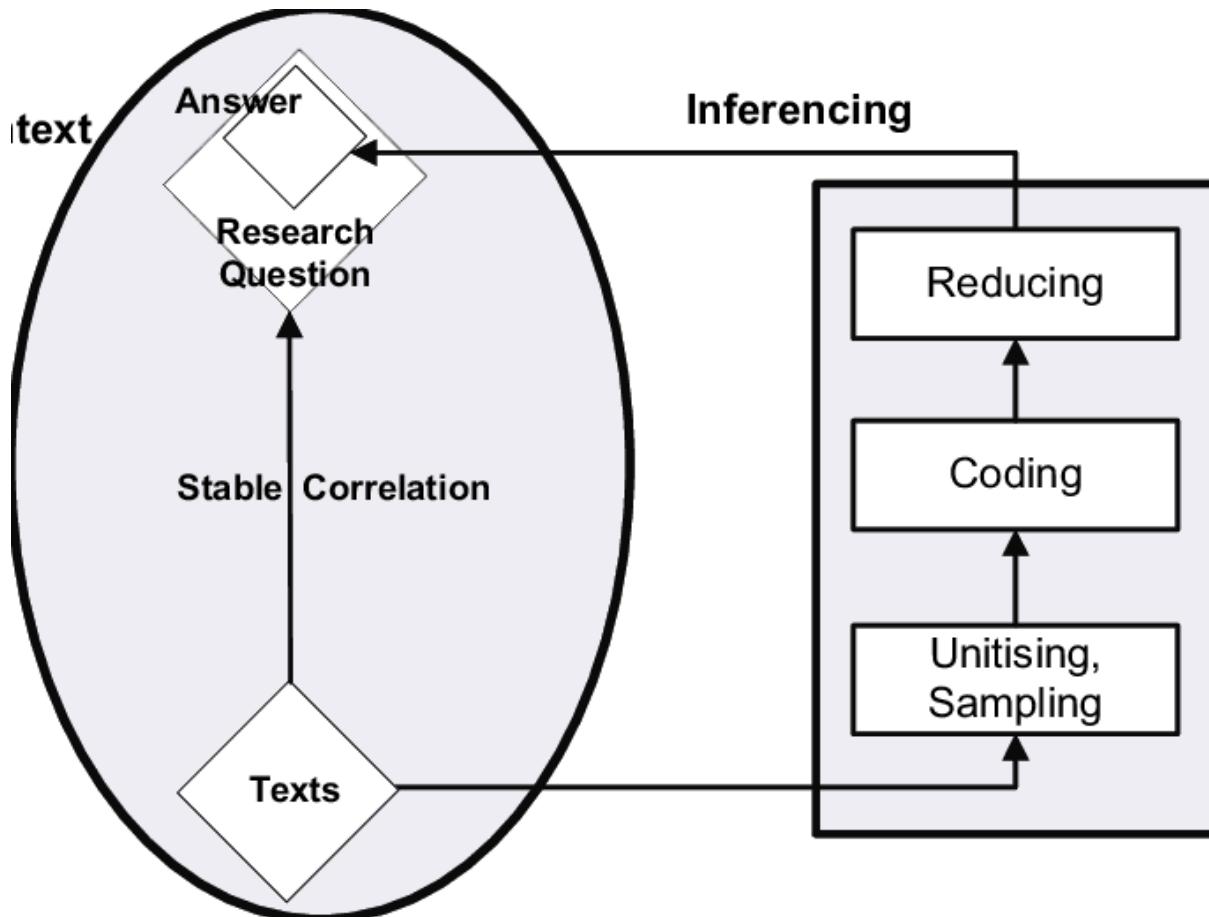


Figure 1. (content analysis) The content analysis research process. Diagram by Klaus Krippendorff (1989).

The procedure of the data collection and analysis started during January 2020 and the process continued until about the mid of February 2020. In order to get advantage of every single piece of information, I started writing diaries on a daily basis. These diaries included information about the data collection, personal issues; notes related to articles that I used to read. Diaries were necessary to analyse the interviews, especially that I was explaining every interview separately once I finish the interview with the participant, thus, I was able to have more time for data interpretation and saving time as well to discuss them, and build on them concerning the data and articles to discussed during the process.

Moreover, it is very common that during the thesis process that the researcher can be extremely busy, and some information can be easily missed and thus losing quality within the

study, writing the diary can be the solution to be organized, and include all data needed accordingly for analysis.

However, spending about a month collecting data, I was always trying to transcribe data immediately in order to avoid losing the quality of content and be as authentic and accurate as can be. Transcribing the data is the fundamental point during the research process, in order to get the results and be familiarized with the real situation of the study, it takes time to collect it depending on the requirements and the environment and even the way that participants respond and offer availability. It is the process that can add a well deep understanding of theories about the case study and theories about the study case, thus a new resource according to the new updates, through emerging the old and new in a new platform (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

The process of transcribing the data was manually implemented, participants gave me the chance to get their voices recorded, thus I was able to listen to the voice notes many times and be accurate about data, reviewing that voice note was technically helpful for me to proceed in the process and have the chance to organize ideas. These transcripts included the speeches of all participants, the interviewers and the interviewees with all details such as jokes or any other related discussion as well (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

On the other side, gesture and body movements of the participants have not been mentioned in the study. The participants used the Arabic language, but it was a Lebanese Dialect, which means that it is not the formal Arabic, which can make it harder for some people to understand. For this reason, during the process of transcribing and transferring the excerpts I meant to use a formal Arabic language in order to make it clearer, and the excerpts were transcribed in a way that can make the sentences focusing on the main points of the research, not too long and not very short so they keep the original content. Anyway, as agreed with the participants concerning the safety of data and personal identity, the whole documents and voice notes were all saved on my laptop, in order to be destroyed after publishing the research, and all data and the information recorded were kept as unknown files.

The work on the transcription was flexible because I was doing that on a daily basis instead of waiting to collect them, which makes it easier and faster. Thus, analysing data was going in parallel with the data collection process, thus, I was able to work on this process starting from the mid-January.

However, Braun and Clark (2006) suggests, that in order to be strongly engaged with the data through the research process. It is important to be proactively reading, which means using the reading and researching in a way that can be related, and can serve the goal of the research, and in this way reading and re-reading can help to have a profound understanding for the meanings. After getting carefully and thoroughly within the transcripts, the context of the study was split into interpretation units that are like a full phrase or even a full paragraph. The excerpts that were derived from the transcripts were then characterized with one or more than one word or one-phrase codes which were describing the content of the appropriate meaning parts in English, this technique was made for me as a personal initiative to help me go further and connect information and data for the study (Table 1). The word program was used in order to combine data in a table, which can categorize them based on the code and the text. This technique helped me recognize many codes within the study, as some of them were pretty related and connected.

Table 2 Initial Interpretation-code Task

No	Text	Code	Teachers
Not defined	In fact, because children have no access to free play spaces at home that allow them enjoy their hobbies, it is challenging for teachers to deal with them. For this reason, teachers should have some skills to cope with these challenges	Challenges/ children do not have space at home to enjoy their hobbies/ challenging to keep them calm in the classroom.	3

Furthermore, moving onto the next part of these codes in order to classify them in a wider division. Braun and Clarke (2006) refers to this stage that includes ideas mechanism on behalf of the researcher concerning the relationship that might be available within codes, themes and various positions of themes. This stage was necessary for the process, and it was a challenging mechanism. Due to the huge amount of data analysis, and explanation that the author should be taking into account.

On the other hand, it was not easily or simply determined concerning the final division. In the beginning, I took the initiative to classify these codes according to the themes that they belong to, based on the interview excerpt and by checking as well the eligibility of every code in which it can be related to a specific category. Then, as I was moving in the process, it was important to focus more on the research questions and the categories that these codes can be classified under themes.

Table 3 Categorization of codes

Difficulties and Barriers			
Experiences of students and attitude	Support Chain	Work Experiences of Teachers	Other
Challenges/ Social interaction/ Personal attitude/hyperactive	Not prepared to coordinate	Completely new experience/ lack of adequate training.	Cultural barriers/ Parents are not included in the process.

Additionally, I found that it is helpful for the process to keep the balance between the themes derived from the data, and the scope of these themes concerning the research questions. However, I suggested that the basic categories should be decided according to the research questions, meanwhile the subcategories can be recognized according to the themes that developed from the data. That can help us to infer that some codes should have to be omitted from the final interpretation, and this decision was taken for the benefit of the research, in order to keep the quality and transparency and avoid leading the research out of the main research goals. The categorization procedure occurred in every interview with every teacher, in order to assess each code carefully and have a deep understanding concerning the research main goals. Eventually, the main categories that have been generated throughout the process will be discussed carefully in the Finding part.

3.8 Ethical Considerations

According to Atkins & Wallace (2012), an ethical consideration is a moral and authentic attitude. It is very necessary in any educational study, considering the ethical aspects not only decided or related to one part of the research, but instead of that, it should start from the initial points where the researcher starts to think about the topic until the end where the researcher publish the finding and results.

Additionally, the qualitative research concentrates on three main aspects: First, language as a mean of communication, which can help to convey knowledge and build communication in a social group. Second, concerning such a study explanation and analysis concerning abstract meanings that are related to such a concept or study. Third, the theory building which is built on exploring patterns and relations within qualitative data. Moreover, Interpretation and analysing in data should be carefully transcribed into texts that can explain based on a systematic process within the qualitative research process. The quality and morals during the research are also related and considered as main points for successful research. It can give accuracy of information and safety of participants (Elie et al, 2002).

Moreover, the discussion included very critical information; teachers were talking about many aspects, and did not interrupt them in order to concentrate on the most important answers for the research. For example, they provided me with answers related to the learning activities in the classes, such as the social emotional learning, the math activities, language acquisition, the challenges that they face as teachers of refugee children and the impact of training on their performance in the classes. Additionally, the organization of the International Rescue Committee provided me with the results of last year that are describing the number of students who improved in the learning process.

In a research of mine, the data was always collected taking into consideration the ethical aspects with all details, in a way that keeps the participants comfortable and safe to avoid any harm that might happen to them as a result for their contribution to the study. In order to get the consent for my interviews, I had to follow a complicated process with different people in different positions in order to be on the right path. I contacted my thesis supervisor in order to

get an approval for the data collection, which is going to be collected in Lebanon by my former colleagues, who are working in the same NGO, where the data should be gathered. Thus, that they have the experience to be technically getting the accurate data according to the questions that were prepared by me, and then I contacted the education officer, who is in charge of the teachers who are going to participate in the research, in order to allow them to participate and share their experience without any expected troubles. After that, I started to contact the teachers in order to sign up the documents and explain to them some points and concerns that they needed to know more about.

However, because I was already working with the same NGO, I had the chance to have meetings with the teachers as well through Skype as a way to share with them the goal of my research and get them familiar with the process and the same with officers in charge as well. The meetings that I had previously before the beginning of the research process with my former colleagues allowed me to broaden my thinking and get to know the topic of my research. Additionally, it was a chance for me to build the questions, start to narrow down the ideas in a way that can serve the goal of the study. Thus, I was able to choose the participants who can serve the content and provide it with accurate and authentic information. This information made the process easier through the video call and continuous chatting instead of using emails.

However, the teachers that participated in the study did not participate in such a research process before. This makes the data collection a bit challenging, because they were concerned about the interview process in the beginning. After the discussions that occurred, we were able to sort it out, and they were motivated to answer and share their experiences especially after the confirmation from their supervisor, who made it easier by giving the permission and the consent as part of the study. Furthermore, the consent forms which are considered a major part of the study, were written in English, and then I translated them into Arabic for the sake of making the process easier and allow teachers to be comfortable and avoid language barriers. Participants were provided with information about the researcher and the University of Jyvaskyla official website in case they wanted to have a look and know more about the University, in addition to the contact information of the Supervisor, which was given to the officer in charge by Email.

On the other hand, an agreement was made concerning the time and place of the interviews. The agreement about the interviews took into consideration the availability of teachers and gave them an opportunity to select their possible time from a list in order to avoid overlapping with

their work or their private life. After the process of collecting the date for my qualitative research was completed, the results and everything related to the research as documents, consents and even recordings were saved in a private folder that cannot be shared with anyone in order to keep confidentiality for participants. Based on the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (2009), the whole information that were collected from the participants and recorded electronically or even written notes, as the voice notes, written notes or any other related information should be kept as unknown to avoid any trouble and keep the ethical consideration.

Moreover, I told the teachers who participated about the processing path through which the information will be used, and they have the opportunity to access the information in case they want to. Moreover, a clear message was delivered to them as well, that all the data and information will be kept in a confidential way until the submission is done and then all data will be destroyed. Based on their request, their names will not be shared in the research but instead fake names will be used, thus, I informed them that fake names would be used to refer to such cases or scenarios in the study.

4 Findings

I conducted the interviews taking into consideration important factors that can play a crucial role in the results and accuracy of the data. Most importantly, the participants are all educators who are participating in the teaching programs that are helping refugee students who came to Lebanon such as, Iraqi, Syrian and Palestinian. However, teachers have common and different points of views concerning the program and the way that children respond to it, the context of the findings will be discussing teachers' perspectives concerning many aspects that can affect the learning process of children and their possible integration in the Lebanese curriculum. Moreover, the citations selected in this part of the study were derived from the original scripts of the teachers and other excerpts are based on the oral discussion with the officer in charge Sami who is supervising over the teachers in the program, and they will be translated from Arabic into English by the author.

4.1 The organization of refugee children in ECEC classes

The Early Childhood Program of refugee students in Lebanon is conducted by the International Refugee Council (IRC), as a response to the humanitarian crisis which is taking place in Syria since the beginning of 2011 (The International Rescue Committee, 2018). However, during the discussion with Sami, I was able to understand more about the activity times based on the schedule.

According to Sami, the students should attend three days a week in the ECE classes, every day is 3.5 hours where they implement many activities such as, Math, Science, Art, Physical activity and Life skills sessions that support the social emotional learning of the children through open discussions. They start their day with beginning this in the morning part, which is taking place in the morning as an opening of the day. Moreover, Sami added that every class is prepared for about 25 students. The number of children registered in every center depend on the number of classes, which were designed to have all children of the area enrolled, but the attendance can vary depending on the parents' seriousness about the importance of education for their kids in this critical age, and this is what the IRC is working on. Children are in a continuous interaction

in the classrooms, they are allowed to have discussions and suggestions in the classes under the supervision of the teachers. Sara said that:

'the classes were provided with spacious places for each activity. Children were comfortable and happy in the part of the morning message, which is all about a free discussion between the teacher and the students. In this activity children have the chance to get some fruits as well and sit on a comfortable, colored chairs or even get rest on the ground which is covered with a rubber mat, so they can interact and share their stories, while the teacher directs their attitude from negative to positive'

Thus, affecting their behavior and supporting them with social skills that can develop their social and emotional learning process. Teachers have their own parts as well where they can be creative and depending on not only the lesson plan, but also they can change in the content in a way that can be more helpful for the kids, the fact that makes them feel comfortable and more prepared for any situation that might happen in the class.

The ECE classrooms were divided by age, the three years old are to be in grade one. The four years old for grade two and the five years old are to attend in grade three. Each class have their own activities that can be suitable for their age and skills. Nonetheless, there is a placement test through a specific tool for children who are newcomers, and want to enrol after the beginning of the cycle. For example, the children who are four years old, and want to be enrolled later on in the program, should happen to have the placement test. In order to decide, if they attend in grade two, which is the logical place for them, or in grade one, in case they do not meet the required skills. The placement test is not a matter of writing, but it depends on oral questions and some drawings for example to assess some skills such as the motor skills, or even the attitude of the kid and how to respond to such situations. On the other hand, teachers mentioned that dividing activities as different parts in a daily routine was helpful for children to recognize that there is a routine, and thus affect their attitude by creating a disciplinary behaviour as a response to the organization of activities. Sami added, that teachers receive weekly plans on a weekly basis that describe the activities and help them follow the curriculum, the weekly plans are describing all details, children start the day with a morning meeting in which they have a free discussion as a morning message as mentioned before, and this activity last for 20 minutes. Then, they start the language activity, which lasts for 30 minutes. This activity might include songs and different

methods to deliver language for children. The math activity lasts for 20 minutes, during this activity children are able to interact and work in groups. Moreover, children have the lunch break that lasts for 20 minutes where they can enjoy healthy food, and then they move to what is called the recreational activity for 30 minutes, and it can be a free choice for children to do what they prefer to do under supervision of teachers. In addition, they move later on to the writing activity, which lasts for 30 minutes where children develop some skills in a play-based environment. Eventually, children get back to the closing activity where they can discuss the day and they have the opportunity to suggest something for the future activities.

However, Ghina added that '*children enjoy these classes, especially that their parents do not have enough space for them to play and enjoy their times. Thus, the ECE classes offer them learning activities in a fully play based environment.*' Additionally, the idea that Ghina is talking about, can be related to the hard situations that refugees face in Lebanon, this described in the theoretical part. The part is describing that refugees face such hardships as, renewing their legal document, finding a job which make it hard for their kids to have education and even enough space at home to practice any of their hobbies (UNICEF, 2019)

However, based on the interviews, it seemed that the majority of teachers did not have an experience with refugee students before they work in this program. Additionally, some teachers do not have the qualifications to be in the teaching field, but they still can be teaching and work in schools whether if it is programs that belong to NGOs, or even the public schools. They just get training about the current field as in the case of teachers who work for IRC, which is providing them with training about different issues. Hanaa said:

"that teachers received many training during their work with refugee students in the ECE program such as, time and class management, language acquisition in early stages, gender-based violence, social emotional learning and many other sessions as emergency updates for them within the program in order to be perfectly implementing the plan."

Nonetheless, the idea of providing teachers with special training, is important. Hanaa, in the previous part mentioned that they receive training, in order to provide students with a good quality of teaching. This is important to maintain a high-quality ion such a challenging environment with refugee students, and this is proving the theoretical part which is talking about the importance of quality in ECE programs for refugee students. It is important that educators

who are interested in the ECEC programs to attend to training and recognize the best practices that can build of a quality in education withing ECEC (Penn, 2011).

Furthermore, the teachers started recently to conduct awareness sessions with parents, in order to let them know more about the importance of education during the Early Childhood Stage. Moreover, its impact on academic development of the kids, and especially in case of refugees who are living in a critical circumstances, and during these sessions, teachers get to know parents and let them feel they are a part of the program and the community which can affect their integration along with their kids in the future.

In relation to this, the comment of one of the teachers that was mentioned earlier in the finding is related to this part of the study, when Rouba said the following concerning the language skills development through the ECEC program:

“In the beginning of cycle, we had children who were not able to speak properly and it was hard for us to understand what they were saying. However, we used some techniques with them such as singing together and trying to speak some sentences in groups, and these techniques were part of what we learned in the training that were provided for us. By the end of the cycle, we were able to feel the difference. ECEC program gave our kids the chance to socialize and develop some skills such as speaking”.

However, the ECEC program can play a major role in the learning development of refugee children. Those kids have no safe spaces at home, because they live in small places as other refugees in the world. ECEC centres are considered as a valuable opportunity for refugee children to get engaged with their peers, develop their motor skills, and learn on a daily basis. Thus, it is the place where they prepare themselves for the future, whether integrating in the local education system where they live as refugees, or even back home. Hence more, this part that Rouba talked about in the result, can be truly related again to the theoretical ideas that are describing the quality in ECEC program. The quality that can lead to achieve inclusiveness for children through interaction with other children and teachers as well, and provide them with technical skills that are important for them in their academic and daily life (Penn, 2011).

4.2 Challenges and success of ECEC program for refugee children

The participants were asked about the challenges that they have seen in ECE classes while working with refugee students. Teachers referred to many challenges, some of the challenges are related to the students themselves, others are related to the parents and their relationships with the community and the learning centre which can be an obstacle for students' learning process. In some cases, teachers used negative terms to describe such challenges, while in some other cases; challenges were seen as something interesting. However, some teachers preferred to give some answers such as "*I found it hard*" referring to the whole program and the experience with refugee students, concepts such as "*hard*" and "*difficulties*" were used to denote to the hardships of this teaching environment. Moreover, teachers referred to some challenges related to the children themselves, such as the aggressive behaviour.

Nonetheless, Malak on similar issues commented, "*We have experienced bullying between children in the centre. Other children have been exposed to bullying in the streets from other children, based on their background as refugees. Thus, we lost some children due to these phenomena. Thus, the learning process was affected negative which led to such an impact on the integration process*"

Furthermore, teachers commented on a point as one of the challenges that is facing refugees and the hosting community, thus, affecting the learning of refugee children as a result. Suzan described the challenges that children faced, due to the huge number of refugees in Lebanon as a whole. In the North of Lebanon particularly saying the following:

"the hosting community is somehow jealous of the services that we receive as refugees".

Rouba said "*children used to start fighting in the classes, and if there is no reason for the fight. They feel that they need to be in an aggressive state, and it is hard to stop them*". In addition, she added, "*it is hard to engage them in the learning activities; thus, we need to keep on the rewarding strategy to motivate them to participate continuously*".

The challenges were not only with the children, but the teachers faced difficulties with children' parents. Ghina said "*One of the challenges that affected the learning environment was that parents who did not take the learning program seriously. Thus, they were not committed or serious about education, the fact that affect the learning process for children*". More precisely, during my own experience, I found out that parents in the northern of Lebanon, were not encouraged to end their children to learn. Due to the fact, that they working in the agriculture, and they usually take their children with them, in order to help them, and learn how to work in

this field in the future. They do not believe in education as they are supposed to be, which affect the learning process of their children.

One more challenge is related to the logistic side in the learning centres. Suzan said, “*Sometimes, I was not able to implement some of the learning activities due to the lack of specific materials. The NGO was not able to cover all the materials for the classes. In addition to the fact, that there are some difficulties to deliver the materials as well due to the long distances from the capital to the north of Lebanon, thus teachers need to always have a second plan in order to proceed*”.

Based on the interviews with the teachers, not all the teachers have a teaching qualification, some of them have a bachelor of economy, and others studied business administration. This fact: is making it challenging for teachers since it is not their field of education, to cope with students in such a hard environment. Thus, teachers need to be provided with training, it is very important for them because they even have challenges concerning the case that students are coming from different backgrounds with traumatic cases (According to Sami). Moreover, Rouba said, “*the NGO offered training about class and time management, and I have gained a lot of skills from the training, but the training gave me the power and control. I can go through my activities smoothly and taking into consideration the needs of the students that might differ from one student to another. I cannot ignore the impact of this training on me and even on the students, who became motivated concerning participation*”.

Malak commented on the importance of training, and based on her comments, she has experienced the training as a positive and supportive by saying “*the Social Emotional learning (SEL) training was one of the aspects that kept me in my position. It helped me to recognize feelings of students and manage their emotions in social settings. I believe that emotions can be used to meet the students' attentions and maintain engagement. SEL training was implemented by integrating its competencies into each lesson in order to develop students' learning and help them socialize, it gave me the ability to be more flexible with students*”

Thus, I believe that SEL training was crucial for teachers, because these skills are not included in the University programs in Lebanon. It is important for refugee children, to help them understand their feelings and understand the new environment through the active engagement with teachers and other children. SEL competences are helpful within the

integration process because it helps children acquire the social skills required for daily issues in schools and such.

Furthermore, Wafaa added “*training about Math, and Language skills were important. I was able to discover new techniques in teaching these subjects, where children tend to spend more time in fun activities and games, through the training all the teachers were able to recognize the concept of ‘the play based environment’, in which teachers can use new methods of teaching and new materials to implement activities*”. Nonetheless, as a former ECE officer in the programs. I have monitored math activities in many classes in different ECEC centres. I was an important part for children, through which they were able to understand math skills, and interact with this subject in order to integrate in the education system within further stage.

Moreover, based on what Wafaa said. I can add the following: Due to the fact that the Lebanese curriculum is based on the French language as a second language, and the language of main subjects as Math, science and others. Thus, providing refugee children with the basics of the foreign language as a part of the ECEC program, is necessary for the integration process. The majority of children’s parents are coming from Syria, and it is known that the French language is not used in the Syrian curriculum, which makes the ECEC programs as the only resource that helps children to acquire the language skills. Thus, children are provided with these skills, in order to proceed their academic career in future and be part of the education system in Lebanon.

On the other hand, Sami who is an officer in the program said, “*I used to be mentoring every teacher on a monthly basis, and I was able to see the improvement that happened to the teachers and their students. In the beginning of the program and before the training session. Teachers were not really controlling the classes, and not all children were engaged in the activities due to the lack of experience in this environment. I know that working with refugee students is challenging. Due to the fact that they have been victims to war along with their families*”.

The observation that Sami mentioned are necessary to keep teachers updated. However, I used to work as an ECE officer in Lebanon with ECEC program for refugee children. Thus, I can understand the idea of Sami about the observation. It is a crucial process through which teachers can see their performance based on the observation, and the observer can help them through updating them with suitable technical advice or training. This is important to improve their teaching methodologies and help children integrate in the ECEC program.

4.3. ECEC teachers' experiences within the integration process of refugee children

The learning process is always including some challenges for all children, even those who live a normal life and in their countries. However, according to the teachers who participated in the study, refugee children face more challenges because they live in a different community, with different culture and values.

However, Carla said, “*One of the major issues that face our refugee students is that their parents are all the time busy at work, in order to make sure that they can feed their families. In some families, both parents are working because life here is expensive. Thus, children lack an important part during their childhood, they only take life skills in the centre but no one at home is following up with them*”. Thus, during my experience in this field, I noticed the difference in learning development for children, based on their parents attitude with them, during my awareness sessions as education officer in the ECEC, I had the chance to talk to the parents, and some of them did not have time to sit with their children at home, the fact that affected their learning process due to the lack of such instructions and help from their parents, children did not even have the chance to talk to their parents sometimes. Thus, they missed understating the personal positive attitude which can providing by parents such as, behaving them and let them understand the community around them.

Additionally, Rouba said “*Parents repeatedly reported that there is some racism against them when they are walking their children to school, the fact that discourage parents and they tend to skip some days. The parents of children say that the hosting community is jealous that refugee students can get free education while they cannot have it, and this is making them aggressive with refugees sometimes and uncooperative*”.

Reine mentioned another challenge that children faced, and affected their learning process. She mentioned that, “*despite the fact that life is expensive in Lebanon, but there are some Lebanese who offer free accommodation for refugees, as a kind of help for few months, or even a period of time that can last for a year. This is one of the reasons that encourage refugees to from one city to another in the same country; this is affecting the learning process for children and causing some challenges for teachers as well. Last month, three children who started the cycle with me, left the centre and moved to another city*”.

Moreover, Hanaa added “*refugee student faces some psychological and social issues, due to the lack of friends in the community. Life is becoming harder for them, especially that racism is playing a role in this, and thus, some of the hosting families would not allow children to meet others whom refugees are taking into consideration some cultural differences. Another challenge for children is that the language barrier within the curriculum. The Lebanese curriculum follow the French language as a second language. However, we are trying in the centre to help the kids learn through the plan. They get support in the centre, but they don't receive any support at home from their parents*”.

Eventually, Suzan is highly concerned about the bullying cases in the classes. She added that, “*There is a dangerous case which is becoming serious lately, toward refugee children, which is 'bullying'. Bullying is becoming very common between children in this area. Their families are not cooperative to stop this phenomenon, as teachers we met some of the hosting families and tried to explain to them through awareness session the consequences of bullying on refugee children who are already troubled with traumatic cases due to the civil war that they have witnessed. Thus, it was an additional reason that push the parents of our students, to be afraid of sending their children to the learning centre if they are not with them, and since they work and they leave to their work early in the morning, some children do not have the opportunity to attend daily and miss many sessions*”.

The research process showed that teachers had the opportunity to evaluate students on a monthly basis. Through a technical tool which is provided by the NGO. This tool is including information about the social, math and language skills, in addition to the daily observation with classes during the implementation of the lesson plan, which can be conducted by teachers to cover other aspects such as the communication skills between children and the impact of the program as a whole on them. However, Rouba said, “*at the end of cycle, children showed that they have improved in different aspects, a lot of my students were able to count in Arabic and French till 100, and they were able to recognize letters in both languages as well. The aggressive behaviours that we used to see in classes were almost not available at the end of the cycle except for some behavioural issues due to the competitions that might take place in some activities but we were able to handle them*”

Ghina added, “*The social emotional learning helped the children to recognize their feelings, and know how to build positive relationship with others through respect. In addition to the*

communication skills developed, to enable them to have a broad connection with their peers and other children from the community. Parents mentioned that children are becoming less aggressive at home, and they are ready to accept orders from their parents more than before”

On the other side, Sami added, “*Children have witnessed a significant change, due to the continuous observation on a weekly basis. We were able to catch the development and update their parents who were aware to the learning development. In ECE classes, children are not required to write full sentences but to they are required to learn how differentiate letters and get to be involved with other children and teachers, to be able to start their formal education and move to the public school when they turn 6 years old. Furthermore, they are required to acquire social skills in order to be integrated with other kids on a later stage. One of the ECE program’s goals is to support refugee children, and help them to be integrated by providing them with social skills. In addition to other skills such as, the foreign language skills that is used in Lebanon*”.

This clarification by Sami, gave us more understanding about the crucial role of ECEC programs for refugee children, it proves again that this program is filling the gap for refugees and help them integrate not only in schools but in life. It can easily affect the attitude of children and their parents, by letting them feel that they have a place and a role to play in the future.

In addition to that, teachers talk about the language improvement of children. Besides, the language acquisition concerning letters and recognizing their shapes. The speaking language as well which was a bit not clearly spoken by some students. Rouba said “*In the beginning of cycle. We had children who were not able to speak properly and it was hard for us to understand what they were saying, but used some techniques with them such as singing together and trying to speak some sentences in groups, and these techniques were part of what we learned in the training that were provided for us. By the end of cycle, we were able to feel the difference with those children, they were able to speak properly and with confidence, even their parents were amazed by the results, and they said that ECEC program gave our kids the chance to socialize and develop some skills such as speaking*”.

The social emotional concept has been mentioned by teachers many times through the interview and even out of the main questions of the study. However, as mentioned before in the previous sections, at some points the attitude of refugee students may interrupt the learning process within the ECE classes. Teachers were mainly talking about this issue as a problematic

case which is related to children's social-emotional competences as explained by them. Teachers were asked to explain about the positive attitude, which is related to the social-emotional aspect, in addition to the challenging behaviours, which is creating difficulties in communication with them and based on social-emotional aspects as well. Nonetheless, the results varied from one teacher to another within different ECE classes in the same program.

Going through the interview process with teachers of ECE classes, there was a clear vision concerning children's attitude as a beginner in the learning centre, and their attitude at later stages where development occurred throughout the support that they received from their teachers. Some teachers classified their behaviours, starting from the beginning when they had a challenging attitude according to teachers, and moving to have a better behavioural attitude. Teachers repeated the concept "they hit each other a lot, they don't listen to us", and other teachers referred to a positive attitude that appeared in later stages. Ghina explained:

".....some of the children who used to be aggressive with their classmates have changed, they became much better and what makes me really happy about their attitude is that they are more open to listen to their friends, and share some foods with them sometimes".

Moreover, Ghina kept on describing further behaviours that explain the development that occur to children concerning social-emotional aspects "*Children learned by time how to recognize, and organize their emotions which affects their relationships with other. They became more engaged with the culture of the community which was explained indirectly into the program, and they became familiar with guidelines and rules in the school, and follow them easier than before*".

It is very important to understand that not all the behavioural issues that were mentioned are described, as they can be the same to all the children without exceptions. Sara talked as well about the social-emotional competences within the interview process. Other teachers preferred to talk about their students as a group that can have similar results. Sara talked about the students as individuals that can respond to the activities, and build some skills because of them, some would have problematic issues and others can show such improvement that can affect their social-emotional aspects, and thus affect their future and learning process at all. Sara said:

"... Children within classes have different attitudes; some of them show big improvements that can be reflected on their performance and attitude, and others who still show problematic issues that turn to be challenges for them in the future. Unfortunately, the students with negative

behaviour are suffering due to many reasons, and one of them can be the lack of caring by their parents at home which can affect their social-emotional competencies”

On the other hand, Hanaa added, “*Children in early childhood stage might feel that they are in a totally new environment, discovering new faces such as other kids, teachers, and even other people who can be included as mentors. Additionally, the idea that children have a routine to follow with teachers as well. Because, they used to deal with their parents at home, and now everything is new. Thus, I do not usually link the problematic issues to their background as refugees. Instead, we can help them through the social-emotional support that we offer as a part of the program*”.

During the analysis of data, and information interpretation based on the interviews with the teachers, to support the learning process of refugee children, and looking at the aspects that can affect their integration in the Lebanese curriculum for a later stage. Well-being was considered as an important issue in such a critical period of their lives. Participants on many occasions mentioned the implementation level of activities and the level of the program that is being conducted for the refugee children. Some of the teachers suggested ideas and further implementation related to the culture of refugees and best ways that can lead for a better integration into the Lebanese curriculum.

I was able to understand the reason behind the existence of the ECEC program for refugee children throughout the interviews process. However, the main goal of these classes was not only to provide refugee children with some academic technical skills as writing and reading, instead, the goal was to help them build communication skills that can help them get engaged in the adaptation process easily, help them feel comfortable and peaceful in new community through supporting their wellbeing. Thus, prepare them for further stages and integrate into the education system. Wafaa said:

“The concentration in our ECE classes is not on grammatical issues or learning about reading, as much as it is about developing communication skills of refugee students and improving their wellbeing through different activities in a play-based environment”.

A variety of techniques were used by teachers in order to create a healthy learning environment, that can help refugee students feel that they are welcome in these classes, teachers used to implement learning activities using arts and crafts that attract children and they can learn with games and music, this makes them happy about being in the classroom. Carla said “we

used to put children into groups, every group can have a table provided with the tools that they need, we were always preparing the activities beforehand in order to let them move smoothly into their groups and based on what they like, so we allow them to choose what they want, thus, they feel more comfortable”.

In addition to that, Rouba said, “*The autonomy of freedom such as, the variety of techniques in classes was one of the main factors in ECE classrooms that helped children to adapt and develop. Children had the opportunity to choose their own learning centres, when we are in the centre activities, and within the setting of every class. There are 4 learning centres for different goals, math, science, art and language centre, so children were free to choose what they would like to work*”.

Moreover, Sami added, “*Conducting awareness session with parents, as a part of the program. Furthermore, inviting parents to come to school as way to encourage them understand the learning process, and integrate them as well. this strategy helped the children as well to feel more comfortable, seeing their parents coming to school, and make them more confident and building for a positive relationship with the staff while getting to know them*”.

Suzan added, “*Seeing parents at school was encouraging for us. We were able to know from them the impact that occurred to children, parents were really cooperative and happy while talking to us, one of the parents told me that their child is able to differentiate between letters and his attitude is much better, and this was really nice to know that our effort is making those kids better*”. Thus, I was able to touch these facts during our meeting with children’ parents. This fact, helped teachers see their positive impact on children, which motivated them to give more and be creative. Thus, affecting the whole learning process.

5 Discussion

The current research aimed to discuss the integration of refugee children into the Lebanese education curriculum, using the ECEC centres as a tool that can fill the gap, and play the role of the integration space for refugee children and their parents. The main findings showed the critical role of ECEC centres through different technical activities that can develop their learning process such as, social emotional skills through open discussion and morning message, the math and science activities and language activities.

The unlimited number of refugees that started to enter Lebanon in 2011, has led specialists and people who make decisions about them, to raise some questions concerning the next step. The way that the Lebanese government would react to the crisis and the preparation that can be made to ensure that the different aspects of the integration of refugees will be covered. The first eight years of children's life are considered as the most important for them to develop their basic skills in many aspects such as cognitive, physical and socio-emotional aspects, that are necessary for their future and that build for a better functioning in later stages of life (UNICEF, 2012).

Moreover, Garcia, Pence and Evans (2008) discussed the importance of early childhood education. They mentioned that the attendance of children to these classes would have a great impact on their personalities and bring a positive influence on their academic achievement, and this helps to decrease the dropout level in schools as well. Thus, the early years of every child's life are considered as the fundamental contribution for children's academic performance in later stages (Essa 2013; Halle, Vick & Anderson 2010). My study tried to discuss early childhood education of refugee students, and the impact of it on their integration into the Lebanese education system, based on teachers' perspectives, through their daily experiences in classrooms, and the impact of the program on their academic performance and personal attitude.

However, based on the study process, it is undeniable that early childhood education is crucial for children to achieve integration. Shuayb et al, (2016) analysed the importance of education and schooling experience of Syrian refugee children in Germany and Lebanon. The study stated that children were exposed to some barriers concerning adaptation and being engaged into the educational system in these countries. Children of families that came as refugees were exposed to these challenges more than others. One of the barriers is the difficulties they face in order to

be enrolled in a quality, early childhood program in the hosting countries, which can easily affect the chances of sufficient academic development as well as affect their performance as individuals. In response to the difficulties of refugee children, interventions happened to refugee children who suffer from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Tyrer & Fazel 2014; Vostanis, 2016).

In addition to that, Bronfenbrenner (1979) suggested that the connection that is available within various systems could have an impact on the development process of children, and it can easily affect the integration of refugees in a new environment. Thus, many factors help create an impact on children. It is not only the educators or the instructions that they follow in the classrooms, but also the other factors that can indirectly affect them in the end. Obviously, the teachers' experiences that were transcribed throughout the interview process gives me a large amount of comments and opinions that were not similar about the ECEC classrooms.

The discussion gained insight from different teachers with various opinions about: The ECE program as a solution for refugee children to help them face some traumatic challenges through teaching techniques that teachers were trained on. The ECE program as a main factor for those children to integrate into the Lebanese curriculum, and achieve the development in this crucial period, which can lead to a better academic development in a later stage.

5.1 Refugees in Lebanon: Challenges and Integration.

The relations between Lebanon and Syria have been through some factors that made it significant. They have religious and community connection. There is a political division between those countries as well. This was one of the reasons that delayed the response to the Syrian crisis (Picard, 2016).

Interview process included discussion about this point, as another factor that playing a challenging role for refugee students.

On the other hand, wellbeing is a common concept that people talk about as a measurement for life satisfaction. Policy makers use it as well as a way to compare the quality of life and assess the social and economic intervention for various communities (Veenhoven, 2000; Young,

2001) which can measure happiness as a major point for life satisfaction, and life satisfaction is important as an indicator of the quality of life.

However, according to Farida & Silvia (2008) discrimination can easily affect people and create a low level of wellbeing, self-esteem and life satisfaction. Moreover, some studies recognized the impact of discrimination on migrants and refugees as a specific case. Researches by (Williams et al, 1997) and (Williams and Harris-Reid, 1999) suggested that Mexican Americans and Asian Americans in addition to Blacks suffered and were exposed for psychological issues because of discrimination. The study of (Liebkind's, 1996) of Vietnamese refugees in Finland, explored a connection between discrimination and stress symptoms, and the study of (Rumbaut's, 1995) which was conducted on a large number of refugee children in the USA, found a strong relation between depression and discrimination. Another study by (Werkuyten and Nekuee, 1999) of educated Iranian refugees in the Netherlands suggested that ethic issues, self-esteem, life satisfaction and discrimination are all related to each other as a chain that affect the integration concept in all life aspects.

Hence more, during my experience as an ECE officer, I have noticed the impact of bullying on refugee children. It is affecting their academic performance and engagement in the classes. Additionally, being in a state where the hosting community is not happy that they get free services, like the ECEC program and even the financial support is making it harder for them to live in such a community. The discrimination is common in some areas where refugees can be exposed for some challenges such as segregation. All these facts can still affect parents and even their children in schools which affect their integration process in the education system. Despite the fact that we used to have awareness session with them and the hosting community, and training teachers to have more skills that can help children, but all these techniques were not entirely helpful for refugees and their children.

Moreover, talking about the challenges such as bullying, which can easily affect the whole life of children including their academic process, is related to the solution that was offered in the theoretical part, through the role of teacher agency. The teacher agency is an important aspect, through which the teacher can act and plan accordingly in such a challenging learning environment (Rose, 2019). This part is proving the idea that participants discussed during the interview process, in which they focus on the importance of training and sharing experiences which can help motivate them and learn based on real experiences.

5.2 Lessons learned from the Finnish experience in the ECE.

Pedagogical work in early childhood education and care (ECEC) is becoming more demanding. Due to the complications that are taking place because of the different scenarios that are occurring, the political changes, and the new updates in order to respond to the current daily issues for children (Ukkonen-Mikkola & Fonsén, 2018).

Urban, (2008) suggests that educators should cover competencies such as social, educational and cultural aspects in order to deliver the content efficiently, ECEC is a crucial topic and is becoming an interesting point that is continuously developing, and education change or school reform is in the heart of development when it comes to ECEC practices (Miller & Cable, 2008).

Layder's map suggests that the first level which is the context level concerning societal values, steering and laws. Finnish ECEC is directed by the local education mechanisms, and the main target of Finnish ECEC is all about developing wellbeing of everyone, learning, achieving good quality learning and equality as well. (Ukkonen-Mikkola & Fonsén, 2018) On the other hand, the ECEC program for refugees in Lebanon were provided by an NGO, which is cooperating with the ministry of education. The cooperation was concerning the curriculum format, but the NGO was controlling the way of teaching, regardless if it is similar to that of the formal schools or not. This might have given the teachers more opportunities to act freely and accordingly. Though, this might have a slight impact on the development process of children when they move to the formal education system in Lebanon.

Additionally, ECEC services in Finland are supported and observed by municipalities (76 per cent), which means that municipalities are managing these services in a way that can cover each area in order to achieve satisfaction through all the country, and private services can be found as well (NIHW, 2014). However, comparing the roles on municipalities in early childhood between Lebanon and Finland can show that municipalities in Lebanon do not interfere in this issue. This can have a negative impact on the ECEC in particular and education in general because municipalities can have bigger vision all over the country instead of depending on one committee to run the whole system, and this what makes the Finnish experience a successful one.

Academic qualifications can play an important role in education development generally and ECEC typically, the qualification for ECEC educators in Finland is decided by law (Finnish

Ministry of Education and Culture, 2015). The teachers in Finnish ECEC are formed of two groups: the first group which is the ECE educators and they should have qualifications as a bachelor's or master's degree certificate from a university, or a bachelor degree that can be granted from the university of applied science. Another group is the nursery educators, and this level of educators should have a secondary school level qualification. These employees can work cooperatively in a multi-professional team (Karila, 2012).

However, during the interview process, concerning the ECEC program which is conducted for refugees in Lebanon. Some teachers said that, they do not have qualifications in teaching. Some of them do not even have a bachelor degree. This can be a lesson that can be learned in Lebanon to develop the Education system, and follow the Finnish experience which is requesting teachers to have academic qualifications, and this is very important for teachers to have enough skills in order to cope in such a challenging environment, especially ECEC for refugee children which requires a highly qualified level.

On a personal level, comparing Lebanon to Finland, it is clear that in Lebanon teachers do not have the exact qualification to work in ECEC programs. When I applied for the ECE officer position, I did not have a previous experience, but I was provided with intensive training by the NGO, in order to manage and control the learning process through the curriculum. Thus, it was always challenging for me to take some critical decisions which makes the integration process slower. However, considering the Finnish experience which insist on qualification is very important to improve the learning quality, and integration as a main goal of the ECEC program.

5.3 Welcoming refugee children in ECEC settings

Nowadays, the international discussions are talking about the need to improve the quality of early childhood education (ECEC) for children all over the world. This can be achieved when taking into account the impact that quality ECEC can add on the wellbeing of children who live in weak circumstances such as immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers (Bove & Sharmahd, 2020).

However, although much has been done on the level of initiatives to reduce the suffer of children in early period education and reduce inequality, but many challenges were still disturbing the access for ECEC settings, such as cultural, segregation and discrimination (Bove

& Sharmahd, 2020). This is related to the results that were discussed in the interview process, where the participants talk about social barriers for the learning process of children.

There are many factors that still affecting the early childhood education. Even though many discussions and studies are considering this period, but there still some groups that suffer during it such as the low income families and refugee backgrounds, those are still finding difficulties to be enrolled for ECEC, and even if they were able to enrol, they are still suffering of lacking good quality services (Vandenbroeck & Lazzari, 2013).

However, based on the discussion through the interview with Sami. We can infer that it is not enough to provide ECEC centres, but there should be a global plan to contain the numbers of children who are not able to enrol, because this is considered as a global issue and can affect the future of the whole world and not only one single nation.

On the other hand, studies show that ECEC programs are considered very efficient. Providing encouragement through supportive techniques and empowering communities, through offering and assuring a progressive universalism perspective, develop social inclusion for all. In addition to concentrating on achieving the requirements of families in need and children such as the refugees, as recommended in the European Quality Framework for ECEC (2014).

Moreover, ECEC settings are required not only to be welcoming for children based on the free services and accessibility for all. Instead, the focus should be on the quality of services, as well as a critical part of the learning process for children. Moreover, many families are able to send their children and enrol them, but they are still suffering due to the lack of quality learning, which can respond to the needs of children in a very critical period that can lead to a broader development for their future (Vandenbroeck, 2009).

Furthermore, connecting this to the results of the interviews that were mentioned can show that ECEC program for refugee students in Lebanon. Thus, which is trying to provide students with quality learning, teachers' training and providing social emotional competences through the implementation is not only a theoretical part within the process, but a real support for teachers and their students for flexible implementation and better learning that lead to integration.

Hence more, welcoming refugees in ECEC programs, and as teachers mentioned that those refugee children are getting free educational services, can help them through integration in the new education system. Thus, it is helping based on the theory of Bronfenbrenner, which is mentioned earlier in the study, through understanding the impact of migration on children. The

ECEC program in this case in the solution for the children, not only for learning development, but other personal aspects in their lives.

5.4 Teachers' professional agency in ECEC.

The concept of education is bigger than learning based on specific instructions. It should be a supportive tool to promote people's agency, and this idea has been a general assumption in western countries during the Enlightenment. It also triggered people's thinking to discuss the real role of education and the way that it should be treated to achieve or produce development (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Ecclestone, 2007).

Recently, recognizing the social and cultural processes that support the development process of teachers' agency is becoming very important (Davydov, Slobodchikov, & Tsukerman, 2003; Edwards, 2005; Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004; Engle & Faux, 2006; Zuckerman, 2007). Taking into account the viewpoint of teacher education. Agency is considered as necessity for many reasons.

First, training teachers should not only be based on following instructions blindly. Instead, to deliver some plans based on the curriculum, and help children to acquire the skills to develop their own and their students' capabilities for an efficient learning and permanent academic growth in order to understand more deeply the mechanisms that lead to an agentic teacher, and the techniques to build this development (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004; Edwards & Protheroe, 2003).

Second, educational organizations are requested to help their learners through motivating their capacity for active and agentic learning. Yet, many educational organizations fail to deliver this concept as part of the teacher education process. Countries such as, Finland and UK, teachers are reported to learn and depend on the plans that are already decided within the curriculum, and not being encouraged to have the resilience and flexibility to act according to the new changes and challenges within the learning environment situations (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004; Edwards & Protheroe, 2003; Opettajankoulutus, 2020).

The third part, where agency is taken into consideration as a crucial part of teacher's identity, in order to be professionally acting in a learning environment (Beijaard, Meijer, & Verloop, 2004). Fourthly, teachers are required to work proactively with other teachers and other professions, sharing experiences and knowledge is highly appreciated to motivate the capacity of

a professional agency. This capacity, relational agency is necessary to utilize the support that is shared by others as a professional resource (Edwards, 2005, 2007; Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004).

Moreover, teacher professional agency is important to come up with engaging and creative learning environment. Teachers should acquire skills on how to deliver knowledge throughout the learning environment, in way that respect challenges, and help students and even educators to feel comfortable with the content. It is helpful to help teachers integrate the latest theoretical updates and not only follow the instructions that might not help all learners (Biesta & Tedder, 2007; Billett, 2006; Billett & Pavlova, 2005; Hamerness, 2006; Vähäsantanen & Billett, 2008).

Nonetheless, the interviews with teachers were an opportunity to understand closely the role of teacher professional agency, and its impact on the learning environment within a challenging environment with refugee children.

Additionally, the professional agency of teachers plays an important role in the education process for refugee children. As teachers mentioned concerning the training that the NGO provided, and their role in helping teachers acquire new skills and techniques to deal with children. Thus, the professional agency can develop through sharing experiences in different scenarios within ECEC classes. These experiences turn into skills that trigger the professional agency for teachers, and affect their performance in ECEC classes, the fact that affect the positive integration of refugee children in these classes.

One more point, it is mentioned here in the discussion part, that teachers should not follow the instructions blindly to deliver the curriculum as mentioned by (Edwards & D'Arcy, 2004; Edwards & Protheroe, 2003). Thus, and as mentioned by participants in the interview, who mentioned that they always have the opportunity to choose the activity that is better for the current situation, which means that they have such freedom for the benefit of children. This proving again the relationship between the theoretical part and the results, which is confirming the importance of teacher's agency that can be developed through sharing experiences withing training and such.

5.5 Limitations and Future Research Recommendations

The current study represents my first try at a research project. Thus, the process of the study includes some limitations that will be discussed below, and some tips about future

recommendations will be discussed. Taking into consideration that I am a beginner conducting this study, it was normally that the limitations appeared within the research design and the practicing process. Thus, these factors were considered as barriers within the process, and challenging for me while conducting interviews and getting answers, the fact that led me to revise the research objectives.

Even though, the study was aiming to discuss the integration of refugee children into the Lebanese curriculum based on teachers' perspectives, the discussion with educators have led to portraying refugee experiences and the impact of some competencies on the learning process of children such as, social emotional competencies, personal wellbeing and learning skills within the ECEC program. Going through these details was important to have more understanding of the early childhood period for refugee students with what it contains of challenges as an exceptional case. Teachers mentioned the social emotional competency on many occasions as an important factor that affect the learning process and help children through the integration process.

Conducting interviews with teachers, and building on the discussions was a great opportunity to meet individuals with different views of the refugee case and a chance to enrich the understanding with actual examples that can describe the integration the obstacles that can prevent that process.

This deviation, nevertheless, offered me the opportunity to see, and contemplate on the different environmental factors that are included in, and actively shape the issue of the refugee experience. By utilising Bronfenbrenner's ecological framework as an approach within the study, I tried to have a better understanding and explain the refugee reality situation, based on teachers' perspectives. The similarities between different ecological approaches then became clear and once again decoded the limitations of the current research. Since the study project was set in the setting of ECEC program, and was informed by a typical group of people, the educators, many conditions that are important to the refugee experience and have a direct effect on the individual were only briefly mentioned. Furthermore, this research has only described the most prominent of the life of refugee reality within the Lebanese context and the environmental conditions that form this fact. Discussions with teachers who are involved in ECEC classes, who are directly included in the refugee situation, as well as with refugees as parents of children in their classes,

have the possibility to build a holistic view on the case of refugee integration into the Lebanese education system.

However, taking into consideration that, educational project for refugee students has been there for years in the Lebanese setting. Thus, the educators and their NGOs or educational centres have had a valuable time to create a deep understanding about the community and the children who are considered as beneficiaries, and the best practices in order to achieve development and integration.

On the other hand, despite the fact that the content analysis process is useful for research and comes with great benefits within the process, it can have some challenges or limitations just like any other strategy. The first can be that content analysis always sticks to the scientific view of the cases. Typical findings demand a lot of units of analysis. This might be challenging for the interpretation of such communications or related discussion characteristic of literary, historical, or even psychoanalytic information (Krippendorff, 1989).

Another limitation in the content analysis, is the fact that it demands reproducing for the data. This suggests fixed and neutral groups and processes that can be systemized without relation to the interpreter and the task that is being analyzed. However, computer content analysis is considered as one of its results. It prefers putting data in use, which can lead to a context that leads to stable and obvious analysis, and keeps the opportunity for those whose meanings may witness such alterations within the chain of communication in the process, or even in case that where features of some communicators or even some groups from the community can be included. Such vague interpretations might take place easily in political and personal discourses (Krippendorff, 1989).

Moreover, studies that have been conducted about education issues for refugees, the impact of refugees on the hosting community and the challenges that can face refugees as vulnerable people in a new community, can all be used as a bank of information to achieve the improvement of educational projects, and perfect integration.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Consent Form

Dear Educator.....

I Yehya Alhajji writing to you to tell that I am asking your permission for an interview, that will include questions about you experience as an educator in ECE classes of refugee students.

I need this information because I am working on my research in this domain; not all the information and answers during the interview will be shared with anyone but me. Your name and other personal information will be confidential. I will be careful with the data and will delete it after finishing the research process.....

I wish you accept my kind request and help me get the information I need for my research.

You signature:

حضره المعلم / المعلمة
.....

أنا يحيى الحاجي، أقوم حاليا بكتابة بحث متعلق بالطفولة المبكرة للأطفال اللاجئين في لبنان لاتمام مشروع الماجستير في جامعة جيفاسكولا في فنلندا، وبناء عليه أطلب من حضرتكم الأذن للمشاركة في مقابلة تتضمن بعض الأسئلة المتعلقة بتجربتكم أشير لأن كل المعلومات المتعلقة بكم ستبقى سرية ولن يتم تداولها مع اي شخص وأؤكد حرصي على مسح المعلومات فور انهاء البحث.

أرجو تعاونكم

التوقيع:

