Master Thesis

Highly skilled refugees' experiences with university in the Netherlands

Discussed through the lens of the WURth-while inclusion project at WUR

International Development Studies

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Abstract

Many adult refugees who enter the Netherlands are highly educated, yet often have complications accrediting their foreign degrees, resulting in lower skilled jobs. Joining higher education (HE) is an opportunity to continue careers in their field of study or to pursue another. While refugees are in the asylum process, they are restricted from studying and have limited work opportunities. The asylum process should take months but often lasts several years. This means refugees will lose touch with their field making it harder to join the Dutch labour force or enter HE.

In recent years, inclusion projects have appeared in some Dutch universities. These projects aim to allow refugees to have free access to university courses while they are in the asylum process or two to three years after obtaining their residence permit. They offer refugees something to do and allow them to stay in contact with their field. For this thesis, I have partnered with the WURTh-while project, at Wageningen University (WUR), to examine intentions, experiences, and outcomes for refugees who have taken part in inclusion courses. To pursue my research, I have based my conceptual framework on Sen's capability approach and chosen to use qualitative methods, interviewing 21 refugees.

I found that the people's capabilities influence their decision making and are influenced by the experiences that they have. Those taking courses must be highly educated to start with. This likely influences intentions for taking courses which were often academic, or labour focused. Experiences with the courses also influenced the capabilities they were able to build with barriers often influencing the opportunities and outcomes they would have. Mental health was also found to impact all dimensions of my research. This thesis aims to contribute to knowledge about inclusion projects and to encourage other universities to take on similar initiatives.

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Abbreviations

AZC - Asylum Seeker Centre

COA - The Central Agency for the Reception of Asylum Seekers

HE – Higher Education

UAF - Stichting voor Vluchetling-Studenten (Foundation for Refugee Students)

WUR – Wageningen University & Research

Contents

1. Introduction

Despite the belief that refugees[1] are often low skilled, many refugees are indeed highly educated[2] (Bemak & Chung, 2015, as cited in Mertens, 2017). In Europe, one fifth of refugees have completed post-secondary education (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021). In the Netherlands, the number of refugees who are highly educated is dependent on where they come from (Duarte and van der Meij, 2021). In 2011, 41% of Iranian refugees, 28% of Iraqi refugees, 26% of Afghani refugees and 5% of Somalian refugees were considered highly educated (Dourleijn and Dagevos, 2011, as cited in Duarte and van der Meij, 2021). In 2018, one third of refugees from Syria had some experience with HE before entering the Netherlands (Dagevos et al., 2018, as cited in Duarte & van der Meij, 2021). That same year, 905 refugees started higher education (HE). This was 3% of the total refugee population in the country (UAF, 2018, as cited in Duarte and van der Meij, 2021). However, this is very likely to be an underestimate as it only includes refugees supported by the foundation for refugee students (UAF) to enter studies. While the percentages of highly educated refugees and refugees in Dutch HE does not make up most refugees in the Netherlands, it does show that refugees and HE are relevant to each other.

Education offers displaced people the option to improve their living standards and better adapt to a new society (Aras and Yasun, 2016). Education is central in reducing the impacts of displacement (Sinclair, 2001). Denying people the ability to join HE has implications for their home and host countries. Access to HE can provide people the opportunity to "use, adapt and improve their qualifications, training and previous experiences to benefit their host societies" (Arar et al., 2020, p. 196). Within scholarship, education for refugees cannot be overlooked because education reinforces globalized hierarchies. Despite the gain of freedom by fleeing their homelands refugees often experience reduced capabilities once in their host country due to hierarchies of power which exist between the Global North and South (Baker et al., 2019). When people are barred from education because they lack citizenship, they are missing out on

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[1] Refugees are those that have been granted asylum in a destination country and asylum seekers those who are waiting for asylum. In this thesis, I will mostly be referring to both as refugees unless otherwise specified. See more in '1.2 Defining the highly educated Refugee'.

[2] Highly educated refers to people who have attended university and have experience in a field. See more in '1.2 Defining the highly educated refugee'.

opportunities for development (Baker et al., 2019). Barriers to accessing studies reduce human freedoms and increase these inequalities (Walker, 2005). This thesis is in the field of international development studies because it aims to look at how education may reduce injustices and improve individual lives for refugees. For my research, I have partnered with the WURth-while inclusion project at Wageningen university (WUR) in the Netherlands. Inclusion projects offer highly educated refugees the opportunity to start their lives again even if just providing something to do rather than a direct line to a job or further studies. In this thesis, I will examine the intentions, experiences, and outcomes for those who have been involved in WURth-while.

1.1 Relevance and knowledge gap

There is some research into highly skilled refugees and HE; however, there is scarce insight into the intentions, experiences, and outcomes for refugee students with these programs. According to Unangst & Crea (2020), there is limited literature on university support systems for refugees as well as the struggles that refugee students face when accessing HE. Felix (2018) also points out that there is limited information surrounding refugee students' "educational outcomes, or their access to and experience within higher education" (Felix, 2018, p. 219). Ramsay & Baker (2019) analysed current literature on the experiences of refugees in HE and also found that there is need for more research in the field. Currently in the Netherlands, the primary and secondary education of refugee children (under 18) is often mentioned (such as the report by Tudjman et al., 2016) but education for adults is not discussed as much.

Duarte & van der Meij (2021), offer three potential reasons why research surrounding refugees and HE is still quite sparse. First, that refugee students may be grouped with other ethnic minority students in studies. Secondly, once refugees have obtained official status, they have the nationality of their new country which may make their status invisible. Third, some students may not reveal that they are refugees to others to avoid stigma (Stevenson & Baker, 2018). Arar et al. (2020) adds that focus tends to be on international students in HE rather than specifically on displaced students. Unangst & Crea (2020) have also called for more research about projects that support refugee students in HE. With this thesis I seek to contribute to and advance these debates

by offering insight into the intentions, experiences, and outcomes for refugees and how that shapes their capabilities.

1.2 Defining the highly educated refugee

In this research, I draw on the terms of 'refugee' and 'asylum seeker'. These two terms are often conflated into the term 'refugee' (Rosenkranz, 2000, as cited in Psoinos, 2007). However, there are also important differences. Refugees are those that have been granted asylum in a destination country due to fear of persecution for reasons due to religion, nationality, race, politics, and social group ("UNHCR"). Asylum seekers are those who are waiting and in the process of being granted refugee status (Psoinos, 2007). The concepts are often used interchangeably and the same will be done in this research unless specified.

In this case, it is not that significant to a make a distinction when referring to the participants in my study for a few reasons. First, I have chosen to include refugees and asylum seekers in this study because they are both eligible to take courses through WURth-while. Due to this, the participants I spoke with include refugees and asylum seekers. Second, many of the refugees whom I spoke with referred to themselves as refugees even if they are an asylum seeker. Third, participants may have been asylum seekers when they took a course but had refugee status once I interviewed them. There are also those who already had status, and some are still awaiting status approval. Because of the changing roles of asylum seeker and refugee I have decided to use the term refugee to keep this thesis clear.

I am also specifically using the term 'highly educated refugee'. I have chosen to focus on highly educated refugees for two reasons. During the interview process several of the participants referred to themselves as highly skilled or highly educated. WURth-while also requires students to have at least started a bachelor with many students having completed a bachelor, masters, or PhD. Though the concept exists in scholarship it is often taken for granted or considered self-explanatory and there is no clear definition of this term. While scholars (van Tubergen, 2022; Sontag, 2018; Psoinos, 2007) have done research on highly skilled refugees in HE, they have not defined what a highly skilled refugee is.

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I was able to find one definition by de Lange et al. (2020). In their work they define highly educated refugees as those "holding higher professional qualifications or higher professional skills, both attested by at least three years of HE or professional experience" (de Lange et al., 2020 p. 76). As it is in line with the way refugees viewed themselves and the requirements of WURth-while, I will be adopting de Lange et al. (2020)'s definition.

1.3 Research Aims & Questions

In this thesis, I will examine the intentions, experiences, and outcomes for highly educated refugees who have taken free courses at WUR. To explore this, I built my research around Sen's capabilities approach[3]. Capabilities help explain all three categories and how they are related. Different capabilities, such as level of education and English language abilities, influence whether refugees can take courses in the first place. Barriers to capabilities impact their experiences and outcomes that occur after taking free HE courses. I aim to use these findings to shed light on the projects themselves and encourage the expansion of free education opportunities to more universities in the Netherlands. To frame my research, I have devised some research questions based on the literature and theory as well as the requests of WURth-while.

Main Question

What are the intentions, experiences, and outcomes for refugees in the WURth-while project at WUR and how are they linked to capabilities?

Sub Questions

- Why do refugees partake in the WURth-while and other inclusion projects?
- How do refugees experience HE in the Netherlands?
- What outcomes and opportunities have refugees experienced from partaking the WURth-while courses?

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[3] Capabilities are the ability that someone has to make decisions and act and is shaped by the freedoms they have (Sen, 1992). See '2.7 Theoretical Foundations' for more details.

1.4 Thesis outline

To answer my research questions, I begin Chapter two by examining the current literature on refugees in HE. I then discuss some related theories. Next, I devise a conceptual framework which is based off the literature and theory. In Chapter three, I outline my methodology. In Chapter four, I summarise the geographical context. This is split into two parts, contextualising the Dutch asylum process, and giving details about WURth-while. In Chapters five through nine, I share my research findings. Chapter five is on the intentions that refugees have when joining courses. Chapter six discusses the experiences and barriers that refugees have during their time in the courses. Chapter seven examines the experiences and interactions that refugees have had. Chapter eight is split into two parts. Part one looks at outcomes from taking courses. Part two includes the main feedback that participants had for WURth-while. Chapter nine examines how mental health emerges throughout the findings. In the discussion, chapter 10, I focus on how these concepts are interrelated, compare them to existing theories and shows ways in which this research advances existing work. I then conclude with Chapter 11, outlining the main findings and offering recommendations and avenues for further research.

2. Current research on refugees in higher education

There are a limited, yet growing, number of studies related to refugee participation in HE. Literature has looked at refugee experiences with HE all over the world. Australia (Dunwoodie et al., 2020; Stevenson & Baker, 2018), Canada (Anselme & Hands, 2012), the UK (Morrice, 2013; Morrice, 2009), the US (Felix, 2018), Switzerland (Sontag, 2018), Kenya (Wright & Plasterer, 2012), and the Netherlands (van Tubergen, 2022) are some examples of locations where studies have taken place. Scholarship mainly involves qualitative methods through ethnographic study, interviews, or systematic reviews of current literature. Studies include examples of university projects for refugees, reasons why refugees participate in university, barriers and experiences refugees have while in university, and some sparse research into aspirations, outcomes, and recommendations for refugees after attending HE.

In this chapter, I examine the concepts and discussions that occur in the literature. I will also look at Sen's capability approach and how it links to HE for refugees. From my research questions, the literature, and theory, I have developed a conceptual framework which will guide this study.

2.1 Examples of university support programs for refugees

Current scholarship on refugees in HE looks at attendance to university as well as specifically at university projects for refugees. In this section, I will briefly examine a handful of HE support projects that currently exist for highly educated refugees. I am looking at support projects because my research has been done through the WURth-while inclusion initiative. Doing research into refugee HE through these types of projects guides the types of findings found in preexisting scholarship. Thus, it is important to briefly share the studies of key works in the literature. In other sections of this chapter, all refugee interactions with the university, including through these projects, is considered. This is because experiences could potentially be universal regardless of whether refugees are fully enrolled students or just taking courses. Simply focusing on full-time students may also underrepresent the experiences of those who are balancing studies with work and family.

Projects similar to WURTh-while exist all over and can include mentoring, language classes, buddy systems and other courses. There are projects which support refugees in camps with HE (Giles, 2018) and those, such as Kiron university, which provide online training programs (Sontag, 2018). There are Dutch (Duarte & van der Meij, 2021) and English (Morrice, 2009) transition programs into university or the labour force, Dutch work-learn opportunities (Van Dijk, 2021), specific support for refugees entering university in Canada and the US (Felix, 2018), and Swiss and German university introduction programs (Sontag, 2018) which have previously been studied by scholars.

Dutch transition programs aim to reduce the obstacles that refugees face (Klatter-Folmer & Weltens, 2017, as cited in Duarte & van der Meij, 2021). They seek to increase communication, language skills and offer support and the necessary knowledge required to enter HE in the Netherlands (Duarte & van der Meij, 2021). Similarly, Ways into Learning and Work Course (WILAW), was a project for highly educated refugees at the University of Sussex which sought to support access to HE or jobs related to their field. The project provided guidance with CV writing, job searches, application, interviewing skills and with preparation for the English Language Test System (IELTS). Networking events and individual support were also offered (Morrice, 2009).

Sontag (2018) looks at barriers and challenges that refugees face during their time in introduction programs. Based on my literature review, the inquiry conducted by Sontag (2018) is the most like my research as she looks at introduction programs provided by universities in Switzerland. These programs are designed to allow refugees to experience the Swiss HE system, to take language courses and to sit in during lectures. The projects offer buddies to refugees. These projects are quite like Dutch university inclusion initiatives and will help guide my research. They are also good examples of projects that have already been studied by scholars. In the following sections I will include the findings from their work as well as other scholarship in the field.

2.2 Intentions: Why do refugees join HE?

In this section, I look at existing scholarship on refugees' intentions to join university in their receiving country. The literature cites general and more personal reasons refugees may have for joining HE. For some refugees, studying in their new home country can be very important (Shakya et al., 2010). Education is often seen as an opportunity (Perry & Mallozzi, 2011) and a pathway to better social and economic integration (Felix, 2018; Arar et al., 2020) by reducing discrimination and poverty (Stevenson & Willott, 2007).

People also take courses to use their time (Crea, 2016), providing structure to an otherwise amorphous period during the asylum process (Dryden-Peterson, 2017). This can allow refugees to feel like they have agency and control of their situation by increasing familiarity with the local language and culture (Baker et al., 2019). For example, for refugees in WILAW at the university of Sussex, accessing HE meant they could improve their English and adapt to unknown expectations of their field (Morrice, 2013). Involvement in courses can guide future trajectories of refugees (Baker et al., 2019; Unangst & Crea, 2020), offer hope for the future (Duarte & van der Meij, 2021) and a way to feel normal (Streitwieser & Unangst, 2018).

In his work on highly educated refugees in Dutch HE, van Tubergen (2022) found that there are differences in incentive to enroll in HE post-migration based on age, country of origin and gender. For instance, females and those older than 30 are less likely to invest in HE. He also found that Iranian refugees were the most likely to enroll in HE, while Somalian refugees were least likely. Refugees that applied to get their foreign credentials recognized were also likelier to enroll in further studies. Van Tubergen (2022) believes that those who get their foreign credentials recognized are likely a specific group of refugees who are more likely to stay in their receiving country and experience gains from partaking in HE. He believes that this is in alternative to the belief that degree accreditation offers opportunities to follow HE.

Van Tubergen (2022)'s arguments are in line with Duarte and van der Meij's (2021) finding that having attended HE in their country of origin doesn't necessarily mean that there will be a good future for refugees in the Netherlands. Home degrees are often undervalued (Mattheijer, 2000, as

cited in Duarte & van der Meij, 2021), and there may not be access to official certification (Hannah, 1999). Because of this, gaining Dutch citizenship and qualifications from HE increases success in the labour market. Thus, many highly educated refugees may participate in HE to return to their field of studies (UAF, 2018, as cited in Duarte & van der Meij, 2021). These intentions are just the beginning. In the next section, I look at the experiences of refugees in HE discussed in the literature.

2.3 Experiences: barriers and challenges

Different scholarly studies look to uncover challenges and barriers that refugees experience when attempting to join and particpate in HE. Before delving into the main challenges, it is important to note that scholars have differing opinions about how experiences with HE should be categorised. According to Morrice (2009), refugee experiences are diverse. Thus, it is important to not generalize. People's stories should be used to reveal their agency and complex identities. On the other hand, Arar (2021) states that although refugees are not a homogenous group, they have some common circumstances and difficulties in continuing HE. This is supported by Duarte & van der Meij (2021), who share that refugees often experience similar obstacles in HE. Refugees are also subject to specific restrictions and limitations that control what opportunities they have (Sontag, 2018).

In line with Arar (2021), Duarte & van der Meij (2021) and Sontag (2018), in this section I briefly summarize arguments and list some of the challenges and reoccurring barriers. From the literature, the most common issues include the asylum process, foreign diploma accreditation, cost, understanding the university system, language and academic writing, mental health, diversity of background, and balancing study, work, and family. Other less often mentioned findings include providing proof of status, difficulties in making social connections, bureaucracy, and delayed entry into university.

Asylum process

In the literature, the asylum process appears as a main barrier to participating in HE. Refugees who stay in asylum seeking centers (AZCs) for a long time have a reduced likelihood of

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enrolling in education post-migration (van Tubergen, 2022). The long duration spent waiting for status is also shown to have negative impacts on health (Hvidtfeldt et al., 2019). According to van Tubergen (2022), this could potentially reduce motivation and ability to invest in HE once status has been acquired. The asylum process also delays language acquisition because refugees don't have access to many language courses or much contact with Dutch speakers. Due to the uncertainty around the asylum process, people are less interested in learning the Dutch language (van Tubergen, 2010). Because of this, refugees have a reduced likelihood of following HE in the Netherlands. Moreover, if studying during the asylum process, noise and distractions are common in AZCs, makes it difficult to focus (Sontag, 2018). The asylum process poses a variety of different barriers to partaking in HE.

Foreign diploma accreditation

Refugees often face issues when accrediting their foreign diplomas which can cause difficulties in HE. Foreign credentials are often devalued in Europe (Lancee & Bol, 2017), as well as in the Netherlands (Hartog & Zorlu, 2007), resulting in greater difficulties in the job market (van Tubergen, 2022). Because of this, refugees often change their career or studies (Glastra & Vedder, 2010) despite being overqualified (de Lange et al., 2020). They often must repeat part or the entirety of their degrees to match their receiving country's standards (Bajwa et al., 2017). Even once accredited refugees may face difficulties with universities recognizing their past education (Shakya et al., 2010), potentially demoralizing those who try to re-enter the field (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021).

On the other hand, if refugees have their qualifications officially recognized this may increase opportunities for jobs (Damelang et al., 2020) and participation in Dutch HE (van Tubergen, 2022). This could also encourage refugees to enroll in HE (Friedberg, 2000, as cited in van Tubergen, 2022). Nonetheless, while foreign diplomas can make it easier to pursue HE, refugees may have to take further education that they have already done in their home countries leading to difficulties including incurred costs associated with HE.

Cost

Funding for education is a very common challenge for refugees who are trying to participate in HE (Stevenson & Baker, 2018; Giles, 2018; Felix, 2018; Shakya et al., 2010). Refugees often also deal with poverty (Anselme & Hands, 2012) and may struggle to afford tuition. In the Netherlands, this is further compounded by that fact that financial aid programs and loans often exclude individuals over the age of 30 (Saiti & Chlestos, 2020, as cited in Arar, 2021), making HE harder to join for mature students (Van Dijk, 2021).

According to Sontag (2018), refugees can also struggle to afford transportation costs. Since there is uncertainty about where a refugee will be placed once they acquire status, it can be hard to choose the location of study. Once refugees are placed in a municipality, they don't have much choice and must stay in that place. They often only have a small allowance from the government and are limited in mobility. Due to distance and financial constraints, it can be difficult to afford transportation to access university. Throughout the literature I sampled, difficulties in affording tuition are typically cited as the main cost barrier for attending university. However, affording transportation and other amenities for university are also barriers to participating.

Understanding the university system

Understanding the university system can also cause complications before and during enrollment. According to Arar et al. (2020), limited awareness and standard policy excludes refugees from being successful in HE. Sontag (2018) found that if refugees are taking courses while in an AZC, it is frustrating and difficult to access education because they are busy with the asylum process. Refugees often have no time to prepare for entering a new education system compared to their peers and thus have a combination of troubles which may be related to understanding the system, language, and lack of existing networks.

These can contribute to unfamiliarity with social conventions of the university (Wache & Zufferey, 2013, as cited in Ramsay & Baker, 2019), especially for older refugees (van Tubergen, 2022). The Dutch system is complex and finding the right degree, applications, enrolling, starting the degree and graduating can take some time (van Tubergen, 2022). Because of this,

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refugees often have difficulties adjusting to the new country's university system (Ferede, 2012; Oikonomidoy, 2010, as cited in Felix, 2018;) and may lose motivation to participate.

According to Engstrom & Tinto (2008, as cited in Felix, 2018) there is no option for refugees to access university without support as they are less likely to make good of their time in university. Despite having several difficulties with understanding the university system, there is currently a limited provision of support resources by universities. This means specific needs are often not identified. One reason for this is that refugees are often not recognized as a unique group. This is likely to increase the chances of dropping out (Dunwoodie et al., 2020). It appears that difficulties with understanding the university system are further exacerbated by a lack of support from the university itself.

Language and academic writing

Language (Stevenson & Baker, 2018; Felix, 2016) and academic writing (Wache & Zufferey, 2013, as cited in Ramsay & Baker, 2019; Perry & Hart, 2012, as cited in Felix, 2018) are considered large challenges for refugees while in HE, as refugees often have lower local language abilities in comparison to other migrant groups (Chiswick & Miller, 2001). Because of this, following classes may be difficult (Shakya et al., 2010). It can also be strenuous interacting with peers. For example, participants in Dutch work-learn projects shared that not being able to speak Dutch well or understand slang and jokes in social settings was a barrier to being fully involved (Van Dijk, 2021). Even when they have high levels of literacy, refugees often still have difficulties with the language demands of HE curriculum (Bijwaard, 2008).

Mental health

Refugees also struggle with mental health while participating in HE. According to Arar (2021), psychological wellbeing and ongoing mental health problems due to trauma are mentioned regularly in the literature. For example, one refugee interviewed by Morrice (2013), experienced anxiety and uncertainty and felt othered during her time in HE. Problems with mental health due to trauma are a large barrier to gaining the most out of HE (Stevenson & Baker, 2018; Stevenson & Willot, 2007) and make integration into university more difficult (Mattheijer, 2000, as cited in

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Mertens, 2017). Trauma can also make it harder to access university in the first place (Baker et al., 2019). Mental health is mainly shown to be a barrier to participating in HE, whether it be to accessing HE, the experiences during HE, or managing to continue HE.

Diversity of backgrounds

Refugee students have diverse backgrounds which can cause unique challenges when transitioning into HE (Felix, 2018). These include ethnicity, faith, past migration, and level of education as well as culture, gender, and age (Morrice, 2013; Stevenson & Baker, 2018). They may also face discrimination, due to being a member of a minority group, from professors and peers (Thomas et al., 2002, as cited in Gorard et al., 2006). Because of this, some students believe that revealing themselves as a refugee could negatively influence their chances of studying in HE (Dunwoodie et al., 2020). This can lead to difficulties in making social connections (Onsando & Billet, 2009, as cited in Ramsay & Baker, 2019).

Balancing study, work, and family

Family can cause challenges when partaking in HE (Stevenson & Baker, 2018) and balancing studying, working and family is a barrier to participating in HE (Morrice, 2013; Shakya et al., 2010; Morrice, 2009). During the asylum process, separation from family may also cause distractions due to fear for family members (Sontag, 2018). Even if refugees wish to participate in HE, social services may not permit refugees to study and encourage them to work immediately after gaining asylum instead (Sontag, 2018). These can cause difficulties in finding the time to apply and succeed in university.

Other challenges

There are several other challenges which have been less commonly mentioned. Highly educated refugees are subject to many restrictions due to government policies. This often leaves them having to rely on the support of government agencies despite their high qualifications (Sontag, 2018). They may have issues with providing proof of status to universities (Felix, 2018) and often must wait for over a year to start HE (Gateley, 2013). Despite the challenges faced when

participating in HE, refugees often state they are content with their experiences. For instance, in their research Lee & Sehoole (2019) found that refugees in South African universities experienced some challenges with being disrespected and labelled but were overall satisfied with the experiences they had at university. It is also important to note that there is no single story of being a refugee in HE. Refugees may feel like they belong, that they are recognized or that they are isolated (Morrice, 2013).

2.4 Outcomes

Outcomes don't appear to be the focus of recent scholarship on refugees in HE. However, in this section I briefly touch on the scholarship that does. According to van Tubergen (2022) and Lancee and Bol (2017), post-secondary education for refugees can offer better job opportunities and outcomes in the labour market. Crea (2016) found that benefits include having improved skills, language, self-awareness, and knowledge as well as having the opportunity to be a role model for younger refugees and helping the community.

Even if a refugee has taken a training course to upskill their qualifications finding a job in their field of study doesn't necessarily happen (Riemsdijk & Axelsson, 2021). However, for refugees who took part WILAW at university of Sussex, there were some outcomes noted. Morrice (2009) theorises that refugees may have gained confidence and had an increased sense of agency. Participants also mentioned that courses offered them a way to identify what they wanted to do next, whether it was related to a career or further studies. Some participants were able to start HE after taking the course; however, this wasn't necessarily because of the program (Morrice, 2009). Outcomes are shown to be personal, social, and economic.

2.5 Recommendations

There are some recommendations for universities to improve refugee experiences and outcomes within HE. Dunwoodie et al. (2020) recommend that university admin and staff should offer specific resources and services to help refugees to feel more at home in university. Arar (2021) says that HE systems must increase their flexibility to manage and create opportunities for refugees to access HE and stay in university. Arar (2021) also recommends doing further

research related to the challenges that different groups of refugees' experience in HE to consider the differences between refugee students. From her work with refugees in the UK, Morrice (2013) says that trauma management for refugees is essential for a better experience in HE. Unangst & Crea (2020) believe that universities should share successful practices and programs for refugees between each other to inform and develop better systems to support refugees.

Ramsay and Baker (2019) summarise recommendations that have been made to improve refugee student experiences in HE. These are (1) recognizing refugee experiences as assets (Naidoo et al., 2015); (2) Providing support for attending HE (Stevenson & Willot, 2007); (3) Encouraging students to learn university norms (Vickers et al., 2017); and (4) Cultural training and education for educators to meet specific needs of refugee students in a sensitive and inclusive way (Ferede, 2012). Finally, Ramsay & Baker (2019) suggest that there should be more intersectional research on the difficulties refugees experience in order to increase access, participation, and successfulness in HE.

There are two general recommendations that are not for universities. Sullivan & Simonson (2016, as cited in Arar, 2021) state that special programs for refugees that include training and support should be provided. Going in a different direction, Andersson (2020) argues that instead of diploma accreditation, refugees' actual skills and competence should be assessed because formal accreditation is often a barrier to accessing HE or the labor force in their field. These recommendations should be taken into consideration by university programs.

2.6 Limitations to the literature

There also a few limitations to the recent works on refugees in HE. Though there are few studies on highly educated refugees in HE (such as van Tubergen, 2022). Many studies tend to focus on either refugees in HE or highly educated refugees. Several of the studies look at youth about to enter HE (such as Anselme and Hands, 2012) or youth in secondary education (Stevenson & Willot, 2007; Aras & Yasun, 2016), rather than older refugees. Most of the research is not from the last five or even ten years and those that are more recent tend to examine past studies rather than doing developing new research. For example, Arar et al. (2020) review existing literature to

build their arguments. The scholarship is mostly western and many of the most recent studies are done by the same scholars (eg. Arar, Baker, Stevenson, Streitwieser, Unangst, van Tubergen) and published in similar journals (eg Refuge: Canada's Journal on Refugees). However, this may also be influenced by the resources I have access too. There is also a lack of studies showing successful practices. Many studies are qualitative and include ethnographic studies and interviews of refugees; however, they vary in scale and duration. A few studies mainly spoke to teachers (Dryden-Peterson, 2017) or mentors (Vickers et al., 2017) rather than refugees. In the Netherlands specifically, the availability of data on highly educated refugees is limited (Hartog & Zorlu, 2017). Regardless, the current scholarship is insightful and will help guide my studies.

2.7 Theoretical foundations

Most work on refugees in HE focusses on framing their experiences around the integration process. For this study I am more interested at looking at the freedoms and abilities of refugees in HE and how that frames their intentions, experiences, and the outcomes while in WURth-while. Thus, the main theory that guides my research is Sen's capability approach. I also briefly draw upon the capacity development framework as a way to build on the capability approach.

The capability approach

The capability approach examines a person's ability to improve their own wellbeing. Capabilities are the ability that someone has to make decisions and act. It is a theory which examines the freedoms that people have which influence their abilities to make decisions. Capabilities are based on various inequalities which hinder personal freedom and are central to development (Sen, 1992).

Changes to social context and resources are required to expand one's capabilities. This process of change is called a conversion factor (Robeyns, 2005). The diagram on the following page (Figure 1) constructed by Robeyns (2005) helps to visualize how this works.

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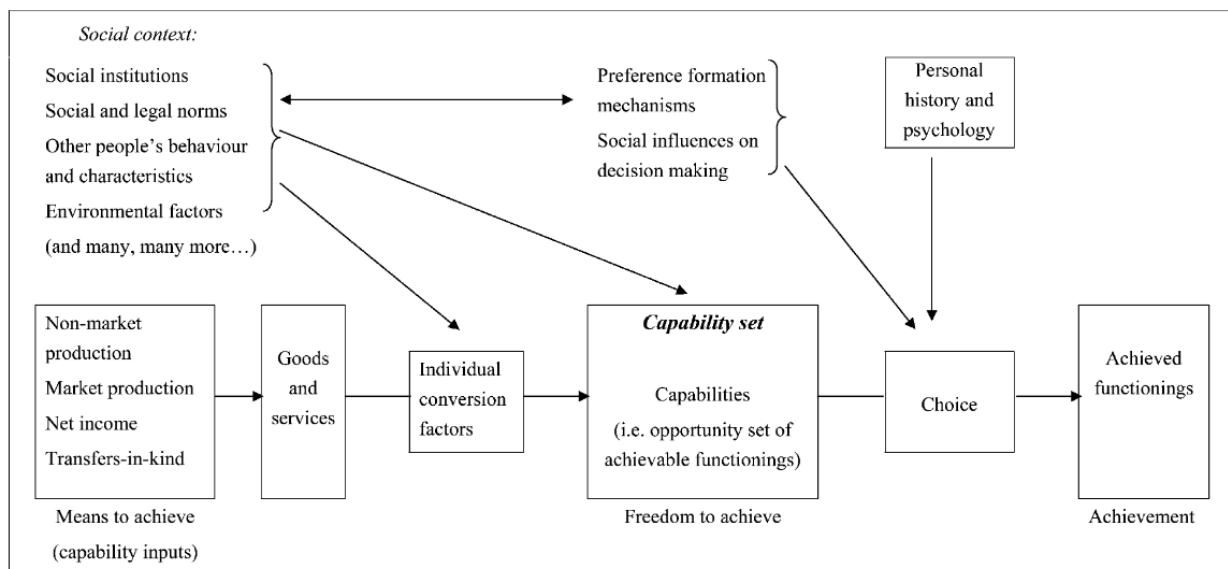
Figure (1) Diagram depicting a person's capabilities. From "The capability approach: A theoretical survey," by I. Robeyns, 2005, Journal of Human Development, 6(1), p.98

Capabilities must be converted, through the ability to make choices, to functionings for changes to happen. Functionings are what someone can do or achieve with the capability (ability) that they have (Sen, 1999). Functionings are also known as the outcomes. The process of converting capabilities to functionings is influenced by the environment, social context, personal psychology and personal history. These influence the choices made which will then influence the functionings (outcomes) that are able to be achieved (Robeyns, 2005).

At the foundations of the Capability Approach is Sen's freedom as development. Sen (1999) specifically focuses on freedom as achieving a life that 'one has reason to value'. To explain this, Walker (2005) gives the example that one may have the capability to attend university but may have interests in choosing a different lifestyle or they may not have the capability but want to access further studies. Agency is also central to understanding capacity and capabilities. Agency acknowledges that individuals may not have free choice in all departments but rather there are constraints on decisions making (Unterhalter, 2003).

Capabilities can influence access to education and vice versa. Drèze & Sen (1995) have discussed capabilities in relation to education in terms of the latter. They have discussed five

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reasons why education enables the expansion of one's freedom. (1) Education can help people access society and the workforce. (2) Education itself is a capability which can impact the ability to access other capabilities. (3) Being educated can increase the ability to influence public debate. (4) Increase networking. (5) Education empowers which can increase the capabilities of marginalized groups. Education can expand capabilities and thus personal freedom.

Capabilities, refugees, and higher education

Capabilities have been linked to refugees and HE within scholarship. According to Unangst & Crea (2020), capabilities are influenced by gender, race, and class. They are also influenced by social capital (Ager & Strang, 2008), culture and transnational bonds (Fischler, 2015), history, and structure which are also influenced by aspirations and enablers (Wilkinson, 2018). For example, white privileged people (often men) with biased views often influence the experiences of marginalized students in class whose voices are more often ignored (Walker, 2005).

Experiences and processes are necessary to understand outcomes (functionings) within education (Walker & Unterhalter, 2007). Walker (2005) uses the capability approach as a framework within their work on capabilities and HE. Though she doesn't specifically touch on refugees her work on capabilities and education can be adapted to anyone who participates in HE. By evaluating individual's capabilities, we can look beyond whether someone attended university or not and examine the freedoms they had to choose and how that influences their opportunities which is a part of outcomes (Walker, 2005). According to Sen (1992), capabilities heavily influence what decisions people make and thus their experiences. However, Walker (2005) argues there are constraints to developing capabilities in HE which are heavily influenced by the structural system that is already in place.

Walker (2005) develops a list of capabilities which should exist within HE. The aim of the list is to evaluate the quality of experiences that people have in HE. This list can help guide the kinds of capabilties people should have in HE, regardless of whether they are a refugee or not. Here capabilities include opportunities as well as capacities and skills. These are (1) practical reason - the ability to make independent choices; (2) educational resilience - the ability to consider risk, navigate studies and respond to opportunities within education and to have aspirations; (3)

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knowledge and imagination - the ability to access knowledge and apply it in an open minded way; (4) learning disposition - curiosity and a desire to learn; (5) social relations and social networks - establish trust and work in groups; (6) respect, dignity and recognition - intercultural competence; (7) emotional integrity - not experiencing fear or anxiety which will reduce learning opportunities; and (8) bodily integrity - freedom from verbal or physical harassment (2006). These will be alluded to in the discussion (chapter 10).

Capacity development Framework

Capacity is the ability for someone to do something and is influenced by their capabilities as well as their intentions (Davis & Lemma, 2009). In their work on refugees in HE, Wilkinson (2018) states that power relations, gender, class, social norms, and structural enablers all limit one's capacity to aspire. In other words, capacity is influenced by several factors which can impact a person's intentions. Because capacities are mentioned within the capability approach and literature, I have chosen to adopt the capacity development framework as a secondary theory in my research.

The capacity development framework is another framework within development studies. Although it is associated with developing countries, international development studies have recently taken a turn to focus on so-called developed countries (Mönks et al., 2017). I have chosen to adapt this approach from the country scale to the individual scale. This is because capacity Development focuses "on empowering and strengthening endogenous capabilities." (Davis & Lemma, 2009, p.8), through "transformations that empower individuals." (Davis & Lemma, 2009, p.6). This means that projects, activities, or actions taken by individuals need to include "changing mindsets and attitudes" (Davis & Lemma, 2009, p.5) and is emphasized by Wright & Plasterer (2012), who state that accessing HE leads to transitions for refugees.

2.8 Conceptual Framework

Building on recurring discussions in the literature, Sen's capability approach and the capacity development framework, I have delineated a conceptual approach (figure 2) that allows me to

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operationalize my research questions and aims into research findings. Thus, I have chosen to split my model into three interconnected dimensions which embody the main ideas that I will explore during my research. Each dimension of my model has a sub concept which has emerged from the theory. They will be used to help answer my main research question which asks what the intentions, experiences, and outcomes are for refugees who have taken courses through the WURth-while project.
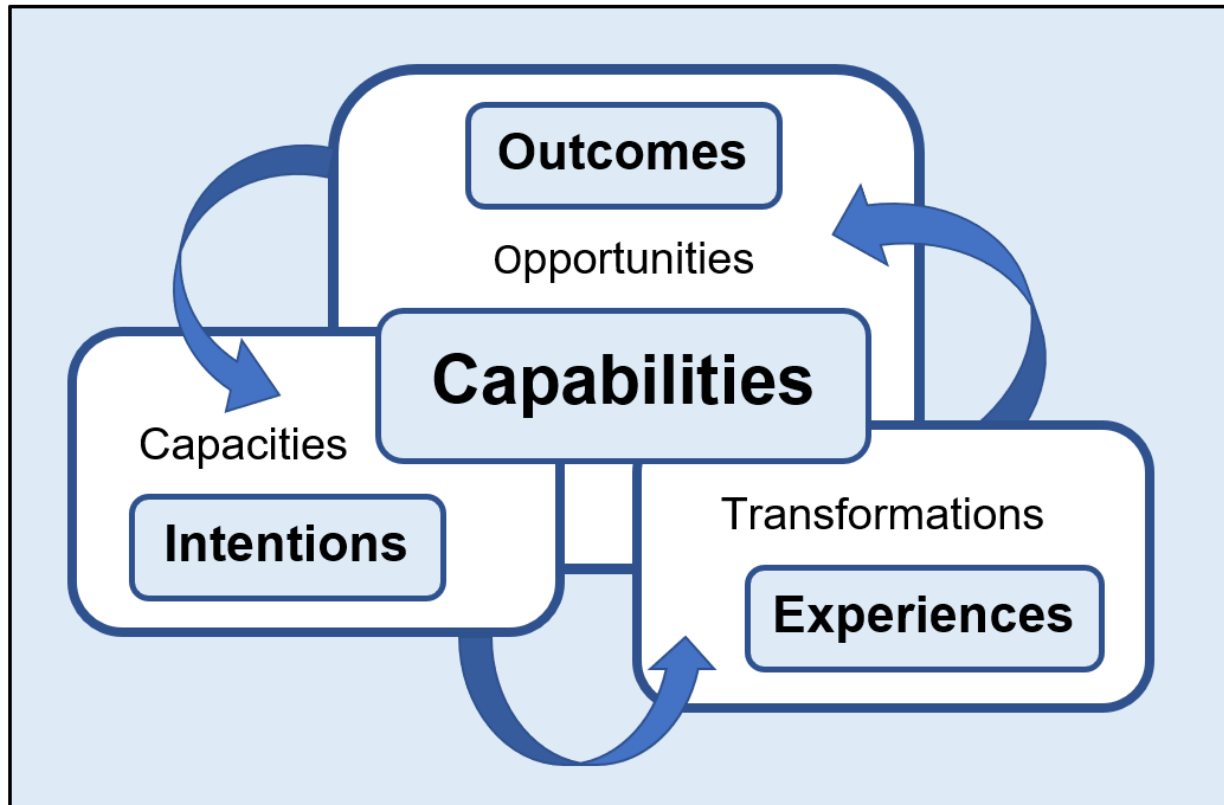
 Figure 2 shows my conceptual framework.

I chose the word 'intentions' to represent the goals and aspirations that refugees have when choosing to take courses. People have a capacity for goals and aspirations depending on their capabilities. Intentions, or the ability to aspire, can influence the types of experiences people have as they are based on the capabilities that they start with (Walker, 2005). Intentions and capacity shape my first sub question which asks what refugees' intentions are for taking courses. Transformations occur due to the experiences that people have (Davis & Lemma, 2009; Wright & plasterer, 2012). These influence the outcomes that people may experience (Walker &

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Unterhalter, 2007). This leads to the second sub question which asks what the experiences refugees have during courses are.

Outcomes come directly from the concept of functionings in Sen's capability approach (Sen, 1999). In in my framework, outcomes are based on people's capabilities, which are in turn influenced by the intentions and experiences that they have had. Opportunities are a subset of outcomes. Examining capabilities can show the capacity that someone had to make choices and how their experiences influence the opportunities they get (Walker, 2005). This leads to the final research question which asks what opportunities and outcomes refugees have after taking courses. Outcomes are influenced by the intentions people had, including their experience and other functioning's (Sen, 1992). Outcomes can also influence future capabilities. Whether or not education and labour integration (Ager & Strang, 2008) happens or not is part of outcomes as well.

Understanding the interconnectedness between dimensions will be important for evaluating my findings. For example, people already have a certain level of education and English level which allows them to take a course in the first place. This influences the experiences they have during the course and may influence their outcomes as well. This conceptual framework along with the research questions will be used to guide my methodology and research.

3. Methodology

This qualitative study was conducted between February and April 2022. During that time 21 in depth interviews were conducted with refugees who have been involved with WURth-while. In this section, I will show how my research goals operationalize my methods and I will outline my methods. I will also briefly discuss my positionality and limitations to the research.

3.1 Operationalization & Methodological approach

The concepts that I have chosen to use are related to the goals of the WURth-while project and the ideas they wanted to explore during our partnership. These concepts are further reinforced by the literature and theory which have shaped my conceptual framework. The main three concepts that I am exploring are intentions, experiences, and outcomes. Intentions are the goals, plans and aspirations that refugees have when taking courses. Experiences are what happens during their time in the course, including the barriers to their capabilities. Outcomes are the consequences of the courses and the opportunities that arise from them. Because I am working with the capability approach, I have chosen to use qualitative methods to gain insight into the different stories of multiple refugees. This is because qualitative methods may release the potentially silent experiences of participants (Hennink et al., 2020). Doing interviews specifically allows me to collect refugees' firsthand experiences (Purkey, 2012). Thus, I can explore why refugees have certain intentions, experiences, and motivations and how that links to their capabilities.

3.3 Outline of methods

In December, I reached out to different projects that offer free courses for refugees in the Netherlands. I was met with a motivated response from WURth-while. From there we met a couple times to discuss options for research. WURth-while then contacted the refugees who have taken a course through the project. In January, I received several responses and by February I was able to arrange 21 interviews which were mainly conducted throughout March. In this section I outline the methods used.

Purposive Sampling

I used purposive sampling so that I could interview refugees who have taken part in WURth-while. The project gave everyone who has taken part in courses in the last five years the opportunity to connect with me and I interviewed those who reached out.

In-depth interviews

I conducted a total of 21 in depth interviews with refugees to gain a deeper insight into their intentions, experiences, and outcomes from being in WURth-while. For this, I developed an interview guide (see appendix 1). The first interview was a pilot interview and afterwards I made several adjustments to the interview guide. Some findings from the pilot interview were useful and have been included in my results. Questions covered key themes related to the research questions and enquired about intentions, experiences, and outcomes.

All the participants were able to speak English as it is a requirement to take a course through WURth-while. Because of this, I did not require a translator. However, a couple participants had lower English proficiency and I had to rephrase some questions so that they understood what I was asking. All the participants were open to sharing information about their time in the course. This is likely because they reached out to do an interview with me themselves. There were three main commonalities between participants. They were all asylum seekers and refugees; had all at least started a bachelor before joining WURth-while and had all at least begun a course through the project. On the following page, table 1 shows the traits of the participants I interviewed.

Because of the pandemic, I offered participants the opportunity to either do interviews online or in person. About 11 out of 21 interviews happened in person and the rest were virtually through Microsoft Teams. I did interviews in Wageningen, Utrecht and two other locations. The interviews varied in length. Most interviews lasted 45 minutes to an hour; however, the shortest one was about 30 minutes and the longest was over an hour. I had initially predicted that in person interviews would be longer but that did not seem to be the case. I recorded the interviews with my phone, laptop or tablet and took notes on my laptop during the process.

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Region of Origin	IN AZC During courses?	Status during courses?	HE Background
Amir	Early 50s	Male	Middle East	NO	Refugee	Masters PhD
Farah	Late 30s	Female	Middle East	NO	Refugee	PhD
Osman	Late 20s	Male	Middle East	NO	Refugee	Two Masters
Mikal	Late 30s	Male	North Africa	YES	Asylum Seeker	PhD
Anwar	Late 20s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Masters
Saad	Early 30s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Masters
Nalani	Late 20s	Female	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Bachelors
Sef	Mid 30s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Masters
Mustafa	Mid 30s	Male	South Asia	NO	Refugee	Bachelors Masters
Nura	Mid 30s	Female	Middle East	YES	Refugee	Bachelors
Abdul	Late 30s	Male	South Asia	YES	Asylum Seeker	Bachelors
Nadir	Late 40s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	PhD Post doc
Gabriel	Early 30s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Bachelors
Fareed	Late 20s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Bachelors
Rya	Early 30s	Female	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Incomplete Bachelors
Hassan	Late 30s	Male	Middle East	NO	Refugee	Bachelors
Sajjad	Early 30s	Male	South Asia	NO	Refugee	Bachelors
Basheera	Early 30s	Female	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Masters
Murad	Mid 40s	Male	Middle East	NO	Refugee	Bachelors
Najah	Early 40s	Female	Middle East	NO	Refugee	Bachelors
Ishaq	Mid 30s	Male	Middle East	YES	Asylum Seeker	Bachelors

Table 1 shows participant traits.

Using my notes as the basis, I transcribed each interview by hand. I then chose seven of the transcripts from which to develop a codebook. I specifically handpicked the interviews to show a range of participant characteristics. These included gender, age, educational background, whether they were online and in person, whether they were an asylum seeker or had refugee

status, and whether they had failed courses or not. I was then able to draft a codebook. From there I grouped codes into a codebook (see appendix 4).

I then put the interviews into NVIVO for analysis. The data I used for my findings was categorized in the following main themes: capabilities (capacity barriers), capabilities (goals and aspirations)[4], experiences, outcomes and opportunities, and mental health. Mental health was its own separate category because it was mentioned in relation to all the other categories. There were some other themes that I did not use extensively in my findings (Appendix 4). From the coding, I was able to find connections between my data.

I also ran two in depth interviews with the coordinator and a former volunteer for WURth-while and made interview guides for these interviews (see Appendix 2 and 3). These interviews were to answer questions I had about the WURth-while project. However, the interviews also showed to be useful when comparing the responses of refugees with the opinions of WURth-while in the discussion (chapter 10).

WURth-while staff	Role
Suzanna van der Meer *works ~8 hours a week*	Educational coordinator: • Read and assess applications (CV and motivation letter) • Check English skill level of applicants (briefly) • Discuss the courses options with applicants • Check with course coordinators that the prospective student can take the course • Guide student where needed during course • Direct and work with volunteer on tasks • Networking with VluchtelingenWErk and COA • Fund raising • Started the buddy program
Ellinore van Driel *worked ~5 hours a week*	Volunteer: • From 2020-2022 • Ran buddy program • Some intake interviews • Admin work

Table 2 shows the roles of staff at WURth-while.

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[4] This is what I chose to name 'intentions' afterwards.

3.4 Positionality

I am a white, 23-year-old, person who comes from a higher social class and is monolingual (English). Since I am not a refugee, nor am I a member of an ethnic minority group I did not begin with an emic perspective. I came into the research with some assumptions of how interviews would go but of course everything went differently. These prior assumptions and biases came from my lack of lived experience as a refugee as well as my situated knowledge background based on my university education in human geography and International Development studies along with my upbringing as an international student. Having grown up in various multicultural environments (in Gabon, Norway, Canada etc.) gives me an international lens on the experience of migration. However, my international experiences along with my economic status and ethnicity all vastly differ from those of the participants that I spoke with.

All the participants were also older than me, with the majority being in their thirties, which enhanced differences. I was also very aware that I will never be able to understand their lived experiences of being a refugee. Although I did not explicitly ask about it, mental health and trauma came up during the interviews. My positionality may have impacted participants comfort with discussing their experiences, this may be why I wasn't able to find much about intersectionality (see section 3.5). Because of this, at times it was difficult to build rapport, especially with the virtual interviews.

However, I was able to make unforeseen connections with many participants based on my international experience in the Netherlands. I had at first assumed that there would be no similarities at all. Despite this, after talking about their experiences with Dutch culture and the Dutch education I learned that I had similar experiences. For example, I have had similar interactions with Dutch people, with learning the Dutch university system and adapting to Dutch society. This is likely because I am an international student here in the Netherlands who does not speak Dutch. As a result, we were able to have common ground. This helped me build rapport during the interviews.

3.5 Limitations

There are limitations to my research. First is time. I was constrained to around three months to do the research for my thesis. Due to this I was only able to run interviews despite my original intentions to do participant observation and run focus groups as well. I was also unable to do participant observation because I did not get consent from participants taking in person classes and many were in online classes. This connects to the next limitation which was the pandemic. Because of COVID-19 lectures were mainly online. Participants who only took online courses and never went to the university may have had vastly different experiences with participating in WUR because of this. However, this is not easy to see in my findings though it will be mentioned when apparent.

I was fortunately able to speak with 21 refugees. However, they all come from a range of back grounds and diverse experiences and took the project in different years. Because of this there may be some generalisations, due to grouping participant experiences in my findings. There is also likely participant bias towards positive experiences with the program because the refugees I interviewed self selected to be in my study. Refugees who had traumatic experiences may have also not wanted to participate in my study. For example, I received an email from one refugee who said they did not want to do an interview because they were uninterested in reliving the traumatic experience they had during that time. Another reason for positive discussions could be because I was interviewing for WURth-while and participants knew that, so they didn't want to say negative things about the project. However, some participants did note the more negative experiences that they had and many participants did discuss how their mental health framed their time with the project.

While my conceptual model was used to frame my research questions, my research is a focused study on capabilities and agency and mainly ignores institutional structure and government policy. In NVIVO, I coded for participant traits to examine if age, gender, ethnicity, and education level influence the dimensions of my research. However, it was mostly unconclusive. This may be because refugees were uncomfortable speaking about these aspects in the interviews and many participants, though not all, avoided linking their experiences to personal details.

These have resulted in some research gaps or some of the findings being ignored. Also, as far as I am aware, this is the first study of its kind in the Netherlands, there is limited published information on inclusion projects in this country. I have done my best to include all that I know about inclusion projects in second part of geographical context (see section 4.2).

4. Geographical Context

This section is divided into two parts which give the necessary background information to understand my findings. 4.1 examines the asylum process and accessing university for refugees in the Netherlands. 4.2 gives background on inclusion projects in the Netherlands with specific focus on WURth-while.

4.1 The Netherlands

According to Duarte & van der Meij (2021), participating in HE could profit many refugees in the Netherlands. However, the asylum process can influence access to HE for refugees. Acquiring status may take several months to years and during that time asylum seekers in the Netherlands are isolated, unable to study and have few work opportunities (van Tubergen, 2022). Entering university is also complicated and knowing English and Dutch well is central to accessing Dutch HE. For many refugees, certification or diplomas from their home countries may not be accepted or complete (Streitwieser et al., 2019; van Tubergen, 2022, Duarte & van der Meij, 2021). Other barriers have been discussed in the literature review.

In the Netherlands, COA oversees receiving, supporting, and guiding asylum seekers. Meals, accommodation and ~59 euros a week for other expenses are supplied (van Tubergen, 2022). Asylum seekers are placed in 90 AZCs throughout the Netherlands based on capacity. These are mainly located in suburbs, towns, and cities (OECD, 2018). Asylum Seekers over 17 cannot partake in education while in the asylum process. Work is restricted but is possible for up to 24 weeks (as of 2021). If working, asylum seekers must pay for rent and other costs and can only keep one quarter of their pay up to 185 euro a month (van Tubergen, 2022). Once an asylum seeker has refugee status they are placed in municipalities throughout the Netherlands. COA attempts to match refugee work experience and skills with labor needs through regions and municipalities may offer opportunities related to study, work or volunteering (OECD, 2018). Refugees can then register for Dutch lessons and integration courses which aim to help them familiarise with Dutch society (van Tubergen, 2022).

After gaining a residence permit, refugees can also apply for university or other forms of education. If a refugee is below 30, they can access the study loans provided by the Dutch government. Tuition for Dutch university remains around 2000 euro a year (van Tubergen, 2022). However, the Dutch system is complex (van de Werfhorst & van Tubergen, 2007), and it can be quite difficult to find the right degree, apply, start education, and graduate. To enroll in Dutch universities, refugees must have their foreign degrees officially recognized. They can apply, free of charge, for formal accreditation of their credentials (van Tubergen, 2022) through NUFFIC. NUFFIC is a nonprofit organization that recognizes foreign degrees if they qualify under Dutch standards and requirements. NUFFIC will indicate whether a degree is sufficient or if additional courses are required to reach an equivalency to the foreign degree (OECD, 2017). As mentioned in the literature review, refugees may have to redo part of their degree in the Netherlands or may want to use their degree to do HE. For example, they may want to do a masters after having obtained a bachelors in their home country.

Universities in the Netherlands are taught in both English and Dutch. Any foreign person wishing to pursue a HE is required to pass either the NT2-II for Dutch courses or IELTS/TOEFL for English courses unless they have previously studied in English. Previous education must also be considered sufficient through an evaluation by the International Credential Evaluation board (IDW) ("VluchtelingenWerk Netherlands"). For many refugees, certification or diplomas from their home countries may not be accepted or complete (Streitwieser et al., 2019). If potential students don't have a diploma or an insufficient previous education, they must take an entrance examination (colloquium doctum) if they are over the age of 21. Transition years are also offered but only in Dutch. The civic integration examination is also required over the age of 18. If potential students hold an asylum residence permit, are between the ages of 18 and 30 and plan on starting a course within the next year they are eligible for study finance. There are programs such as the UAF, which help refugees access and choose studies ("VluchtelingenWerk Netherlands"). The UAF is an organisation that often helps support refugees financially to do higher level education and their goal is to help refugees enter the labor market ("Stichting voor Vluchteling-Studenten UAF").

4.2 WURth-while: A case of inclusion projects in the Netherlands

There are some Dutch universities which offer free course opportunities to refugees and asylum seekers. Some examples of these programs are InclUUsion at Utrecht University and WURth-while at WUR. However, these programs do not receive significant funds from the Dutch government which means that they cannot provide free bachelor's degrees for refugee students. Rather these programs give people the opportunity to follow university level courses to fill their time and keep in touch with their field of studies while they are in the asylum or integration procedure. Although these programs do not provide free degrees for refugee and asylum seekers, they do offer the opportunity to take free courses, thus allowing refugee students to participate in Dutch university life. Participation in education and Dutch student life is an essential part of joining society. However, many questions come to light when considering which refugees can join the study programs and whether these programs have been beneficial to refugee students both academically but also socially.

For my research, I am specifically looking at the experiences of highly educated refugees and asylum seekers with HE in the Netherlands. I am doing this in partnership with WURth-while at WUR. This is done by interviewing 21 refugees and asylum seekers then analyzing the experiences and outcomes of those students who have taken part in a course or more at WUR through the WURth-while project. WURth-while is a project which allows refugees to participate for free in university courses if they are in the asylum process or haven't had status for longer than three years. The program was inspired by InclUUsion at Utrecht University and was started by members of WUR and the Dutch council for refugees in 2017 ("Wurth-while"; S. van der Meer, personal communication, December 10, 2021). The mission of the program is to give people something to do during the process of the asylum application and during the first two years after receiving the refugee residence permit. The goal is to keep these highly skilled refugees and asylum seekers connected to their field of sciences and to introduce them to the Dutch education system. The program at WUR is quite small with one permanent staff member, a volunteer and about six to nine participants each term. There are six terms a year, each lasting roughly 8 weeks (S. van der Meer, personal communication, December 10, 2021).

At WUR professors volunteer to permit refugee students to enter their courses for free. All regular bachelors and masters' courses are permitted if the participants study background fits and the course coordinator has given permission to take the course. Students can acquire credits in the courses they participate in. Students are allowed to take up to three full credit courses per year; however, exceptions have been made when helping students take requirements to enter HE degrees at WUR and other Dutch universities. For instance, one person I spoke with took five courses at the university to help prepare for the masters they did the following year at WUR. WURth-while has also helped a student connect with their home institution to finish their masters. However, this is not the purpose of WURth-while and they encourage prospective refugee students to speak with the UAF. There are also quite a few cases of participants who found a job in their field of study after participating in WURth-while (S. van der Meer, personal communication, December 10, 2021). WURth-while also offers a buddy program. Refugees are offered a buddy who can answer questions they have and help them with the university system. Around 75% of participants have agreed to a buddy since the buddy project was added (E. van Driel, personal communication, May 12, 2022).

WURth-while has done two evaluation reports for the project in the last five years. The use of the evaluation report is to appeal to WUR to continue the WURth-while project. The most recent report (van der Meer et al., 2021) shares common survey feedback (see table 3). I will draw on and compare the feedback in this table to my findings in the discussion (Chapter 10).

• Feeling included, part of a group
• Sense of intellectual use
• Progress in their field of study
• Improved self-confidence and self-esteem
• Personal development
• Connection with other students, teachers, buddies
• Introduction to the Dutch education system
• Brighter thinking
• Mutual learning about other cultures in buddy couples

Table 3 shows common feedback about WURth-while, from "Evaluation WURth-while programme 2019-2020 & 2020-2021," by van der Meer et al., 2021, WUR. Unpublished Report.

WURth-while also recorded the number of students they have had over the last four years as well as the number of courses they took and exams they took and passed (see Table 4). While the number of passed exams is low, it isn't that important if students pass the courses. For many students it is their first time studying in English and they are going through a stressful situation with the asylum process and Dutch integration. It is more important that they can have a chance to see the Dutch education system, stay in touch with their field of study and have something to do (van der Meer et al., 2021).

Years	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021
Students	22	22	30	34
Courses	44	47	49	56
Exams	24	34	33	29
Exams passed	7	21	24	22

Table 4 shows the number of students and exams passed per year. From "Evaluation WURth-while programme 2019-2020 & 2020-2021," by van der Meer et al., 2021, WUR. Unpublished Report.

Empirical Chapters

This research is based on my conceptual framework and methodology. In this section I will share the main findings of my research. The findings are divided into five chapters. There is one chapter for intentions, two for experiences and one chapter for outcomes. The final chapter is on mental health which crosscuts my findings.

5. Intentions: Reasons to join WURth-while

Refugees have different intentions when taking courses through WURth-while. In this chapter, I will go through the main intentions that they had when deciding to take a course through WURth-while. Intentions encompass both the capabilities that refugees begin with through the goals and aspirations that they have. The main intentions that participants had were to see the Dutch education system, to do further studies, to update their skills and to stay in contact with their field of study.

5.1 To see how the Dutch university system works

To see or join the Dutch community and university system was the most common reason for participants to take a course at WUR. 17/21 of the participants interviewed mentioned this. For many this was an opportunity to understand the system so that it will be easier to do future studies. Some mentioned that it would help to integrate as well. Others mentioned they wanted to see the system to find their footing, to see what they want to do, to expand networks and because they were interested or curious to see what it is like. This is linked to outcomes because people may or may not have reached their goals. The two quotes below show different reasons for seeing the Dutch system.

Uhh, learn new things, of course because I selected the course, and I was curious to see how the system works here… What, what are the teaching methods and how, how the students are, how teachers are and how the university works

(Sef, male, mid 30s).

"I get the chance to understand and know how the university system, how the Dutch university system, how it's working and the quality and… it's good to know that if you'll be participating in one of these university."

(Anwar, male, late 20s).

Both Sef and Anwar mentioned wanting to see the Dutch university system. For Sef, he stumbled across WURth-while while he was volunteering during the asylum process. He was more interested in having something to do, challenging himself and distracting himself during the asylum process. For Anwar this is important because he wants to do a PhD in the Netherlands and felt it would help him when he finishes the asylum process and can begin choosing universities and applying for PhD positions. This was to make further studies easier which links to the second finding. Because participants are highly educated, many want to adapt to the Dutch education system and labour market. Their educational backgrounds and English ability give them the capability to take courses through WURth-while.

5.2 Gateway to further studies

Just as Anwar wanted to use the course as a gateway to further studies, so did several other participants. Many mentioned it would be an easier transition into the Dutch university system. Several wanted to use the course as a gateway. This also links to seeing the Dutch university system because showing they have experience on their CV in a Dutch setting is considered to help increase future HE and labour chances. A few participants were already looking at universities in the Netherlands with some specifically wanting to study at Wageningen and found courses that way. Some, like Anwar, were specifically looking for PhD and postdoc research at

WUR, so further research is also a part of this. One participant even managed to get an unpaid internship at the university. People also wanted something to do around their studies or to further their studies. Others used the courses as a sort of premasters or preparation for a masters. This was often linked to differences with home studies and how the courses could act as a bridge between the two to increase future studies and job opportunities. The two quotes below provide examples of this.

> I… applied for master. But I was a little bit late for the English test, ALS, so I missed it. And the program… starts every September. Then I had uh kind of year off and it was like, yeah, it was. Yeah, I thought like it's, it's, good to strengthen some knowledge. And do some courses like those… [to] have kind of what do you call, prerequisite knowledge for the master courses.

<div align="right">(Hassan, male, late 30s)</div>

> "I just want too, maybe if I just start my studies, I continue that. It's my goal, maybe I will complete my studies here in WUR. But unfortunately, I cannot continue my studies because of my problems."

<div align="right">(Abdul, male, late 30s).</div>

These two quotes show the same intentions for taking courses through WURth-while. However, both participants had different capabilities which also influences their experiences and outcomes. Hassan already had refugee status in the Netherlands and was working in a company related to his field. However, he felt behind his Dutch colleagues. Because of this he decided to apply for a masters at Wageningen, but when he had to postpone it by a year, he decided to take courses through WURth-while to ease his way into the master. Abdul, on the other hand, was in the asylum process and thought it would be something to do that could maybe help him do a masters. However, because of mental health complications he had to withdraw from the course and has not done any further HE (see chapter 9). Both these examples show how different capabilities can influence intention to take HE.

5.3 Updating skills

Updating skills is one of the commonly mentioned reasons. To update their CVs and to gain more knowledge are both part of updating skills and are linked to future plans and goals people have. These two quotes give examples of this.

"New information to me, particularly new information to me. This is a combination course between [[course content]]. Also, I accept knowledge about practical. I also benefit because I need also some skills to my CV."

(Amir, male, early 50s)

This is a platform for the refugees to, to, interact, to integrate to, to see. Yeah, what sort of mindset of people are living here and how you gonna dealt with them… but from my years like 2018 to 2020 there was a, yeah, they stopped of taking interviews, so people were staying for two years without, without any goal of life. And for me it's it was really nice to, to, see something like that and start studying or to improve your knowledge.

(Mustafa, male, mid 30s)

Amir and Mustafa had similar intentions to update skills but for vastly different reasons. Amir is the oldest participant that I interviewed. He already has a PhD from eastern Asia and is looking to get a research position at a university in the Netherlands. He recently got a temporary residence permit and is splitting his time between Dutch language courses, his family and taking courses in his field at Wageningen. He wants to do masters research courses at Wageningen to increase his skills, stay in contact with his field of study and increase networking opportunities. This can be seen in the next finding. Meanwhile, Mustafa had already done a master's degree in the Netherlands but now found himself in the asylum process. Rather than choose a course in his field of study, he chose one related to his interests with the goal of gaining new knowledge in that area. These two examples show different

reasons for wanting to better skills. Both participants have different capabilities based on their past experiences which have framed their intentions for taking a course.

5.4 Staying connected to their field of study

Refugees also mentioned wanting to use their time well and wanting to stay connected to their field of study. Many specifically chose WUR for their field. Sciences, water, toxicology and agricultural sciences were some of the main fields that came up. These two quotes depict examples of this.

"Because there is also [degree specialization] department there, [degree specialization] department, I see a lot of professors, also practical and it is in my field. That's my target."

(Amir, male, early 50s)

it's quite part of our field and all of the courses that I was…going to choose is about and related to my career. So, I need to improve my career in the practical and the theory that is. Even in future I can apply for any opportunity in the university because I had a very good experience in the teaching and also education and also in… the research here.

(Nadir, male, late 40s)

As mentioned before, because Amir already had a PhD, he wanted to use the courses to increase networking with professors in his field. Similarly, Nadir also has a PhD. Just like Amir, he chose to take courses to increase his chances with research in WUR. Unlike Amir, Nadir only recently came to the Netherlands and is still in the AZC. He has also done some postdoctoral research in East Asia and has been able to use the courses at Wageningen to find an unpaid internship in his field. However, Nadir says that it is very uncertain that he will continue because of the asylum process. This shows that while refugees may have certain intentions, their experiences and the outcomes surrounding them may vary depending on different barriers they face. Even though they both have PhDs, because Nadir is still in the

asylum process and Amir has a temporary permit their capabilities are differently influenced because of their circumstances and Amir has many more opportunities open to him. The barriers that Nadir and Amir faced are just a few examples of the many which WURth-while participants face, as I will discuss in the next chapter.

6. Experiences: Barriers to taking courses

In this chapter, I will discuss the experiences that refugees had during their time in the courses at WURth-while. Many participants mentioned that they had a good experience, however; external factors such as the asylum process impacted their experience. This is where barriers to capabilities comes in. Capabilities can reduce their ability to join in the first place and their experiences can reduce their ability to build capabilities. Different barriers influenced individual experiences with the courses based on their initial capabilities. Barriers to capacity influence intentions, experiences, and outcomes. Barriers stopped participants from being able to enroll, made it harder to participate or led to participants withdrawing. The main challenges that refugees experience are the asylum process, being very busy, travel distance and COVID-19.

6.1 Asylum experience

The largest barrier was the asylum experience. This was mainly either because it was hard to study in the AZC or the interview process got in the way of participation. For example, some participants had the interview process and course exam at the same time so they couldn't attend the exam. Often the procedure led to participants not being able to finish. These two quotes are examples of how the asylum experience was a barrier to participating.

> You have to also concern about asylum and residence permit, and you have to prepare yourself and also you have to follow the lessons un in WUR online. That was a bit… toughness for me you know…Yeah, I could say one of hard thing for me. Difficult to combine my studies with the… asylum process.

> (Fareed, male, late 20s)

> Yeah. As you know here, I'm staying in AZC and it is difficult to find quiet place to, if your course is online, it is difficult to find quiet place to join your courses. I was suffering to find um quiet and umm good place to join course.

> (Mikal, male, late 30s).

Fareed and Mikal both took courses during COVID-19 meaning that they were online. They experienced barriers to studying online because they were living in AZCs. For Fareed, it made it difficult to focus on studies with the interviews and other preparation he had to do. Mikal had difficulties with noise because he lived in a shared space. The Wi-Fi was also a difficulty for him. While COVID-19 was the cause of issues for these two participants it is not necessarily the only reason the asylum process became a barrier. The asylum experience is also linked to travel cost and being very busy due to the process. Being busy differed whether participants were in the asylum process or had refugee status. For those in the AZC, the process (interviews etc.) made them too busy. This barrier mainly impacted those who still had not received status while they were taking a course. This shows how capabilities are hindered by the asylum process. A few participants mentioned not having time for how frequent the courses occurred and many complained about the short duration of each course (six to eight weeks). This leads to the next finding.

6.2 Time constraints

For those who already had refugee status, a large barrier to participation is that they were very busy when taking a course. This included being busy with family, working and taking Dutch language courses. Some participants were doing all three at the same time as trying to take courses at WUR. For those who were busy with family it was either because they needed to support their family, wanted to spend time with their family or because COVID-19 lockdowns had meant that they had to take care of their children at home. For those who were taking Dutch classes at the same time they sometimes had to skip lessons at WUR, and many were not able to enroll in another course because of conflicting schedule despite their interest to do so.

For those working for Gemeente, there were mixed experiences. For one participant the Gemeente told him he had to work and could no longer take courses. For another participant, he was able to make a deal with Gemeente where he only worked certain hours around his course schedule. However, after some time it became too much for him and he dropped out of his second course. Linked to the next barrier (see section 6.3), Dutch courses were sometimes far

away from WUR, so participants had to drop certain courses and take lessons online with WUR. These two quotes show how busy participants were while they were trying to take courses.

> And I started at my… Dutch language and also WURth-while. I also begin with Wurth-while and I did my 1, 2 courses yeah… So, you have to work also for Gemeente. Also work. So, I'm also working that time in a [[job]]. I don't know how to. So, it was very busy time yeah.

> (Sajjad, male, early 30s)

> Yeah. Like, the whole, the whole situation was so messy for me. Like, I have to do the Dutch courses. I cannot find, I don't have fixed place in Wageningen. And um I have to do the English courses. Uh, thinking about what can I do to learn English to have the ALS exam and it's very tough period. You know? You have to do everything.

> (Gabriel, male, early 30s)

Both Sajjad and Gabriel's capabilities were impacted by the expectations of Dutch integration process. They were very busy during their time in a course at WURth-while. Sajjad took two courses. During the first one he was able to make some arrangements with Gemeente so that he could work while he wasn't in classes. On top of Dutch courses, work and WURth-while courses he also had to take care of his family. During his second course work the Gemeente were no longer able to accommodate him, and he chose to drop the course to make time to support his family. Gabriel only took one course while he was in the AZC. He was able to stay at a friend's place while studying at WURth-while because he didn't live in Wageningen. However, he was juggling language courses at the same time and had never studied in English before, because of this he was unable to pass. Because Gabriel lived so far away, he was fortunate to know someone to stay with. However, most refugees don't have this option which connects to the next finding.

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6.3 Travel distance

Another large barrier was travel distance. Many of the participants do not live near to Wageningen so they had to commute long distances. This connects to cost because the Dutch government doesn't supply asylum seekers with enough money to cover travel costs. For others, the distance was related to being busy with Dutch language courses and not being able to make it to both. For some the distance stopped them from being able to continue or made them have to take online courses. For others they travelled the distance anyways but said it hindered their experience. This is linked to intentions and outcomes as well because many were very driven to participate despite the distance. Of those who didn't live in Wageningen, many encouraged expanding the project to different universities in other parts of the Netherlands. The two quotes below represent some of the travel barriers.

> One of the problem I think it relate to the cost transportations yeah this is uh problem that is facing me. Because in period, in the last period… I enrolled to join uh one courses but because of cost transportation I couldn't continue so I withdraw of the course because of this problem of the cost transportation.

> (Mikal, male, late 30s)

> Yeah, I was also planning to do a course this period, but the attendance is compulsory, and… I can't manage to travel from [location] to Wageningen. The distance yes. When I was in the previous camp… it was affecting my participation. And um I almost was thinking to cancel studying the course umm I think also um if we have Dutch school then the times, I think this also effect… Plus, as long as I'm still in the refugees camp it's not easy to… travel.

> (Nura, female, mid 30s)

Both Mikal and Nura were in AZCs and had to withdraw from a course because of transportation. For Mikal, it was because he could not afford the cost of transportation due to the distance. For Nura, it was more related to the distance, she was previously able to take an online

course to avoid this but when courses became in person it became more difficult. This is also because Nura was very busy with Dutch courses which often clash with the courses that she and other refugees want to take. At the same time, some people also took courses at WUR because they were in the AZC in Wageningen and didn't have to worry about distance. They often took courses due to location rather than for their field of study. Some of them held degrees in subjects such as English and Business and took random courses such as activism, international development and skills building courses. This was very different to those who took specific courses in their field of study who often did not live in Wageningen. This shows that location is an environmental factor which impacts the capacity to join courses. Many in Wageningen took courses because they were easily able to while those who lived far away often took courses because they wanted too.

6.4 COVID-19

COVID-19 wasn't often directly an issue for participants. In fact, several who did not live in Wageningen mentioned that it gave them the opportunity to take courses because they were able to do them online and wouldn't have been able to do them otherwise. However, at the same time, for those who lived in the AZCs other issues came up. For instance, Wi-Fi issues, noise and lack of privacy. One person, taking an online course, had laptop problems. Some did not enjoy the online format such as Nalani who "couldn't participate in another course because [she] wanted to go for another course, but… quit it because [she] didn't want to go online, [she] wanted to go in person". Meanwhile others said that the course online was better for them. For example, Basheera applied to do a course before the COVID-19 lockdown in the Netherlands and

> had uh searched some uh, some place to live of something. Um then during, I think one day before I heard that, yeah, it was lockdown or so and then I received some emails from the university that you should log in uh website of so and then you can follow the course online. I should just go there when I had a practical. In a laboratory or so. So, yeah, that was perfect for me.

(Basheera, female, early 30s)

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For Basheera, it was the opportunity to take courses when she lived far away and would have had difficulty going to classes. She also wanted something to do because there wasn't much to do during the covid lockdown. These barriers wouldn't have existed without COVID-19, yet at the same time many people wouldn't have been able to take courses otherwise due to the travel distance. Although some appreciated the opportunity to take online courses, for others they had hoped to use the course as an escape and distraction (see chapter 5 and chapter 9), but because of COVID-19 had to take courses online. For those who lived in Wageningen, COVID-19 was mainly considered an inconvenience rather than an opportunity to take courses as they would have been able to take courses regardless of the pandemic.

COVID-19, age and distance did have one consequence in common which was that participants were far less likely to be involved in university life outside of their courses. In fact, the most involved that any participant got was going to the library on campus. One participant, Farah, had to take care of her child because the nursery was closed so it meant she couldn't continue taking courses at WUR even though she lived in proximity to the university. The quote below exemplifies this.

> I tried to complete online but because there is no nursery for [my child] uh I just was follow the, I couldn't go to the practical part just the online but after that because there is group work and a practical part I stopped. Couldn't complete. Now [they] start to go to school, now I have some free time to do something.

> (Farah, Female, late 30s)

This shows how COVID-19 opened doors for some but closed doors for others when it came to taking courses. Not all participants took courses during COVID-19 of course. Some took courses before the COVID-19 period. This of course influenced their experience with the courses. For example, one man, Sef, who took courses before COVID-19 travelled 2.5 hours both ways to make it to his courses. Another man, Amir, who lived a similar distance away chose to take courses online because it was during COVID-19, and he had that option. Just as COVID-19

influenced caused challenges there are also positive and negative interactions that framed refugeed. These will be discussed in the next section.

7. Positive and negative interactions and experiences

Experiences during the courses involved interactions that were both negative and positive. Interactions occurred between refugee students and their peers, professors, and WURth-while. When asked about their experience with the course, participants stated that it was nice to feel like an international student again and be among students. Many mentioned a good experience overall with words such as 'satisfied', 'great opportunity', 'happy', 'easy', and 'excited' used. Some people also mentioned they had no complications during the course. Positive and negative interactions occurred with WURth-while, other students and professors. However, it is important to note that these experiences didn't frame the overall experience of the participants but are rather used to show a variety of individual experiences.

7.1 Positive experiences

I have chosen three quotes which give examples of reoccurring positive experiences that participant had. These include getting extra support from professors, support from WURth-while and using WURth-while as a distraction from the negativity of the asylum process.

> When I get Corona… I told [my professor] … I did not take my laptop and… I was in depression. I sent [an] email. I told her 'I have corona, I cannot continue anymore in this course' and [she] told me 'You can… just do the presentation, you don't have to… be online next week'. So, I did the presentation and [she] was very proud of me. And then… I thought okay, there is somebody can push me, and they want me to be there. I wanna continue.

(Rya, female, late 20s)

Rya was the only participant who has not completed HE before coming to the Netherlands. She had started a bachelor but was unable to complete it because she had to flee the country. WURth-while offered her the opportunity to take several skills building courses while she was living in the AZC. Despite hiccups she enjoyed her time thoroughly and felt supported by her professors and WURth-while and was also able to make a couple friends who she is still in contact with.

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Rya enjoyed WURth-while so much she was disappointed she couldn't continue taking courses when she reached the maximum permitted. All participants shared that they had good support from WURth-while. The quote below gives an example of this.

> Suzanna was very helpful I think and when I needed help, I was helped, and I think that went really well… I think that was fine. It was like an open door if I needed to say something I could easily say. Support, they could help me. So that side, that side was good, yeah.

> (Sef, male, mid 30s)

However, unlike Rya, Sef's experiences weren't all positive (see section 7.2). Positive and negative experiences were also interconnected. The quote below gives an example of this.

> It was a nice time actually because… I was going from a very dark period… I was living on that time in the AZC, in the refugee camp, and then I got to know… WURth-while and then when I was accepted and I went to the university… it was like a life kind of saving thing for me, like being with the student using the lectures like taking notes. And… it was a nice time in terms of like healing my… wounds… it really helped me and that time.

> (Saad, male, early 30s)

Saad was taking a course while he was working and living in the AZC. He was dealing with the stress of the process as well as worrying about his family back home. He, like many other refugees were able to use the course to escape from their problems if only for a short time. However, Saad had an experience outside of WUR, where he was told by a Dutch person that he shouldn't be in the Netherlands and was taking their jobs and resources. Because of this he always feared being outed as a refugee during his time in the course. Though this negative experience wasn't at WUR it was during his time in WURth-while and meant that he always had the fear at the back of his mind. This leads to the last section of this chapter.

7.2 Negative experiences

Although most participants didn't note any explicit negative experiences there were a few mentions of experiences that weren't so positive. The quotes below depict the type of negative experiences that refugees had while they were in courses. The main issue was being othered and isolated. Two participants had experiences of being othered by their professors. The quote below gives an example of this.

> The first experience um it was very difficult for me…For the prerequisite course they learned software that needed for this course… Unfortunately, um the professor um because this uh, the practical courses is in a group… he afraid I cannot handle the group. He putted me in the individual group, and it was very difficult for me because actually I don't know about this software… So, it's difficult for me but after that, everything… went better.

> (Najah, female, early 40s)

In her first course at WUR Najah had to get work done on their own instead of as part of a group. She ended up failing the course. Despite this, Najah pushed on and took several more courses. She said that despite the difficult start it had been her dream to study at WUR and so she pushed to continue. She even retook the same course later and passed it. Mustafa was also othered by his professors. In Mustafa's experience there is an unconscious experience of being a refugee, of being othered. At the end of the course his "professor came, and he said, oh, we were expecting that you will say a lot of things about your experience" (Mustafa, male, mid 30s). This gives a clear example of how marginalized people can be made other from their peers by the professors.

Participants also felt othered and isolated from other students in their courses. The quotes below exemplify this.

> I am surprised of the students. Like they are not looking to make friends. They are coming to study, finish the course and goodbye. Heh. That's it. Here. This is my experience. For me

it's like yeah. It's for me, it should be more like friendly environment. They are friendly but they are focused on the – they are not looking to make friends.

<div align="right">(Fareed, male, late 20s)</div>

Most of the people, they already have their own friends and if you go for one month or two months you are not that easily integrated. So, everyone moves from one course to another, or they are scheduled for different committees, or they have different, they have different assignments. Cause I was doing only one course it was not that much interaction no.

<div align="right">(Sef, male, mid 30s)</div>

For both Fareed and Sef, the short length of the courses meant that it was difficult to make friends because of the length of the course and how busy the other students were. Fareed had been hoping to make friends when he joined the course in his mid-20s, especially because he was a more similar age to students in the course. However, because of COVID-19, the course was online. This made it more difficult to have interactions that were not related to course work. Sef took his course in person, but he too felt it difficult to make friends. However, it is important to note that mentions of being othered came up less frequently than mentions of being included and supported.

Finally, almost half the participants didn't complete at least one course. Reasons included the asylum process, mental health, language barriers, COVID-19, confusion, wasn't interested and couldn't manage (schedule conflicts). These are all interrelated. For example, Farah couldn't finish because it was COVID-19 and she had to care for her kid. There was a language barrier, so she was struggling with the course content outside of the practical. From the above examples, capabilities both impacted experiences and vice versa. Some participants, such as Saad and Najah, were able to use their experiences to their advantage while other participants faced difficulties because of online courses and Dutch cultural differences. These experiences can lead to different outcomes which will be discussed in the next chapter.

8. Outcomes and Feedback

This section is divided into two parts. Part 1 explores the main outcomes for participants after taking WURth-while courses and part 2 examines the most common feedback about the project. I have chosen to include these two parts in outcomes because experiences with the courses frame participant outcomes as well as the feedback they have about the project.

Outcomes from WURth-while courses

There are a few outcomes which stood out in the interviews. Outcomes can be both tangible but also more personal. The main outcomes that were experiences are that refugees got to learn how Dutch education system works, felt like they have integrated into society better, had a confidence increase and felt inspired, or haven't used the course for anything. Below I share and give examples of the main outcomes.

8.1 Learnt how the Dutch educational system works

The main outcome is that participants saw the Dutch Education system. This was also a common reason for taking a course in the first place. The two quotes below give clear examples of how outcomes are clearly linked to intentions.

> To know how the Dutch education system working. How intensive, or not intensive is, uh, how, uh, the online platforms working. How everything in the education system, how it works? It's really good that these kinds of opportunities are open for refugees. They do it before they think of bachelor or masters, so they get the idea.
>
> (Nura, female, mid 30s)

> For refugees it's really… good opportunity to, to enter the, the student life, now Netherlands life. Then if they want to do studies or courses now, they have background for apply for uh university… Because first time it was… a lot of requirements I don't understand… Now if

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I want to do study, if my English better or my Dutch better. Now if I want to do any, any study at university or HBO, MBO, it's more easier for me to know everything.

<p style="text-align:right">(Rya, female, late 20s)</p>

For both Nura and Rya, taking courses was a way to see the Dutch education system in order to make further studies more accessible. Nura spoke more generally about how joining WURth-while helps you get the idea of the system. Rya spoke more personally about how she now understands entry requirements and is more comfortable dealing with the Dutch education system. This was the case for many participants who took courses. Accessing and understanding the Dutch university system removes barriers for refugees if they wish to do further studies in the Netherlands. This shows how their capabilities were expanded by taking the course. This finding connects to the next section. This is because the Dutch university system was viewed by participants to increase integration into Dutch society.

8.2 Integration

Integration is also an outcome for some of the participants. The two quotes below exemplify the ways in which WURth-while is viewed to increase integration.

Yeah, I, I think it was very helpful and very good plan for help the refugees uh to get familiar with the uh, with the I think the level of knowledge of the Dutch uh university and also um it's very help them for integration, I think. Yeah.

<p style="text-align:right">(Najah, female, early 40s)</p>

I really encourage other, I, I I would like to see it in every university in Netherlands because it will make bigger chances for refugees to work in the future and to involve, involve, and engage with the Dutch community easier. And in the work environment.

<p style="text-align:right">(Ishaq, male, mid 30s).</p>

For Najah, because she took courses, she was able to see the Dutch system. She believes that it has helped increase her integration into Dutch society because she has been able to participate and learn about the Dutch system earlier on. Ishaq hopes that courses will be offered at more universities (see section 8.6) because it helps refugees, especially asylum seekers interact with the Dutch community earlier on. In both cases, seeing the Dutch system was an integral part of assimilating and taking courses through WURth-while was a gateway to do so.

8.3 Confidence increase and inspired

Participants also mentioned that they were personally inspired and that their confidence had increased after taking courses. Here are two quotes that give examples of this.

> Yeah, I will say that it… inspired me. Affected me in my studies you know… I considered some job opportunities actually. Just go to market and find a job… But I changed my mind later… Wageningen also in that point affected me.

> (Fareed, male, late 20s)

> It gives me the self confidence that I can do masters study in the Netherlands… I will be able to do it and I gained the confidence that it's doable. It's not that hard. Regarding the gap between my previous education and the education system here in Netherlands. It's really wide gap. So, this training course really closed the gap and broke the ice for me to study master degree normally.

> (Ishaq, male, mid 30s)

Fareed had initially planned on getting a job after he got status; however, after he took a course from WURth-while he was inspired to continue his study in the Netherlands. He got his bachelor accredited by NUFFIC and is now studying for the English exam as well as looking at pre-Masters. His plan is to do a masters in the Netherlands before he turns 30 so that he can access the student loans. Different to Fareed, Ishaq is still in the asylum process and had already

planned on doing further studies but now he feels more confident about studying a PhD in the Netherlands. Having seen the Dutch system has led to him being less uncertain and more confident in his own academic abilities and about what his next steps will be. While being inspired and having a confidence increase may not be measurable capabilities, they might increase a person's drive to do further studies which in turn may expand their capabilities.

8.4 Have not used the courses

Although there are some outcomes which had significant impacts on participants, a few people did not use the course for anything and felt that it had not impacted them in any way. These three quotes give examples of different reasons why the courses were not used or considered useful.

"At the end of the day, you're just getting courses… With these courses it not so simple… It not give you a very, not give you a way to go out, a way to your dream."

(Sajjad, male, early 30s)

I don't see after I left WURth-while, I don't see any added value that has helped me after that I left that could create more chances for me. Unfortunately, I don't see that, uhh, but until when I was there, of course there were some learning opportunities, but if you are trying to find out if WURth-while also influenced my success later that didn't happen.

(Sef, male, mid 30s)

My plan was actually just to participate and get the certificate for the future but then I just did nothing, and it was all about my procedure in the Netherlands and getting the documents or not. Maybe if I apply for university, I can show them the certificate from WURth-while. I have a certificate, but I haven't used it.

(Nalani, female, late 20s)

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Sajjad and Sef believe that the courses have not helped in any way. Differently, Nalani had hoped to use her courses to help her do future studies but then the asylum process got in the way, and she has not done anything with it yet though she still hopes to use the course for future studies. This finding shows that the courses may not have contributed to expanding people's capabilities.

Feedback for WURth-while

In addition to examining my research questions, the interviews also illuminate useful feedback for WURth-while. The feedback reveals ways in which the WURth-while project can be improved. Feedback can also be used to inform Dutch universities about certain aspects to focus on when building on or developing their own inclusion projects. The feedback is centered around wanting more assistance and communication from Wurth-while during their time in the courses, wanting better publicity for the project, and wanting the project to be extended to other universities.

8.5 Better assistance and communication

Several participants mentioned that they wanted better assistance and communication during and before the course. The quotes below give two examples of this.

> There could be… more communication with the students, with the refugee and explain each point in a simple way and in a video. It's going to be a great help and if there's any number that you can reach easily to the response or to the leader or to anyone that can answer you without going into all details. Just a number for WhatsApp you can contact. That's it.
>
> (Mikal, male, late 30s)

> If there are some sessions… Like sitting with the specific student like 'hey, how is it going?'. Like in terms of like, kind of, more communication… I think you need somebody. So, then I think you would feel more comfortable, more inclusive.

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Mikal wanted more clear guidelines and communication at the beginning of the courses. He also wanted increased contact throughout. Saad, hoped for more mentorship and check ins throughout. These two examples encompass the recurring feedback that participants shared during the interviews. When asked about this, Suzanna said that contact with refugee students can be quite difficult because everyone is very different because

> you don't know who needs more guidance or who is like a bit tired of me asking 'oh are you still doing well, did you find all the course materials?' Maybe it can seem a bit like too much. But for the other person they needed more.

(S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022).

She also shared that there can be cultural differences so some students will always ask for help when they need it, but others would not. She also said that she tries to reach out about how things are going but isn't always able to give assistance because she is not knowledgeable in their subject and they need to go to the course coordinator or other students, such as a buddy, for that information (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022).

8.6 Better publicity

Many participants also wanted better publicity because not enough people know about WURth-while. These two quotes are examples of why people feel that there needs to be more awareness about the project.

> But I think they can have more advertisements, yeah, to introduce themselves to the asylum seeker. You know before the asylum seekers they wait really shorter. I wait 1 year and 4 months for my first interview… I had time to study. I think, I think the rest, not all the people but I think more people would like to do that. But they don't know anything about it.

(Basheera, female, early 30s)

"You can do more promotion for the project because I have seen many qualified colleagues who are not aware this project exist or similar projects in different universities."

<div align="right">(Osman, male, late 20s)</div>

Both Basheera and Osman mention that people don't know that the WURth-while project exists. 17/21 refugees, in my study, found out about courses from their friends and the internet and only three had heard about courses from COA or other sources.

Currently, WURth-while is in touch with VluchtelingenWerk and the COA in the Wageningen AZC; however, this does not account for those who have joined WURth-while from far away locations. But WURth-while is only made of one permanent staff member (Suzanna) so advertising beyond Wageningen is difficult to do. Because of this, refugees are less likely to know about the courses unless they actively hunt for it themselves. It is especially hard to know about because of the no-study law during the asylum process which means that many people may not even think to look for inclusion courses in the first place. The distance between AZCs and inclusion projects links to the next finding.

8.7 Extend inclusion projects to other universities

There are currently a few existing university inclusion projects which are only located in the center of the Netherlands. Because of this many refugees who would elsewise like to join may face difficulties with travelling and reaching inclusion courses (see section 6.3). Because of this "these kinds of projects, they should be started in different areas and near the camp areas and near the people who easily get these opportunities." (Abdul, male, late 30s). Since the project has shown to have a positive impact on almost everyone who took a course, even if it was just something to do, many participants hope that the course can be expanded to other universities throughout the Netherlands.

This feedback from participants alongside the interviews with Suzanna and Ellinore help shed light on changes that could be implemented to better inclusion projects throughout the

Netherlands. After speaking with the refugees, it has become my goal to try and use my thesis and findings to promote this project to other universities in the Netherlands with the hope that they may also start an inclusion project. In the next chapter, I will examine how mental health ties intentions, experiences, and outcomes together.

9. Mental Health: Crosscutting intentions, experiences, and outcomes

As mentioned throughout, there are several links between intentions, experiences, and outcomes. However, one finding that crosscuts all the sections is mental health. I did not ask specific questions about mental health, rather it was revealed in participants answers throughout the interviews. Participants mentioned their mental health either directly or indirectly. Core aspects of mental health discussed during the interviews included stress, having a tough time, depression, and loneliness. Mental illness and trauma were also mentioned. This was often in relation to being in the asylum-seeking process and was more commonly mentioned by those who did not have official refugee status. Mental health is important because it influences the capabilities that participants have which in turn impacts intentions, experiences, and outcomes. Because of its prevalence throughout my study, I have devised a chapter focusing on how mental health has revealed itself in my findings.

9.1 Mental Health & Intentions

When asked about why participants were motivated to take courses through WURth-while mental health related concepts were revealed by several refugees as a reason to take courses. Taking courses as a distraction from stress and depression along other non-mental health reasons were discussed. They were typically linked to the asylum process. The two quotes below show examples of how the aim of taking courses was used as a distraction.

> The constant stress and without have any chance to study or to practice, yeah, I will get rusty with the time… It was for me so clear when I start to forget some basics. So, I want to do it yeah… To forget that I'm still in AZC, in camp. To store and not lose your brain muscles because after stress, after a long stress it can be really lost. And the third thing that you are making a small goal or small target at least. You are not just losing the time.

> (Anwar, male, late 20s)

The goal was to get educated and to experience the Dutch education system… and to stay motivated and to stay in track and because living as a refugee is different than living as a normal situation. Feeling stressed and depressed and feeling like having no goal. I really appreciate the projects to keep people busy to at least have a purpose or a goal.

(Nalani, Female, late 20s)

Anwar chose to take courses for several reasons but one of the intentions was to distract himself from the stress that he was enduring in the AZC. For Nalani, it was a distraction and a way to stay motivated during dark times. Anwar and Nalani were able to use the courses to stay motivated and distract from mental health problems; however, this was not the case for everyone. For Anwar and Nalani, their mental health appeared to be influenced by the environment (the AZC) they were in and thus by removing themselves from the environment they were able to reduce mental stress and depressive symptoms.

However, for other such as Abdul (see section 9.2), mental health problems were more closely related to personal trauma and difficulties they had experienced as a refugee. This is an example of how capabilities can be influenced by environmental factors and societal context they are in. Whether it is their current environment (the AZC) or their past environment which has caused trauma. This also shows how capabilities can frame the ability to make decisions and the experiences people will have. Unlike Anwar and Nalani, mental health problems contributed to difficulties during WURth-while courses for some refugees. This leads to the next section which explores how mental health influences experiences during courses.

9.2 Mental Health & Experiences

Mental health also impacted the experiences people had while in courses. Some felt under pressure because they were busy which meant they did not perform as well. Some participants, such as Saad (see chapter 7), mentioned they did not return to courses because they wanted to relax more and focus on Dutch language courses or work. For others, such as Abdul, mental health issues resulted in them having to withdraw from courses to focus on their mental health.

This was specifically linked to the asylum process as well as personal trauma. The quotes below depict examples of how mental health was a barrier to participating in the courses.

At that time, I was totally disturbed and mentally and not uh and then I decide to, I'll join university, that course and then I started that course but I, I, I, cannot continue that course because of my personal some issue. I'm mentally I'm not okay and there is too much stress, the problems with me are not okay and then I cannot continue that course. So, it's uh, difficult for me to continue because… many issues but some of them is my personal situation.

(Abdul, male, late 30s)

I was not in a good situation then I was really stressed out… I didn't take the exam. I was not in a good situation so my… psychologist told me 'You should not take the exam you have a lot of stress'. Then I had a contact with the university, and they gave me the second chance with I think one month of two months later. Then I, yeah, then I prepare myself for the second time and I was successful.

(Basheera, female, early 30s)

Because of mental health Abdul had to drop his course that he was taking. Like Anwar and Nalani he had hoped to use the course as a distraction. However, because the AZC was not the root of his stress, his own mental illness prevented him from being able to continue and he had to withdraw from the course and did not complete it. Basheera had a comparable situation where her mental health got in the way of her studies. Although she was able to complete her exam in the end, like Saad, she did not take more courses as she needed to focus on her mental health and the asylum process. For both Abdul and Basheera, their personal mental health reduced their capability to participate in courses.

For others, mental health influenced their experiences during courses but did not necessarily reduce their capability to participate. Stress and loneliness were cited as problems that were faced while with WURth-while. For some this reduced the quality of their experience and for

others it was a background issue which did not necessarily contribute to a worse time while in courses. The quotes below give examples which represent these two different experiences.

Uh, right now I don't feel any difficulties other than, main difficulties is feel lonely. Without family, because my family now still far away and they don't have enough resources to support their life and we thought we are going to settle our situation in a short time but unfortunately it takes quite a long time right now, but we hope we can resist our situation.

(Nadir, male, late 40s)

For Nadir, the only trouble he faced was loneliness due to missing his family and worrying about their safety. He shared that this did not really impact his time during the course but was an ongoing personal stress. Other refugees I spoke with also had similar difficulties with loneliness and stress while waiting for their families but when asked whether it influenced their time in the course, they said that it did not make it any more difficult. For others, personal stress did make it more difficult to stay focused. The quote below gives an example of this.

The situation is very unclear, and they are under uh stress. Um and um they cannot easily focus on the study. Uh but for examples I remember sometimes it is very difficult…to have a connection. Not always but some, for example, if I ask them [Dutch students], um, they treat me maybe not so friendly.

(Najah, female early 40s)

The unclear situation, such as waiting for family and asylum, was a barrier to being able to focus during classes for Najah. She also mentioned having difficulties making connections with other students. This connects to the negative experiences that participants had while taking courses Making friends and interacting with others was often difficult (see section 7.2). Though for some it was not a problem as they did not plan to make connections with other students in the first place. Others did not have trouble making friends or interacting. Despite this, feeling othered due to a lack of connection with Dutch students appears to be an isolating experience for some

refugees. This probably reduced the chance of using courses as a distraction from mental health difficulties such as loneliness and stress during the course. The experiences that people had during the courses also influenced mental health outcomes. In the next section, I will discuss links between mental health and outcomes.

9.3 Mental Health & Outcomes

Mental Health also impacted outcomes after taking courses. For some refugees, their own mental health hindered the outcomes, such as Abdul who had to withdraw and never finished his course. For others, the courses did the opposite and helped with their mental health. The quotes below give examples of how taking courses helped a participant through a tough period.

> That's a very dark period of time, but you can change it. An opportunity if, if, there is a way, you know. If you think there's a certain organization just, they are looking for you and they have, they give a value to your life. Yeah, that's how I mean the the WURth-while can change this very dark period. A very good opportunity.

(Saad, male, early 30s)

"It helped me to go through a tough time. Give me the chance to, to rediscover this part of me. Like that I'm able to study and able to participate and to get something new in my brain."

(Anwar, male, late 20s).

These quotes show examples of positive outcomes related to mental health. As mentioned in the last chapter, Saad had a quite positive experience and was able to distract himself from the negativity of the asylum process. Similarly, Anwar had intended to take the course as a distraction from the stress of the AZC. Anwar was able to use the course to get through a tough time in his life. However, some other refugees did not end up using their course for anything (see section 8.4). This was sometimes because they were unable to continue due to mental health issues. The examples throughout this section show the vast array of intentions, experiences, and

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outcomes linked to mental health and how they are connected to one another. As mentioned, mental health related issues, whether personal or social, have a major influence on refugees' capabilities. When mental health was 'bad' capabilities appear to be reduced and vice versa.

It is important to note that there is a limitation to my research. Although I did hear about negative outcomes related to mental health during the interviews, most refugees mainlydiscussed positive experiences and outcomes. This is likely because those refugees who had more negative experiences and outcomes from taking courses were less interested in doing interviews with me (see chapter 3.4). Mental health has been shown to be a crosscutting theme across all dimensions of my research. In the following chapter I will discuss my findings in relation to current scholarship.

10. Discussion

In this chapter, I compare my findings with current literature, theory and statements made by WURth-while. To do this, I continue to categorize the discussion around the three dimensions of intentions, experiences, and outcomes. In this discussion, the interconnection between each dimension and how they relate to capabilities is explored.

10.1 Intentions

Some of the motivations to join HE courses discussed in the literature and by WURth-while are comparable to ideas that arose in my interviews. In my research, the main reasons for taking courses were to see the Dutch university system, as a gateway to further studies, to update skills, and to stay connected with field of study. These relate to each other because they all involve the purpose of increasing opportunities for future studies or work. The main intentions all point towards further studies or work.

People have the intention to increase their capabilities by participating in HE (functioning). Motivations to take courses are also based on the initial capabilities that people had before they choose to join courses. Taking courses as an opportunity for the future is an example of the educational resilience capability (Walker, 2005) because this involves refugees choosing educational opportunities that are available to them. This makes sense as WURth-while itself caters to people with certain demonstratable capabilities. Refugees must have already completed some HE and demonstrated proficiency in English to join courses. This is in line with Drèze & Sen (1995)'s statement that education is a capability which influences the option to access other capabilities.

For example, without having participated in HE refugees would not be able to join courses which means they could not see the Dutch university system or update skills on their CVs. This would reduce their opportunity to build further capabilities. This was also apparent in the interviews conducted with Suzanna and Ellinore. For instance, Suzanna shares that through WURth-while refugees "can use the capacities that [they] have" by taking courses (S. van der Meer, personal

communication, May 16, 2022). This is also reflected in the works of Felix (2018) and Arar et al. (2020) who share that HE is viewed by refugees as a method to integrate better socially and economically

Duarte & van der Meij (2021) also discuss that accessing HE is a way to have hope for the future and to feel normal. During my interviews there were mentions of taking courses as an opportunity for a gateway to the future and wanting to feel like an international student. Participants also mentioned wanting to learn something and to update their CV and skills. Instead of studying solely for the purpose of learning, interviewees tended to consider larger goals of doing further studies, research, joining the labour market, improving their English and increasing familiarity with Dutch education system. This is explicitly supported by Morrice (2013) who found that HE courses are used to improve language abilities. This is another example of the learning disposition capability (Walker, 2005). Beyond promoting individuals' capabilities through an introduction to academic and labour opportunities, the WURth-while program can also ease cultural integration (Baker et al., 2019) and prepare participants for unknown expectations in their field (Morrice, 2013).

Structuring time was mentioned by Crea (2016) and WURth-while (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022) as a reason for taking courses. Although not one of my main findings, several participants did cite having 'something to do' as a reason for taking a course. According to my literature review, this is not addressed in current scholarship. However, it makes sense in context because my study is framed around a specific inclusion project rather than on general HE. This is also linked to the asylum process and COVID-19 because those who were in AZCs when they took courses were often looking for a distraction from mental health issues or something to do during the pandemic. This is reconfirmed in my interview with Ellinore as she also mentioned that many people wanted to distract themselves from the asylum process, especially during COVID-19 (E. van Driel, personal communication, May 12, 2022).

There are some findings of mine that were not discussed in the literature. While mental health is discussed as a barrier to entering HE, it is less directly addressed as a reason for taking courses in the first place. As noted in chapter 9, mental health is apparent throughout all three dimensions

of my research. In the literature, it is likely that the focus on mental health as a barrier to participation in HE is related to the fact that most studies done before mine purely focus on experiences. Mental health has also become a global concern in recent years so participants in my study may have been more willing to mention it throughout my interviews. Within my study, none of the participants I spoke with specifically mentioned reducing poverty or discrimination (Stevenson & Willot, 2007) as a reason to join HE. However, there were some brief mentions of integration into Dutch culture and the labour force which could be directly related to reducing personal discrimination and poverty.

In this section, I compared the intentions of refugees to take courses with the literature and interviews with WURth-while. Similar motivations included increased opportunities and using time well, while COVID-19 and mental health were not mentioned in relation to intentions in the literature. In the next part, I will examine experiences.

10.2 Experiences

As mentioned before, the current literature focuses mainly on refugee experiences, with specific focus on barriers. Although it is important to acknowledge Morrice (2013)'s point that I should not generalize refugee experiences, I must agree with Arar (2021) in this case. He points out that although refugees are not a homogenous group, they may experience similar circumstances when it comes to barriers faced in HE. This appears to be the case for many of my findings. In this study, I have divided experiences into barriers to participation and positive and negative interactions. The most common barriers to experiencing inclusion courses are the asylum experience, lack of time, travel distance, and COVID-19. Different experiences and barriers to studying impact the capabilities that people can build. For instance, refugees who had to stop courses due to COVID-19 were not able to add courses to their resume.

Before I begin examining similarities and differences between my work and the literature, I believe it is important to note there is one very similar study to my own. In her 2018 study, Sontag examines the experiences of highly educated refugees in Swiss inclusion projects. To my knowledge this is the only study that is akin to this thesis. However, there are some differences

between my research and Sontag's. Sontag (2018) bases her conceptual framework on institutional structure and how that influences refugees in HE courses. I have chosen to take a different approach, using the capabilities approach to look at the agency of the refugees themselves rather than focus on structure.

Like the literature, the asylum process emerged as a recurring barrier in my interviews. This is because it cut into peoples' schedules of being busy, exacerbated mental health issues, and made studying difficult in the AZC. My findings are similar to those of Sontag (2018) who found that refugees had issues with studying in the AZC because of noise. My data adds onto this as participants regularly cited Wi-Fi problems and lack of privacy. Suzanna builds off this by having mentioned that the situation at the AZC is an issue for refugees because of lack of space, poor internet, and/or inability to focus (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022). In contrast with the literature, the asylum process itself hindered participation in courses. Refugees often had to prepare for interviews or were relocated which meant that they had less time to study, needed to drop a course or were unable to take future courses despite wishing to. Van Tubergen (2022) saw the asylum process is as a deterrent to refugees entering HE in the future but my data illustrates how it can hinder the whole experience. This is likely due to the unique focus of my research on courses that refugees are able to take during the asylum process rather than focusing on general entry into university.

It is evident that the asylum process reduces the capabilities that refugees have and inhibits their ability form new capabilities. For many 'emotional integrity' can be a challenge (Walker, 2005). This is because many refugees deal with mental health problems which can be shaped by the asylum process. For example, Suzanna mentions how it is chaotic time for participants, and they may be ashamed to ask for help (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022). Mental health is a challenge refugees face in HE itself (Arar, 2021). Mental health can be a barrier to using and developing capabilities and achieving functionings. These capabilities can be academic ones or personal goals. This likely contributes to the more negative experiences that refugees have had during courses. Not only does mental health influence experiences, but it also influences the intentions to take courses as many refugees often want to take courses as distractions. Mental health also impacts the outcomes (or functionings) that people achieve.

Time constraints mean that balancing family, work, and study is difficult (Morrice, 2013; Shakya et al., 2010; Morrice, 2009). This is apparent in my findings. Refugees often must work for Gemeente and take Dutch integration courses at the same time. Some are also preoccupied with family, an experience also presented in the literature. Moreover, Sontag (2018) revealed that refugees may be encouraged to work rather than join HE by social services. A few of my participants had to work for Gemeente and thus lacked the free time to take courses. Again, it is very apparent that several of my findings are in line with those of Sontag (2018). This shows that those who are busy are less likely to build their capabilities from accessing HE. However, taking Dutch courses may lead to other functionings which may help refugees with their initial goals, especially for those interested in integrating into Dutch society. It is clear that experiences can also frame the opportunities that refugees are offered.

In the literature, cost is also a large barrier. This was the main finding mentioned by Stevenson & Baker (2018) and others (Giles, 2018; Felix, 2018; Shakya et al., 2010). Cost is also a consideration in my findings but for different reasons. Because the WURth-while courses are free, financing tuition fees is mute. However, affording transportation to courses was a major issue for many participants who did not live in Wageningen. This was due to the limited stipend or salary that refugees got from COA or Gemeente. Again, this finding is backed up by Sontag (2018). This problem is especially prevalent when refugees' universities are in another city from where they are taking courses.

Adding onto that, transit distance was also one of my key findings. I found that some refugees travelled as much as five hours in a day to reach courses at WUR. This shows how important it was for them to participate in WURth-while courses. This was supported by my interviews with Suzanna and with Ellinore. Suzanna said there were issues with funding travel (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022). Further backing up my findings, Ellinore discusses how "the public transport system in the Netherlands makes it so impossible to actually get a refugee from one point to another" (E. van Driel, personal communication, May 12, 2022) because refugees often don't have OV Chipkaarts (transit card) and buses don't take cash anymore. So, it was hard to bring refugees in for in person exams during COVID-19 (E. van Driel, personal communication, May 12, 2022). This is backed up by Sontag (2018) who says

refugees who live further away from their university face difficulties with affording transportation.

Beyond making it difficult to attend courses, travel distance can discourage participants from staying in them. This was less of an issue during COVID-19 because refugees had to take online courses (van Dijk, 2021). This in turn shaped the capabilities people had. For examples, for those not living in Wageningen, it reduced some barriers to taking courses because they did not have to pay for transit. On the other hand, this caused issues for those living in AZCs and those who had to take care of family members. This shows that, like mental health, COVID-19 is related to the other barriers. When I asked Suzanna if COVID-19 had caused any difficulties she shared that there weren't any to her knowledge. This is probably because she was more distant from the WURth-while students due to the online format.

Having complications with foreign diploma accreditation is also a main challenge explored by the literature. This was mentioned by some participants in my research as a barrier to further studies and joining the workforce. However, for others having their diploma accredited meant they could join Dutch society. This is similar to intentions where past education shapes the capabilities people have. It appears that this influences the opportunities that come to them as well. In my research, foreign degree accreditation did not come up as a barrier to taking courses. This is a limitation in my research. I was only able to interview refugees who had been accepted into the project and, by extensions, were those were able to successfully send their credentials to WURth-while. Some participants did mention having their degrees accredited by NUFFIC, but it was in relation to accessing the labour market and further studies rather than for entering a WURth-while course. Again, based on the framing of the study this makes sense, due to the focus on temporary and free university courses.

Language and academic writing are also a large barrier according to current scholarship (Stevenson & Baker, 2018; Felix, 2016). However, in my findings this was not as prevalent, though it was mentioned. This was likely because participants were required to have a certain level of English before joining. Like the last limitation mentioned, I was only speaking with participants who were sufficiently proficient in English to start a course. Some of the participants

did have a lower level of English and said that it hindered their experience and ability during class. This matches up with Duarte & van der Meij (2021)'s point that taking classes and learning will be more difficult due to a language barrier. In this case, participants already had language capabilities which allowed them to participate in courses.

Other less common challenges in the literature, that my testimonial reinforces, include difficulties in making social connections (Ramsay & Baker, 2019). For example, in my study Several participants mentioned how hard it was to make friends and feel included. However, for other participants this was not the case. This is backed up by WURth-while's finding that participants felt more included and had connections with professors, other students, and buddies (van der Meer et al., 2021). Age (Morrice, 2013; Stevenson & Baker, 2018) was also discussed by a couple participants, but less as a barrier than expected. However, age was more significant for accessing student loans for further education.

In Morrice (2013)'s study and Lee & Sehoole (2019) studies on refugees in HE, they found that people were overall satisfied with their time in university. This is in line with my findings and discussion with WURth-while. In general, even if they did not pass courses, refugees stated that they had a good time and did not face many complications. Ellinore also reported that many participants had a "good time" (E. van Driel, personal communication, May 12, 2022). Experiences during courses led to a variety of outcomes for participants which I will analyse in the next section. Positive and negative experiences were mainly related to interactions that people had during the course but don't appear to influence their overall outcomes.

10.3 Outcomes

Because experiences influence the capabilities that people can build, they often impact the opportunities or functionings that are had. In my research the most common outcomes were that people were introduced to the Dutch education system, labour market, and culture. Some felt an increase in confidence or inspiration and others did not use the course for anything. Outcomes of participating in HE for refugees is underexplored in the literature. However, there are a few scholarly works which back up by my findings.

The intentions refugees have for taking courses are also realised in some of the experiences and outcomes. Being able to understand the university system is a barrier to entering and staying in HE (van Tubergen, 2022; Wache & Zufferey, 2013, as cited in Ramsay & Baker, 2019; Sontag, 2018) and may explain my why refugees wanted to see the Dutch university system. In my findings this was mentioned by many to facilitate easier entrance into further studies in the future. This outcome is supported by WURth-while's finding in their evaluation report that refugees could see the Dutch system (van der Meer et al., 2021). Seeing as understanding the university system is a barrier to partaking in HE, it makes a lot of sense why so many participants wanted to see the system before they entered an actual degree. A few participants had already done HE in the Netherlands and they mentioned how the program didn't help them see the Dutch education system but how they struggled in their past Dutch degrees and could see how it would help. My participants also briefly mentioned that they had some issues with understanding the system at first. This is reinforced by Suzanna's mention that refugees may not know what is required and lack the information to do things at the university (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022).

Through exposure to the Dutch education system some refugees were able to build their capability to integrate into society and the labour market. According to Drèze & Sen (1995), this is a capability that is developed by accessing HE. The idea that refugees may have better future employment opportunities after taking part in HE (van Tubergen, 2022; Felix, 2018; Baker et al. 2019) backs up my finding that students felt they were more integrated with increased chances of doing further studies or a job. Improving skills, language and knowledge are linked to the intentions that participants in my research had.

Increased confidence and inspiration are also one of my findings. This is backed up by Morrice (2009)'s mention that confidence increase is a potential symptom of taking training programs and courses. It is also line with WURth-while's findings in their most recent evaluation report of the project. They found that taking the course increased confidence (van der Meer et al., 2021). Increased inspiration and confidence are forms of empowerment. According to Drèze & Sen (1995), empowerment is one of the ways that education increases individual freedom (or capabilities). Participating in courses also offered some participants Walker (2005)'s learning

disposition capability because those who had a confidence increase were often inspired to do further studies.

On the other hand, outcomes are not as existent for everone. Riemsdjik & Axelsson (2021) state that even if refugees take training courses, they don't necessarily find jobs and, in my study, many participants did not use the courses. This shows that not everyone may have been able to build their capabilities. This is likely due to a variety of reasons such as the mental health and COVID-19 challenges that participants experienced. This was not brought up in WURth-while's evaluation report. This is likely because refugees may have not been comfortable sharing with staff from WURth-while that they did not have positive outcome from taking courses.

Other findings by WURth-while were that students felt intellectually useful, had progressed in their field, developed personally, and experienced meaningful interactions with other students (van der Meer et al., 2021). While these are all categorized as outcomes for students who have taken courses through WURth-while, they are very connected to the intentions which many students mentioned rather than the main outcomes I found. Wanting to stay in touch with their field and having something to do and stay intellectually useful were some of the main intentions which I think participants succeeded in as many mentioned that they were happy with the course in their field. However, I have not included this as one of the main outcomes in my study because there were more prevalent ones. I didn't hear much about personal development from participants and only one participant discussed having a cultural interaction with other students. According to my interview with Suzanna, many participants also do further studies (S. van der Meer, personal communication, May 16, 2022). This is reflected in my findings however, agreeing with the work of Morrice (2009), there is no proof that the course is what helped refugees into further opportunities.

In my findings, capabilities are shown to increase equality for refugees by allowing them access to Dutch society during the asylum process, thus providing potential opportunities for them in the future. This is relevant to the field of international development because education projects such as WURth-while expand refugees' freedoms by transforming their livelihoods. Inclusion

projects offer opportunities for development by reducing the inequalities that refugees experience upon arrival in the Netherlands.

11. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to gain a deeper insight into HE inclusion projects for refugees in the Netherlands. To my knowledge it is the first of its kind in the country. I was able to do this by running 21 in depth interviews with refugees who participated in WURth-while. From these interviews, I was able to categorize the findings into three core dimensions of intentions, experiences, and outcomes. This case examined the three dimensions for refugees who have taken free inclusion courses and how it is connected to their capabilities. I found that capabilities alter and are shaped by all three dimensions. I also found that mental health was a determining factor in the intentions, experiences, and outcomes for people.

Having prior education shapes the capabilities refugees have and in turn influences the decisions they can make and the experiences they have. The main intentions expressed by refugees to join courses were to see the Dutch education system, to pursue further studies, update skills and their CV, and to stay in contact with their field of studies. For the purposes of this study, experiences were categorized into barriers and interactions. These all appeared to be related to the goal of participating in further education or the labor market. Critically, mental health was a factor which heavily influenced whether people wanted to join courses.

Experiences may or may not cause transformations that lead to different experiences for refugees. This is highly dependent on if refugees experienced certain barriers to taking courses. Barriers were especially influenced by whether a refugee was in the asylum process, their schedule, distance to class, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Many of the barriers influenced one another. For example, COVID-19 affected people living the AZC more than those who did not. Mental health impacted experiences during courses as well. Positive experiences were mainly surrounding interactions with professors and WURth-while and having a generally positive experience. Experiences with the courses also impacted the capabilities refugees were able to build with barriers often influencing the opportunities and outcomes they could have.

The outcomes included from participating in WURth-while included introduction to the Dutch university system, social/cultural integration, increased confidence, and no results for some.

Outcomes or functionings are also dependent on the initial goals refugees had, the choices made and the capabilities that refugees have, either prior or based on their experiences during course. The three dimensions are all interconnected and observably impacted by mental health, and COVID-19 which had variable influence on experiences. My findings are generally in line with current discussions in the literature as well as the views of the WURth-while project.

This work is relevant because there are currently more and more highly educated refugees entering the Netherlands and other countries. My research has shown that refugees capabilities to participate in HE are influenced by and shape their intentions, experiences and outcomes when participating in HE. From my findings, I would like to make some recommendations, both for WURth-while and on a larger scale. In terms of project-specific recommendations, WURth-while needs more staff to help expand their project and increase advertisement as well as offering better communication and assistance during the courses. Netherlands wise, there should be more inclusion projects expanded to universities close to AZCs throughout the country. Seeing as WURth-while is a small project with only one permanent staff member and around 25 refugees a year in the initiative it is feasible for universities to implement the project.

There should also be more training programs offered to refugees to help them adapt to the Dutch system of HE and the labour market. Because the asylum and integration process in the Netherlands is a challenging time, projects such as WURth-while offer opportunities for refugees to do something and distract themselves from the dark period they can be in. This research shows that inclusion projects can grow refugees' capabilities. Thus, these projects are necessary and should be continued not only at WUR but at universities throughout the Netherlands. I hope that in the future more opportunities will be offered for refugees to access HE.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Interview Guide Participants

Interview Guide

Introduction

Hello and nice to meet you! As a reminder my name is Rachel Henderson, and I am a student in the International Development Studies Masters at Utrecht University. For my thesis research I have teamed up with the WURth-while project at WUR to examine the experiences and outcomes of refugees who have taken a course (or more) at WUR through the Wurth-while project. The information collected from the interviews will be used for two purposes. It will be used for the WUR to gain further insight into the WURth-while project. The information will also be used for my thesis, with broader considerations of whether projects such as WURth-while influence experiences with integration in the Netherlands. The interview will take roughly 60 minutes. Your participation has no anticipated associated risks; however, at any time you can stop or withdraw from the interview or research.

Option 1: In Person
Before we begin, I will need you to read and sign the consent form. Please let me know if you have any questions.
(Begin recording once consent form is signed)

Option 2: Online
Before we begin, I will ask for your consent. I will read several statements. With each statement I will check if you agree. Please let me know if you have any questions throughout.
Do you agree too
- *Being recorded for transcription and analysis purposes (I will begin the recording now)*
- Notes will be taken during the interview
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by me as the research investigator
- Access to the transcript will be limited to me and academic colleagues who will read the thesis
- Summaries and quotations from the interview that are made available through academic publication, University Utrecht or the WURth-while project will be anonymized. This is so you cannot be identified. Any information that can be used to identify you will not be included in the results.
- The recording of the interview will be kept until thesis is complete

- Any changes to the above will only happen with your explicit agreement

Do you agree to these statements?

Do you agree to being directly quoted? Your name will not be published, and a made-up name will be used.

Content from the interview may be used:
- In academic paper, news articles and policy papers
- On Websites, such as Wurth-while's page
- In research feedback discussions
- In research notes

By orally agreeing to this you:
1. Voluntarily taking part in this research
2. Interview content may be used as mentioned above
3. You have heard the consent form
4. You don't expect to receive benefits or payment for your involvement
5. You can request a copy of the transcript if you would like to see it or make any edits to ensure confidentiality
6. You have had the opportunity to ask all the questions you could have.
7. You understand you can contact the researcher with any follow up questions in the future.

Okay, before I ask for your consent do you have any final questions?
Okay, now that I have read each statement. Do you give consent to being interviewed and the information I share being recorded and used as just discussed?
Thank you for agreeing to participate.
We will now begin the interview. As a reminder, you may choose to skip questions, stop the interview, or withdraw from this research at any point during the research process.

Background Information
- No. of interview:
- Interview Format: Online/In person
- Religion
- Name.
    - What is your first name that you go by?
- Age
    - What is your age?
- Gender
- Country of Origin
    - Where are you from originally?
- Spoken languages (including ability with Dutch)
    - What languages do you speak?

- o What is your skill level in Dutch?
- Living situation (Partner/Family/Friends)
  - o Do you live with friends or family?
- Refugee or Asylum Seeker
  - o How long have you been in the Netherlands for?
  - o Have you obtained residency in the Netherlands?
- Year participated in WURth-while project
  - o What year were you in WURth-while?
- Duration of stay in the Netherlands when participating in WURth-while
  - o How long had you been in the Netherlands for when you joined WURth-while?
- Distance from Wageningen during participation in project
  - o How far did/do you have to commute to Wageningen?
  - o Which town or city do you currently live in?
- Education level
  - o Have you done any prior HE before coming to the Netherlands?
  - o Can you tell me about it?
- Is there anything else you would like to share about yourself?

Joining the Project

1. How do you remember your time in the project? (For people who are not currently in the project)
   a. Good, bad, boring, interesting etc
2. Can you tell me about how you heard of WURth-while?
3. Can you share what led you to join a course through WURth-while?
   a. Advertisement, word of mouth, personal research
   b. After how long in the Netherlands did you decide to join WURth-while?
4. Why did you choose WURth-while?
   a. Something to do, networking, learning etc
5. What was the process of joining WURth-while
   a. Did you apply for other projects (such as Incluusion)
6. Can you share the goals you had when joining the WURth-while project?

During the time in the Project

7. Can you tell me about the course or courses you took at WURth-while
   a. Type of course, length of course, usefulness etc
8. What were your interactions with other students in the course been like?
   a. Dutch students
   b. Can you give me an example?
9. What were the professors like in the course or courses you took?
   a. Can you give me an example of your experience interacting with them?
10. What have your interactions with staff from WURth-while been like?
    a. Can you give me an example?

11. Did you have a Dutch student that showed you around the university? If so, what was your experience with that? (A student buddy is another student that helped you get familiar at Wageningen)
12. Can you share your experiences interacting with other refugees who were also in the project at the same time?
13. During your involvement in the project in what ways were you involved with the university itself?
    a. Only through joining courses
    b. Clubs
    c. Friends
    d. Public events
    e. Etc
14. What complications did you experience when participating in the project?
    a. Distance, budget, COVID-19, communication, age, peers, cultural/religious differences, etc
    b. Did you have a budget (money provided to you by WURth-while?)
15. What improvements do you think there could be for the project?
    a. Cost, Distance, Peers, Project itself, way it is run
16. If you are willing, can you share what factors influenced your participation in the WURth-while project?
    a. COVID-19, family, religion, asylum process, age etc

Plans/Outcomes
17. In what ways did you use your interactions with WURth-while to further your opportunities in the Netherlands?
    a. To take HE degrees
    b. To finish degree of home country
    c. To network
    d. To fill time during asylum
    e. etc
18. What do/did you plan on doing once you are done the course?
    a. Family, work, education
19. What do you hope to do? /What did you hope to get out of joining the project?
    a. Family, work, education
20. What have you been doing since leaving the project?
    a. Family, work, education

Overall Opinions
21. What is your opinion about the WURth-while project?
22. Would you recommend someone to join WURth-while? Why/Why not?
    a. Networking, stepping stone
23. If you could go back, is there anything you would change?
    a. About course you chose

b. About your level of participation

c. Whether you joined wurth-while or not

Time in the Netherlands

24. Can you share any opinions and or experiences about living in the Netherlands?

a. Family, school, work, learning Dutch, interacting with Dutch people, personal health etc

25. Can you share any difficulties you have faced while living in the Netherlands?

a. Family, school, work, learning Dutch, interacting with Dutch people, personal health etc

b. Can you tell me your experience with Dutch courses in the Netherlands?

c. Can you share any differences between living here and back home?

d. Have you had any difficulties with accessing infrastructure?

i. Such as health care

ii. Transport

Final Question

26. Is there anything else you would like to share?

a. Experience with WURth-while, Netherlands; about self

b. Why you reached out

Well thank you so much for joining me today for the interview. You will likely hear from me in the upcoming weeks if I have any clarifying questions. I may run a discussion group in April, and you might hear from me about that if you are interested. Have a good rest of your day! Bye!

Appendix 2: Interview Guide WURth-while Coordinator

Universiteit Utrecht   **WAGENINGEN** UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH   **WAGENIN** UNIVERSITY & RES

Interview Guide

Introduction
Thank you for joining me in the interview today! The interview will last around 60 minutes. As you know I am doing this interview to learn more about the WURth-while project itself. This is so that I can better understand the responses that I got from the interviews that I have run with the refugees and asylum seekers.

Option 2: Online
Before we begin, I will ask for your consent. I will read several statements. With each statement I will check if you agree. Please let me know if you have any questions.
Do you agree to

- *Being recorded for transcription and analysis purposes (I will begin the recording now)*

- Notes will be taken during the interview
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by me as the research investigator
- Access to the transcript will be limited to me
- Summaries and quotations from the interview that are made available through academic publication, University Utrecht or the WURth-while project will be anonymized. This is so you cannot be identified. Any information that can be used to identify you will not be included in the results.
- The recording of the interview will be kept until thesis is complete
- Any changes to the above will only happen with your explicit agreement

Do you agree to these statements?

Do you agree to being directly quoted? Your name will not be published, and a pseudonym will be used.

Content from the interview may be used:
- In academic paper, news articles and policy papers
- On Websites, such as Wurth-while's page
- In research feedback discussions
- In research notes

Okay, before I ask for your consent do you have any final questions?

Thank you for agreeing to participate.

We will now begin the interview. You can withdraw from this research at any point during the research process.

Background Information
- Interview Format: Online/In person
- Age
  - What is your age?
- Country of Origin
  - Where are you from originally?
- Spoken languages (including ability with Dutch)
  - What languages do you speak?
- How long have you been involved in the WURth-while project?
- What is your educational background?

Personal Background Information Related to WURth-while
1. How do you remember your time with WURth-while so far?
2. Can you tell me about how you heard of WURth-while?
3. Can you share what led you to get involved with WURth-while?
4. Why did you choose to work at WURth-while?
5. Can you share the goals you had when joining the WURth-while project?
6. What was your work/study experience before doing WURth-while?
7. What do you do other than working at WURth-while?
8. How long have you worked for WURth-while?
9. What is your official position for WURth-while?
   a. What do you do for your job?
10. What have your experiences with WURth-while been like so far?
11. Can you tell me about your experiences interacting with refugee participants?
12. Can you tell me about your experiences interacting with volunteers?
13. How many volunteers have you had?
    a. How did you recruit volunteers?
14. Can you tell me about your experiences interacting with other staff at WUR?
    a. Course coordinators etc.

Background on WURth-while
15. When was WURth-while formed?
16. Why was WURth-while formed?
17. Can you tell me about how WURth-while started?
18. What are the purposes of WURth-while?
19. What does WURth-while do?

20. Can you tell me about how WURth-while gets participants?
    a. Advertisements?
    b. Word of mouth?
21. Can you tell me about the application process?
    a. Too what extent do you assess the level of English of the participants?
22. How many participants have you had per term/year?
23. How many applications from participants vs number of participants accepted?
24. How many participants do more than one course?
25. What differences have there been for WURth-while between before COVID-19, during COVID-19 and after COVID-19?
26. Can you tell me about the buddy project and what came of it?

Participants in WURth-while

27. What have been the outcomes for participants from WURth-while so far?
28. Many participants want to learn Dutch, why is that the case?
29. Many participants want to learn English, why is that the case?
30. How common is it for participants to continue on with a masters/bachelor/research/ work in their field?
31. What issues have participants raised?
32. What support does WURth-while provide for participants?
33. What misunderstandings or difficulties have you had with participants?
34. What issues have you helped solve for participants?
35. Have you kept in touch with any participants after they finished their time at WURth-while?

Opinions about WURth-while

36. What changes have been made to WURth-while in the last five years?
    a. What things have stayed the same?
    b. Budget
37. What improvements or changes do you think there could be for the project?
    a. Cost, Distance, Peers, Project itself, way it is run
38. What do you think about other programs like WURth-while?

Final Question

39. Is there anything else you would like to add?
    a. Experience with WURth-while, working in the Netherlands; about self

Appendix 3: Interview Guide WURTh-while Volunteer

Universiteit Utrecht   **WAGENINGEN** UNIVERSITY & RESEARCH   **WAGENIN** UNIVERSITY & RES

Interview Guide

Introduction

Hello and nice to meet you! My name is Rachel Henderson, and I am a student in the International Development Studies Masters at Utrecht University. For my thesis research I am collaborating with the WURth-while project at WUR to examine the experiences of refugees who have taken courses at WUR through the Wurth-while project. The information collected from the interviews will be used for two purposes. It will be used for the WUR to gain further insight into the WURth-while project. I will use this information for my thesis with broader considerations of refugee experiences with HE in the Netherlands. The interview will take roughly 45 minutes. Your participation has no anticipated associated risks; however, at any time you can stop or withdraw from the interview or research.

Option 2: Online

Before we begin, I will ask for your consent. I will read several statements. With each statement I will check if you agree. Please let me know if you have any questions.
Do you agree to

- *Being recorded for transcription and analysis purposes (I will begin the recording now)*

- Notes will be taken during the interview
- The transcript of the interview will be analysed by me as the research investigator
- Access to the transcript will be limited to me
- Summaries and quotations from the interview that are made available through academic publication, University Utrecht or the WURth-while project will be anonymized. This is so you cannot be identified. Any information that can be used to identify you will not be included in the results.
- The recording of the interview will be kept until thesis is complete
- Any changes to the above will only happen with your explicit agreement

Do you agree to these statements?

Do you agree to being directly quoted? Your name will not be published, and a pseudonym will be used.

Content from the interview may be used:
- In academic paper, news articles and policy papers

- On Websites, such as Wurth-while's page
- In research feedback discussions
- In research notes

Okay, before I ask for your consent do you have any final questions?

Thank you for agreeing to participate.

We will now begin the interview. You can withdraw from this research at any point during the research process.

Background Information
- No. of interview:
- Interview Format: Online/In person
- Age
  - What is your age?
- Country of Origin
  - Where are you from originally?
- Spoken languages (including ability with Dutch)
  - What languages do you speak?
- What year were you a volunteer for a WURth-while?
- Education level
  - What education have you done so far?

Joining the Project

1. How do you remember your time as a volunteer in the project?
   c. Good, bad, boring, interesting etc
2. Can you tell me about how you heard of WURth-while?
3. Why did you choose to volunteer for WURth-while?
   a. Something to do, networking, learning, goals etc.

During the time in the Project

4. Can you tell me about what you did for WURth-while?
5. What type of interactions did you have with the refugee and asylum seeker participants?
   a. What were they like?
   b. Can you give me some examples?
6. What type of interactions did you have with Suzanna, the WURth-while coordinator?
   a. Can you give me an example?
7. What was your experience with the buddy Program?

8. During your involvement in the project in what ways were you involved with the university itself?
   a. Only through joining courses
   b. Clubs
   c. Friends
   d. Public events
   e. Etc
9. What challenges (if any) did you experience while volunteering in the project?
10. What improvements do you think could benefit the project?

Plans/Outcomes

11. Can you tell me about why you decided to leave WURth-while?
12. What activities have you been engaging in since leaving WURth-while?
    a. Family, work, education

Overall Opinions

13. What do you think about the WURth-while project?
14. Would you recommend someone to join WURth-while? Why/Why not?
    a. Networking, steppingstone
    b. As a volunteer?
    c. As a participant?
15. If you could go back, is there anything you would change?

Final Question

16. Is there anything else you would like to add?
    a. Experience with WURth-while, Netherlands; about self

Appendix 4: Codebook

Theme	Strategy	Description	Sub Theme	Example
Capabilities (Capacity Barriers)	Deductive and inductive	Barriers could prevent participants from taking a course, hinder their experience during or prevent them from completing one. **Linked to Experience theme**.	• Budget and money • **Asylum experience** • Language barrier • Age • **Very busy (with family, work, language courses)** • **Travel distance** • COVID-19 • Mental health	"I did one courses in, uh, in 2019, 1920. Then my [[child]] was in the nursery. After that I tried to complete online but because there is no nursery for him uh I just was follow the, I couldn't go to the practical part just the online but after that because there is group work and a practical part I stopped."
Capabilities (Goals & Aspirations)	Deductive and inductive	The future plans that participants have and why participants wanted to take a course.	Future plans • Changing plans • Langugae Courses • More WURth-while courses • **Plan to do future studies** • Plan to do research • Plan to get a job Reasons for joining a course • Distraction • Gateway to Future (job/internship, research, **studies**) • Good chance or opportunity • Improve English • Networking • Not wasting life or time • **See Dutch University system** • Something to do	Future Plans "So, uh I just cancelled that plan. I just refused that option in my life and decided to uh study. The reason, the reason is get diploma, get a degree because get good evaluation in the Netherlands." Reasons for joining a course "Yeah. So, I had to start these programs to see the opportunities that they offer and the best one was in WURth-while in Wageningen because it gave me as I told you before an opportunity to participate in an advanced course that meet with my specialisation that is of course in the master level, not in the

			• **To stay in contact with field of study** • To stay motivated • **Update CV, skills, new information**	bachelor or something else yeah."
Course Discovery	Inductive	How the course was discovered.	• Internet • Friends • COA/AZC • Other	"I was looking for a PhD position. So, I'm doing normally research in the internet over different things and I came up with this kind of programs. WURth-while and I think in Utrecht another program. In Eindhoven also universities they had. Nijmegen maybe."
Experiences (Course itself)	Inductive and deductive	What participants experience during their time in the course.	• **Comparison to home studies** • course length (time) • Course type • **Didn't pass course** • Difficult start • Felt like student • **Good experience** • **Interactions (with students, professors, WURth-while)** • Involvement level	"Uh, actually, it was quite good. At the beginning the, the site, the application, how to use it was a little complicated because nobody told, explain what I have to do. And but I reached to the professor, she helped me a lot, she sent me even the book. I start to study, how to say, I start to manage it but uh I didn't had any contact with my group, I didn't know that I had a group except when I did the exam. Few points was really good and a few points was really just nothing."
Experiences (Outside course)	Inductive	What participants experiences in the Netherlands have been like.	• Accessing UAF or other agencies • Asylum process • COVID-19 • Culture • Dutch language course	"Just to, to refresh my knowledge not to be rusted. Asylum cases sometimes take 4 years, 3 years and a half. You don't know. You cannot really

			- English language course - Feels disconnected - Feels included or connected - Feels safe - HE studies in the Netherlands - Gemeente or government communication - NUFFIC or other accreditation - Other inclusion projects - Stopped or delayed career - Work	pause your career and your studying this long."
Feedback for WURth-while	Inductive	Feedback that participants have for the WURth-while project.	**More assistance and communication** **better publicity** - Want a degree or certificate - want training program - Good organisation - More course options - More staff **Extend project to other universities**	"Maybe they can extend uh the employees or something, you know?"
Mental Heath	Inductive and deductive	Way that refugee/asylum seekers refer to selves.	- Mental health - Depression - Loneliness - Stress - Tough time	"But for me, I was in shock, shocked after I come to here, I was, I had depression because I feel that my dreams gone out, went out. And I didn't start early to do something."
Outcomes and opportunities	Deductive and inductive	Things that participants have been doing since their time in the course.	**Confidence increase** - further studies	"Yeah, I will say that it's uh impre- yeah inspired me. Affected me in my studies you know?"

		Things that the course provided or didn't for participants.	• Got through tough time (link to mental health) • haven't used course • **Increased job chances** • **Inspired** • **Integration** • **Saw Dutch system**	
Participant Traits	Deductive	Descriptions of participants.	• Highly skilled/educated • Age • Asylum Seeker • Dutch skill level • Has done a bachelors • Has done a Masters • Has done a PhD • Has done post doctoral research • Hasn't completed a bachelor • Length of stay in the Netherlands • Living situation • Refugee • Speaks more than 2 languages • Work experience • WURth-while year	"Because it's a shared problem for all, mostly, all of the rea - educated, or highly educated refugees that I have met. They all face the same obstacle of not knowing where to study or what to do in order to continue studying and not to pause their career."