



Women change quickly while men change slowly:

Exploring gender perceptions of couples of East African origins in Sweden (Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia)

Déo Niyomugabo

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Déo Niyomugabo

Supervisor:	Oscar Larsson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development
Examiner:	Patrik Oskarsson, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Urban and Rural Development
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Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
Faculty of Natural Resources and Agricultural Sciences
Department of Urban and Rural Development
Division of Rural Development

Abstract

This study seeks to explore, from the perspectives of migrant couples, the challenges emanating from the change in gender norms during the integration process of migrant couples in Sweden. The research is specifically limited to migrants of East African origins (Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Rwanda) and the main intent is to scrutinize the evolvement of intra-household relations as gender norms change during the integration process. For data collection, qualitative methods have been employed and reliable data were generated through in-depth individual interviews. Data have been analyzed through the lens of relevant theories and concepts; Gender theory and household bargaining have been employed to discuss the challenges for couples as gender norms change during the integration process. The empirical findings revealed that the intra-household interactions between men and women are conspicuously shaped by the gender norms of the host country. This was evidenced by the reshaping of household bargaining in the migrants' families where women have acquired more bargaining power or the abilities to influence decisions in the households. Moreover, the new gender norms have engendered the alteration of gendered division of labor as evidenced by the upheaval of responsibilities and tasks between men and women in the migrant households. The research has revealed that these changes have triggered conflicts between men and women in the migrant households. The disputes are raised due to the fact that women have acquired more bargaining power through economic independence and men do not want to lose the autocratic power and control over the households. Furthermore, this study has revealed that, though migrant couples face awkward gender-related challenges, they have adopted coping mechanisms and more than men, women quickly adopt the Swedish gender norms and culture during their stay in Sweden. *Keywords:* Immigrants, East Africa, Integration program, gender norms, household bargaining, gender equality, bargaining power

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Abbreviations

DFID	Department For International Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GOS	Government Office of Sweden
IRIS	Inter Agency Regional analyst network
SFFP	Swedish Feminist Foreign Policy
SEA	Swedish Enforcement Authority
SEP	Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy
SFI	Svenska För Invandrare
SGEA	Swedish Gender Equality Agency
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nation Development program
UNESCO	United Nation Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization

1. Introduction

1.1 Problem statement

Across the world, migration is a pervasive phenomenon which plays a crucial role in changing the lives of people in both the sending and the host countries (Wiesbrock, 2006). Researches have revealed that migration provides opportunities and entails changes in terms of socio-economic development. This mainly concerns with poverty reduction, the acquisition of wealth through decent employment and changes in gender relations within the migrants' families (Bevelander, 2014).

Furthermore, migration entails challenges for the people who are engaged in it and, in some instances migrants encounter different hitches during the integration process. These mainly concern with cultural differences and language barriers which make it difficult to quickly find employment opportunities (Schwartz (2010).

Previously conducted studies have concurred that the culture of the host country conspicuously impact on the daily lives of Immigrants (Kruzykowski, 2007). In this respect, gender relations are inevitably affected as they are naturally shaped by cultural norms.

Researches have shown that immigrants of African origin bring their culture, gender norms, stereotypes and religious beliefs in the host countries (Kubai, 2003). In some instances, this creates a cumbersome situation in the integration process as the migrants' culture is, to some extent, not compatible with that of the natives. Or simply their traditional behaviors do not match the rules and cultural norms of the host countries (Logova, 2014).

Similarly, migrants of East African origins bring a diversity of cultures and norms to Sweden. This is due to the fact that Sweden and East African countries are different in terms of gender norms (Darvishpour, 2002); Gender inequality is more noticeable in different communities of the sub-Saharan Africa than in any other part of the world (UNESCO, 2017) while the Swedish government has made tremendous efforts to institute a workforce-based gender equality that appertains to social citizenship and egalitarian ideology. This policy is basically intended to promote gender equality in a sense that women and men are considered as *self-supporting* individuals within the labor market (Gunnarsson et al., 2004; Mannelqvist, 2007). Thus, moving from a society which scantily respects the

principles of gender equality to a country which proved to be advanced in enacting the egalitarian ideology seems to be exacting for migrants. Therefore, it is of paramount importance to explore the challenges for couples as gender norms change during the integration process in Sweden.

Scholarly attention to migration dynamics has solely sought to explore the underlying causes of migration known as *push and pull factors* and the economic outputs of migration which basically stem from the remittances sent back home (Adhikari, 2015; Roy and Nangia, 2013; Singh, 2018). However, the effect of migration on the social life of migrants, especially on gender relations and the difficulties associated to it have received less attention in Sweden. This interesting subject is uncounted for and represents a crucial research gap in social sciences and migration in particular.

Another point to consider is that a seemingly similar research has been conducted in Peruvian and Bolivian cities (Bastia, 2009) but the results obtained are context-dependent, and hence, cannot be extrapolated. It is, therefore, worthwhile and necessary to explore the challenges for migrant couples as gender norms change during the integration process in Sweden.

Previous researches have shown that 100,000 immigrants moved to Sweden in 2009 resulting in the net migration of 54,067 individuals (Bevelander, 2009). Considering the surge of migrants observed over the last few decades in Sweden, and taking into account various difficulties connected to the diversity of culture and origins of migrants, it is of vital importance to scrutinize gender relations and the integration process in the migrants' households in Sweden.

1.2 Research aim

This study aims to explore the challenges for migrant couples as gender norms change during the integration process in Sweden.

1.3 Research questions

This study has three questions that complement each other and in line with the research aim:

- How do household gender relations change during the integration process of migrants' couples?
- What are the challenges faced by migrants' families as gender norms change during the integration process in Sweden.
- How do migrants' couples adapt to the new gender norms in Sweden?

1.4 Study scope and limitations

This study focuses on exploring the challenges for couples as gender norms change during the integration process of migrants in Sweden. However, not all the challenges encountered by migrants are explored. The study is limited to the challenges which are associated to gender relations or the interactions between men and women in the migrants' households. Regarding the research participants, I have chosen migrant couples of East African origins as respondents.

Furthermore, the study did not cover the East African region as a whole due to time constraints, lack of funding and lack of translators for several different languages spoken in the horn of Africa. Only four specific countries of the region (Burundi, Ethiopia, Eritrea and Rwanda) were used to collect data through individual interviews. Moreover, the study focused merely on immigrants who moved to Sweden as a family or couple for a better understanding gender relations and the associated challenges during the integration process of migrants.

2. Background information

2.1 East African immigrants in Sweden

Like many other countries of the Global North, Sweden has received a sizable number of migrants from different parts of the world including East African countries. Over a few decades, one hundred thousand immigrants moved to Sweden resulting in the net migration of 54,067 individuals. This became the highest number since the post-world war period (Bevelander, 2009). Research has revealed that immigrants of East African origins have particular socio-cultural traits which are noticeably distinct from those of the host communities.

Historically, the East African countries have been characterized by gender inequality which is manifested in the power imbalance and the unequal sharing of opportunities between women and men (Logova, 2014). The relationship between women and men in East Africa depends on cultural norms and religious beliefs (Moyo, 2014). This usually puts men in the position of autocratic heads of households and excludes women from the decision-making processes. Additionally, women were to some extent considered as sexual objects and have limited power to influence decisions concerning their own sexual life (Moyo, 2004).

In this section, I thoroughly describe the migrants of east African origin in Sweden, which have been used as research participants for this particular study. The chosen interviewees are from four East African countries namely Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea and Ethiopia.

Informants for this study are migrant couples from the aforementioned East African countries who moved to Sweden due to various reasons. Though the research participants have some common traits and behaviors as they are all from East Africa, there are dissimilarities in terms of religion, culture, age and sex. I have interviewed four couples (four women and four men) and interviews were conducted separately. Three couples out of four are Christian (Catholic, protestants and orthodox) and one Ethiopian couple is Muslim. Even though they are not rigidly bound to their religious beliefs, they still practice some religious rituals such as communal celebration of Sunday Mass and mosque gatherings for worship.

Regarding the age, the interviewed migrants are from different generations and their ages ranged from 28 to 59 at the time of interviews.

2.1.1 Information about the research participants

The table below shows detailed information about the research participants.

Table 1: Details of respondents for individual interviews

Identity in the text	Gender	Age	Country of Origin	Religion	Marital Status	Level of education	Occupation
Interviewee 1	F	28	Rwanda	Protestant	Married	University	Nurse
Interviewee 2	M	31	Rwanda	Protestant	Married	University	Student
Interviewee 3	M	59	Burundi	Catholic	Married	University	Bus Driver
Interviewee 4	F	41	Burundi	Catholic	Married	University	Teacher
Interviewee 5	M	38	Ethiopia	Muslim	Divorced	High School	Bus driver
Interviewee 6	F	29	Ethiopia	Muslim	Divorced	High School	Working in hemköp
Interviewee 7	M	37	Eritrea	Orthodox	Married	University	Student
Interviewee 8	F	34	Eritrea	Orthodox	Married	Gymnasium	Working in äldreboende

2.2 The Swedish law in relation to gender equality

The gender equality law was promulgated in Sweden in 1979 and was eventually enacted in 1980. According to this law, Swedish men and women possess the same rights and conditions in social life. The purpose of gender equality act is to foster equal right for men and women in different spheres of life such as development opportunities, employment and working conditions. Though the act is gender neutral, it mainly focuses ameliorating the working conditions for women (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2023).

Similarly, gender issue became a separate policy in the 1970s and has had a central position in the public debate ever since. The primordial aim of Sweden's gender equality policy is to ensure that women and men have the same opportunity in education, health care and job opportunities. The policy also puts emphasis on the right to feely enjoy life without any fear of violence, abuse or violation of rights which is based on gender (Lang, 2015).

Subsequently, the Swedish government ratified the Women's Convention themed *The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women* (CEDAW) in 1980. This law was validated by the UN in 1979 with the intention of eradicating discrimination against women in all its forms. The convention has to ensure that men and women have the same rights all over the world. Thereby, Sweden was among the first countries in the world to ratify and enforce that law (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2023). Additionally, the Swedish highest decision making assembly (Riksdag) instituted a new gender equality policy goal which is stipulated as follow: "*Women and men should have the same power to shape society and their own lives*"

These laws were followed by a number of decisions made by the Swedish government in order to promote gender equality. In this context many laws have been amended in favor of gender balance and the eradication of discrimination against women in Sweden. For instance, from 1989 Swedish women were allowed to be recruited to all parts of the armed forces including the commanding positions. Moreover, the gender neutral conscription for the military services was adopted in 2010. In the same perspective the Swedish gender equality agency was established in 2018 with a mandate of fostering the gender mainstreaming (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2023).

According to Svensson et al., (2012), the policy of gender equality in Sweden is inextricably connected to the ideology of a social democratic welfare state (Svensson et al., 2012). In the course of formulating the Swedish welfare state, the aspect of gender equality has been prioritized in a number of welfare reforms which were oriented to labor market (Hernes, 1987; Sainsbury, 1996; Bradley, 1996). As measured in the global gender gap indexes, the Swedish model has been remarkably successful in terms of gender equality (World Economic Forum, The global gender gap index 2006-2011). To exemplify, Swedish women have a higher level of participation in labor market and education. In addition, the Swedish government has put in place policies aiming at reconciling family life and work, supporting families with little children as well as fighting against prostitution and gender-based violence. These policies have been formulated in the 1970s and have been explicitly reflected on as regulations that promote gender equality and eradicate discrimination of women (Svensson et al., 2012). Moreover, there are changes in gender equality which have been engendered by the membership of Sweden in the European Union (Svensson et al., 2012).

However, researches have unveiled some gender-based discriminatory practices which are remnant in the Swedish society. This is particularly found in specific social groups such as migrant ladies and single mothers (Svensson et al., 2012). Similarly, studies have revealed the subordination of women in the Swedish society which lies on two principles: the dissociation of women and men and the fact that men are used as benchmark. Though, the social system was based on the principle

of a “*dual income earner family*”, the concept of segregation between female and male was scantily affected in the public life (SOU, 1994:44).

2.3 Programs which are the first encounter of gender norms for immigrants

According to the Swedish Gender Equality Agency (2018), gender equality norms between women and men have been fundamental in the constitution and policy objectives in Sweden (Equality policy objectives 2005/06:155). Following the historian Yvonne Hirdman, gender relations in Sweden reflect the divisions of power and responsibilities between men and women and they have been shaped progressively in the Swedish welfare state (SOU, 1990:44). The continuous changes in gender relations are considered as renegotiations of “*gendered contracts*” in which the gender equality contract replaced the housewife contract in the 1960s (Hirdman in SOU, 1990:44).

The Swedish government has established a mechanism through which families with children get benefits such as housing allowances, child allowances as well as childcare and healthcare services. All these benefits were put in place in favor of women (Skatteverket, 2007). Similarly, the gradual social reforms such as the introduction of insurance on parental leave coupled with the sex neutral parental leave and the government-sponsored day care for children proved to be substantial incentives for the enhancement of gender equality. All these programs were initiated to facilitate parents (both mothers and fathers) to equally share responsibilities for their offspring (Gunnarsson and Svensson, 2009). Additionally, the education systems have been adjusted in a way that matches gender equality and has played a key role in altering gender-based stereotypes within education and professional career. In this regards, schools and higher learning institutions have embraced democratic values and have been obliged to promote gender equality (Gunnarsson and Svensson, 2009).

In the same framework, the Swedish government has instituted a workforce-based gender equality that appertains to social citizenship and egalitarian ideology. This policy is basically intended to promote gender equality in a sense that women and men are considered as *self-supporting* individuals within the labor market. Thus, the main focus is put on a *dual income-earner family* ideology rather than a *bread winner* ideology (Gunnarsson et al., 2004; Mannelqvist, 2007).

The social reforms that occurred in 1960s and 1970s engendered notable changes in terms of gender equality in Sweden. This mainly concerns with the egalitarian ideology that seeks to promote the participation of married women in the labor market without hindering their family life. It was meant to ease the combination of employment and family life for women (Gunnarsson and Stattin, 2001; Gunnarson

et al., 2004). This change was viewed as a driving force that enabled women to easily integrate into the public spheres of social life in the country. It thereby shaped the traditional gender norms that put women in domestic chores and excluded them from paid work (Gunnarsson and Svensson, 2009).

In 2006, the Swedish parliament conducted a social reform on gender equality policy. This reform altered the definition of gender equality from “*equal rights, opportunities and responsibilities for men and women*” to the expression that “*women and men should have the same power to shape the society and their own lives*” (Skr, 2011/12:3).

The new policy recognizes the differences between social groups and individuals and generated four objectives in relation to gender equality: The first one is about uniform distribution of power and influence. It basically put more emphasis on the fact that men and women should possess the same opportunities to actively participate decision making. The second objective is based on the idea of economic equality and the primordial intention is to achieve economic independence through equal access to opportunities such as paid work and education (Wennberg, 2008, 339-343; Gunnarsson and Svensson, 2009, 57-59). By describing gender equality in terms of economic independence, the Swedish welfare state considers the imbalance of power relation between women and men as a social problem. In this respect, the relatively lower economic and social status of women is interpreted as lack of resources (Hirdman in SOU, 1990:44).

The third objective concerns with sharing responsibilities in domestic chores and care work between men and women in the form of joint custody. Subsequently, rule of a joint custody for the child was introduced in 1998 and it is applicable in the case of parental separation. Even though, fathers are getting more engaged in taking care of children than they did previously, this field of work is still female-dominated in Sweden.

Finally, the fourth objective is intended to abolish the violence of men against women and advocates for the right to physical integrity for both men and women (Wennberg, 2008, 339-343; Gunnarsson and Svensson, 2009, 57-59). In this regard, the prohibition of purchase of sexual services constituted a remarkable social change in Sweden in 1999. This was due to the fact that purchasing sexual services is socially unacceptable and the criminalization of such behavior would significantly reduce prostitution which is considered as unequal relationship between women and men.

Active measures

Like many other EU countries, Sweden has taken affirmative actions also known as preferential treatment or positive discrimination in order to explicitly promote gender equality (Stevensson, 2005; Gunnarsson and Stevensson, 2009, 63, 76). In the EU context, affirmative actions are defined as “*giving a priority or advantages to a person in order to change an unequal situation, and so can be used only for as long as the situation is judged to be unequal*” (Lerwall, 2001, 342).

Affirmative actions are merely applied to historically disadvantaged or under-represented social groups in a given society. In some instances, less or equally qualified people who belong to those groups are prioritized over other individuals who are not part of those groups. Affirmative actions are used as tools to attain gender equality in various sectors such as education, employment, joint custody, sexuality, child-care, violence and power division in politics (Gunnarsson and Stevensson, 2012).

For instance, in the Sex Equality Act of 1980, the preferential treatment allowed hiring managers to select a candidate who belongs to an under-represented sex over a candidate of the over-represented sex with equal competences. These actions were taken in line with the government plan to attain gender equality in the sector of employment (Bondestam, 1999; Gunnarsson and Stevensson, 2009).

In the same framework, the government decided to augment the number of female professors in the universities and 1 professor out of 31 was employed due to affirmative action (Jordansson, 1999). Despite the efforts made by the European Court of Justice to promote affirmative actions, EU and Sweden in particular, are reluctant to use this model (Gunnarsson and Stevensson, 2009).

3. Concepts and Theories

This part thoroughly describes different theories and concepts that are used to analyze and interpret the results of the research. Following O'Reilly (2015), theories and concepts provide an analytical framework which Frigga (2002), helps to examine a social phenomenon. Thus, the use of different theories and concepts is paramount for the analysis and interpretation of the results. In this regards, gender theory and household bargaining which are relevant to this particular study, are herein highlighted and explained.

3.1 Gender theories

According to the concept of gender helps to understand how sexes are used to reproduce a composite of social relations. In this regards, gender theories have been chosen as a salient conceptual lens for scrutinizing this particular subject matter and they are employed as tools to explore gender relations in the migrant households.

In order to exhaustively understand gender relations and integration in the migrants' households, it is of vital importance to elucidate the concept of gender.

According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), gender is defined as “*social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female, the relationships between women and men and girls and boys*” (OCHA, 2012). Similarly, gender is perceived as the cultural and psychological differences between females and males. It refers to femininity and masculinity and is not directly connected to biological sex (Giddens, 2009). According to Kronsell et al., (2015) gender is fundamental in many debates and policy formulations and tends to be more than just sexual differences. Similarly, Connell, (2002) defines it as the social and cultural relations between individuals and organization around what is supposed to be the biological differences between women and men.

Gender relations:

Taking into account the nature of this research which typically explores gender relations in the migrant households, it is imperative to shed more light on the concept of gender relations.

“Gender relations refer to relations between men and women that are socially determined by culture, religion or socially acceptable ways of thinking or being. These relationships between men and women, as they exist in most societies, are characterized by the marginalization of women in decision making and other forms of power sharing in the home and places of authority” (IST, 2019).

Similarly, gender relations is defined the ways in which a culture or society defines rights, responsibilities, and the identities of men and women in relation to one another (Bravo-Baumann, 2000). Following Agarwal, (1997), the concept of gender relations refers to power relations between men and women and these relations affect economic outcomes in different ways (Agarwal, 1997). Gender relations are fundamental in regulating social relations in a given society. They are definitely crucial for questions regarding division of labor, laws, politics, religions, sexuality, language, exploitation and domination (Frigga, 2002). Dankelman (2010) argues that gender relations are dynamic and context- dependent; they are shaped by connections and obstructions between various symbolic dimensions (stereotypes, representation and cultural contexts), institutions and individuals such as identity (Dankelman, 2010). Gender relations are historically dynamic and are not uniform across the world. They are generally viewed as socially constructed rather than biologically ascribed (Agarwal, 1997).

Many feminists concurred that power structures such as age, social context and ethnicity are intertwined with gender – related vulnerability. These power structures remarkably impact on gender roles such as access and ownership of resources in the households. In this respect, several types of power relations are connected by structural, individual and institutional behaviors (De los Reyes & Molinari, 2005).

The organization of gender relations in the families is jeopardized by the domination and control over women by men. In this particular case, the labor of women is less valuable than men’s and is fundamentally considered as cheap. This makes women vulnerable to capitalist exploitation. Historically, gender relations were reduced to relationship between men and women instead of considering them as relations of productions spanning almost all spheres of life in a given society (Dankelman, 2010). According to Frigga (2002), gender relations are regarded as relations of production and are employed on the social whole as the basis of capital accumulation

In many instances, various mode of production --and particularly the production of means of life-- are shaped by gender relations. This also includes the division of labor between men and women (Doss, 2001).

Gender equality

According to Statistics Sweden (2018), gender equality refers to the fact that men and women have the same power to shape their lives and the society. This means that they equally share opportunities, obligations and rights in all aspects of life. Similarly, gender equality is defined as treating men and women the same way as derived from the human rights provisions. This implies that men and women are given equal opportunities to benefit from their human rights, to play a part in their social, economic, cultural and political development and equally gain from the results. The term gender equality is employed to explain the relationship between men and women (Miruka, 2013).

In the same way, Rolleri (2013) defines gender equality as a social condition whereby women and men share equal rights and a balance of power, status, opportunities, and rewards.

Gender equality has both qualitative and quantitative aspects; qualitative gender equality means that the experience, knowledge and value of both men and women have the same weight and are utilized to improve and regulate all domains of society (Statistics Sweden, 2018). Whereas the quantitative aspect of gender equality implies an even distribution of men and women in all spheres of the society such as employment, education and positions of power as well (Statistics Sweden, 2018)

The process of achieving gender equality in Africa remains exacting due to the mindset, religious beliefs and culture of the natives. However, there has been a slight improvement in terms of gender balance over the last 30 years (Mutume, 2005). The issue of gender inequality is exacerbated by a number of factors which mainly stem from the relatively low rate of educated women, the exclusion of women in the decision making platforms and the household headship which remains male - dominated (Chant, 2007). These combined factors lead to the feminization of poverty, which still a major setback for gender equality. In addition, women not only face poverty-related issues but they are also prone to heavy labor burdens (Chant, 2007).

3.2 Household bargaining

This research employs the bargaining theory to thoroughly explain household bargaining and decision making in the migrants' families in the face of new social norms. This theory is a paramount model for spelling out the uneven distribution of household resources and power between women and men (Bolt and Bird, 2003).

In the course of bargaining, intra-household interaction entails both elements of conflict and cooperation (Agarwal, 1997). In this respect, cooperative arrangement in the household makes household members better off than noncooperation. However, the cooperative outcomes may be more propitious to a particular party

over the other one in the household. This implies that one person gain results in another person loss, which leads to conflicts between household members (Agarwal, 1997).

The bargaining power of a household's member basically depends on her/his fall-back position (this concerns with the external options which regulate how wealthy the person would be if the cooperation deteriorates) also known as threat point. Thus, the betterment of the person's fall-back position results in improvement of advantages that person gets in the household (Agarwal, 1997). Similarly, Flinn et al., (2018), argued that the bargaining power considerably influences the decision making within the members of the household and the allocation of family resources is determined by the bargaining power of every household member (Flinn et al., 2018). Thus, members of the household bargain with each other while making decisions. Following the cooperative model of the bargaining theory, decision making in the household is contingent on the fall-back position or the threat point of household members (Chiapori et al., 1993). The fall-back position is also determined by the contributions of household members. Therefore, household members who contribute considerably are in a good position to be granted a greater bargaining power and can control the allocation of household resources (Sen, 1990).

According to Doss and Morris (2001), the gender of the head of household plays a vital role in sorting out issues and making decisions in the households. Men and women face disparate hitches in the households and solve them in different ways (Doss and Morris, 2001). To exemplify, there is a significant difference in doing domestic chores between men and women, and there is a remarkable difference in taking up modern technologies between men and women in a given society. More than women, men tend to rapidly embrace and practice novel technologies because they are in a good position to access the necessary resources (Doss and Morris, 2000; Doss, 2001).

Researches have revealed that women bargaining power impact on key household decisions such as labor allocation in different activities including farming work, domestic chores and wage work as well (Agarwal, 1997; Doss, 2013). A number of authors revealed that labor division in the rural households is considerably shaped by gender relations. In some instances, the gendered division of labor can intensify the feminization of certain domestic chores in the agrarian setting Maharjan et al. (2012); Bever (2002) and Quisumbing (2003). In most cases the labor division in agriculture depends on gender (Doss, 2001; Agarwal, 1997); Men and women are tasked with different duties in the rural livelihoods. However, these differences are flexible and can be changed depending on the prevailing circumstances (Doss, 2001). In some instances, women engage in tasks which are traditionally male-dominated.

These tasks are, to some extent, too strenuous compared to the physical strength of women (Jackson, 1999). For instance, farming tasks such as digging, threshing making terraces and irrigating crops are too laborious for female farmers (Kasper, 2005; Maharjan et al. 2012; Lokshin and Glinskaya, 2009).

4. Research methodology

4.1 Research design

According to Madriz, (1995), qualitative research methods give much emphasis on the quality of data in a detailed process. One of the most valuable qualitative researches is the use of in-depth interviews (one on one). This method encourages a natural conversation, which helps to get all details from the respondent. For this particular study, a qualitative research method was conducted to thoroughly answer different questions and to understand the reality of the migrants' family life.

Furthermore, qualitative research methodology uses two major techniques, which are the observation of participant and interviews (Morgan, 1988). During the individual interviews or one-on-one interviews, I took the opportunity, not only to listen but also to observe and analyze the body language of the respondents as well as their emotional behaviors when they were telling stories. Moreover, research has revealed that the reality is socially constructed and people make sense of every issue based on social interaction (Wendl, 2016). Thus, the qualitative method helped to understand participants' views as they are socially constructed reality. I created a connection and trust between me and the family members who participated in this study so as to ensure a free and smooth dialogue.

4.2 Data Collection

Data collection was conducted among families of immigrants who originated from the East African region. Eastern Africa is large, as explained in the previous sections. Therefore, we could not cover the whole region due to the time shortage. Only limited families met the requirements set for the interviews. Interviewed couples were selected based on their origin, mother tongue and the particular kind of relations between the members of the couple.

This was done so as to collect data from a wide range of respondents with slight differences in culture and background. It was, thus, essential to specify then categories of the ideal couples to be interviewed.

Based on the objectives of this study and the line of answering research questions, different criteria were adopted. These include the year of arrival in Sweden, the marital status (basically families), the level of education among the respondent and the specific origin of the respondent (rural and urban). Moreover, being married before immigrating to Sweden was a critical criterion for selecting interviewed families in this study. The main reason was to have a comparative analysis of the family relation back home and the current situation in Sweden. Living in Sweden as an immigrant involves multiple novel tasks, including parenting in a different society, job searching as well as changing a carrier. These criteria helped to compare what has changed in comparison to the life they had in their home countries, different challenges they have encountered, and the advantages of being in Sweden as a host country.

Additionally, the time of arrival of the immigrant families in Sweden was also another critical criterion. It helps to understand different experiences and challenges in the integration process and how the integration programs have been revised and evolved. The coping mechanisms over different challenges related to gender norms as a family experience over a certain period of time. The study was carried out in the municipality of Uppsala, Knivsta, and Stockholm based on the availability and residences of informants and a representative sample was taken from four specific countries, which are Rwanda, Burundi, Eritrea, and Ethiopia.

4.2.1 Categories of immigrants in Sweden

Table 2: Different categories depending on the number of years of immigration to Sweden

Categories	Year of in Sweden
category 1	1 -5 years
category 2	5-10 years
category 3	10 years and above

Another critical aspect was that, I was quite familiar with the various cultures of East Africa due to the fact of come from one of the four chosen countries and I have lived in 3 of those countries. It was an advantage for me because I am adept to some of the languages spoken in East African region such as French, English, Swahili, Kinyarwanda, and Kirundi.

Thus, I could easily understand some of the stories without using a translator. Moreover, there are similarities of culture among the four selected countries, which made it easier to understand some of the social characters of the different respondent and to interpret their body languages. For instance, Rwanda and

Burundi almost speak the same language but different dialects. For the cases of Eritrea and Ethiopia, two friends and classmates voluntarily agreed to help in the translation of languages spoken in the horn of Africa (Amharic and Tigrinya) during data collection. The language criteria were crucial in a way that respondents must feel comfortable so as to freely answer the questions. This was handy tool for a better communication and collaboration with different respondents as it helped to ask different challenging questions in other to understand the information given through emotions and gestures. Building a connection between the interviewer and the respondent was of paramount importance because the study involved family relations.

Finally, we considered the background and origin of the immigrants (rural and urban origins) in order to analyze and understand different perceptions of rural and urban families during the integration process in Sweden.

4.3 Sampling

Initially, eight couples responding to the criteria and the objective of this study were identified. However, we could not meet all of them since women and men from the same family had to be interviewed separately. This has reduced the total number of interviewees from 16 to 8. To capture the perspective of women and men separately was essential since it provided the opportunity for men and women of the same family to express themselves freely. It was such a good experience of hearing them as partners but interviewed separately.

4.3.1 Characteristics of selected respondents

The table below shows the details of the selected respondents

Table 3: Characteristics of selected respondent. Source: field data from March to August, 2019

FM code	Sex	Origin	Marital status	Area of origin	Years in Sweden	Mother tongue
FM1	F1	Rwanda	Married with 1 child	Urban	10years	Kinyarwanda
	M1	Rwanda	Married with 1child	Urban	3years	Kinyarwanda
FM2	F2	Eritrea	Married with 3 children	Rural	5years	Tigrinya
	M2	Eritrea	Married with 3 children	Rural	5years	Tigrinya
FM3	F3	Burundi	Married with 2 children	Urban	15year	Kirundi
	M3	Burundi	Married with 2 children	Urban	15years	Kirundi
FM4	F4	Ethiopia	Divorced with 2 children	Rural	10 years	Amharic
	M4	Ethiopia	Divorced with 2 children	Rural	10years	Amharic

4.4 Interviews

As mentioned above, this study employed in-depth individual interviews to collect data. According Ryan (2013), one to one interview consists of gaining insights into people's perceptions, understanding, and experience of a given phenomenon. In the course of interviewing, one interview usually took approximately two hours, which was enough time to navigate through all the questions but also not so long to avoid the boredom of respondents.

As stated above, women and men in the same family were interviewed separately in order not to influence each other when responding to different questions regarding their family life.

However, not everyone understood and accepted that we could interview a wife and husband separately. The constraint had been identified already before the beginning of the study, and some measures were taken accordingly. These concerned with informing the families about how the interviews will be conducted

and to have the permission of them before we could schedule the actual appointment for the interview. I had a few rejections of appointments but did not impact the outcome of the study they were anticipated.

The interviews with both women and men were highly informative. They provided a clear understanding of their different experiences and their understandings about the influence of Swedish gender norms and practices. The first contact with participants was challenging because I had to build trust between me and the respondents so as to get as much information as possible. Creating a good vibe and relaxed environment was a crucial aspect of the interviewing process because certain confidential information ended up being obtained and made it possible to discuss different sensitive topics.

Questions were clarified as much as possible to avoid the misinterpretation and thus, providing the wrong answers; question were described with a simple example that is easy to understand.

Before the beginning of every interview, several issues were anticipated considering the sensitivity of the topics, which sometimes involved the familial relationships and privacy.

By avoid any miscommunication and unethical behavior that would compromise the study output, the designed protocol was always respected. Before the beginning of every interview, we asked the consent of the respondent to ask sensitive questions, permission to record the interview, or taking pictures. Also, information about the interviewer was provided in order to ensure mutual respect between the researcher and the respondent.

4.5 Data analysis

Data analysis involved interviews transcription and the transcribed interviews were then revised. In addition, notes were taken about detailed information such as the first impressions with the respondent. During the revision of transcripts, other different impressions were highlighted, keywords were labeled, and relevant key sentences were identified.

Furthermore, it was observed that different respondents highlighted similar information. It was analyzed by identifying repeated words at several stages of the interview. Some eye-catching or surprising answers were underlined too. Answers and phenomena were coded as much as possible for the analysis purposes.

Also, the analysis involves a combination of more than two codes, which had similarities. Data were, then, analyzed through the lens of relevant theories and concepts. This was done by comparing your data with theory to look for patterns, similarities and differences between the general theory and the specific case.

Special attention was given to what I thought was critical and in line with the research questions.

5. Keys findings

This chapter presents a comprehensive narrative of the research results collected from the field. The research findings have been obtained from the individual interviews and they are organized so as to respond to the research questions presented in the first chapter.

Moreover, this section presents in –depth analysis of the results through the lens of the relevant theories and concepts presented in the third chapter. The analysis focuses on comparing data and theories to look for patterns, similarities and differences between the general theories and the specific cases. The first part of this chapter sheds more light on the first question of the research which is about how gender relations change during the integration process of the migrant couples. The second part is connected to the second research question and explores the difficulties faced by migrant families as gender norms change during the integration process. Finally, the last part of this chapter responds to the third research question which concerns with how migrant families adapt to the Swedish gender norms.

5.1 Gradual changes in gender relations during the integration process

5.1.1 The nexus between increased income and improved bargaining power for women in the migrants' households

This study revealed that gender relations have changed remarkably during the integration process of the migrants in Sweden. Among others, the reshaping of bargaining power within the migrant families is one of the changes that resulted from the newly adopted gender norms in Sweden.

Many of the interviewed migrants confirmed that the interactions between men and women have been significantly altered, especially in the decision making process.

In the beginning, migrant men of East African origin were considered as the supreme heads of households and possessed the full authority and control over their

families. This supremacy emanates from the culture and the traditional norms of their home countries. Eventually, after a long stay in Sweden, the trend changed and women gained power to influence decisions in intra-household negotiations. Based on the information collected from different respondents, the change was prompted by a number of factors such as the newly acquired economic independence of women as well as the orientation program which instills novel gender norms in the migrant families.

One of the interviewed women asserted that the change is due to the difference between the countries of origin and the host country in terms of gender equality. In some East African countries men and women are not equally treated in different spheres of life such as education and employment, and in some instances, men are explicitly prioritized over women. According to Santos (2019, young women are 1.5 times less likely to be employed or to take a formal education or training than young men in the East African region (Santos, 2019). This may be seen as hindering factor that prevents some women from securing jobs in their local communities and thus, they financially depend on their husbands.

"Back in my home country, I was not able to earn money because I was a housewife. I was 98% financially dependent on my husband. In Sweden, despite having a low level of education, I was able to attend the SFI and got a job in the äldreboende (retirement home). I make a considerable amount of money that I would have never got in my country of origin (interviewee 8, 19/05/2019).

Though it was not quite easy to estimate the income of immigrant families in both the original and host countries, the research has revealed that the education level of migrant women was very low in their home countries (See table 1) and the majority of them did not have income at all as they were not employed. One woman who originated from the rural area said,

"I was forced by my family to get married when I was only 15 years old and abandoned school when I was in primary five. My responsibilities back in rural Eritrea were only to take care of our two children and all other domestic activities, and my husband was a nomad moving cattle from one place to another to find pasture. Normally the majority of women in the region were housewives because there was no opportunity for them outside of their homes " (Interviewee 8, Uppsala 19/05/2019)."

However, some rural women could generate little income from agriculture as they could not secure paid jobs. Generally, women were financially dependent on their husbands.

The situation changed when couples moved to Sweden where women were able to access education and secure paid jobs.

Moreover, some women did not get employed immediately but benefited from other source of income such as family and child support, housing allowances, parental benefits and maintenance support.

5.1.2 Comparison of immigrants' social status in both their home countries and Sweden

The table below shows the comparison of wives and husbands' income and the level of education in their home countries and in Sweden

Table 4: The social status comparison table of immigrants from their home countries and in Sweden

FM code	FM1 <i>Rwanda</i>		FM2 <i>Eritrea</i>		FM3 <i>Burundi</i>		FM4 <i>Ethiopia</i>	
Gender	F1	M1	F2	M2	F3	M3	F4	M4
Education level in the home country	Secondary	Bachelors	Primary	Bachelors	9 years be*	Bachelors	No studies	Secondary
Education level in Sweden	Bachelor's in nursing+SFI	Master + SFI	SFI	Masters+SFI	SFI	Bachelors + SFI	Gymnasium	Gymnasium
Monthly income in the home country (SEK)	1000	5000	300	1000	1500	8000	200	2000
Monthly income in Sweden (SEK)	23000	21000	5000	9000	18000	22000	2000	30000

Be: basic education; Gymnasium: high education +SFI; (data connected from the field interviews from 5 March to 15 August, 2019). All the currencies used in different countries were translated into Swedish Krona.*

The Swedish law allows men and women to have equal access to job opportunities (Lang, 2015), and in some instances, women get better jobs and hence earn more money than men. Though this is quite normal in the Swedish society, it becomes very problematic when it happens within the migrant families in Sweden.

According to the interviewed lady from Rwanda, equal access to education and job opportunities for both men and women in Sweden is merely in favor of migrant women.

This is because in the East African culture, historically men have been the sole breadwinners of their families as most of the households are male-headed in their home countries. In Sweden, when migrant women get the same or even better job opportunities than their husbands, they are in a better position to gain economic independence and consequently improve their bargaining power in the households. On the other hand, this particular situation is not fairly accepted by migrant men as it puts them under strains and their bargaining power diminish to some extent. In some cases, men can even lose the headship of the household. She said

“Sometimes women earn more than men depending on how many hours they work and the nature of the work. This becomes a serious problem in the migrant families because the East African culture allows men to earn more in the family in order to justify that they are the heads of the households. It is an issue for my family because I have realized that my husband is not comfortable because I earn more than him. I have always noticed it in our family, especially when we are bargaining over certain things. I am convinced that my bargaining power has improved since I earn more money and I can significantly influence decisions in our family.” (Interviewee 1, Uppsala 10/04/2019).

The prevailing situation in the migrant’s households reflects the theory of household bargaining highlighted in the third chapter of this study. Following Agarwal, (1997), in the course of intra-household bargaining, the cooperative outcomes may favor a particular party over the other one in the household. This implies that one person gain results in another person loss, which leads to conflicts between household members. This is comparable to the situation of migrant men who lost over their wives; migrant women have gained economic independence due to employment and other social benefits and this has subsequently ameliorated their bargaining power in the intra-household negotiations. On the other hand, their husbands who were used to autocratically lead the rest of the family lost power and felt offended to some extent.

Moreover, Agarwal, (1997) argued that the bargaining power of a household’s member basically depends on her/his fall-back position. This concerns with the external options which regulate how wealthy the person would be if the cooperation deteriorates. Similarly, the financial means acquired by migrant women, in this particular study, determines their fall-back position and their abilities to influence decisions in their families. Thus, economic independence of migrant women corresponds to their fall-back position. This is evidenced by the fact that, under the prevailing circumstances, migrant women can still live a decent life even when they are separated from their husbands. To illustrate, one migrant woman opted for divorce because she was not in good terms with her husband.

The man said,

“After only seven months, she became pregnant and immediately decided to abort the baby. When I asked why, she told me that she never thought that raising a child in Sweden would be thought and that she did not want to make more children while others were still very young. I was confused because it was something that a woman in Eritrea cannot do due to our religion and culture. The disagreement escalated to a higher level and we get separated for almost one year until our families back home reunited us” (Interviewee 7, Uppsala 13/05/2019).

Additionally, Flinn et al., (2018), in their research on bargaining theories revealed that the bargaining power influences the decision making in the household

and the allocation of family resources is contingent on the bargaining power of each of the household members. Thus, members of the household bargain with each other while making decisions. Following the cooperative model of the bargaining theory, decision making in the household depends on the fall-back position or the threat point of household members (Chiapori et al., 1993). Comparably, the acquired economic independence of migrant women in this particular study vested in them the power to freely make decisions in their families. However, this research has revealed that the acquired fall-back position does not always guarantee the full authority and liberty to influence decisions. Due to the cultural norms and religious beliefs of their home countries, some women are still submissive to their husbands even if they are economically independent.

Previous researches have also proved that the fall-back position is determined by the contributions of household members; household members who contribute considerably are in a good position to be granted greater bargaining power and can control the allocation of household resources (Sen, 1990). In the same way, this study has shown that migrant women are in a good position to influence decisions in their families because they contribute financially.

All in all, this study has unveiled the nexus between the income for migrant women and the improvement of their bargaining power during their integration process in Sweden. Based on different testimonies of respondents (both men and women), and in light of the relevant theories and previously conducted researches, one would confirm the connection between the economic independence of migrant women and their abilities to influence the decisions in the households. This is expressed in the daily interactions between migrant women and their husbands and in the decision making process of their households.

5.1.3 Alteration of gendered division of labor in the migrants' families

As aforementioned, the orientation program has entailed changes in gender relations within the migrant families. In this section, more emphasis is put on changes which are related to the division of labor in the migrants' households. Research participants have thoroughly spelled out the dynamics of the gendered labor division in the migrant families, both in their countries of origin and the host countries.

According to the respondents (both men and women), the upheaval of responsibilities between men and their wives after migration is obviously recognized in the livelihoods of the migrants' families. The gender-based division of labor in East Africa heavily depends on the social systems of the countries coupled with the traditional norms and religious beliefs of the natives. When

families move to Sweden, they are exposed to a new social system, new rules and cultural norms which are typical to the Swedish society. With time, migrants are inevitably obliged to abide by the new rules and to adopt the Swedish norms.

Prior to migration, East African families have specific gender norms and tradition which are entrenched in culture of their societies. For instance, like in many parts of the world, the division of labor in East Africa is based on gender to some extent; there are certain tasks that are typically reserved for women while others are solely performed by men. This trend is socially accepted and is amplified by the customary laws of the local communities. However, the model may change after migration because the norms of the East African countries differ from those of the host country. One man from Eritrea testified that he was shocked when he was asked to undertake certain domestic chores which are normally carried out by women in his home country. He uttered,

"Back in Eritrea, cooking or doing dishes was not my responsibility; it even disgraces for someone who does it. I was a teacher, and that was my only responsibility; my wife did not have a paid job, and she was staying home to take care of our children and other domestic activities such as cooking, doing dishes, laundry and taking care of the children (Interviewee 7, 13/5/2019)."

This research has shown that the changes in labor division which exist within the migrants families are engendered by the gender norms changes. In this regards, the majority of respondents asserted that the Swedish gender norms affect the division of labor between wives and their husbands in the households. Moreover some behavior changes are acquired through the integration program which is also known as the orientation program or culture orientation (Samhällsorientering).

One woman said

"Newly arrived immigrants must attend the integration program in order to get a certificate "samhällsorientering." it is the certificate that gives a possibility and opportunity for jobs, schools, and loans. In the middle of the session, they teach us how to share responsibilities. For example, they say women should cook four days a week and men three days. It should be the same also for other activities such as taking children to school and hospital" (Interviewee 1, Uppsala 10/04/2019).

However, these changes are not only reinforced during the orientation program of the migrants, but also manifested in different public institutions which are frequented by migrants. A Rwandese woman said

"When I took the kids at the hospital alone, the doctor asks me where the husband is. The second time when going back to the hospital alone with the kids, the doctor then started questioning the absence of the husband and made a follow-up call" (Interviewee1, Uppsala 10/04/2019).

The gendered division of labor concerns with how the work is divided between women and men based on their gender roles. It does not only consider the paid jobs but also any other tasks assigned to men and women in their livelihoods (Doss, 2001). This embodies the situation of the research participants for this study in their home countries. Men and women were traditionally tasked with different duties based on their gender roles and the prevailing gender norms.

The upheaval of labor division in the migrants' families in Sweden reflects the changes in gender relations highlighted in the *gender theories*. Following Agarwal, (1997), the concept of gender relations refers to power relations between men and women and these relations affect economic outcomes in different ways. In this particular case, the division of labor between men and their wives is viewed as gender relations in the households and, as Agarwal, (1997) argued, these relations ultimately impact on the economic status of the households. For instance, the change in the division of labor between men and women in the migrants' families inevitably affects the livelihoods of migrants' in terms of economy.

As shown in table 3, migration considerably changed the socio-economic status of migrants' households; women have been able to access education and thus, secured paid jobs in the host country. This has undoubtedly altered their economic status as they are able to generate income from the employment. On the other hand, the situation was quite different in the countries of origin. Most of the women were not highly educated and did not have any income-generating activity as most of them were involved in domestic chores.

A number of authors concurred that labor division in the rural households is considerably shaped by gender relations (Maharjan et al. (2012); Bever (2002) and Quisumbing (2003). This is illustrated by migrant women who shifted from domestic chores in East Africa to paid jobs in Sweden. The shift was triggered by the difference in gender relations between East African countries and Sweden.

As mentioned in the second chapter of this study, historically, the East African countries have been characterized by gender inequality which is manifested in the power imbalance and the unequal sharing of opportunities between women and men (Logova, 2014). Conversely, gender relations in Sweden reflect the divisions of power and responsibilities between men and women and they have been shaped progressively in the Swedish welfare state (SOU, 1990:44). The continuous changes in gender relations are considered as renegotiations of "*gendered contracts*" in which the gender equality contract replaced the housewife contract in the 1960s (Hirdman in SOU, 1990:44). Moreover, those changes are in line the Swedish government plan which is to attain gender equality in the sector of employment (Bondestam, 1999; Gunnarsson and Stevansson, 2009).

Based on the aforementioned facts, the difference between East African countries and Sweden in terms of gender equality explains the change in gender

relations for migrants which resulted in the reshaping of division of labor between men and women in Sweden.

Similarly, Frigga, (2002) opined that gender relations are fundamental in regulating social relations in a given society. They are definitely crucial for questions regarding division of labor, laws, politics, religions, sexuality, language, exploitation and domination. In the same way, the change in gender relations in the migrants' families has altered the division of labor between men and women.

Furthermore, the research has found that gender relations are historically dynamic and are not uniform across the world. They are generally viewed as socially constructed rather than biologically ascribed (Agarwal, 1997). This fact explains the reason behind the gradual changes in gender relation for the migrant families from their home countries to Sweden. The traditional division of labor in the migrant families was not static throughout the integration period in Sweden. Rather, it has progressively undergone some changes with time.

In view of the above discussions, it is quite evident that the traditional gendered division of labor has been shaped throughout the integration process of migrant families. Prior to migration, the division of labor was based on gender norms and traditions of East African countries. This model categorically assigned particular tasks to women (especially domestic chores) which should never be performed by men. In the same way, some fields of work (mostly paid work) was male-dominated and this trend was socially accepted. Upon migration, households have embraced new gender norms and rules that significantly altered the traditional way of labor division. Thus, migrants (both men and women) are assigned new tasks in Sweden due to changes in gender relations.

5.2 Difficulties related to gender norms changes during the integration process of migrant families

In the above sections, I have thoroughly explained the changes in gender norms, bargaining power and gendered division of labor which emanate from the orientation program and the long stay of migrants in Sweden. Although, these changes are viewed as a form of improvement in gender relations, they are not fairly welcomed by some migrants who perceive them as discrimination against men. In most cases, these changes result in conflicts between men and women in the migrant families because men feel humiliated and lose the power and control over the households.

The majority of the respondents in this study opined that numerous intra-household conflicts are raised due to the changes in gender norms and the acquired economic independence of migrant women in Sweden.

As mentioned above, the change in gender norms entails the reshuffle in the assignment of tasks between men and women. Some research participants pointed out that during the orientation program, migrant men are taught to perform duties which are traditionally assigned to women in the culture of East African societies. One woman said,

“In one session, we were taught that a woman should only cook twice a week and the rest of the week the man should also cook. This also should be applied to taking care of the children and taking them to the hospital when they are sick. They insisted that all the tasks should be divided between men and women” (Interviewee 1, Uppsala 19/05/2019).

For instances cooking and other domestic chores are generally reserved for women in East Africa, especially in the rural areas. During the culture orientation program, migrants (both men and women) are taught that they should perform all tasks irrespective of their gender. However, this is not socially accepted in the migrant communities. Some men fail to comply with the instructions of the cultural orientation program; they refuse to perform the newly assigned tasks (domestic chores) and, in most cases, it results in intra-household conflicts. One man said,

“We have learnt different lessons during the orientation program. Some were useful while others were meant to erase our culture and traditions, and this has engendered conflicts in our family. For instance, we have always had fierce disputes with my wife when I refused to cook or wash dishes (Interviewee 3, Uppsala 19/05/2019).

Additionally, a number of conflicts arise from the power imbalance between men and women in the migrants' families. Many respondents have argued that migration and the orientation program in particular, have significantly shaped gender relations especially the decision making power between men and women. Migrants concurred that contrarily to the situation in their home countries, migrant women have more power to influence decisions than their husbands in the households.

In East Africa, most of the households are male-headed and men possess the full authority and control over their families. Regarding the decision making process, men considerably influence decisions concerning the allocation of resources, prioritization of activities, the division of labor and the use of generated income in the family. Even though, negotiations occur between the members of the households, men who are the ones who make the final decisions. It rarely happens that other household members can oppose to the decision of the head of the household (the man). This trend is socially and culturally accepted in different communities of the East African region and it is more conspicuous in the countryside than in urban areas.

As one interviewed women said, in some parts of East Africa, young ladies are mentored from their early age by their elders. This mentorship consists of instilling in young ladies, the cultural values and the decent behaviors that guarantee a happy and long-lasting marriage. In the course of mentorship, young ladies are particularly advised on how to take good care of their husbands and to stay submissive and loyal even when they are unjustly treated. This is very fundamental in conjugal life and most women consider it as a strict customary law.

A woman attested,

“In the Rwandan culture, it is very seldom to find a woman who goes against the decision of her husband. This is because, girls are taught to respect their future husbands in all circumstances. Before marriage and even earlier, girls must have mentors. These are usually old women who are experienced in conjugal life and who are supposed to be wise enough to give helpful advices. During this mentorship, girls are asked to respect their husbands and they are strictly obliged to abide by it. This is the reason why marriages last longer in Rwanda than in Sweden. In addition, intra-household conflicts do not escalate to a higher level because, in some instances, women must accept the decisions of their husbands even if they don't sincerely agree”.

However, the situation becomes quite different when women move to Sweden. Migrants women are not that much submissive and they cannot easily accept to be unjustly treated by their husbands or to face domestic violence because they are protected by Swedish laws.

Additionally, they no longer follow the customary rules and regulations of their home countries. Instead, they imitate the cultures and behaviors of the Swedish people. By doing so, they feel much more secured and gain more bargaining power in the decision making processes of their households. On the other hand, men who are used to autocratically lead households and to make decisions without consulting their wives feel humiliated and find it awkward to adapt to the new culture. They hardly accept to conjointly make decisions with their wives. This change results in violent conflicts in the migrant families as a Burundian man asserted,

“My wife acts violently when it is time for taking important decisions and with no respect. This has never happened back in our home country due to the respect she had for me. I feel like I have lost dignity and the Manliness that I had before” (Interviewee 3, Uppsala 19/05/2019).

Furthermore, this research has divulged the pervasive intra-household disagreements which are engendered by the lessons provided during the orientation program. In the course culture orientation program, one of the seven subjects covered was *the individual's rights and obligations (Individens Rättigheter Och Skyldigheter)*. During this course, migrant women are informed about their rights and especially the rights concerning the integrity of their body. They are taught that they have the right to independently make decisions concerning how they should

use their body. They can, by themselves, decide on their sexual life even when the decisions are not aligned with their traditional norms. For instance, migrant women are aware of their rights to abort. According to the Swedish abortion act, abortion is authorized before the first eighteen weeks of pregnancy (SFS1974: 595). That implies that a woman can, without the consent of her husband, decide to abort within that period interval. This has also been a source disputes for many migrant couples as this act is against the traditional norms of some East African countries. In some instances, the conflicts escalate to the extent that families opt for divorce.

As Agarwal, (1997), argued in the concept of household bargaining, intra-household interaction entails both elements of conflict and cooperation in the course of bargaining. This emulates the situation of migrant couples in Sweden. As mentioned above, different forms of conflicts emerged in the migrant households as a result of changing the bargaining power. In some instances, the disputes escalated to the level of separation. This implies that the cooperation approach failed in the bargaining process and each party was categorically bound to its own position. Additionally, the outcomes of household bargaining may be more propitious to a particular party over the other one in the household. This implies that one person gain results in another person loss, which leads to conflicts between household members (Agarwal, 1997).

In the same way, the new trend of bargaining gives women more power than before. This is because the Swedish culture and laws allow women to stand for their rights and give them plenty of opportunities such as education and employment. Following the historian Yvonne Hirdman, gender relations in Sweden reflect the divisions of power and responsibilities between men and women and they have been shaped progressively in the Swedish welfare state (SOU, 1990:44). The continuous changes in gender relations are considered as renegotiations of “*gendered contracts*” in which the gender equality contract replaced the housewife contract in the 1960s (Hirdman in SOU, 1990:44). In this particular case, migrants’ gender relations shifted from housewife contract to gender equality contract, which engendered intra-household conflicts.

To sum up, the changes in gender relations for migrant couples brought about difficulties in the interactions between men and women in their households. This is evidenced by the disputes and disagreement between men and their wives on certain decisions concerning the management of the households. Based on the research finding on this particular subject matter, the disputes emanate from the change in household bargaining and the acquired economic independence of women which guarantee them a fall-back position. Moreover, women have embraced the new gender norms which allow them to make decisions and to have equal power and access to opportunities as their husbands. The new trend it is not easily accepted by migrant men as they lose autocratic power and control over the

households. In some instances, this becomes a source of intra-household conflicts because men feel humiliated and offended to some extent.

5.3 Adaptation of migrant families to the Swedish gender norms

The section above highlighted different hitches encountered by migrant couples during the integration process. Even though migrants manifested weaknesses and lack of will to cope with the challenges which are related to the new gender norms, some have progressively made efforts to adapt to the Swedish culture and to abide by the new rules.

This research has shown that, more than men, women can rapidly adapt to the new gender norms of the host country (Sweden). In most cases, this is due to the fact that the new gender norms favor women; these norms put women in position that allow them to have equal access to opportunities as their husbands and to share responsibilities and work burden including domestic chores.

“Women change quickly while men change slowly! After the integration programs, my wife has never been the same again; she always insists on the fact that we must share the domestic chores. She is ignoring the fact that I have never cooked or washed dishes for almost my entire life” (Interviewee 7, Uppsala 19/05/2019).

Based on this situation, one may think that the Swedish society favors women over men. However, following previous researchers who pointed to similar dynamics, this may not be the case. Instead, the difference emanates from the fact that the Swedish government has promulgated the gender equality law. According to this law, Swedish men and women possess the same rights and conditions in social life and though the act is gender neutral, it mainly focuses on ameliorating the working conditions for women (Swedish Gender Equality Agency, 2023). In addition, this difference reflects the laws which have been amended in favor of gender balance and the eradication of discrimination against women in the Swedish welfare state (SOU, 1990:44). Thus, these laws and regulations have created a social environment that facilitates migrant women to quickly adopt new gender norms.

Moreover, the culture orientation program plays a key role in inculcating the new culture, gender norms, rules and regulations in migrants. The program content seems to be tailored to change the gender relations of migrant couples so as to ease their integration in the Swedish Society. In this regard, the fact that women are marginalized and discriminated in different communities of the global south

countries has been taken into account. Most of the lessons provided are meant to teach women about their rights and how they should behave in accordance with the principles of gender equality and the Swedish culture in general. Thus, more than men, women appreciate and show a keen interest in the culture orientation program.

The Ethiopian man said

"My family originated from Oromo tribal district in the north of Addis Ababa, rural Ethiopia. My wife and I have attended the culture program together as well as SFI. In the beginning, I immediately realized that my wife was enjoying the program content because many of the lessons learnt and the instructions given met her expectations as they were meant to comfort women who are supposed to be marginalized in their home countries." (Interviewee 5, Stockholm 07/08/2019).

Even though the majority of migrant men did not appreciate the culture orientation program because they have lost power, some attested that this program is not merely tailored for the benefits of women. At least some men gained from the gender equality lesson. For instance, one man said that he has a much closer connection to his children nowadays than he would have had if they had not migrated to Sweden.

This shows that not only women appreciate the orientation program but also some men recognize the importance of the attending the cultural orientation program as it has their mindset vis à vis gender equality in the households. An Eritrean man argued,

"Compared to rural Eritrea, I would say that almost everything changed in terms of gender rules and norms in our family relations in Sweden. I have learnt to do things that I have never done before. For example, I am involved in different domestic chores (cooking, washing dishes, cleaning, and taking care of kids). In addition, I have been able to build a secure connection with my kids, which would have been impossible in my home country." (Interviewee 7, Uppsala 13/05/2019).

Though East African migrants share some traditional gender norms and culture, there is a variation among countries and religious beliefs. Depending on their origins and educational level, some migrants are rigidly bound to their traditional gender norms while others are very flexible. For instance a Rwandese lady attested that even though they are struggling to abide by the Swedish rules and to adopt the new gender norms, it is not that much difficult for them because they had attained a certain level of understanding about gender equality in the home country. In addition, she argued that the membership of a particular religious group can play a crucial role in instilling or quitting certain gender norms. A Rwandese lady uttered,

"I know it is not easy to cope with the changes in culture especially in gender relations. However, it was not that much difficult for my husband and I to quickly switch to the new gender norms and adapt to the Swedish culture. This was because we come from a country which a little bit advanced in terms of gender equality

compared to other African countries. So, we knew even before migration, about gender balance and mutual respect between men and women. In addition, our religion (protestant) does not support the supremacy and autocratic power over their wives. Also, we are not that much submissive to our husbands like Muslim women” (Interviewee1, Uppsala 10/04/2019).

Furthermore, this research has unveiled the nexus between the origins of migrants and their capacity to adapt to new gender norms in Sweden. The research has revealed that most of the migrants who were living in urban areas prior to migration, are most likely, in a good position to adapt to new gender norms that those who were living in rural areas. This is evidenced by the testimonies of two couples who were living in rural areas in their home countries. They were firmly bound to their traditional and religious beliefs to the extent that it was difficult for them to adopt the new gender norms after migration.

On the other hand, migrants who originated from urban areas are relatively flexible and can take up novel culture and norms in the host country. This is because, prior to migration, they were exposed to a diversity of cultures as they met people of different backgrounds.

Similarly, Evans (2019), conducted a study in Cambodia and found out that urban dwellers support gender equality more than rural dwellers. Moreover, urban ladies have more access to education and employment than rural women. This explains the reason behind their quick adaptability in the host country. These findings emulates the results of the study by Darvishpour (2002), who discovered that migrant families of rural origins struggle to understand gender rules and norms of the Swedish Society due to the social and cultural norms of their home countries.

5.3.1 Origin of research participants (interviewed families)

Table 5: Specific origin of interviewed families. Source: data from the field

Variables	GENDER	RURAL/URBAN origins
FM1	Women	Urban
	Men	Urban
FM2	Women	Rural
	Men	Rural
FM3	Women	Urban
	Men	Urban
FM4	Women	Rural
	Men	Rural

This research has revealed that it takes a relatively long time for migrant couples to understand and cope with the challenging gender norms. This is because in the beginning, migrants (especially men) are bound to their traditional gender norms and culture and they want to live in Sweden as if they were still in East Africa.

On the other hand, migrant women quickly grasp the content of the culture orientation program and want to put it into practice. This implies that they want to live according to the Swedish gender norms, rules and culture. With time, both men and women change their radical positions and come to a common understanding.

An Eritrean woman attested,

"My husband and I were separated for one year because we had disagreement concerning the right for abortion. From the beginning I thought it was good to adopt new gender norms while completely ignoring the traditional value and cultures. I wanted to behave like a Swedish woman and I wanted freedom in making decisions. After one year of separation, I realized that I was wrong. Our parents helped us to discuss about family issues and found solutions. We therefore, decided to get back together for the benefits of our two children" (Interviewee 8, Uppsala 13/05/2019)."

Research participants have revealed that the changes engendered by the orientation program are not only limited to the understanding and emulation of gender equality. Also, through the culture orientation program, migrants have acquired substantial skills that led to the betterment of their socio-economic life. To illustrate, one lady from Ethiopia attested that the orientation program has remarkably empowered her as she has been able to secure a well-paid job that she would not get in her home country. She has conspicuously changed as she managed to transcend her traditional gender norms that had curtailed her potentials and she made tremendous efforts to achieve what other women cannot do in her home country. She said,

"After the integration program, I had a different understanding of life. I have understood that it is possible to compete for paid jobs with my husband to be employed even though I did not have an advanced level of education. My husband brought the ideas that I cannot go out and find a job. He told me that he has a job as a bus driver and that he earns a considerable amount of money, and he wanted me to stay home and take care of our two kids. The discussion took up one year trying to convince him about benefits of having a paid job as woman but the husband refused categorically. I just realized that he wanted to prioritize his

benefits over those of the family. I ended up requesting for a divorce" (Interviewee 5, Stockholm 07/08/2019).

Following Gunnarsson and Stattin (2001) and Gunnarsson et al., (2004), the decision of this woman is in line with the 1970 social reform that occurred in Sweden and which engendered notable changes in terms of gender equality. This reform brought about the egalitarian ideology that seeks to promote the participation of married women in the labor market without hindering their family life and it was meant to ease the combination of employment and family life for women (Gunnarsson and Stattin, 2001; Gunnarsson et al., 2004).

Furthermore, respondents have pointed out that they have accepted to cope with the exacting gender norms and to abide by the new rules and regulations in Sweden simply because they do not have choice. As some of the newly imposed norms and culture are like obligations, migrants are supposed to adapt to them even if they are not fully convinced.

To exemplify, some migrant men have opted for halting the intra-household disputes, not because they are in good terms with their wives but because they are afraid of being punished. Similarly, migrants have annoyingly accepted to follow the Swedish rules and regulations which are burdensome for them.

"It took many years for me to understand some of the things imposed on my own family while in Sweden, and I have learnt to accept what I cannot change. For example, my kids have become disrespectful, and I do not have control over them anymore; I cannot even to punish my own child because it is criminal in Sweden. It is really frustrating. This is a permanent situation and I have decided to live with it since I cannot change the system (Interviewee3, Uppsala 20/06/2019).

Though the integration process has noticeably instilled Swedish gender norms in migrant families, some of them did not wholly embrace all the new cultural and gender norms. They are still bound to their traditional cultures and norms and have conserved their habitual stereotypes. This is because migrants have strong ties with their origins and are afraid of losing their identity. They opted for the merely adapting to gender norms which are compulsory and they omit those that are not in line with their traditions and religious beliefs. One lady asserted,

"If I follow all of that I have been told during the integration programs, it means that I will go against my culture and Muslim religion I belong to. It also means that I will never again be accepted in my community back home. For example, I decided to abort one year after arriving in Sweden. It was horrible for me because my family back home stopped all contact with me for almost one year. My husband also decides to leave me. I had to go through a difficult time because of the decision I made concerning my own body. I have learnt to judge and choose what is necessary from what is not, for the benefits of our kids and for the sake of a strong and united family (Interviewee 6, Uppsala 17/05/2019).

Similarly, some try to adapt to the new culture but do not fully embrace it. As one woman suggested, it is much wiser not to blindly abide by all the new rules and regulations which are introduced during the orientation program. Rather, migrant couples should take into account some traditional gender norms for the betterment of the intra-household interactions.

In this regards, she found it helpful to balance the two cultures and use the common sense to discern the norms and behaviors which do not lead to conflicts. She uttered,

“During the orientation program, both men and women are taught about how to behave and the responsibilities they should take. The instructions given during the orientation program are like obligations to some extent, and they can lead to disagreements and conflicts if fully respected. As far as I am concerned, the division of tasks between a wife and husband is something that each couple should discuss about and make their own decision. It should never be uniform. In our culture, a husband can only cook when he wants to help her wife but it is not an obligation. I think this works for my family here in Sweden” (Interviewee 1, Uppsala 19/05/2019).

To summarize, the adaptation of migrant couples to the Swedish gender norms is difficult and long-lasting. In some instances, more than men, women manage to quickly integrate in the Swedish society as they are able to embrace the new gender norms and traditions. This research has revealed that the rapid adaptation of migrant women to the new culture is due to the Swedish laws that promote gender equality and eradication discrimination against women. This research has shown that the cultural orientation program plays a crucial role in the adaptation and integration of migrants in the Swedish society. Additionally, the adaptation of migrant couples is contingent on their origins and religious beliefs. Some are still bound to their traditional gender norms and resist adopting new gender norms while others are flexible and can quickly take up the Swedish gender norms.

6. Discussion and Conclusion

This chapter briefly outlines the key findings of the research. It concisely responds to the research questions and the overall purpose of the study in light of relevant concepts and theories. Moreover, this section brings in the analysis of the results by shedding more light on the connection between the findings, the contextual background and relevant previous researches.

6.1 Concluding remarks

This study has revealed that migrants' gender relations are considerably shaped the Swedish gender norms. This is evidenced by the alteration of interactions between men and their wives in the migrants' households during the integration process in Sweden. Additionally, the proliferation of intra-household disputes and disagreements proves the deterioration of conjugal relations in the migrants households.

The changes in gender relations are noticed in different spheres of the social life of migrant couples in Sweden. For instance, the study has unveiled the improved bargaining power for migrant women, which came as a result of increased income and acquired economic independence of migrant women. In this regards, migrant women have gained the power to influence decisions in the intra-household interactions and this power was almost inexistent prior to migration.

Moreover, the change in gender relations is expressed in the alteration of gendered division of labor in the migrant families. This research has revealed that there has been an upheaval of tasks and responsibilities between men and women of East African origins. Prior to migration, the gender-based division of labor in the migrants' local communities was heavily contingent on traditional norms and religious beliefs coupled with customary laws of the natives. In this case, certain tasks were reserved to a particular gender group and it was socially accepted. After migration, the trend changed because migrant couples embraced new cultural and gender norms which are different from those of their home countries. In some instances, migrant men are obliged to perform tasks which are traditionally reserved for women and vice versa.

This research has revealed that the aforementioned changes have engendered hindrances in the intra-household interactions of migrant families.

These difficulties are due to the acquired economic independence of migrant women which improves their bargaining power or the abilities to influence decisions in their households. Moreover, women embrace new gender norms which allow them to have equal power and access to opportunities as their husbands. On the other hand, this trend is not fairly accepted by migrant men as they lose autocratic power and control over the households. In some instances, this becomes a source of intra-household conflicts because men feel humiliated and discriminated to some extent.

Furthermore, this study found out that, despite the awkward gender-related challenges faced by migrant couples, they adopted substantive strategies to cope with this cumbersome situation and they have progressively made efforts to adapt to the Swedish culture and to abide by the new rules. However, this study has revealed that, some migrants opt not to fully embrace the new gender norms and traditions. Instead, they discern gender norms which are not against the culture and religious beliefs of their home countries.

As opined by migrants, the identified changes in gender relations have been shaped by the culture orientation program which is tailored to facilitate the integration of migrants in the Swedish Society. Moreover, the research has revealed that, more than men, women quickly adopt the Swedish gender norms and culture during their stay in Sweden. This is due to the fact that the Swedish gender norms and the gender equality policy favor women in various ways and prioritize the eradication of discrimination against women. Migrant women are in position that allows them to have equal access to opportunities as their husbands and to share responsibilities and work burden including domestic chores.

6.2 The nexus between Swedish gender norms and the change in gender relations for migrant couples

This study has revealed that the changes in gender relations for migrant families are inexorably influenced by the existing Swedish gender norms, rules and policies. The implication of Swedish gender norms and laws in the reshaping of migrants' gender relations is evidenced by connection and similarities between the contextual situation and evolvement of migrants' gender relation in the host country.

The change in gender relations which engendered intra-household conflicts reflect the concept of gender relations described in the third chapter of this study. According to IST (2019), in some societies, gender relations are characterized by the marginalization of women. In most cases women are excluded from the decision-making processes and have limited or no access to certain benefits such as education and paid jobs.

This emulates the relations between men and women in their home countries. Due to their traditional culture, some migrant women could not make important decisions when they were still in East Africa. Additionally, some of them were not educated and could not get paid jobs like their husbands.

However, following Dankelman (2010), gender relations are dynamic and context-dependent. They are shaped by connections and obstructions between various symbolic dimensions (stereotypes, representation and cultural contexts), institutions and individuals such as identity. This explains the reason behind the change of relations between men and women after migration. Since gender relations are dynamic, the intra-household relations between men and their wives could not remain the same after migration. It simply implies that the relations between men and women have been changed depending on the contexts, culture and rules of the host country. The contextual situation of migrants in their home countries was different from the situation in Sweden. For instances, migrant couples have come across different connections, obstructions, stereotypes and novel cultural norms that conspicuously shaped their gender relations. Similarly, previous research has proved that gender relations are historically dynamic and are not uniform across the world (Agarwal, 1997). This is evidenced by the fact that the relations between migrant men and women evolved with time and in space and have been molded by the culture and institutions of the host country.

This research has revealed that the deterioration of conjugal relations starts when migrant women understand their rights in Sweden. This is due to the fact that women are empowered through education, employment and increased income and they can no longer accept to be unfairly treated by their husbands as they have acquired a *fall-back position*. This brought a fascinating question - *Is the economic independence a fall-back position for migrant women?* Based on the research findings of this particular case, the answer could be *yes*. This is evidenced by the fact that migrant women have gained conspicuous bargaining power and the *decision making* abilities subsequent to their employment in Sweden. However, previous researchers pointed to controversial dynamics; According to Biery (2009), gender relations improve when people get better off. This assumption strictly opposes the research findings for this particular study.

The empowerment of migrant women in Sweden, which emanates from their increased income, is aligned with the Swedish workforce-based gender equality policy which appertains to social citizenship and egalitarian ideology. This policy is basically intended to promote gender equality in a sense that women and men are considered as *self-supporting* individuals within the labor market. Thus, the main focus is put on a *dual income-earner family* ideology rather than a *bread winner* ideology (Gunnarsson et al., 2004; Mannelqvist, 2007). Similarly, the education and employment of migrant women made them *self-supporting* individuals as they ceased to depend from their husbands who were considered as *breadwinners* in their

home countries. One would attest that instituted workforce-based gender equality policy has noticeably catalyzed this change.

Additionally, this change was catalyzed by the Swedish egalitarian ideology that seeks to promote the participation of married women in the labor market without hindering their family life. This ideology is meant to ease the combination of employment and family life for women. According to Svensson et al., (2012), the policy aims at reconciling family life and work, supporting families with little children as well as fighting against prostitution and gender-based violence. Additionally, it has been explicitly reflected on as regulation that promotes gender equality and eradicates discrimination of women (Svensson et al., 2012).

Similarly, this particular study has shown that, contrarily to the situation in their home countries, migrant women are hired for paid jobs in Sweden and this has no adverse effect on their children. This is in line with the Swedish gender equality policy which was adopted in the 1970s. According to Lang (2015), the policy aims to ensure that women and men have the same opportunity in education, health care and job opportunities (Lang, 2015). Additionally this situation reflects the affirmative actions which are used by governments as tools in order to attain gender equality in various sectors such as education, child-care, employment and power division in politics (Gunnarsson and Stevensson, 2012). It is, therefore, beyond doubt that this ideology served as a driving force that enabled migrant women to easily integrate into the public spheres of social life in the host country. By doing so, the prevailing ideology has shaped the traditional gender norms that put women in domestic chores and excluded them from paid work in their home countries.

On the other hand, migrant men are worried and frustrated because they can no longer exercise their power as they would do in their home country. In this case, the intra-household interactions and cooperation becomes difficult because women are empowered enough and can no longer tolerate the injustice and superiority imposed by their husbands. Thus, the new gender norms put migrant couples in an awkward situation which, in some instances, results in conflicts and separation.

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Appendix 1

Full data collected from the field. Period of 5th of March to 15th August 2019

FM codes	FM 1		FM2		FM3		FM4	
Age	31	28	37	34	59	43	38	29
Gender	Male	female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Marital status	Married/ 1 child	Married/ 1child	Married / 2children	Married/ 2 children	Married	Married	Divorced/2 children	Divorced/ children
Origin	Rwanda	Rwanda	Eritrea	Eritrea	Burundi	Burundi	Ethiopia	Ethiopia
Arrival year	2017	2010	2015	2015	2005	2005	2010	2010
Level/Edu Before	Bachelors	Secondary	Bachelors	Primary	Bachelor	9years be*	Primary	No studie
Lever of Edu After	Master's degree	Bachelor's in nursing	Master's degree	SFI	Becher's degree	SFI	SFI	Gymnasiu (high school)
Education in Sweden	Masters	Bachelors in nursing	Masters in environment	SFI	SFI	SFI	SFI	High school, SF
Occup before	NGO employee	Student	Teacher	Unemployed	NGO manager	unemployed	Pastoral nomad	Domestic activities
Occup after	IKEA	Social worker	Student	inemployed	Bus driver	Retirement home	Taxi driver	Social worker
Income before	5000	1000	300	1000	8000	1500	2000	200
Income after	21000	23000	9000	5000	22000	18000	30000	12000
Integra, Participation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Place of origin	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural	Urban	Urban	Rural	Rural

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