

**UNIVERSITY OF THE WESTERN CAPE**



**An investigation into barriers to participation in adult learning among refugees: The case of the Somalis in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town**

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**Thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Education**

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**December 2019**

**‘Education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world’**

*Nelson Mandela*



## KEY WORDS

1. Barriers to participation in adult learning
2. Dispositional barriers
3. Situational barriers
4. Academic barriers
5. Institutional barriers
6. Chain of Response Model (COR)
7. Gender inequalities
9. Migration
10. Refugees



## ABSTRACT

This study seeks to investigate barriers to participation in adult learning among Somali refugees in Cape Town. It draws on scholarship around various conceptual frameworks on migration perspectives, and barriers to participation in adult learning, as lenses to understand and explain the experiences of the Somali refugee community. The Refugee Act of 1998 was promulgated post-democracy in South Africa. One of the objectives of this Act was to redress past inequalities by providing access to education for all the people of South Africa including foreigners who are refugees or immigrants legally settled in the country.

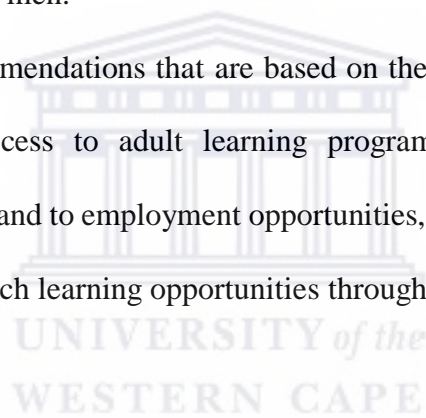
Due to various challenges, not all refugees and migrants have access to education that would provide them with the necessary skills to enter the job market. Without access to the formal labour market, they resort to informal activities that enable them to generate cash and sustain livelihoods. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the gender dimension is important since women particularly are subject to prejudices and disadvantages that deny them entry into the labour market, both informal and formal. This study therefore investigated barriers to participation in adult learning among refugees. One of the main purposes of the research was to examine the impediments, which inhibit both men and women refugees from access to a decent education and opportunities for adult learning in South Africa.

The methodology adopted was a qualitative research design. Through focused, in-depth interviews with a sample grouping of a Somali refugee community, insights were obtained into the challenges and blockages to learning access that are prevalent. The sample size comprised 50 participants: 25

males and 25 females, which were arrived at using the snowball sampling technique. An in-depth interview protocol guided the discussion, which was intended to elicit personal narratives.

The findings of the study revealed that both men and women experience institutional, situational, dispositional and academic barriers, which prevent them from participating in adult learning programmes and other learning opportunities in spite of their willingness to do so. However, women particularly suffer from a lack of access due to cultural and religious norms, which limit their participation as women learners. This additional barrier proved to be a substantive situational barrier that did not affect Somali men.

This study makes several recommendations that are based on the research findings. Participants generally desired sufficient access to adult learning programmes, harmonious living and integration within communities, and to employment opportunities, education funding support, and increased public awareness of such learning opportunities through seminars and workshops.



## DECLARATION

I, **Kasifa Kakai**, hereby declare that this full thesis entitled “An Investigation into Barriers to Participation in Adult Learning among Refugees: The Case of the Somalis in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town” is my own work and that it has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university, and that all the sources I have used or cited have been indicated and acknowledged as complete references.

**Kasifa Kakai**

Duly Signed: K. Kakai



Date: 30 June 2020

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The journey of writing a thesis demanded a major commitment despite many unexpected obstacles that were encountered. There were times when enormous support and encouragement was needed.

I would like to thank the many people who made it possible for me to undertake this academic journey. Above all, I want to thank and praise his highness the almighty God for being central to my entire life, by giving me faith in everything I do. He also gave me the strength, love and courage to embark on my hardest academic undertaking, towards achieving the dream of my life. I would like to be able to thank Professor Joy Papier for coming to my rescue and convincing me that I was able to complete this dissertation. I would not have been able to do so without her expert guidance, her empathy with what I was trying to achieve, and her belief in me. I am grateful also to Professor Zelda Groener who supported me at the outset and contributed substantially to my research endeavour. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to my mentor, Dr. Colleen for your constant comment, suggestions and discussions, and I also acknowledge our continuous meetings and your support, which gave me, confidence to come to the completion of this thesis.

I wish to convey my heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Neetha Ravjee, our research coordinator and her entire team, the PET/DPGS group, and Dr. Laurent Beya Kalala, not forgetting Dr. Sophia Matenda who worked together with me over some months towards completion. I am also thankful to Dr. Bidandi Fred whom I consulted whenever I was in need of help, and the late Julius Wamema (R.I.P), for his encouragement. My gratitude also goes to the following people who contributed to

my academic journey at UWC: the former Rector, Prof.essor Brian O’Connell, the late Professor Persens (R.I.P), the late Dr. Ingrid Miller the late Registrar by then (R.I.P), Mr. Mark Seale, residential director, Mr. Dirk Saal, my residential manager, currently retired, not forgetting the work study programme which I have been surviving on throughout, Prof.essor Lorna Holtman, Mr. Mike Kwatsha and his team. I am grateful to all the lecturers throughout my undergraduate years in the Arts Faculty, Honours in ISD, all the staff of Education Faculty, the secretary of the Arts Faculty during my undergraduate studies, the SRC Presidents of years 2005-8, my special gratitude goes to Wenzokuhle Ncube, Farida Mirembe, Mr. Gasant Gamiet, Dr. Thokozani Kanyerere, and his family, just to mention but a few.

Special thanks go to the Somali community members who wholeheartedly volunteered to participate in the study. My sincere gratitude also goes to Zanzaf for their contributions, which supported me through my entire study. I am indebted for all the support rendered to me.

I want to express special gratitude to all my family and extended family members. Special thanks goes to my late father Mzeei Mustapha Mudebo (our ‘Madiba’), my greatest beloved mother, Azziza Buwala (late) for enduring my absence when she really needed me most especially during the time she was sick, my beloved sister, a great friend, mentor, and my role model who continuously encouraged me to study without considering my advancing age, Mrs. Zaituna Kanagwa Masaba and her family, my most beloved big brother too who also gave me a lot of encouragement and moral support throughout my study period, Mr. Abdul-Mutwalibi Khaukha, my other brothers, Magombe Ali, Musa Wadada, Sowedi Khaukha, Sulaiman Magosya, sister Fatina Kakai, my nieces and nephews, Shamim Namaganda, Aminah Namaganda - Blackie,



Kamida, Ziyada, Fatinah Nagudi Gamisha, Aminah Namaganda - Brownie, Laman, Ibrahim, Ismael, Abu-Bakr, Masitula, Moses, Yusuf, Burbura Namasaba the list is endless. Thanks to Mr. Paul Wasike for his support and encouragement and also to my relatives, friends and my entire Bunabudo clan members. Exceptional acknowledgement should also go to my academic friend and mentor Mr. Cliff Ngwata.

Finally, but not least, I would like to thank the Hector Peterson residence community which has been my home at UWC throughout my academic journey, from undergraduate to postgraduate years. To all those whom I have not mentioned, I acknowledge you all and highly appreciate your efforts.



## DEDICATION

This thesis is specially dedicated to the Almighty Allah who protected and steered me throughout my study, and to my family, particularly my beloved late mother Azizza Buwala (peace be upon her), to my beloved late dad, Mzeei Mustapha Mudebo, (peace be upon him), my only and beloved sister Zaitun Kanagwa, my brother, Khaukha Abdul Mutwalibi and their families. The thesis is also dedicated to my beloved baby girl Muduwa Mariam Sumaiyah, my late great grandma Aliziki Namaganda & Grandpa Sowedi Khaukha, my late big brother Imam Saibu Wambede, my nephew Nasur Khaukha (R.I.P) who left us so early, and my late aunties Maimuna Kakai (Nabigagala), Salama Nabwiduma, may their perfect souls rest in peace.



## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1: Chain of Response Model by Cross (1981).

Figure 4.1: A map of Bellville showing the research site/setting of the area

Figure 4. 2: Key informants of the targeted group



## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
AE	Adult Education
CBD	Central Business District
CBOs	Community Based Organisations
COR	Chain-of-Response model
CSOB	Civil Society Organization Business
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
IOM	International Organisation for Migration
IPSS	Institute for Post-School Studies
ISD	Institute for Social Development
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development
SASA	Somali Association of South Africa
SNM	Somali National Movement
SPM	Somali Patriotic Movement
SYL	Somali Youth League
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
USC	United Somali Congress
UTRS	Unity for Tertiary Refugee Students

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>KEY WORDS</b> .....	<b>ii</b>
<b>ABSTRACT</b> .....	<b>iii</b>
<b>DECLARATION</b> .....	<b>v</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b> .....	<b>vi</b>
<b>DEDICATION</b> .....	<b>ix</b>
<b>LIST OF FIGURES</b> .....	<b>x</b>
<b>ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS</b> .....	<b>xi</b>
<b>TABLE OF CONTENTS</b> .....	<b>xii</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND</b> .....	<b>1</b>
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background.....	2
1.2 Brief overview of the Somali refugees’ situation .....	3
1.3 Rationale for this research .....	4
1.4 Research problem statement .....	4
1.5 Research aim.....	5
1.6 Research questions.....	5
1.7 Objective of the study .....	6
1.8 Limitations of the study .....	6

1.9 Definition of key terms .....	7
1.10 Thesis structure and chapter outline .....	8
<b>CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.0 Introduction.....	11
2.1 Understanding adult learning.....	11
2.2 Adult learning in South Africa.....	14
2.3 Refugees and access to education in South Africa .....	19
2.4 Somali gendered roles that affect adult education .....	21
2.5 Opportunities for adult learning for refugees in South Africa .....	23
2.6 Challenges that confront refugees.....	25
2.7 Relevant Theoretical Frameworks .....	28
2.7.1 Theories of adult learning .....	28
2.7.2 Conceptualizing barriers to adult learning.....	29
2.7.3 Situational barriers.....	30
2.7.4 Institutional barriers.....	31
2.7.5 Dispositional barriers.....	33
2.7.6 Academic barriers .....	33
2.7.7 Chain -of -Response Model / Motivation Theory.....	35
2.8 Using the chain-of-response model to explain engagement in adult education and training .....	38
<b>CHAPTER THREE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>40</b>
3.0 Introduction.....	40
3.1 Statement of the research question .....	40

3.2 Research design .....	41
3.3 Research methods .....	42
3.4 Research site .....	44
3.5 Selection of respondents .....	47
3.6 Sampling methods.....	48
3.7 Demographic information of the participants .....	49
3.8 Data collection .....	51
3.9 Data analysis .....	53
3.10 Trustworthiness.....	54
3.11 Ethical considerations .....	54
3.12 Limitations of the study .....	55
3.13 Conclusion .....	56
<b>CHAPTER FOUR PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS.....</b>	<b>57</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	57
4.1 Profile of the participants.....	57
4.2 Reasons for leaving Somalia.....	58
4.3 Educational experiences in Somalia .....	59
4.4 Challenges experienced by Somali refugees in South Africa.....	62
4.5 Barriers to participation in adult learning as experienced by Somali refugees.....	65
4.6 Adult education opportunities in South Africa .....	79

4.7 Gender inequality as a barrier to adult learning.....	89
4.8 Conclusion .....	94
<b>CHAPTER FIVE DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....</b>	<b>95</b>
5.0 Introduction.....	95
5.1 Institutional Barriers .....	96
5.2 Dispositional Barriers .....	96
5.3 Situational Barriers .....	97
5.4 Academic Barriers .....	97
5.5 Opportunities for adult learning available to Somali women and men refugees .....	98
5.6 Barriers to learning participation among refugee Somali women in particular .....	98
5.7 Summary of major barriers to learning experienced by Somali refugees .....	99
5.8 Recommendations and conclusions .....	102
5.9 Tentative recommendations from the research .....	102
5.10 Recommendations for further research.....	105
5.11 Concluding remarks .....	106
<b>REFERENCES.....</b>	<b>108</b>
<b>APPENDICES .....</b>	<b>125</b>
Appendix A: Interview Guide.....	125
Appendix B: Letter seeking permission to conduct the research.....	129
Appendix C: Informed Consent - Letter of Consent.....	130



Appendix D: Ethical clearance Request/Form..... 131



# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

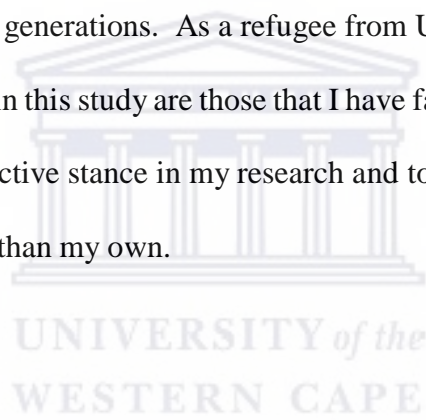
### 1.0 Introduction

South Africa is a home to many people from different regions across world, but mostly the African continent, Teyise (2014). For most African migrants though, and in terms of my personal experience, integration is extremely difficult. According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM, 2008, p. 20), integration is defined as:

...the processes by which migrants become accepted into society, both as individuals and as groups. It generally refers to a two-way process of adaptation by migrants and receiving societies, while the particular requirements for acceptance by a host society vary from country to country...

South Africa is known for having the best constitution on the African continent and is commonly considered to be the “land of milk and honey” as Teyise (2014, p. 20) puts it. It is seen as the most developed nation in Africa; hence it attracts those fleeing conflict and seeking better living conditions. McKay (2007, p. 285) refers to South Africa as “a middle-income country - a country with one foot in the first world, and the other in the developing world”. Since 1994, South Africa has experienced waves of people fleeing wars and hardships from countries such as Zimbabwe, Sudan, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Burundi, Angola, Zambia, Somalia, and Uganda inter alia, and these people are categorised as migrants as well as refugees. Once refugees arrive in South Africa, they are subjected to challenges such as language barriers, access to education, financial constraints, socio-economic and health problems and, disturbingly, experiences of xenophobia that exacerbate their poverty and exclusion from mainstream society and economic

activities through which they could build a better life. There are refugees and migrants who could make valuable contributions to the economy of South Africa as many of them have skill sets that are perhaps scarce in the country (McKay, 2007, p. 285), (Jacobsen & Landau, 2003), (Jacobsen, 2002), (Jacobsen, 2006, p.577), (Dodson, 2010). Many of these, however, have not had the opportunity to gain specialised skills often because of civil wars, or economic instability that have plagued their countries of origin. For those who have not had an opportunity to study, migrating to a country like South Africa is an opportunity to gain access to adult learning programmes, often for the first time. In turn, this would open doors to new knowledge and skills that can transform their lives and the lives of future generations. As a refugee from Uganda, many of the challenges encountered by Somali refugees in this study are those that I have faced. Recognising this potential bias, I strove to maintain an objective stance in my research and to ensure that I was reporting the voices of my respondents rather than my own.



## **1.1 Background**

The adopted home in which migrants/refugees find themselves is a complex one with tensions around integration. As indicated earlier, many migrants and refugees are skilled, while others have never had the chance to study due to instability in their countries of origin, as the case of Somalia. Hence, the chance to acquire knowledge through adult learning offers an opportunity for empowerment and is potential for positive change. This is true in South Africa and on the African continent at large. McKay (2007, p. 285) holds that there are integration programmes throughout the country that are aimed at incorporating foreigners into local environments. The next section takes a closer look at the situation of Somali refugees.

## **1.2 Brief overview of the Somali refugees' situation**

Somalia, the home country of Somali refugees, attained independence in 1960 from its British and Italian colonial masters. Adan Abdallah Osman became the first president of Somalia after the Somali Youth League (SYL) successfully won overwhelming support in the first democratic elections (African Research Bulletin, 2007, p. 170-179). However, by 1969 Somalia was exposed to a regime of military rule in which Major-General Mohamed Siad Barre carried out a well-planned and bloodless rebellion allegedly to get rid of the civilian regime, which was plagued by high levels of corruption, ethnicism and inefficiency (Mazrui & Tidy, 1984, p. 270). Under military rule in the 1970s there was development within the agricultural sector, for example, enormous plantations of bananas were exported to foreign countries like Italy in exchange for foreign currency (Mazrui & Tidy, 1984, p. 270). However, the Ogaden war, which broke out in 1977-78 left Somalia, overpowered by Ethiopia with assistance from the then U.S.S.R, which led to the decline of the regime, as contended by the above scholars.

In the 1980s, Somalia witnessed a period of rapid economic decline as a result of civil war, a poor structural economic policy, rampant corruption and government mismanagement in which the inflation rate was the highest in the history of Somalia, which had risen to 300 percent (Mazrui & Tidy, 1984, p. 270). By 1990 a group of clan-based political parties such as the Somali Patriotic Movement (SPM), the Somali National Movement (SNM) and the United Somali Congress (USC) collectively united to overthrow the government of Siad Barre which later forced the country into an era of civil war, turmoil, lawlessness and insecurity (Leeson, 2006, p. 5-6). Between 1991 and mid 1993 half a million people died as a result of civil war and probably three quarters of the total population of 9.3 million were seriously affected, causing 1.4 million people to be internally

displaced and 1 million people to seek refuge in neighbouring countries (Kirkby et al., 1997, p. 182). Due to lack of permanence within the country and many failed attempts at peace deals between the warring parties, together with the lack of a strong central government, the Somali people have been constantly fleeing to neighbouring countries such as Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, Malawi, Zambia and South Africa. The following section discusses the rationale for this research study.

### **1.3 Rationale for this research**

According to Jacobsen & Landau (2003), the experience of displacement and relocation is not often understood beyond the refugee community, and stereotypes and myths abound. To counteract this ignorance and prejudice, I decided to document the struggles of a fairly large group of Somali refugees in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town to whom I would have relatively easy access, and to focus on their views with regard to access to adult learning. This would, I assumed, contribute to the empirical knowledge base on refugee experiences rather than remaining hearsay or anecdotal evidence

In this study, I have investigated the barriers to participation in adult learning among refugees, with emphasis on the Somali refugees residing within the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town. The Bellville area of Cape Town is 'home' to a substantial number of Somali refugees who have become a community there. The next section takes a closer look at the research problem statement.

### **1.4 Research problem statement**

Barriers to participation in learning are widespread and are not limited to refugees and asylum seekers. Access to adult learning, including among refugees, remains a challenge in South Africa in spite of this country's Constitution and its Bill of Rights, which gives all learners the right to

access education opportunities (RSA, 1996; Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik and Walters, (2000); Aitchison (2018).

While there may be many barriers that confront refugees interested in learning, refugees might also not be well informed about the availability of adult learning programmes or opportunities in the areas in which they reside. Furthermore, the barriers to learning opportunities that refugees struggle with might be poorly understood or masked by other societal issues (Steinberg, 2016). This study, set within a Somali community, thus intended to elucidate the barriers that these particular refugees experience in their quest to obtain knowledge and skills as adult learners in a foreign country.

### **1.5 Research aim**

The aim of this research was to investigate and open for scrutiny the range of barriers that impede access to and participation in adult learning of Somalis who are refugees in South Africa, in the hope that policy makers and other influential parties might be inspired to take action that mediates the barriers for these and other refugees.

### **1.6 Research questions**

My main research question therefore asked:

‘What barriers do Somali refugees, men and women, experience when attempting to access adult learning in South Africa?’

Sub-questions arising from this research question were:

- What opportunities for adult learning are available to Somali women and men refugees in Cape Town, South Africa?

- What barriers to participation in adult learning have men and women refugees experienced?

### **1.7 Objective of the study**

A primary objective of the study was to understand the barriers to participation in learning that the Somali refugee community experiences, but also to shine a light on the position of Somali women, as I suspected from my personal interactions with women refugees that they experienced gender inequality and discrimination in relation to learning opportunities.

### **1.8 Limitations of the study**

The study was conducted with a group of refugees located within a particular geographic context. As such, it does not claim to speak for all refugees in all contexts. However, it is hoped that the findings highlight issues with regard to learning opportunities, or lack thereof, barriers to learning, which may affect similarly displaced people, and perhaps incite some remediation of these.

Participants were not readily available, and it took time and effort to build trust in order that people would share their insights with me on what might be a sensitive topic. Mostly, I felt that respondents were honest and sincere, but their reflections are personal and should be viewed as personal narratives rather than speaking on behalf of the whole community.

This study was influenced by my personal experiences as an asylum seeker myself as well as my religious values. I therefore had to be vigilant and open minded to avoid being influenced by views that were not like mine. Thus, I was consciously aware of potential bias as from data collection to analysis and interpretation in order to report faithfully the experiences of Somali refugees in Bellville, Cape Town.

As many of the respondents' first language was not English, proper translation and interpretation was required. Two Somali students studying at UWC agreed to assist interviewees where language barriers existed as explained in chapter 3, section 3.6. I attempted to keep to the respondents' words as far as possible in order to remain true to their sentiments expressed.

Despite the above limitations in the study, the findings provided helpful base information for future research and policy assessment. Furthermore, the study certainly indicated possible ways of improving the conditions faced by some of the respondents in the study that might apply to other refugee contexts.

## **1.9 Definition of key terms**

**Barriers to participation in adult learning:** Factors that impede access to or full participation in learning

**Dispositional barriers:** Barriers related to low motivation, attitudes and self-perceptions

**Situational barriers:** Barriers related to one's situation in life at a given time. For example, lack of money or time.

**Institutional barriers:** These are practices and procedures within institutions that exclude or discourage adult learners from participating.

**Academic barriers:** These barriers include literacy skills such as reading, writing, listening and speaking. Other important skills are numeric skills, computer skills, as well as skills in accessing



information, attention and memory skills, critical and reflective thinking skills, skills in writing essays, examinations and tests, and so on.

**Chain of - Response Model (COR):** It is a conceptual framework aimed at explaining what makes some people participate in adult education and training while others do not.

**Gender inequalities:** The condition of being unequally treated due to one's gender, and lack of parity between sexes.

**Globalization:** Refers to rapidly increasing worldwide communication integration, connectedness and interdependence of societies and cultures, as well as the movement towards economic, financial trade and free transfer of goods and services such as education.

**Migration:** it is the movement of people from one location to another due to various factors such as unemployment, technology, the standard of living and so on.

**Refugee:** is a person who is forced to flee his/her home country of origin due to persecution, whether on an individual basis or as part of a mass exodus due to political, economic, religious, cultural, military or other related problems.

## **1.10 Thesis structure and chapter outline**

This thesis is presented in five chapters as follows:

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Background**

This introductory chapter provides the background to this study. It contains a statement of the problem, the research questions, objective of the study and defines key terms used herein. It ends with an outline of the entire thesis

## **Chapter 2: Literature review and the conceptual frameworks**

This chapter presents a review of literature related to broader refugee challenges as well as barriers to participation in adult learning. It draws on migration related issues both internationally and locally, and policy matters. The conceptual frameworks outlined herein serve as lenses through which the experiences of men and women refugees might be viewed and understood.

## **Chapter 3: Research design and methodology**

This chapter describes the research methodology herein as a qualitative approach and gives a description of the data collection instruments, the targeted respondents. It also sets out the research process together with ethical considerations and the limitations of the study.

## **Chapter 4: Presentation of findings from the data**

This chapter sets out the findings of the research in terms of the data gathered through the qualitative interviews. Extracts from the data are set out verbatim in order to provide richness and texture, and to build a thick description of refugee experiences in their own words.

## **Chapter 5: Discussion of the data, Conclusions and Tentative Recommendations**

Finally, this chapter discusses the findings in relation to both the literature and the conceptual framework utilised. Conclusions and tentative recommendations are proposed in closing.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a general introduction and background to the study as well as the research aims and objectives. The chapter offered a brief overview of the Somali and refugee

situation, a problem statement, the definition and explanation of key terms frequently used in the study and ends with an outline of the chapters in the entire thesis.

The following chapter, Chapter Two, presents a review of literature and theoretical frameworks applicable to this thesis.



## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

#### **2.0 Introduction**

A literature review in any research study is based on the assumption that researchers learn from existing knowledge and build on what others have already studied (Hussey and Hussey, 1997; Neuman, 2000; Mouton, 2001). This chapter presents a review of relevant literature and the conceptual framework applied in this study. Primarily a literature review contributes to the development of the framework for the study. Overall, the scholarship discussed in this chapter provides the background to the study and a framework that is used to evaluate the data presented in Chapter 5.

The intention here then is to explore literature on adult learning and barriers to participation in adult learning opportunities. But this chapter also intends to contextualize adult learning within the South African context, particularly post 1994, which provides the backdrop to Somali refugee experiences in South Africa.

The following section will deal with how adult learning is broadly understood and conceptualised, within the context of South African and international policy on refugees.

#### **2.1 Understanding adult learning**

One cannot understand adult learning in Africa without looking at its history and origins. In a bygone era, it was important for Africans to provide education for the adult population so as to ensure the survival and the propagation of skills, integration, group cohesion, societal values and acceptable attitudes, Baatjes and Mathe, (2004). This expectation gave rise to the use of the

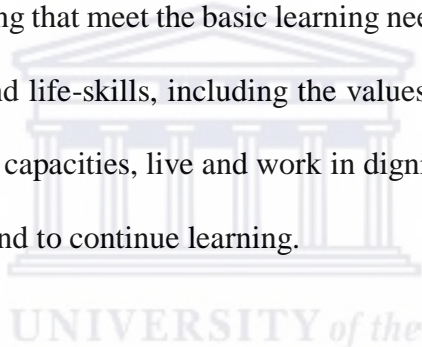
apprenticeship training which provided an opportunity for the preparation of herbalists, hunters, food-gatherers, security officials, rulers, soldiers, traders and so on” (Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik, & Walters, 2000, p. 11).

The role of adult learning as an agent for social change has been prominent for several decades and has informed the activities of civil society and government campaigns in various countries including South Africa (Baatjes and Mathe, 2004). Adult learning embraces transformation and empowerment in terms of skills within communities in South Africa and the world at large. It has great value as it provides numerous opportunities to those who may not have had a chance to study due to factors such as finance and family issues, to name a few. Eaton (2010) postulates that adult learning can be viewed as formal, non-formal and informal learning, and is learning which is undertaken by adults who may have had some early basic education. Adult education results in the gaining of new knowledge and skills by individuals and groups in their lifetime. The Government of South Africa has also enshrined the Bill of Rights in its Constitution which enshrines the right of all citizens "to a basic education, including adult basic education, and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible". (RSA, 1996a; Department of Education, 2003, p3).

Within the South African context, Adult Basic Education and Training refers to the conceptual foundation for lifelong learning and development, which encompasses knowledge, skills and attitudes required for social, economic and political participation and transformation. Adult Basic Education and Training ranges from levels 1- 4, the exit level of which is equivalent to Grade 9 in schooling, in terms of the South African Qualifications Authority Act (RSA, 1996). The Adult Basic Education and Training Act (2000) clarifies responsibility as follows:

*To regulate adult basic education and training; to provide for the establishment, governance and funding of public adult learning centres; to provide for the registration of private adult learning centres; to provide for quality assurance and quality promotion in adult basic education and training; to provide for transitional arrangements; and to provide for matters connected therewith (p. 3).*

Gibbons and Wentworth, (2001, p.3), define adulthood as the “point at which individuals perceive themselves to be essentially self-directing”, but state that self-directedness does not necessarily correlate with age. Baatjes and Mathe, (2004), define Adult Basic Education (ABE) as all forms of organised education and training that meet the basic learning needs of adults, including literacy, numeracy, general knowledge and life-skills, including the values and attitudes that they require in order to survive, develop their capacities, live and work in dignity, improve the quality of their lives, make informed decisions and to continue learning.



Prior to 1996, ABE in South Africa consisted mainly of literacy in English and numeracy. Literacy is generally seen as the ability to read and write, not only by adults, but also by children and youths as well, in a continuum of reading and writing skills. According to Hoppers (2012) broader definition, adult learning applies to all forms of education and training, which are not part of normal schooling. However, Rule, (2006) argues that adult learning refers to learning undertaken by learners who are 15 years of age and above. Hoppers (2012) further asserts that adult education should be seen as a continuing learning process which provides opportunities to people who may have dropped out of school for various reasons.

The philosophy underpinning second chance education is that “students who do not succeed on the main road are given another chance to do so, not via a parallel road, but rather a re-entry portal

into the main track” (Ross and Gray, 2005, p.113- 4). The above summarised definitions are significant and therefore relevant to this study.

The next section focuses on how adult learning has been taken up in the South African policy framework post- 1994 as well as the problems that are evident.

## **2.2 Adult learning in South Africa**

In today’s modern society, education is regarded as the fundamental building block of society. Hence, education in a real sense has become a need and not a want, so that each and every individual in South Africa or elsewhere would want to access it. Mnguni, (2013), argues that ‘education is the tool that can be used to change the world’. The term education can be defined as the process of educating or teaching someone, so that he or she can learn valuable information to progress in society. This concept of education has always been “a contested arena with complex issues”, according to Tshiredo (2013, p 8) that had to be resolved in the post- apartheid era. Moreover, in South Africa during the apartheid era, the majority of black people in South Africa were denied educational opportunities by the apartheid government. This left the country with a high poverty rate and a large illiteracy problem. When the new democratic government came into power in 1994, improving adult learning was recognised as an important priority. Opportunities for adult learning especially were seen as important for adults who had been denied education under the apartheid system (Rule, 2006).

Since the dismantling of apartheid, South Africa has made attempts to remove discriminatory structures that the apartheid government had in place. During August 1994, there were advertisements and press releases campaigning for education restructuring (Jansen, 1999), which

led to a complete reform of the education system. Tshiredo (2013) stated that, “the adoption of the new constitution after the country became a democracy has provided the basis for curriculum change and development in South Africa” (pg.1). However, there was critique that the first education policies initiatives were based on political posturing and not on the true purpose of education (Govender, and Fataar, 2015, p. 16).

The ANC increased its popularity amongst the people of South Africa, affording the party the opportunity to alter the constitution (Mouton et al. 2012, p.11) and abolish the existing racially defined departments of education in favour of a single education system. Additionally, the main purpose of this new restructuring was to integrate education and training into a system of lifelong learning. After 1994, the ANC government advocated adult learning as a window for adults who had no opportunity to go to school because of the political climate that deprived many to access learning during their earlier years of childhood (Rule, 2006). The new democratic government viewed adult learning in its totality as an inclusive learning approach that could be provided either at home, school, community, and workplace and through mass media (Rule, 2006).

Widom, & Shepard (1996) argues that adult learning in South Africa is often spoken of as if it were a different domain all together, with little relation to learning in childhood or adolescence. Aitchison (2003) describes adult learning in the South African context as comprehensive, including formal, non-formal and informal learning extended throughout the lifespan of an individual to attain the fullest possible development in personal, social and professional life. Furthermore, according to (Aitchison 2003b; Zeelen and Rampedi, (2011), South Africa had a new constitution Zeelen, Rampedi, & van der Linden (2014) and an advanced liberal government linked



to globalization. Nevertheless, according to (French, 2003, p.27), adult education in South Africa has never reached the required scale to satisfy national need although it has had a rich history. Evidence of this is to be found in the inadequate funding for public adult education in the country (Aitchison, 2018).

Since 1994, various initiatives have been put in places that aim not only to ensure access to educational opportunities and restore a culture of learning and teaching but also to improve the quality of education (Aitchison & Harley, 2006). Yet in South Africa there are still extensive numbers of people who in spite of the availability of ABET centres, remain outside the adult learning system. Merriam and Caffarella (1991, p.87) refer to the ‘mystery’ of why more adults, especially those who might benefit the most, are not participating in ABET.

The South African adult education sector faces serious difficulties such as funding which remains low. Gaps in policy formulation and implementation means that the sector cannot adequately meet the current needs of adults for adult learning (Aitchison, 2006; 2018; Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik, and Walters, 2000). Additionally, Aitchison, (2018) contends that adult and continuing education in Africa, including South Africa, consistently has had lower priority in terms of funding and available facilities.

According to Aitchison, (2003), during the time of political transition many people and organisations expected a new democratic government to put in place measures to increase literacy rates and adult basic education provision. Furthermore, the future of NGO literacy campaigns and ABET providers remained uncertain, largely because of funding uncertainties, the loss of experienced staff and more frequently the issue of poor management and administration

(Aitchison, 2018). Aitchison (2003) holds that there is a weak culture of research in relation to adult learning in South Africa; it is under-funded, and seems incomplete, and it is poorly structured. There is also a need for resources, infrastructure and sites to be located near to where adult learners reside and work.

Following the election of a democratic government, a special directorate for Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) or Adult Education and Training (AET) as it is now known, was established within the Department of Education (DoE), which later moved to the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) as part of the ambit of 'post schooling'. Adult Basic Education was declared a constitutional right in South Africa and alongside NGO's, the state has since become a major AET provider (Bhola, 1998); Taylor, Fleisch, & Shindler, 2008; Walters, 2000). The SA constitution stipulates that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult learning and further education (RSA 1996a). The Education Act, Act 27 of 1996 (1996b) gives all learners the right to access the universal syllabus. Furthermore, a key point of the constitution states that a new unified education and training system should be based on the equality of education and training. The policy framework outlines the obligation of the ministry to provide educational opportunities to those who experience learning barriers or those who dropped out (RSA, 2001; Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik and Walters, 2000).

Since 1994, the South African government has formulated a programme of restructuring the education system on principles of equity, human rights, democracy and sustainable development. Despite these policy initiatives, the South African adult education system still faces major

challenges including administrative instability (Aitchison, 2003; Spaull, 2013; Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik and Walters, 2000).

The clauses in the constitution protect and support all learners regardless of who they are (RSA, 1996a) towards inclusive full participation and elimination of all forms of exclusionary prejudice. The White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (DHET, 2013:21), explains that adult education offered through the Public Adult Learning Centres (PALCS) has been inadequate, with 3200 learning centres across the country catering for about 265 000 learners, many of which do not have their own premises to operate from and are using public schools and community centres. These centres offer basic education and most of the staff members (teachers) are not permanently employed. The DHET (2013) acknowledges that government efforts have not been effective in improving the quality of adult education in the country. Thus, they proposed to move the PALCs from provincial education departments to the Department of Higher Education and Training through the Further Education and Training Colleges Amendment Act No. 1 of 2013.

The vision and goals of the government's White Paper on Post-School Education and Training (2013) promotes adult basic education and training as a vehicle for social transformation, which can contribute to redressing apartheid inequalities, building democracy and securing human rights. At the same time, the White Paper projects adult basic education and training as a foundation for economic growth (DHET, 2013).

As indicated earlier, South Africa is considered to be a middle-income country - it faces major challenges of unemployment; poverty, inequality, racially skewed wealth, and an increasing

overflow of unskilled labour (Landman et al, 2004; Gelb, 2003; Venter & Landsberg, 2006; Armstrong, Lekezwa & Siebrits, 2008).

Approximately 60 percent of South Africans are living in extreme poverty and, among them, 15 percent of the poorest are desperately struggling to make ends meet, making access to the mainstream education system a challenge (Gloppen, 2019). According to the National Education Policy Investigation (1992, p. 1), Bantu education was under-funded and ill equipped. The most important effect of this unequal education provision was ‘that millions of people have received either no education or very little formal education of very low quality’. Aitchison (2018) holds that this is still the case today.

In the following section, I focus on understanding the history of refugee situation in the South African context, and refugees’ access to education and its relevancy to this research.

### **2.3 Refugees and access to education in South Africa**

In the post-colonial period, the African continent witnessed a worsening humanitarian situation owing to various conflicts and wars across the continent mainly in the 1990s, such as in Zaire (now Democratic Republic of Congo or DRC), Somalia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda, Liberia, Angola, Mozambique and Sudan. The conflict in most cases focused on the fight for political supremacy and territorial control in these countries as well as problems related to the complex colonial legacy and conflict over geographical borders Prah, (2004).

Refugees fleeing from war usually lose their livelihoods as well as their opportunities including education. However, upon arrival in a new destination, they are obliged to learn a new culture for

integration, communication and survival. Somali refugees are no exception. Since many of them are considered vulnerable and could have either not attained schooling back home or have not been in any formal schooling, many of them have been conditioned to learn the language of the new environment and this can only be achieved through adult learning centres and informal learning in the informal economy that exist in the host country. Refugees have many adjustments to make as they try to adapt to a new environment. Among them is social identity; new cultural expectations about the educational experience, and attitude and learning motivation. Besides these issues, learning new languages is also a key factor in adult learning which can lead adult learners to success.

### **2.3.1 Education and the Somali refugee community in SA**

In the case of Somali refugees, there has been little participation in the mainstream education system offered in South Africa. Many of the Somalis participate in the Madrasa (Muslim schools), which is the foundation of learning phase in which all Muslims have to undergo as their basic foundation of learning. Somalis as a community put emphasis on the Madrasa, an Islamic cultural practice rather than the Western education structures. There is also the challenge of cultural practices that may present barriers to adult learning in terms of participation in learning.

Cultural practices among the Somali community living in South Africa, especially in Cape Town, hinges on religion, language, marriage and other traditions which impact on their lives in the host community (Jinnah, & Lowe, 2015). Jinnah, (2017) describes culture as a system of values, norms, and beliefs that are shared among a group of people living together and speaking a similar language and share other practices such as circumcision.

However, religion as one of the strongest cultural practices among Somalis is not only about Islam but about its extension to education. In this regard the Somali community wherever they are, have much emphasis on Islamic teaching rather than the main education system, which has a language barrier (Jinnah, & Lowe, 2015). This barrier also prevents them from performing some economic activities, and they are compelled to seek adult learning opportunities.

#### **2.4 Somali gendered roles that affect adult education**

According to Barlas, (2002), the Somali community is a highly patriarchal society whereby decisions are usually made by men. Doyal (2000) also observes that men view women as inferior and as submissive to men. Doyal further argues that there are ‘specific measures designed to distinguish women and men’. For example, according to Islam, men believe that they are superior to women in terms of thinking and maturity (Barlas, 2002). Studies conducted by Doyal (2000), show that gender is a critical factor in Somali community and as such, there is some bias especially when it comes to adult education.

Adult education can do much for men and women in terms of gender equality (Doyal, 2000). It gives learners -self-reliance and helps empower people, especially women, to decide for themselves on what is good for them. It assists in enhancing their skills and may help them find jobs, hence increasing their financial independence (Fenwick, 2004).

Doyal (2000) further affirms that adult education allows both men and women to see the value of education and to better educate their children and help them at school, as a result breaking the vicious cycle of lack of education and poverty, which is often passed from one generation to the next.

The United Nations reports that migration is generally beneficial for migrants who access better opportunities, for their families after acquiring some formal knowledge through education. In return, these migrants benefit from remittances, after the redistribution of labour from lower to higher productivity jobs in different local labour markets. Migration opens opportunities for women especially those who engage in education and in adult learning, giving them access to jobs outside the home and thereby contributing to their empowerment (UN, 2008).

The experiences of men and women migrants differ, and most of the differences are due to the role, behaviour, and relationships that certain society assigns to and expects from a woman or a man in their country of origin and their country of destination. Despite numerous conventions, laws and other forms of support that seem to support women's participation, women are still excluded from participating in various areas of society, especially the Somali Muslim community.

The World Bank Report (2006) describes gender inequality in terms of affording men and women different opportunities because of their gender; however, such inequality arises in the first instance from the unequal power relations between females and males (Subrahmanian, 2005).

The construction of gender inequality has rested on "assigning a range of so-called natural differences" between women and men so as to formalize their differential treatment and unequal allocation of resources (Kabeer, 1999, p. 37). The unequal burdens borne by women and young girls in home-based chores (reproductive activities), including the maintenance of human resources through their unrecognized or under-valued work within the home, provides a good example. Perceptions of 'women's work' bring about gender stereotypes that contribute to negative views of women in institutional learning as well as in the formal workplace (Kabeer,

1999, p 37). Generally, men and women tend to experience the same barriers towards participating in adult education; however, women are more likely to experience more barriers than are men (McGivney, 2004).

## **2.5 Opportunities for adult learning for refugees in South Africa**

While in South Africa, and where there are opportunities of adult learning for those who see the benefit of studying, they are compelled to join adult learning centres to learn how to communicate and write since the environment they live in requires this. However, the chances of access are limited even though some may be willing to participate.

In an effort to address learning barriers among the Somalis, UNHCR through its implementing partners such as the Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training & Advocacy (ARESTA), established adult learning centres in South Africa to give refugees an opportunity to study, hence these centres are helping many to further their studies or learn English so that they are able to communicate on their own when visiting a hospital, banks, or communicating with clients since many of them are involved in small businesses (UNHCR, 2014).

Those who are aware of adult learning opportunities which exist here in South Africa and in the communities where they live, make use of them UNHCR, (2014). Peer education programs run by NGOs also provide refugees with basic information about their rights including education. The NGOs include Scalabrini Centre in Cape Town which provides adult learning services from level 1 to 4, (UNHCR, 2014).

The United Nations High Commission for Refugees in its 1951 Convention defines a refugee as anyone who, “owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion,



nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such a fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (Hyndman 1987, p. 51).

In 1998 South Africa passed the Refugee Act (no 130 of 1998), which was aimed at addressing the problems of refugees and asylum seekers fleeing their countries due to the lack of political stability, ethnic division, and cultural and religious intolerance. The South African Refugee Act of 1998 (130 of 1998) clearly recognizes the right of access to education for all refugees who reside in South Africa, regardless of their gender, age or race. Policy provides for the right to education for everyone without prejudice (South African Refugee Act, 1998; Higher Education Act, No. 101, 1997).

Under this Act, refugees are allowed to study and seek employment, and are entitled to all the rights enshrined in Chapter Two of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights except for political rights (the right to vote) as well as freedom of trade, occupation and profession, which only apply to citizens (RSA, 1996). The Bill of Rights also enshrines the right of all citizens “to basic education and to further their education to tertiary level where applicable which the state, through reasonable channels, must make progressively available and accessible”. The South African Constitution, together with the White Paper on Education (White Paper 1), clarifies that the right to basic education applies to all persons, children, youth and adults (RSA, Department of Education, 1995). Basic education is therefore a legal entitlement to which every person has a claim (Stone & Winterstein, 2003; Aitchison, 2016).

## **2.6 Challenges that confront refugees**

Despite the existence of the refugee act of 1998, life has not been easy for refugees and asylum seekers in South Africa, particularly in relation to the protection of their human dignity as well as having access to opportunities to further their education.

“Refugees and adult population in South African society who are under-educated and illiterate face multiple forms of oppression including unemployment, disease, poverty, homelessness, and many more. This liberal orientation to education, which creates a belief that education provides the means of further benefits and fulfilment, whilst at the same time promoting social justice, equality and the integration of the diverse interests of opposing groups in society, is rejected because of its failure to address growing disadvantage and alienation” (Baatjes, & Mathe, 2004, p.398)

In 2008 there were nationwide attacks on refugees and asylum seekers (mainly of African descent and particularly the Somali community) in South Africa, in which 62 refugees and asylum seekers were brutally murdered, their shops looted, 670 injured and thousands of them displaced (Mail & Guardian, 31-May-2008). Much of the available literature, mainly news articles, described the attack as a result of poor service delivery to the citizens and some few South Africans’ negative attitude towards refugees and asylum seekers. However, in a more critical report, which the UNHCR released in 2010, the organization highlighted socio-economic factors as a cause of xenophobic outbreaks that needed to be addressed (UNHCR (2008).

According to the UNHCR (2017), South Africa hosts 91043 refugees and more than 218300 asylum seekers, totalling to 309343 from 52 countries, mostly from the Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Angola and Zimbabwe (UNHCR, 2007). It was also estimated that, South Africa had the largest asylum seeker applications in the world -followed by the United States of America (UNHCR, 2007).

Protection for refugees in Africa is found in both the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (UN Refugee Convention) and the 1969 Organization of African Unity protocol for Refugee Convention governing the specific aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa (OAU Refugee Convention). United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (1951). Nationally, South Africa is a signatory to both these international treaties. The South African Refugees Act of 1998 together with the South African Bill of Rights also guarantees protection to refugees and asylum seekers in conformity with international agreement and the South African Constitution of (1996).

In 2005, the National Refugee Baseline Survey was conducted by the UNHCR in South Africa, which revealed that many of the refugees apart from very few of the Somalis had relatively good educational backgrounds and were skilled prior to their arrival in South Africa. However, 24 percent of those interviewed were unemployed, while the employed were not working in the area of their expertise despite the government policy of migration preference given to skilled workers (UNHCR, 2005, p.145).

Independent studies show that some refugees can in fact “contribute immensely to the development of the host country if they are given the opportunity to make use of their prior skills/knowledge and make an impact on their host country” (Taylor, Filipski, Alloush, Gupta, Valdes, & Gonzalez-Estrada, 2016, p.7449). Jacobsen (2006, p.577) argues that the benefit that the state and its citizens are getting as the result of refugee presence supersedes the perceived problems and burdens imposed by refugees on the host. Additionally, the study conducted by Jacobsen shows that despite

the influx and security problems, the host nation and its community benefits mainly in two ways: through the humanitarian assistance afforded to refugees mainly in camps, and from the refugees themselves in terms of assets refugees bring with them in the form of social capital, skills and experiences (Jacobsen, 2006, p.577).

A number of studies conducted by the following scholars have shown that refugees face psychological challenges during their arrival in their host country as a result of the combination of post-traumatic stress and trauma resulting from their past experiences (Warfa, Bhui, Craig, Curtis, Mohamud, McCrone, Stansfeld and Thornicroft, 2006). In addition, problems are often encountered in the host country such as harsh immigration policies, negative perceptions by some of the local people and difficulties around coping with the new environment (Rody, 2002; Brough, Gorman, Ramirez and Westoby, 2003; Hsu, Davies and Hansen, 2004; Pumariega A, Rothe, and Pumariega, J, 2005; Warfa et al, 2006). Jacobsen (2006, p. 276) observes that urban refugees are more likely to be subjected to human rights abuses such as unreasonable detention, threats, discrimination and even physical abuse compared to their counterparts in the refugee camps.

The foregoing sections have set out various issues pertaining to refugees and barriers to adult learning opportunities: migration challenges, gender inequalities, policy and legislation, cultural traditions, which constitute barriers for adults, particularly those who are refugees, seeking access to education.

The next section presents the theoretical frameworks that have relevance for this study. In an effort to make sense of the refugee environment, especially issues they have no control over, these theories appeared to have explanatory value and will be applied as lenses to interrogate the data later herein.

## **2.7 Relevant Theoretical Frameworks**

### **2.7.1 Theories of adult learning**

Trotter (2006) identified several theories relating to adult learning and development as follows: Age Theory; Stage Theory; and Cognitive Development Theory. Theorists of Age Theory have stated that as people aged, they did not stop learning, and recognized first and foremost the existence of lifelong learning as being continued throughout the life cycle. Age theorists contend that the issues adults face changes with chronological age: a mid-life transition period that occurs in the late thirties and early forties. This transition is referred to as the “elbow joint of life, where the adult reflects upon and evaluates life. Reflection caused individuals during this stage to think more about their context and culture, leading them to have a greater sense of membership in the community” (Trotter, 2006, p. 9).

In Stage Theory, it was held that ‘adults passed through distinct and different stages in the ways they constructed childhood experiences. The stage theorists did not see intelligence as a fixed condition, but as something that had the potential to evolve as adults tried to make sense of the world (ibid).

Cognitive Development theorists defined cognitive development as conceptual levels with degrees of abstractness and interpersonal maturity. Developmental stages had four levels: the low conceptual level was one of concrete negativism, over generalization, and focused on personal need; the second level was that of categorical judgments, acceptance of a single rule, and reliance on external standards; the third level was one of awareness of alternatives and sensitivity to

personal feelings; and the fourth and final level showed a reliance on internal rather than external standards, working with others, and seeing events from multiple viewpoints” (ibid, p. 10).

With this brief look at the stages of adult learning, I now turn to a more detailed theoretical account of barriers to adult learning relevance to the study.

### **2.7.2 Conceptualizing barriers to adult learning**

The section below conceptualizes barriers to adult learning in general and is helpful for understanding the barriers that impede access to participation in adult learning among Somalis who are refugees in South Africa.

According to Bennet, (2003, p.303), “barriers to learning is a broad term which yields a range of conditions”. Barriers arise from many factors, which affect the way one is able to learn, or anything that stands in the way of a learner being able to learn effectively. Erradu (2012) contends that barriers to learning are obstructions that may hinder the learner from accessing educational provision and that may contribute to learning breakdown. These barriers may be located within the learner’s capability, such as learning through an additional language, cultural and religious background, social, economic or political perspective according to Bennet (2003). The barriers mentioned above do not refer to individuals’ incapability to learn but are about systematic barriers or barriers in society that hinder their participation in adult learning. Merriam & Caffarella (1991) clarify that barriers that prevent adults from participating fully in adult learning are sometimes also referred to as blockages, constraints, deterrents, impediments or obstacles.

Norman and Hyland (2003, p.270) argue that besides the situational, institutional and dispositional barriers, lack of confidence is also a very significant barrier to adult learning. They insist that,

“group activity and interaction have the potential to enhance confidence and achievement at all levels of learning” (p. 269). Educators should therefore direct more attention towards dispositional barriers, particularly factors linked to learners’ confidence.

Caron (1994) writes that those learners who go back to study after many years of stagnation in structured academic mode exhibit a sense of inactivity, decay and disuse of their minds, and that these can be major barriers to the returning learner compared to traditional students, non-traditional learners “obtain the same information, but with a greater investment in time, and mental energy” (p.6).

A more complete understanding of participation and non-participation must be based on a better understanding, first of the types of barriers, which intersect with each other to create multiple obstacles to learning. Fagan (1991) argues that it is not enough to understand barriers to participation separately and independently. Barriers can be categorised as situational, institutional, dispositional/attitudinal and/or academic. The following section discusses these broad categories of barriers in more detail.

### **2.7.3 Situational barriers**

Fagan (1991) cited in MacKeracher et al. (2006, p.3) points out that these factors can be referred to as “life factors” and consist of broad circumstantial conditions that hamper the ability of adult learners to gain access to educational opportunities. Firstly, these factors include the multiple and often conflicting roles and responsibilities of most adults in relation to their work, family, and community. Secondly, they pertain to the discretionary resources in terms of time, energy and finances the adult learner can or is willing to apply in pursuing learning activities, they also include

the level of support the adult learner receives from significant others in his or her life, and the distance the adult learner must travel to reach the learning opportunity. In terms of situational barriers, “adults feel alienated when their existing skills and experience are not taken into account or when their outside commitments are ignored” (MacKeracher et al. (2006, p.3).

At the same time, situational barriers are also understood as the responsibility of the individual learner, “inflexibility and lack of concerned support on the part of staff and instructors within educational institutions exacerbate the problem” (MacKeracher et al., 2006, p. 5). Furthermore, MacKeracher et al. (2006, p.4) asserts that, “some factors, such as childcare, financial support and transportation services, are classified as both situational and institutional barriers depending on the source of the problem”.

#### **2.7.4 Institutional barriers**

Institutional barriers are defined as all those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage adult learners from participating fully in adult learning (Cross, 1981, p. 98). In discussing the South African situation, Groener (2011) considers institutional barriers to participation in adult learning in socio-political terms. She points out that structural barriers during the apartheid regime prevented South African black people from participating in adult learning and at the same time, they were denied access to funding which could have enhanced their participation. This problem is similar to that of the Somalis since socio-political inequalities were reproduced in their country for decades. Socio-economic barriers are the relationship between the education provision and the economic conditions in any society, which should be recognized. Socio-economic barriers involve lack of basic services, poverty and underdevelopment (Groener (2011). Effective learning is



essentially influenced by the availability of educational resources to meet the needs of any society (Black, 2010).

The Department of Education DOE, (1997) stated in their policy document on ABET that the previous government put in place policies designed to limit access to education for blacks and paid very little attention to literacy. The document holds that "the consequence today is a legacy of some 9, 4 million adults with less than 9 years of schooling, who express the desire and have ability to enrol into the education and training system" (p.27).

Fagan (1991) refers to structural factors as limitations inherent in the methods institutions use to design, deliver and administer learning activities, as well as the methods that are frequently 'biased against or ignorant of the needs of adult learners' (Potter and Ferguson, 2003; Mckeracher, Stuart and Potter, 2006). These factors include the availability and quality of information about learning opportunities, the credentials required for admission to learning opportunities, the quality and complexity of admission and registration procedures, and the timing, scheduling and sequencing of learning opportunities as MacKeracher et al. (2006) explain. Furthermore, the attitudes and behaviours of administrative staff and instructors towards adult learners, the quality and availability of essential support services for learners, together with library, computer resources, advocacy and counselling services, parking and transportation services, can be contributing factors that can create barriers for adults.

Another key concern in this category of institutional barriers is the lack of aspiration to attend full time study, and time required to finish these programs (Cross, 1981, p. 99).

### **2.7.5 Dispositional barriers**

Dispositional barriers refer to attitudes, which are mentioned in the works of Darkenwald and Merriam (1982), as psychosocial barriers. They are defined by Cross (1981, p. 99) as those factors which are related to low motivation, an individual's attitudes, values, beliefs, self-confidence, and negative self-perceptions that may adversely affect the learning process.

Prior negative experiences of learning activities also spill over, as well as the feelings of being isolated within a learning community that makes it difficult to succeed. MacKeracher (2006) posits that health and fitness conditions that adversely affect the ability to learn can constitute another dispositional barrier to the learning process. For instance the perception of being too old or maybe lacking the ability to learn (Cross, 1981).

### **2.7.6 Academic barriers**

There are several skills which, when not acquired, act as barriers to successful learning among adults. Some of these skills essentially include literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Other important skills are numeric and computer skills, as well as skills in accessing information, attention and memory skills, critical and reflective thinking skills, and skills in writing essays, examinations and tests (MacKeracher, Stuart & Potter, 2006). MacKeracher et al, (2006, p. 18), further acknowledges that, "Academic barriers occur because many potential adult learners, while having the necessary entry qualification, may have not used their academic skills for many years with the result that their skills may have declined".

MacKeracher et al. (2006, p. 4), “adds that, “some factors, such as childcare, financial support and transportation services, are classified as both situational and institutional barriers depending on the source of the problem”. For instance, lack of financial support is situational when the adult learner does not have access to enough funds to pay for learning activities; as well as institutional when admission and registration fees are extremely high, and the learners are required to pay for additional resources, such as computers. In this sense, the institutions provide no flexible means to pay for learning activities, or governments have inflexible mechanisms to provide financial support to adult learners in need. Finances can also become an attitudinal barrier when the individual learner must balance the cost of attending learning activities against the anticipated benefits. For some learners, the benefits of participating may never be high enough to outweigh the costs (MacKeracher, 2006, p. 4).

All the above mentioned, inevitably relate to academic barriers as they affect the learners’ ability to learn. Pont (2004) almost fifteen years later, stated more or less the same, stating that groups with low skills, those with low wages, the unemployed, or others far away from the labour market, and elderly people, are less likely to participate in adult education and training than the highly educated, the employed, those working in larger enterprises in white collar occupations, and young adults.

Norman and Hyland (2003, p. 270) argue that besides the situational, institutional and dispositional barriers, lack of confidence is also a significant barrier to adult learning, but “group activity and interaction has the potential to enhance confidence and achievement at all levels of learning” (p. 269). Lack of academic skills and qualifications tend to be an academic barrier for some of the adult learners.

Lastly, Lieb (1991) suggests that the best way to encourage adult learners to learn or participate in adult learning programs/opportunities is simply to enhance their reasons for enrolling and reduce the barriers, which prevent them from participating.

### **2.7.7 Chain -of -Response Model / Motivation Theory**

In the 1980s Cross developed her Chain-of-Response Model as a conceptual framework aimed at explaining what makes some people participate in adult education and training while others do not. Cross (1981), argues that participation in a learning activity, whether in organised classes or self-directed, is not a single act but the result of a chain of responses, each based on an evaluation of the position of the individual in his or her environment. Responses leading to participation tend to originate within the individual, as opposed to outside forces. The model can be seen as recurring, and contains seven stages as developed by Cross which have different impacts on the decision-making process of whether to join and continue participating in an adult learning course, Cross (1981)

The main concepts are self- evaluation which are (represented by A in the figure) and attitude towards education (represented by B in the figure). It assumes that the components of participatory behaviour can best be understood and articulated by the individual making the decision. Cross orders the variables from internal psychological variables to external factors. Social and environmental and/ or experiential factors, which are antecedents to one's self-concept and dispositional orientation toward outside objects, impinge upon the concepts of self-evaluation and attitude.

The following is Cross 's chain-of-response model (COR) diagram explaining its stages mentioned

below;

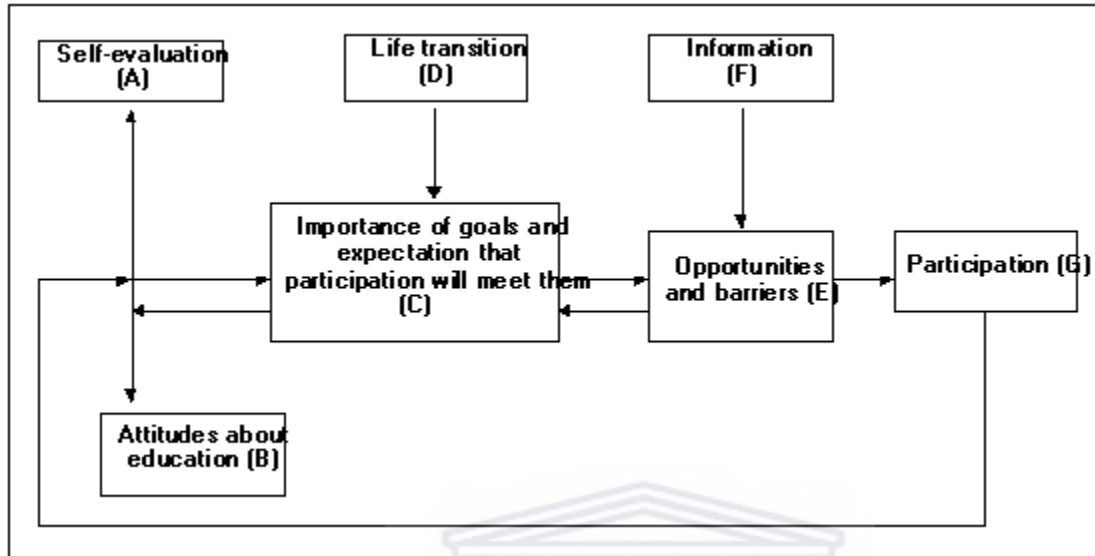


Figure 2.1: Chain of Response Model by Cross (1981).

The internal psychological variables interact with and influence the value attributable to, and the expectancy associated with, a participatory act, simply meaning the importance of goals and expectation that participation will meet goals (represented by C in the figure). The expectancy and valence associated with a participatory act are also influenced by life transitions and developmental tasks that confront the individual in various life cycle phases (represented by D in the figure). The individual responds to the relevant opportunities and barriers associated with the pursuit of an educational opportunity (represented by E in the figure). The extent to which the opportunities and barriers affect the likelihood of participation is partly determined by the differential effect of motivation upon the individual's perception of these variables and the information available for decision making (represented by F in the figure). If responses all along the chain are positive, the result will be participation (point G) (Stowe, 1998).

Cross's COR model is the first to incorporate life events and transitions. Life transitions (D) are those events and change that all adults encounter as they move through the life cycle. Points E and F are environmental factors that may decide whether one participates in education. Barriers can be overcome, and opportunities taken advantage of if one has the information needed to proceed (point F). "Without accurate information, point E in the model is weak because opportunities are not discovered and barriers loom large" (Cross, 1981, p. 127). If responses all along the chain are positive, the result will be participation (point G). Cross says that the model is not really as linear as these steps might suggest. It is also a reciprocal model in that participation in adult education (G) can affect how one feels about education (B) and oneself as a learner (A).

While Cross's model does have environmental components, it is primarily a psychological model with its focus on the individual progressing through the chain of response. In Cross's chain-of-response model, life transitions, events and changes are what all adults undergo as they move through their life cycles. For example, self-evaluation and attitude towards education; information about opportunities and the barriers to participation; life transitions and the importance of goals and the expectations that participation will lead them to, and the environment one is in (Cross, 1981). Furthermore, Cross avers that adult participation in learning is not an isolated act but results from a complex chain of personal responses to internal and external variables that either encourage or discourage participation in adult learning.

Cahalan & Lacireno-Paquet (1998) also contend that factors such as life transitions, information, and opportunities, and barriers, further influence the choice to participate in adult education and

training. In Cross's chain-of-response model, it is pointed out that, "the importance of the barriers towards participation in adult education and training in the end depends on how strong an interest the individual has in adult education and training since the individual must already have an interest in participating" Cross (1981, p. 124).

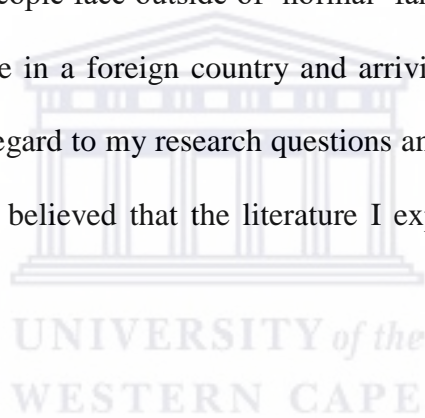
## **2.8 Using the chain-of-response model to explain engagement in adult education and training**

Cross (1981) states that the chain-of-response model (COR) can be used to explain the reasons why some people engage in adult education and training, while others choose not to. Among these chains, the first link consists of individual factors such as self-evaluation and attitudes toward education. From this mainly psychological link, the model moves on to more external factors, which are linked to opportunities as well as barriers.

Cross' chain-of-response model helps in understanding how adults learn, and predicts when, where and how learning can take place. Cross (1981) cited in Merriam and Caffarella (1991) states that, 'there will be not one, but many theories useful in improving the understanding of adults as learners. Knowles (1980) also defines 'andragogy' as the best theory of adult learning, and sees it as 'the art and the science of helping adults learn', which is based upon five assumptions: firstly, as a person matures, his or her self-concept moves from that of being an independent personality towards that one of a self-directing human being; secondly, an adult accumulates a growing reservoir of experience which is a rich resource for learning and the readiness an adult has to learn is intimately related to the developmental tasks of his or her social role. Thirdly, there is a change in time perspective as people mature from future application of knowledge to closeness of

application; fourthly, an adult is more problem-centred than subject-centred in terms of learning. Lastly, adults are also motivated to learn by internal factors rather than external ones.

This chapter focussed on adult learning in relation to policy frameworks, and salient theories/frameworks that serve to underpin the study and which, in my view, offer lenses that might assist me to make sense of the data. Based on the literature about barriers to participation in adult learning, there is a substantive knowledge base on what the average adult experiences in his/her 'normal' daily environment (Cross 1981) with regard to seeking learning. However, little is known about the specific barriers that people face outside of 'normal' familiar settings, as in the case of displaced persons seeking refuge in a foreign country and arriving with their own culture and community. Therefore, having regard to my research questions and the type of community that I was interested in researching, I believed that the literature I explored would guide me in my investigation.



The following chapter sets out the research design, which guided this investigation.



## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter outlines the research design and methodology adopted for this study. It discusses the research site or setting, the research methods used, the population and the sample, the instruments and methods for data collection as well as the procedures used to analyse the data. Ethical issues pertinent to the research as well as its limitations are also discussed.

#### **3.1 Statement of the research question**

The essential concern of my study focused on barriers to participation in adult learning among Somali refugees living in the area of Bellville in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, South Africa.

The following main research question guided the investigation:

‘What barriers do Somali refugees, men and women, experience when attempting to access adult learning in South Africa?’

Sub-questions arising from this research question were:

- What opportunities for adult learning are available to Somali women and men refugees in Cape Town, South Africa?
- What barriers to participation in learning have men, and women refugees in particular, experienced?

### **3.2 Research design**

A qualitative approach with an exploratory and descriptive design was used in this study to investigate the range of barriers that impede access to participation in adult learning. According to Babbie and Mouton (2001), a research design is a detailed outline of how an investigation will take place in a study. Furthermore, a research design will typically include how data is to be collected, what instruments will be employed, how the instruments will be used, and the intended means for analysing the collected data. Durrheim, (2006) explains that the research design focuses on the end product, such as what kind of study is being planned and what kind of results are aimed at. It is the overall plan for connecting the conceptual research problem to the pertinent and the achievable empirical research.

A qualitative research design was identified as appropriate for this study due to the target grouping being a fairly large, localised, single community of Somali refugees in a suburb of Cape Town, South Africa.

Furthermore, a qualitative methodology was selected because the study is naturalistic in character and attempted to understand the phenomena within a specific environment (Babbie and Mouton, 2006). An appropriate research methodology therefore would rely on questionnaires, interviews, and observations (Walliman, 2006). According to Rubin, Babbie and Mouton (2001), qualitative research methodology provides more detail on behaviour, attitudes and motivations/perceptions and allows more flexibility when applied to the data collection process. Babbie and Mouton, (2006) explain further that qualitative methods enable the researcher to establish how people make sense of their lives and experiences. On a similar note, Burns & Grove (2011, p. 23), also assert

that a qualitative research approach is a systematic, interactive, subjective approach used to describe the experiences of participants (Burns & Grove, 2011, p. 23).

A fundamental of qualitative research is to determine the respondents' meanings and definitions of their world, which emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality (ibid, 2011). Therefore, the qualitative methods in this study enabled me to gain an understanding of the range of barriers to participation among Somali adults with regard to learning.

According to Ferreria and Puth (1990), DeVos (1998), qualitative research method is exploratory, and the researcher embarks on a journey of discovery rather than confirmation, while Leedy & Omrod (2010) identified qualitative research methodologies as dealing with data that is primarily verbal in a natural setting, as mentioned earlier on.

### **3.3 Research methods**

In this study, I used in-depth interviews with an interview guide/protocol as a research instrument (see appendix A). Bryman (2008, p. 422) confirms, “The idea of an interview guide is much less specific than the notion of a structured interview schedule”. Furthermore, the author clarifies that “what is crucial is that the questioning allows interviewers to glean the ways in which research participants view their social world and that there is flexibility in the conduct of the interviews” (p. 442).

After developing the interview guide, I conducted a pilot study in order to test if there was adequate development of the schedule. The purpose of a pilot study is “to improve the success of the investigation” (De Vos et, al., 2002, p. 215). According to Sekaran (2003), the interview guide or

schedule ensures that the interviews runs smoothly and in line with the main themes of the study and helps the researcher to cover all the questions required.

Bless and Higson-Smith (2000) and Nachmias and Nachmias (1992) state that the use of open-ended questions gives the respondents freedom to disclose information in detail.

According to De Vos (2002, p. 293), open-ended questions do not need a one-word answer but provide interviewees with many opportunities to express their feelings. Since it was one-on-one interview sessions, there was adequate time to investigate the issues in detail whilst giving interviewees full attention (Neuman, 2000). The open-ended questions asked were appropriate for qualitative data collection in terms of clarification or further coding and analysing responses (Hulley, et al., 2011).

Kvale (1996, p. 14) defines an interview as “an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest”. This technique is an efficient way of interacting with the interviewees and listening to them in the process of collecting data. Interviews are methods of gathering information through oral queries using a set of pre-planned core questions meant for interviewing process. Interviewing refers to structured or unstructured verbal communication between the researcher and the participants, in which information is presented to the researcher. Through interviews, participants’ views, experiences, feelings and expressions were explored more deeply, thereby providing rich information I explored issues important to the participants such as the questions pertaining to demographical data, which allows participants to respond in their own words.

Interviews are used to obtain detailed insights and personal thoughts, which are flexible and unstructured. The interviewer should create a relaxed, open environment, and allow wording of questions and order to be determined also by the flow of conversation.

What prompted me to choose this research instrument for gathering data was because it is a simple and appropriate tool to use in order to allow the respondents' voices to be heard. The interview guide gave me flexibility around the questions asked although I had a set of questions, which could guide the interview process. Since probing is not restricted when using the research instrument, it allowed me to probe further questions which were not in the interview guide at times when something said by the respondents needed to be followed up.

Creswell (2008) argues that “how” and “what” questions are pertinent for qualitative research; therefore using the qualitative approach was worthwhile for dealing with the research questions as stated in my study. This methodology therefore accorded with my quest to gain a deeper understanding of the views, opinions, and experiences pertaining to learning, of participants in the Somali refugee community.

### **3.4 Research site**

Koerber and McMichael (2008) assert that before one conducts the research, a suitable site where the kinds of behaviour are relevant to the research questions, should be considered. In this case, the research site refers to the physical, social or geographical, and cultural area in which the researcher conducts a study (Burns and Grove, 2011).

Maree (2011) holds that selecting an accessible research site is very important, to facilitate the study especially as the researcher needs permission to carry out the intended research and an accessible site might thus be easier. In this case, the site selected by me was the Bellville Central Business District (CBD), in the Northern suburbs of Cape Town, part of the greater Cape Town metropolitan area in South Africa. Bellville is located 20 km from Cape Town city centre and was originally founded as a railway station on the line from Cape Town to Stellenbosch and the Strand (SALGA, 2006). It is situated near some shopping complexes and two public Universities. This urban area has attracted many communities, more especially foreigners such as Somalis, who have made several blocks of downtown Bellville their refugee home from war torn Somalia, and where they have become commercially active.

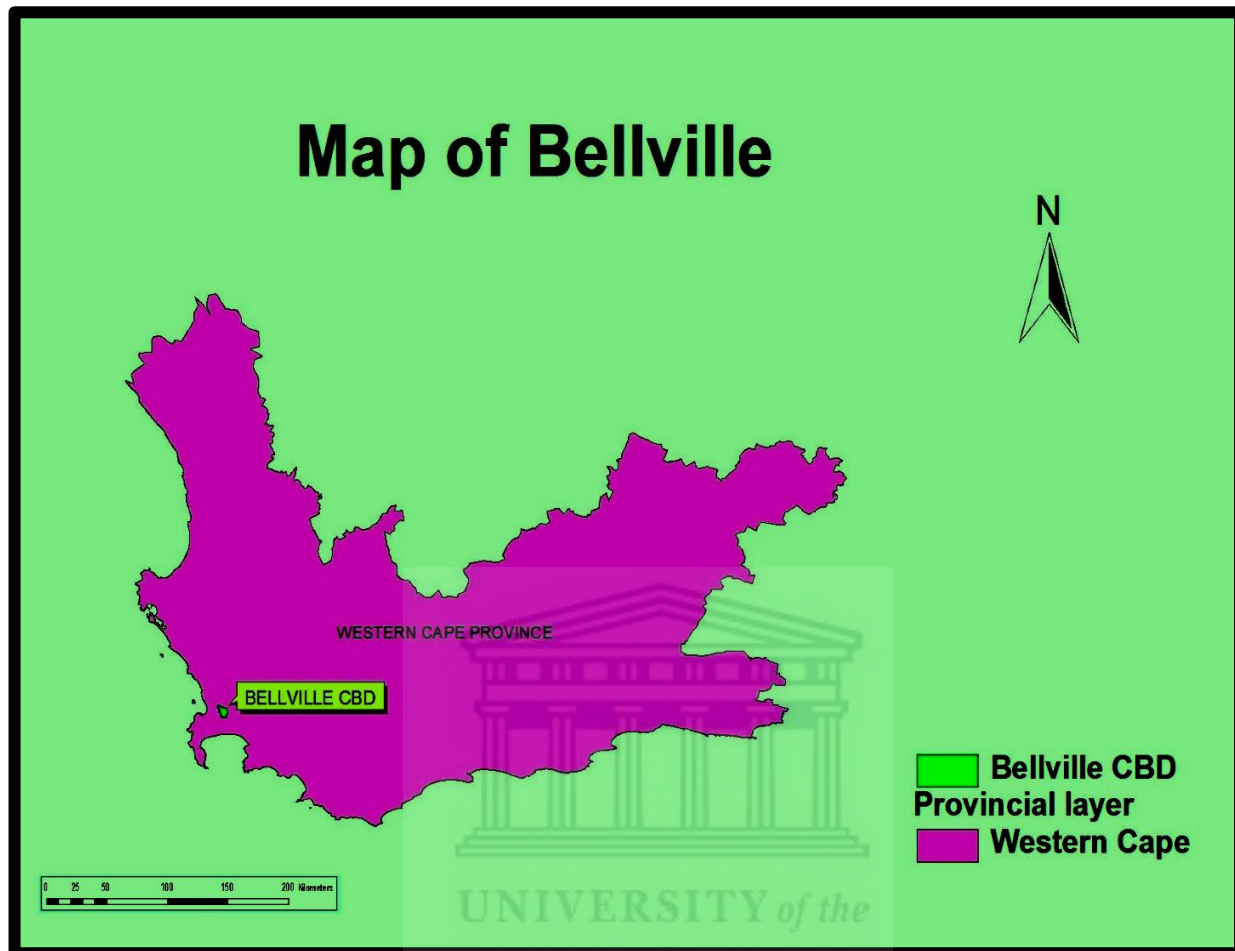
Purposeful selection is a common strategy in qualitative research. Patton (2002, p. 46) argues that, purposeful selection “leads to selecting information rich from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research”. The Bellville site had a large concentration of Somali refugees, which made it a potentially rich source of information for my research.

Somali refugees were the targeted respondents based on my working experience with the Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training and Advocacy as an English volunteer teacher within the organisation. While at ARESTA, I noticed that almost seventy percent of students attending adult education and training (AET) as well as English for beginners were from Somalia. I also noticed that many of them could neither speak nor write English. Being a teacher by profession, I observed that such opportunities were not available to them while in their country of origin. I also observed

that women had few opportunities to study, after interacting and engaging with some of them. Coming to South Africa was an opportunity not only for safety, but also for learning, as some of them said. Because of limited space at ARESTA in Athlone, Somali community leaders opened their own adult learning centre in Bellville where I also provided voluntary teaching services. Thus, it was through this experience that I became interested in carrying out a study on the Somali community in Bellville.

In addition to the Bellville Somali refugees being a fairly large community, this site was also chosen because of its closeness to the university where I was studying which would decrease my transport costs, and the fact that I had access to some community leaders through my work with the ARESTA organisation as mentioned above. I reasoned that selecting the Bellville refugee Somalis as my target grouping would increase my chances of finding sufficient participant willing to take part in the study.

Figure 3.1 below depicts a map of Bellville within the Western Cape to give a sense of the Somali community's location.



**Figure 4.1:** A map of Bellville showing the research site/setting of the area

Source: <http://web1.CapeTown.gov.za>.

### 3.5 Selection of respondents

Selecting respondents for a study involves considering the population and the desired sample size. According to (Rubin and Babbie, 2001), a population in a research study is a group of persons/individuals, object, or items from which samples are taken for measurement. Rubin and Babbie (2001, p. 225) contend that the concept of “population” refers to all the members of any well-defined class of people or it is "the entire group of people that a particular study is interested



in.” In other words, the targeted population is the entire set of individuals whose characteristics are required by the study, while the sample is the subset of individuals selected from that population, (Rubin & Babbie 2016).

The Somali refugee community in Bellville is made up of approximately 1500 – 2000 people according to one of the Somali leaders, but there were no official records by which to verify this, and I had to trust the word of the respondent who was a respected community leader, on this matter. Because I would be doing in depth interviews, which would take some time, I decided not to make the sample too large, and therefore chose a sample of 50 individuals for the study. The sample comprised 25 males and 25 females. I reasoned that obtaining in-depth information from 50 members of this community would enable me to gain sufficient insight into the experiences relating to accessing adult education opportunities.

### **3.6 Sampling methods**

According to Babbie & Mouton, (2006) a sampling method is based on general logic with a target that enables some representation of the population, as it may not be possible to interview all the whole population. I needed participants who would be able to provide insight into experiences of adult education. To derive these participants, I used a purposeful snowball sampling or chain sample technique (Burnard, 2004, p. 177; MacNealy, 1999, p.156). Koerber and McMichael (2008) hold that a convenience sample comprises of those participants who are available and voluntarily willing to participate, allowing a researcher to start with collecting data of those s/he has access to and then requesting respondents to refer contactable others. Maree (2011) notes that this is a technique which is usually cheap and easy to manage and can accommodate a diverse group of people.

The snowball sampling technique allowed respondents to be identified by a process of accumulation, since each subject or participant was asked to suggest the other subjects.

The first step I took was to approach the leader of the Somali community (Chairperson). I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the intended research, where after we had a follow up meeting to discuss the research. The meeting with the chairperson/leader of the Somalis was considered as the starting point for the snowball sampling technique. In our meeting, I assured the chairperson that the anonymity of respondents would be maintained through assigning pseudonyms, and information would not be attributed to identifiable persons. He helped me to meet and to identify community members whom I could approach to interview. Once that was done, I followed up with those people, asked if they were willing to participate and then set up a date and time to interview them. At this point, I also undertook an interview with the chairperson to elicit his views on the perceived barriers community members faced in accessing adult education opportunities. This method of getting the leader to access other participants was an effective technique for arriving at the intended sample of respondents. The table offers some information on the respondents who participated as a result of the convenient snowball sampling method.

### **3.7 Demographic information of the participants**

The respondents were equal numbers of men and women (25 males and 25 females) with differences in marital status; age; and level of education, as the following table shows:

Figure 4.2: Table of demographic characteristics of the sample group (N=50)

<b>Age group (Years)</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
18 – 20	30
21-35	15
36- 50	4
51 +	1

<b>Marital status</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Single	19
Married	29
Divorced	2

<b>Level of education</b>	<b>Number of participants</b>
Madras (Islamic foundation phase)	13
Primary school	10
Secondary school	18
College	7
University	2

The table above shows that there were 30 participants in the range of 18-20-year groups; 15 persons in the range of 21-35 years group; 4 persons in the 36-50-year group; and one person in the 50 years and above group.

Of the 50 respondents who were interviewed, 29 were married, 19 were unmarried and two were divorced. 23 of the respondents said they had 0 – 1 child; 16 respondents indicated that they had between 1 - 2 children; and 11 participants indicated that they had between 5-10 children. Of the total number of 50 participants who were interviewed, 28 participants indicated that they lived in households ranging from 2 – 4 people, while the remaining number of 22 participants, said they lived in households ranging from 5- 10 persons.

In terms of religion and cultural practices, all the participants interviewed were Muslim.

In Somali ethnic perspective, the Ogden ethnic group had the largest number of participants interviewed, being 15 out of 50 participants, followed by the Hawiya ethnic group with 11 participants. The Daroot ethnic group was comprised of nine participants, while the Bantu ethnic group had seven participants. The Kumandle ethnic group was comprised of three participants, while the Ishaka ethnic group was comprised of two participants, and lastly the Madhiban ethnic group, which is the smallest group of all, was comprised of only one participant. These different ethnic groups spoke one language, which is Somali and some of the respondents spoke the Kiswahili language.

### **3.8 Data collection**

This section discusses the different techniques used in this study to collect data.

Since the research depends on collecting data, which determines the findings of the entire research, this was an important phase of the study. Data can be gathered from several sources including written documents, records, workplaces, the Internet, surveys or interviews or sometimes other researchers use observation, document analysis (Kajornboon, 2005, p, 1). The primary data for my

study was collected by means of in-depth interviews guided by the use of an interview schedule, as stated earlier. The in-depth interview process lasted around 45 minutes to an hour, with an average of four to six interviews per day.

Questions were drafted in simple English to enable the participants' understanding. Two Somali students, a male and a female who were studying at UWC agreed to assist at the interviews where language barriers existed so that respondents could express themselves freely. Assistance was employed for transcription of the data after it had been collected.

Some of the respondents could not understand and speak English. However, there were those who could speak Kiswahili (which I am able to speak and understand) very fluently, and they were able to express themselves freely. In this case, I did the interviews in Kiswahili and then translated into English. The translation assistant students were engaged to assist participants to understand the questions and to interpret their responses in Somali. After data collection, the transcripts were translated from Kiswahili into English.

The data was transcribed, translated and the coding process was done manually. According to, Miles and Huberman, (1994), coding is one of the most significant steps taken during analysis to organize and make sense of textual data.

During the data coding process, I identified some patterns in the data using different codes such as age, gender, marital status, level of education, people staying in the same household, how many children, Ethnic group. Codes or categories are tags or labels for allocating units of meaning to the descriptive data. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that coding helps the researcher organize,

manage, interpret and retrieve meaningful segments of data. Denzin and Lincoln (2000, p. 15) add that content analysis allows for “thick description” in the analysis of data where thick descriptions refer to comprehensive explanations and discussions based on existing data.

### **3.9 Data analysis**

Rubin and Rubin (2004, p. 226) state, “Data analysis begins while the interviews are still underway”. Furthermore, the authors argue that the preliminary analysis gives the researcher ample time to restructure his/her questions in order to apply the themes as the interviews continue (Rubin and Rubin, 2004). Bogdan and Biklen (2003) define qualitative data analysis as “working with the data, organising them, breaking them into manageable units, coding them, synthesising them, and searching for patterns”. The aim of analysing qualitative data is to discover patterns, concepts, themes and meanings as explained above. Mouton (2001, p.198) recommends that “to begin the final data analysis, you put into one category all the material from all your interviews that speak to one theme or concept”. I therefore put together and linked all the materials gathered in the categories and looked for variations and similarities linked to the themes.

Emerging themes were classified under situational, institutional, dispositional, and academic barriers to adult learning, since these were clearly defined in the literature and were relatively easy to detect. Barriers such as lack of money or time to study were classed as situational barriers, dispositional barriers included low motivation and attitude towards learning opportunities and perceived relevancy of learning, and institutional barriers were for instance practices within the institution that exclude or discourage adult learners from participating, or barriers arising from

being a foreigner. Academic barriers were for example the language of learning and teaching as a barrier, and lack of literacy skills such as reading, writing and speaking.

Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p.145) explain that for data analysis the data has to be presented in sections which bring together the relevant themes. The authors further maintain that in data analysis the researcher should desist from giving a blow by blow account of each question or lengthy, undigested information obtained from individuals, but should make comparisons and contrasts of informants input, piecing together responses to form a coherent result. Hence, I applied the same principle for this study by bringing the relevant themes together to make meaning of the data.

### **3.10 Trustworthiness**

For Babbie and Mouton (2006), and Denzin and Lincoln (2000) the concept of trustworthiness is associated with ‘credibility’, ‘transferability’, ‘dependability’ and ‘conformability’ as essential factors for enhancing the validity and reliability of qualitative research. To ensure trustworthiness, the participants’ words were audio recorded and have been quoted verbatim in this thesis.

### **3.11 Ethical considerations**

Brink (2012 et al p. 31) contends that the fundamental ethical principles are based on the rights to self-determination, privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, fair treatment and prevention of any form of harm or discomfort.

Mouton (2001, p, 244) emphasises that “the aims of the investigation should be communicated to the participants, and they must be informed as to what will happen, and their signed consent should be obtained”. Before conducting any data collection, I obtained the informed consent from each participant. I explained that any information shared would be kept anonymous and that they would not be identifiable as participants in the study. This was meant to make the participants speak freely and share their experiences. I was at all times cognisant of the need to maintain the confidentiality of the participants as an important ethical consideration in the study.

Louw and Edwards (1997) maintain that another matter to be addressed is how personal and confidential information may be used. The general principle is that information be used with great care and only disclosed where necessary. Ethical clearance was obtained from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of the Western Cape. I explained and clarified in advance to the participants what the research would entail, and the objectives of the research.

The following section highlights the limitations of this study.

### **3.12 Limitations of the study**

Being a refugee student myself and spending time with other refugees gave me an understanding of some of the refugees’ experiences, which could become a limitation in that my interpretations could be based on my own experiences as a refugee rather than that of the respondents. However, I was careful to be aware of any bias that might creep in, or of making assumptions about what I thought respondents might be saying. I focused on my role as a researcher conducting an investigation with clear goals and had no personal relationship or attachment to any of the



respondents. However, empathy or sympathy may at times have been a limitation to restricting oneself only to the facts.

This was a small-scale study undertaken in one refugee Somali community in South Africa, albeit a large and settled community. I make no claims of generalizability to all refugee communities in the country but will allow the data to speak for itself.

### **3.13 Conclusion**

This chapter described the research design, data collection and analysis, issues of trustworthiness and other ethical considerations. The research design was a qualitative one, which targeted a specific grouping of respondents – a localised community of Somali refugees. Data was obtained through comprehensive in-depth interviews using an interview guide with a set of semi-structured questions, which left enough room for self-expression and personal narrative.

In the chapter, which follows, the data gathered in the interview process is presented. The chapter also discusses the research findings in relation to the literature review and theoretical framework of the study.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

The aim of this study was to investigate and open for scrutiny the range of barriers that impede access to participation in adult learning among Somali refugees in South Africa, in the hope that policy makers and other influential parties might be inspired to take action that mediates the barriers for these and other refugees.

The following section presents the data obtained from the respondents and which was thematically analysed in accordance with the research questions and the objectives of the study.

#### **4.1 Profile of the participants**

For the profile of the participants, information was obtained about participants' backgrounds, when they arrived and how long they have been living in South Africa, their sense of the concept of adult learning and how they understand it within their community. At least 30 percent of respondents indicated that they had arrived in South Africa in the late 90s when they were already adults. These were in the age group ranging from 36 – 50 years. In the age group ranging from 18 – 20 years, and above, they had arrived in South Africa as from 2000 when in their teens, as adolescents or young children. None of the participants interviewed were born in SA.

## 4.2 Reasons for leaving Somalia

Out of the 50 participants interviewed, 30 indicated that the main cause of their academic non completion was immigration, as indicated earlier in figure 4.2 - only 2 participants managed to attain university education. The major reason that pushed them to leave their home country, Somalia, was war, which was destroying the country politically, economically and socially. Therefore, they were forced to leave and seek protection and greener pastures in South Africa, as in the excerpts below from the interviews:

*The overthrow of President Siad Barre's regime and the unreasonable war invasion/ which shattered my country for a very long time was the reason for me to leave my country and also another cause for not studying in my country because everything was messed up in that country no one would even think of going to school. (Arajabu Interviewed on, 12/06/2013).*

*Somalia has not been economically, politically and socially stable for a very long period. Everything including education, was not good, no good teachers who can teach, this means that schools cannot operate effectively and students cannot concentrate on their studies with a lot of chaos in the country that was the reason I could not study and it also forced me to leave the country. (Aman- Interviewed on, 13/06/2013).*

Arajabu and Aman (not their real names) shift the blame to their country Somalia, which has been politically, economically and socially unstable for a very long time because of the war, and which ravaged state institutions including the education system.

The above findings echo with what was earlier discussed in the literature review by Groener (2011), Mazrui and Tidy (1984), Kirby et al., (1997), Leeson (2006), the African Bulletin (2007) and Rubenson and Desjardins (2009), about Somalia being economically, politically and socially unstable for a very long period. Data also revealed that the socio-economic reasons drove participants such as Arajabu and Aman to leave Somalia, which resulted in their becoming refugees.

### **4.3 Educational experiences in Somalia**

It is generally believed that education is the key to overcoming poverty as it is an important tool for transforming lives (Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik and Walters, 2000). In the interviews with participants, I asked them about the level of education they had attained as well as their experiences of education in Somalia. Of the 50 interviewees, 13 indicated that they attended school only up to the level of madrassa, both men and women, since it is a compulsory undertaking for all Muslims. Ten participants had attained primary school level, while 18 persons managed to reach the secondary school level. Those who had achieved a college level numbered 7.

The above shows that only 2 out of 50 of the Somali refugees interviewed had been to tertiary education, which was attributed to the war that had impeded educational advancement.

As the war in their country affected everything, it was not possible for many of the Somalis to study any further since they were often on the run fearing for their lives.

The following interview extracts provide evidence this issue.

*Because of war, which was in my country people could not be stable to study, instead they kept on running up and down for security purpose and the safety for their lives which was the reason why I did not study. (Musa- Interviewed on, 28/05/2013).*

*As you are also aware, in the war zone area, everything is always in a mess, learners cannot concentrate, and the same to the teachers, and therefore the environment is not good for everyone to study. (Hakim-Interviewed on, 27/05/2013).*

*There are no good schools because of war which has distorted everything in my country that is the reason I could not have the chance of going to school, but now that I'm here in South Africa where education is for all I don't mind if there's a chance. (Ramadan-Interviewed on, 29/05/2013).*

*There is no proper learning, which takes place in that country where everywhere there is chaos all over the show, people running up and down, others being killed, no one can think of studying. (Mohamed- Interviewed on, 25/05/2013).*

*In my country there are no good schools, teachers nor proper good education because of war which has affected and distorted everything in there, besides that, women do not have chances of studying. (Abbiba-Interviewed on, 5/05/2013).*

*Because of the instability back at home in my country, I did not attend any formal*

*school, and besides that, from the time when I came here in south Africa, still I have not had any chance of studying. (Salim-Interviewed on, 4/06/2013).*

As for the war and educational experiences in their country, many of the participants indicated that they were politically, economically, psychologically and socially affected because of the war in their country.

Due to war it was not possible for many of the Somalis to study any further since they were on the run fearing for their lives. The above statement by Mohamed concurs with the literature in chapter one, Leeson (2006, p. 5-6), Mazrui and Tidy (1984, p. 270)), as well as the African Research Bulletin (2007, p. 170-179), about the war and instability in Somalia, which all supports the study findings. Similar findings on the catastrophe of war which led Somalia into corruption, ethnicism, inefficiency, insecurity, fast economic decline, poor structural economic policy, government mismanagement of resources and a poor education system are stated in Groener (2011).

*Adam's response: I managed to attend only primary school in Kenya in 1994 when I ran away from the war in my country, because Kenya is not far away from my country and at the same time the economic situation there was not so good, again I also had to leave to seek for refugee here in South Africa. (Adam- Interviewed on, 5/06/2013).*

Adam's response resonates with the literature, which states that war in Somali provided an environment not favourable to stay in that country and to study there.

Movement of people from some unbearable conditions such as the outbreak of war in their home countries and the poor economic situation, resulted in insecurity and fear of persecution. Negative attitudes, exclusion (especially of women) were some of the reasons why they left their country and did not have the chance to attend school. However, some participants like Salim indicated that since they are here in South Africa, which offers education for all, they value the chance to participate in adult learning programmes.

Darkenwald and Merriam (1982) refer to barriers, which are linked to attitude and beliefs towards participating in adult learning programmes. Their model focuses on participatory behaviour as a set of responses towards internal and external stimuli, which contribute to hindering adult learning participation, which these participants experienced. Their narratives concur with other scholars as well.

#### **4.4 Challenges experienced by Somali refugees in South Africa**

In South Africa, refugees and asylum seekers said they have been faced with enormous challenges, notably discrimination, xenophobia, and documentation delays, to name a few. In this study some of the participants said that they are often verbally abused and called derogatory names, while others mentioned that they were prosecuted because they did not have proper documentation or had entered the country illegally. The language barrier has also been a challenge for the Somali community, leading to difficulties in finding employment. Women felt that they are harassed because of their traditional dress, as one of the female participants stated:

*At one point I got embarrassed while I was in the mall and one guy asked me why I cover my body and he even wanted to touch me, but I ended up shouting at him. Sometimes men*

*like embarrassing women just because we are women. (Mariam- Interviewed on, 2/04/2013).*

Other participants reported:

*As a refugee you experience a lot of problems here. First of all you're not accepted in the community here in South Africa and on top of that you end up being abused and called all sorts of names because you cannot understand their language, and therefore, you're even scared of thinking of going to school for adult learning studies. (Aisha-Interviewed on, 2/05/2013).*

*One time I entered the taxi and I was not sure where to come out, all the people left me in the taxi and the conductor started saying funny words to me, and I felt so uncomfortable because I did not like what he said to me I think maybe he did that because I'm a woman since most of the women are always looked down. (Fatuma- Interviewed on, 2/05/2013).*

*For me the first time I arrived in Johannesburg I was arrested and taken to police and luckily enough a friend of mine came and bailed me out. (Mohamed- Interviewed on, 25/05/2013).*

*When I arrived here in South Africa after only one month I was arrested and taken to police because my driving permit was not a South African one although it was an international permit and yet I did not know that it was illegal, but later on it was sorted out, and since then I was so scared. (Abdul - Interviewed on, 25/05/2013).*



*When I came here in South Africa, I did experience a lot of problems, which made me regret why I came here if it was not because of the war in my country. (Ali - Interviewed on 22/05/2013).*

*Here in South Africa, on daily basis we foreigners are robbed, killed, they loot our things especially in the townships, and neither the government nor NGO's like UNHCR don't help us, we really experience so many challenges. (Swaibu-Interviewed on, 27/05/2013).*

*We as refugees we're getting a lot of problems here in SA even at home affairs where I believe they can protect us, they also treat us very badly, I'm sorry to tell you this but it's a fact and it happens every day. (Kassim - Interviewed on 1/06/2013).*

Another participant experienced language as a barrier to health facilities:

*Language and work were my experience and also no access to health facilities because of poor language and also being a refugee and a woman. (Aminah - Interviewed on 23/05/2013).*

These extracts indicate that many refugees and asylum seekers experienced enormous difficulties in their host country South Africa. They lamented that some people in South Africa are unwelcoming, and this makes them live in fear. Women also felt demoralized and looked down upon because of their gender. Some participants felt vulnerable and insecure and further indicated

that they lacked a sense of belonging, which makes it more difficult for them to access adult education.

The above statements from the data coincide with the research done by Makuyana (2013), as discussed in chapter two. He confirms that the high poverty and the low employment rate within South African society is the cause of some of the violence and hatred of the local community toward foreigners. As a result of economic insecurity refugees and asylum seekers are targeted and thus the looting of their spaza shops, breaking into xenophobic attacks. Bordeau (2010, p.4) relates this to “an irrational fear or distrust of foreigners”, which Steinberg (2016), echoes. Zeelen and Rampedi, (2011) concur that South Africans themselves grapple with unacceptably high levels of inequality in its population due to previous racial inequalities. South Africa’s Gini coefficient of 0.63 in 2019 ranks it as one of the most unequal societies in the world. This evidently explains some of the experiences the participants upon their arrival in the host country. Considering these challenges, it exacerbates the difficulty of refugees accessing adult education facilities.

#### **4.5 Barriers to participation in adult learning as experienced by Somali refugees**

The data, which follows, was grouped into 8 themes emanating from the interviews conducted with respondents, and it is also linked to the debates in the literature. Extracts from the interviews have been used to illustrate each of the themes under the research questions.

The research questions were as follows:

***‘What barriers do Somali refugees, men and women, experience when attempting to access adult learning in South Africa?’***

Barriers are factors that create difficulties in people's lives and prevent them from participating fully in certain activities such as in adult learning programmes. As stated earlier Cross (1981, p.98), classifies them as situational, institutional and dispositional, while Potter and Alderman (1992) add academic barriers as a fourth element influencing participation during learning activities. The concept of 'barriers to participation' in learning opportunities has been important in adult education literature for almost five decades Cross (1981, p.98).

This research asked participants what they perceived to be the major barriers preventing them from participating in adult learning as well as some of the reasons they had abandoned schooling back in their home countries.

#### **4.5.1 Situational barriers**

Many of the participants indicated that time constraint, coupled with a lack of finances were the barriers, which prevented them from participating in adult learning programmes. The following extracts from participants serve as evidence of this:

*I'm a single mom with children, I also have no time to study and at the same time I can't afford to pay for the fees for myself and the children to go to school, therefore I need to work very hard for them bearing in mind that I'm the only bread winner in my home, I play both roles of mother and father. These days' even women work hard for survival. (Janaat - interviewed on 8/05/2013).*

*For me the problem I have is money and I also don't have enough time to since I'm a single mother with children, no one can look after them and that means I need to work and earn a living to support the family. (Abbiba - interviewed on 5/05/2013).*

*Yes, as for me I'm interested in adult learning because I do not have money to pay for my fees and also time cannot allow because you're busy making a living. I can only accept to study if only the South African government can pay fees for me and also take responsibility of our families. (Yusuf - interviewed on 11/06/2013).*

Both time and a lack of money to study were significant situational barriers for Somali refugees in the study, which some refugees said led to a lack of inclination to study.

*As for me I can see that financial problem has an effect on most of the students' morale and this can affect their performances negatively and they can eventually give up on schooling even if they were willing to do so, besides that time is also another constraint which one has to think of as we all need time for us to balance things to work effectively. (Karim - interviewed on 3/06/2013).*

For some women, a significant barrier was childcare, which in Somali society is mostly the women's responsibility, but family needs had to be balanced with the desire for education:

*If I had money to pay for my fees, and also if I can get someone to take care of my children, I would have loved to study, but unfortunately I can't afford the money and I also think of my children whom I need to look after (Maimunah - interviewed on 7/05/2013).*

*I wish adult learning centres were placed everywhere where you can access them very easily. Some of us stay very far away where transport is a problem, security is another issue, and you end up thinking about how you can also divide your time, work, and the family, balancing them together which is not easy. (Farouk - interviewed on 11/06/2013).*

*Some of us who are refugees here we're not aware of these opportunities of studying, besides that I don't have money to pay fees for these study opportunities, and for those of us who have got little money in our pockets, we will always cover it on the basic needs for our families to survive, that means I cannot have anything left to pay my school fees for me to participate in these adult programs. (Abdul – interviewed on 25/05/2013).*

#### **4.5.2 Dispositional barriers**

Dispositional barriers can present in the form of low motivation, attitudinal barriers, or as psychosocial barriers. They are barriers, defined by Cross (1981, p.107) as factors related to an individual's attitudes, values, beliefs and self-confidence.

These barriers were found mainly related to age, as some participants perceived they are to be too old to study, since they also had young children to raise. The following extracts from the interviews with participants serve to illustrate this:

*I'm an old woman and a widow as well, my husband was a soldier and he was killed in the war, which was in Somalia, he left me with lots of responsibilities, which I have to fulfil as*

*a woman. Besides that, I also work very hard to make a living and also taking care of my children and therefore I don't see the benefit of me going to school (Hadijja - interviewed on 1/05/2013).*

*At my age, I'm scared of going to school and I think I'm also too old to study.*

*(Mariam - interviewed on 7/05/2013).*

Mariam who was in her late 50s, felt that she was too old to go to school. Her responses are linked with Cross's chain of response model which states that dispositional barriers to participation are those related to attitudes and self-perception about oneself as a learner. Older persons such as, Mariam, in her late 50s and Hadijja in her late 40s, felt that they were too old to learn. Other adults, as in the extract below were unable to secure bursaries due to age, even though they might desire to further their learning:

*When I arrived in South Africa I heard about adult learning and I really wanted to study because I did not have that opportunity in my country where there's a lot of injustice, I asked one of my friend how I can get funding for me to study, he told me that UNHCR provide scholarships, when I tried to apply I was rejected because of my age and at the same time I was only an asylum seeker by then, and therefore I could not qualify to get a scholarship for me to study. (Ahamed - interviewed on 20/06/2013).*

#### **4.5.3 Academic barriers (English Language as a Barrier)**

These barriers include literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking, as indicated by Potter and Alderman (1992), MacKeracher et al. (2006) and Cross (1981).

Some participants experienced the English language as a barrier, which prevented them from participating in adult learning programmes. Somali women particularly saw themselves as not competent enough to express themselves in the English language:

*To be honest with you, the schools in Somali don't provide enough quality education to people; they only teach in Somali which is not international language whereby you cannot interact with some other people. And because of that I find it very difficult to talk with people who are not from my country because I'll not understand them and they will not understand me, it's very challenging. (Abu - interviewed on 15/06/2013).*

*I have a problem; I cannot speak any other language apart from my own home language. Even here in South Africa, I'm too much scared of talking to people and because of that I cannot see myself thinking of going to school to study because the biggest problem for me is to speak, especially in English. (Mariam - interviewed on 7/05/2013)*

It can be seen therefore that having to learn in English presented a language barrier preventing access to adult education for some of these participants. The above data collected validates with the following scholar's arguments; Potter and Alderman (1992), MacKeracher et al. (2006) and Cross (1981) as indicated earlier in the literature.

### 4.5.3. Institutional barriers

Merriam and Cafferella (1991, p. 86, refer to institutional barriers as those conditions revolving around “education and cultural determinants.”

Cultural and religious norms also affected the lives of the Somalian refugees. These norms presented barriers to education, especially for women. Data from the interviewees revealed that cultural and religious practices forced the majority of the participants to abandon school early. Some women were forced into early marriages. Men in the Somali community were groomed into business opportunities as required by their culture, while women were expected to become mothers and housewives. Early marriages put many women into vulnerable positions and situations of oppression by their husbands.

*Many people abandoned school because of the war and also culture is another issue because many of them believe so much in culture more than studies (Abbiba - interviewed on 5/05/2013).*

*Because of culture and religious background women are not allowed to study they only get married very early, and that is it. (Zuleha - interviewed on 13/05/2013).*

*Because of our culture in our community, we Somali women are not allowed to study instead our parents or elders prepare us to be housewives at early age and then arrange marriages for us and they get us married at younger ages because of our religious and cultural background. Besides that, some people do not think about studies as being*



*important when they are back at home in Somalia more especially when you are an adult. Young boys before they become men, they are taught to do business after that, they also arrange marriage for them. This issue of culture, which allows early marriages, has been there in our community for quite a long time and the poor economy of the country also contributes to that. However, when we go to other countries, we see other women who are educated we admire them and we feel it is important to study because of the new environment, that is if you're also financially stable. (Zainabu - interviewed on 27/06/2013).*

*Yes, I agree nowadays opportunities are meant for both men and women but long time back, where it was not equal. (Shafula - interviewed on 21/0/2013).*

*Actually, so many Somalis back at home abandon school because they believe so much in culture particularly as a woman, you're not expected to go school apart from getting married and having children, besides that the war also contributed a lot for not studying. (Jamillah - Interviewed on 7/05/2013)*

The practice of marrying young girls off at an early age resulted in many of them having children and they had to resort to looking after their families rather than going to school.

Zainabu and Jamillah's responses above highlight the issue of religion and cultural practices leading to barriers, which prevented many Somali women from participating in adult learning.

The data is in line with the research carried out by Jinnah, (2017) and Teyise (2014) on the issue of culture and forced early marriages for young girls, in a study, which was conducted in South Africa and which, found that “marrying off young girls is a growing phenomenon in some communities whereby culture is used as an excuse”. This was a similar predicament to that being practiced in the Somali community.

The findings also concur with Cross’ (1981) statement that “adult participation in learning is not an isolated act but results from a complex chain of personal responses to internal and external variables that either encourage or discourage participation in learning”.

Some refugees expressed their experience of being a foreigner as an impediment to accessing learning, even though the Constitution gives the right to education to foreigners living in South Africa as well. The following extracts from interviews illustrate their sentiments:

*Ever since I left my country and came here in South Africa, I have faced a lot of challenges, I thought of going to school to study, but it was not so easy to access school here in South Africa especially adult learning. First of all, the government here is not so helpful to the foreigners like me, therefore, accessing some of these opportunities such as adult learning is very difficult (Karim - interviewed on 3/06/2013).*

*I do not know if it is a constitutional right for all the people to access education here in SA, because it’s really a big problem to get enrolled to some of the schools around some of them are so expensive you cannot even afford. For me it does not make any meaning when it comes to accessing education. (Ahamed- interviewed on 20/06/2013).*

*I have liked South Africa because there are many adult learning opportunities which are open to everyone regardless of which gender you are compared to my country where there is nothing like that but instead they look down upon you because you are just a mere woman, however the only problem is that these opportunities are only open for the locals who get first priority. For us foreigners, especially women refugees, we cannot have chances of getting them or accessing such opportunities. (Mastullah - interviewed on 24/06/2013).*

*South Africa is a very good country because it has got so many opportunities, whereby if you want to study even if you're an adult, whether you are a woman or whichever religious background or race you can do so, but the problem which is there, it's not so easy to get these opportunities if you're not a South African (Azzidah - Interviewed on 15/05/2013).*

From the interviews it can be argued that refugees have difficulties in accessing adult education as a result of them being foreigners. The circumstances of Somali women are even more difficult. Although participants said they would like to participate in adult education, many respondents like Karim, Ahamed and Azzida found it very inaccessible.

*I agree, the South African constitution is very clear the way it is written down, but still adult learning opportunity which is available, only benefits the locals who have all the access to it, for us foreigners we don't have that opportunity although our papers indicate that you can work and study (Shafiga – interviewed on 3/06/2013).*

*I think the implementation of the so called South African Refugee Act is not complete the way it is written, I mean how can you allow a refugee go to school but not help them with their needs, while a South African person gets help financially as well as getting access to scholarships, I don't agree to this at all (Salim - interviewed 4/06/2013).*

In the above responses, the participants referred to the Refugee Act and how the implementation of it falls short in South Africa. Gaps between policy and practice have always been a challenge in the education systems in Africa as supported by Zeelen and Rampedi, (2011), UNESCO, (2010). Further extracts on the issue of refugees not feeling protected or cared for in spite of legislation, are provided below:

*Yes, I agree the South African refugee act of 1998 is there and it is clearly stated that all people can benefit from it, but it is not taken seriously the way it is written down in papers, so many refugees here in SA cannot access education or rather adult learning, for me I don't think it's fine that way. (Hassan - interviewed 3/06/2013).*

*I truly agree that the South African constitution and the refugee act are very good compared to other African countries, but still the SA government is not active and not serious at all when it comes to the plight of refugees. Some of us are not safe or insecure of yourself as we live in fear all the time depending on where you stay and that means you cannot go to study in some risk area because you're not safe since many adult centres operate at night. (Swalik - interviewed 29/05/2013).*

*It's true I agree the Act is there and it's a good one, since it allows all to study but it's just written down in papers for formality, and not efficiently practiced as it says and furthermore it doesn't accommodate all the people especially us refugees apart from our children who at least benefit but not at tertiary level. There are many refugee students who have enrolled at the Universities here in South Africa, but they are facing lots of problems and have got no room for financial aid at all to support them. If at all the government can provide funds for us, then that means they can make everyone participate in adult learning programs. (Ramadan - interviewed 29/05/2013).*

*The Government of South Africa is not serious at all with the implementation of their policy which I believe that this particular policy can suite all the people especially we foreign national if at all it was worked upon properly. I think there should be some interventions from the government solve the problem. (Sulaiman - interviewed 27/06/2013).*

*Some places here in South Africa are not easy to go there and the people in some areas are not welcoming at all especially in the locations where there is a lot of racism, xenophobia and discrimination against foreigners, some of us fear to mix with them because of their attitude towards us which means you cannot access adult learning in such places because you'll not feel safe since the government does not protect us. (Madinah - interviewed 23/05/2013).*

*Sincerely for me I have never heard about the refugee act and I also don't know what you mean by refugee rights, may be the government can tell us so that we can know of our rights and maybe we can also benefit from them. (Halima - interviewed 2/05/2013).*

Though some of the participants like Halima were ignorant about the refugees and their rights, many participants were aware of the Act though they felt that the South African government was not upholding the guarantees.

When asked about their views on the relevance of adult learning and its benefits for their lives, some participants were not very positive about the value of education, as the extracts below illustrate:

*I'm old enough and I can't really see the value of studying at my age, because I know very well that no one is going to employ someone of my age. I can only leave that for the young ones to study because it can be relevant to them in future. (Swalik- interviewed on 29/06/2013).*

*It is true adult learning can be relevant to my community, however on the other side of the coin; I may say that I have lots of problems being an adult and old enough in a foreign country. Besides that I have a big family to look after, and I don't think I can be able to concentrate when it comes to learning, therefore I can say that adult learning is not relevant to me as an individual because of my situation, but in reality, its relevant the way I can see it. (Shariff - interviewed on 25/06/2013).*

Shariff agreed and commended adult learning as being relevant to any community, but not for himself as an individual because of circumstances beyond his control. Shariff appeared to have low self-esteem and confidence within himself. Rubenson (2001) argues that certain actions will lead to certain outcomes depending on the strength of the individual's motivation, or the positive and negative forces existing within an individual and the environment in which he/she lives,

similar to what Shariff expresses. Shariff appears unlikely to pursue adult education even if he had the opportunity. Some older persons feel that they are too old to learn. Those adults with poor educational backgrounds frequently lack interest in furthering their studies as well. The same applies to Swalik, Shafula and Salim who also lacked the motivation to pursue adult education and could not see the relevance of adult learning.

*Many people like me are surrounded with lots of problems, which I cannot count and therefore they think about other important things like business, which can sustain their lives as well as their families than adult learning; therefore, it's not relevant in my capacity. (Salim - interviewed on 4/06/2013).*

*I'm just a housewife and also mother of 5 children, which is a big family. My husband was injured during the war back at home, he cannot work and therefore, I'm the only bread winner in my home and as a result I work tirelessly to sustain my entire family for them to survive although I can see the value of adult learning and hence I can say that its relevant to my community, as for me, I have nothing much I can do about it. (Shafula - interviewed on 21/05/2013).*

Rubenson's formula consists of two components as follows: the expectation of personal success in the educational activity and the prospects that being successful in the learning movement will produce positive consequences as explained by (Rubenson, (2001). Furthermore, the Chain-of-Response model by Cross (1981) holds that an adult's participation in a learning activity is not an

isolated act but is the result of a complex chain of responses based on the evaluation of the position of an individual within their surroundings, which is the case with Abdul.

The above sections reported on the barriers to participation in adult learning experienced by Somali refugees, while the following section examines the respondents' awareness of the adult learning opportunities available for both men and women refugees in Cape Town, South Africa.

#### **4.6 Adult education opportunities in South Africa**

In this section the research question being answered is as follows:

***What opportunities for adult learning are available to Somali women and men refugees in Cape Town, South Africa?***

Although adult learning opportunities are available in South Africa, refugees in most cases have no idea about such opportunities since they have not been effectively communicated to the general public. This section presents data gathered from refugees as to their knowledge of access to adult learning and opportunities available to them.

Most of the participants in the study had no knowledge of public adult learning opportunities in South Africa. They suggested that adult learning centres should be more visible in public areas so that people could get to know about them and access them more easily. The following extracts are from interviews with participants that indicate their responses.



*I don't have any idea about these adult learning programs, and no one has ever told me about them, I can tell you that it is my first time to hear such opportunities here in South Africa. (Hassan-Interviewed on 3/06/2013).*

*For me I'm hearing adult learning program for the first since I came here in South Africa. I think the government should organize workshops and seminars to inform the public about such programs because they are beneficial, and they can help us in many ways since some of us did not have a chance to study may be we can benefit in opportunities like those ones. (Badru-Interviewed on 5/06/2013).*

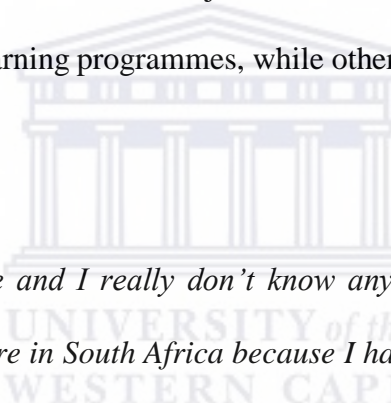
In the findings, participants like Badru shifted the blame for his ignorance of education possibilities onto the government of South Africa for not advising his community of such opportunities. He thought that if they knew about programmes, they could have been made aware of the value of participating in adult learning programmes.

Some civil society organisations such Agency for Refugee Education, Skills Training and Advocacy - ARESTA and Scalabrini Centre provide basic educational opportunities to refugees and asylum-seeking including Somalis. These centres are both based in Cape Town, and adult learning is one of the programmes they offer. Programmes include English for beginners, computer literacy, and adult education and training for those intending to go to ABET Level 4 so that they can enrol for Further Education and Training. When I asked the respondents if they were aware at all of the above mentioned centres, at least 20 percent of the participants indicated that they were

aware but they could not access them because of the distance since one is located in Cape Town – (Scalabrini) and the other one is in Athlone - (ARESTA).

The skills training programmes funded by the above organisations might have enabled refugee communities, including Somalis, to gain skills in different educational disciplines. The conclusion they had drawn was that public adult education was not easily accessible.

When asked about adult learning opportunities that they desired, refugee participants answered that they would prefer acquiring skills that are job related. Others said they would seek what knowledge they could in adult learning programmes, while others said they would be interested in business related programmes.



*As for me I'm not aware and I really don't know anything to do with available adult learning opportunities here in South Africa because I have not heard about it, maybe it is there, but as far as I know, it also sounds like it is not easy to get one. It can be good if I can also get an opportunity like that because where I come from as a woman you cannot have a chance like that to study. (Zamu - interviewed on 6/06/2013).*

However, being a woman with a family presented a distinct barrier to woman learners:

*Participating in adult learning opportunities can be good at some point, but on my side, I have a lot of challenges, which cannot allow me to participate in them. First of all, I'm a*

*refugee; secondly, I have a family which depends on me which means I also need to work for a living in order my family to survive.* (Shabban - interviewed on 8/06/2013).

A majority of the participants, 36 out of 50, agreed that given a chance to study they would enrol and fully participate in adult learning. Most of them believed that education is an important tool for them to empower themselves as well as a gateway to job opportunities. If there was the prospect of a job offer, they would willingly accept and participate in the programmes because it would make a difference in their lives.

Research linked to the above responses are substantiated by scholars such as Walters (2000), Taylor, Fleisch, & Shindler, (2008), and Bhola, (1998), who confirm that available opportunities are important as they can socially and economically transform the lives of adult learners. Similar supporting literatures about adult learning opportunities are Cross (1981) in her elucidation of the chain of response model. She discusses factors such as life transitions, information, and opportunities as well as the significance of barriers, which may prevent adult learners from participating in adult learning. However, two of the participants, Shabban and Zamu responded differently from other participants. Zamu said she was not sure whether there are opportunities in adult learning and moreover, she also added that it was not easy for her to acquire some of these opportunities because she is a woman. She views her gender as an impediment to accessing adult education.

The question that was posed to the participants was to establish if they knew of available adult learning opportunity programmes in Bellville where they could study, I also needed to find out these programmes were, and in which language they were offered. Many of the participants like Fazila expressed ignorance about the availability of adult learning centres in Bellville where she resides.

*There is no adult education institution here in Bellville, and therefore there's no access to adult learning.* (Fazila - interviewed on 14/05/2013).

Some of the participants indicated that they would attend adult learning opportunity programmes taught in English, because they believed that English is an international language mostly preferred and spoken by the majority of the people globally.

*I prefer to learn English because it's an international language and because it is also a medium of communication all over the world if there was given a place to study here in Bellville* (Aminah - interviewed on 23/05/2013)

English is important for many nationalities because is one of the languages widely used for communication purposes in the world. In the findings, out of 50 participants who were interviewed, 33 (66 percent) indicated that they preferred English due to the fact that is spoken by a number of speakers worldwide and it is the medium of communication in South Africa, especially when interacting with the locals. Language also promotes social cohesion (Indabawa, Oduaran, Afrik, & Walters, 2000). From the participants, only one said that she would like to go for computer

lessons because it is a new trend where everyone uses the internet which can expose her to many opportunities.

*This is 21<sup>st</sup> century where everyone is using internet if there was a school here in Bellville teaching computers, I would also love to learn computer lessons so that I can connect with different people through face book, email, skype and some other things which can link you to job opportunities through internet. (Shamillah -interviewed on 16/05/2013).*

*The only available programs around here in Bellville are Madras or Koran lessons and they are only taught in Arabic, which is not international language, and therefore there are no chances of good opportunities. (Ali - interviewed on 22/05/2013).*

*There are only Islamic lessons taught here in Bellville, and there are no adult learning centres anywhere available. (Hassan - interviewed on 3/06/2013).*

*Here in Bellville, there are no adult education learning institutions or rather centres and some of us have got no idea about adult learning programs because the South African government does not inform people about such available opportunities, honestly where can one start from if you have not been told?. (Mohamed - interviewed on 25/05/2013).*

*Firstly, and foremost, there are no available adult learning opportunities here in Bellville, even if these centres were there, I don't think I can participate in the available programs*

*because I'm a busy man I need to work hard for my family.* (Hakim - interviewed on 20/06/2013)

Indications from the data showed that there were no public or government adult learning centres in the Bellville CBD, which are accessible to the community. This shows that even if the participants wanted to pursue adult learning programmes, it would not be easy for them since there are no public centres that they know of except those privately run and those offering Koran lessons. One of the elders of the Somali community expressed his desire to see adult learning centres in their community;

*I'm the chairperson of the Somali community here in Bellville and as the head of the community I feel that we really need services like adult learning centres here to help our people because many of them cannot speak English, read or write, therefore it's very important that at least we have such available opportunities in our community.* (Sulaiman - interviewed on 27/06/2013).

The chairperson said that he, together with some of his community members had tried and had managed to open their own adult learning centre in Bellville area because they felt that there was a great need for the Somalis to learn and acquire some knowledge as many of them had missed that opportunity back in their country. This centre is the only one that caters for this group of refugees and is known as the Somali Association of South Africa (SASA). It conducts adult learning programmes in the evenings and weekends, although it's not active enough since they lack human resources and skills. These programmes were started after the Somali community

realized that there was a need due to the English language barrier, more especially when they visited public places such as hospitals, clinics, shopping places and home affairs. Also, while operating their businesses, they had to get an interpreter to assist them to get services required, which was time consuming and costly, and this compelled them to open their own adult learning centre. However, due to cultural differences within the community, some Somalis do not want to participate in these programmes. Some of the participants indicated that the programmes are not effective enough.

Another question, which was posed to the participants, was whether they had to pay to access the available services of adult learning programmes in their community. Some of the participants in the study said that they had to pay a small fee for those who could afford it, while those who could not afford it did not pay anything. Other participants said that it was optional, especially when it came to attending Madrassa lessons which are offered free of charge.

Another question was posed to the participants to find out if the available adult learning services offered in Bellville were to their satisfaction. Some of the participants said that they were dissatisfied with the learning system which was offered while other participants described the system as being unsatisfactory as they did not benefit anything. The following participant had this to say:

*The only Madras schools which we have here in Bellville are free of charge, for those who can afford, they can pay the little money they have, if you don't have and cannot afford you cannot be forced to pay which is good. But still we need good facilities for such*

*opportunities because we're not happy with what is available.* (Jamillah - interviewed on 6/06/2013).

From the above responses, it is evident that the participants agreed that the available system offered which is a Madrasa operated free of charge and that it was optional for those who could afford to pay. Furthermore, Jamillah also said that they were not forced to pay for these services which they believed was a good idea. However, she indicated that she and the others were not happy with the system available as it was not to their satisfaction. She said that they needed better facilities, which would make them happy. Mohamed indicated that there are no adult learning programmes in Bellville, and he had no idea about other adult learning centres, and therefore he did not know where to start. He blamed the South African government for not informing people about adult learning programmes.

Respondents expressed the wish that the government of South Africa would follow the Constitution and the Refugee Act and develop a unified single strategic solution to overcome some of the challenges faced by refugees with regard to educational opportunities. Other participants said that the government could provide job opportunities to refugees who are already skilled. In this way they could enhance their knowledge and promote social cohesion within the local communities. The following extracts illustrate refugee responses to current government interventions:

*I think it's good if the government of South Africa can mobilize seminars and workshops and meetings to meet up with people and teach them about these adult learning opportunities*



*and at the same time inform them about their rights because some of us are not aware of our rights as refugees here in South Africa. (Swaibu - interviewed on 27/05/2013).*

*The government of South Africa together with education system should put some emphasis on learning opportunities to help those who are skilled as well as those poor refugee students who are committed to learning, since some of them are doing well in terms of education and they can contribute back to the communities here in South Africa and back home where they came from. For me I believe that if action is done everything can improve for the best. (Shamim - interviewed on 2/05/2013).*

*The government should build adult education institutions with easy access for everyone to access adult learning opportunities available here in South Africa. (Fazila - interviewed on 14/05/2013).*

Fazila and Shamim's sentiments are synonymous with the literature review discussed earlier in the chapters, which highlights the importance of education to integration of the refugees (IOM, 2008, Aitchison, 2004).

*I think the only way to intervene and improve the situation to the question you asked about south African policy and refugees, is the government of South Africa to come up with the solution on how to protect and treat all the people equally without any discrimination because the government of South Africa and some of its people have got bad attitude towards us foreigners, they treat us very badly and yet we are fellow Africans like them who belong to the same continent, and with the same colour as they are. The government really need to*

*sensitise all the people and change all that in order to overcome all these conflicts like Xenophobia, which arise every now and then. Referring to the government of SA in general, I mean the police and the security system; they do not protect us at all and yet it is clearly indicated in the SA constitution and in the refugee Act (Hatimah – interviewed on 6/06/2013).*

#### **4.7 Gender inequality as a barrier to adult learning**

This section answers the following research question;

***What barriers to participation in adult learning have women refugees in particular experienced?***

Gender inequality stems from dissimilarities, which are socially constructed Julia (2005), as the following participant illustrates:

*For me, in my opinion, I cannot say that adult learning applies to both genders because it all depends on where and which background one comes from. For me in my community women do not see the value of education as well as adult learning because of my culture and background which does not allow women to go to school however much you might want to do so because you will be seen like you are rebel in your own community. (Rehema - interviewed on 11/05/2013).*

Rehema argues that adult learning opportunities did not apply to men and women equally due to the cultural norms and attitudes towards women as well as cultural and religious practices.

Of the 50 participants who were interviewed in the study, all but one of them agreed and said that adult learning should be available to both genders. One participant argued that only men should have access to adult education. The study further indicated that most women are willing to study but were limited by cultural norms and practices which result in gender inequalities.

Thus, the position of women in Somali society as dictated by culture and religion determined whether women would pursue adult education or not. Abbiba and Zuleha reiterate how as women bound by other duties such as household chores and taking care of the family, they lack the opportunity to go to school or adult education. Zuleha further added that if given the chance as women, they would do as much as men in society. They had this to say;

*For us Somali women including other women in different communities out there, we are mostly involved in household activities such as taking care of the children, nurturing and at times we do not have much time to study. Our men have enough time to study since they are not involved in so many things at home the way women do. And yet even if we are women, given opportunity, we can do what men do and make a difference to the community. (Zuleha - Interviewed on 13/05/2013).*

*No, I do not agree that we have equal opportunities, men sometimes do different jobs, and women normally do housework which men cannot do, and that means being a woman you cannot have time to work and study. (Abbiba - interviewed on 5/05/2013).*

Scholars such as Julia (2005); Subrahmanian (2005); Kabeer (1999, p. 37); Doyal, (2000), Banks and Banks (2009), reiterate how issues of gender dynamics and patriarchy affect all aspects of women's lives including education and educational opportunities in many societies. This is also despite the fact that the Refugee Act states that education is a legal entitlement for all regardless of age and gender.

Fazila and Falida also had the following to say:

*Men sometimes are in control of everything in terms of finances, decision-making because they are our bosses, when they say no to something as a woman you cannot resist for example, if there are chances of studying men are the ones to benefit more because they are the decision makers who decide for themselves, whereas a woman you have got to seek permission from your husband who can either say yes or no to your request. Actually, men have more opportunities than us women. We Somali women only have better chance of opportunities to attend madras (Koran Islamic foundation) in the morning, because we stay at home with children while men go to work. (Fazila - interviewed on 14/05/2013).*

*To be honest with you, men in our culture believe that women are weak and they are not able to do things they do because we depend on them in each and everything, and therefore this makes women more victimize all the time and we just keep quiet, besides that our religion, Islam looks at women as submissive to men. That means we cannot have equal opportunities, they benefit more. (Falida - interviewed on 8/05/2013).*

From the data, it was clear that men are more likely to benefit from learning opportunities than women since men are the decision makers while women have to seek permission from their husbands. as expressed by Fazila and Falida. However, when it comes to attending Madrassa or Islamic religious learning Fazila said that women could benefit in accessing them since the classes are conducted in the mornings and women can attend with their children.

Similar supporting arguments have been expressed earlier about wives being submissive and obedience to their husband because they are regarded as the heads of the family as interpreted in Muslim marriage (Fluehr-Lobban, & Bardsley-Sirois, 1990).

Even though both genders experienced problems accessing adult learning, the findings indicated that Somali women are more often victims of cultural and religious constraints and have far less opportunity to advance academically.

About equality of access the following extracts from the interviews serve as illustration of participants' point of view:

*Yes I agree adult learning opportunities are equal for both men and women and it's true I also agree with the constitution which clearly states that everyone has a right to study, but when it comes to some of us who are refugees here in SA, we do not benefit at all much as it is written down in the papers, whether you're a woman or a man. These opportunities only benefit the locals and sometimes our children are the ones who also benefit.*  
(Mustapha - interviewed on 19/06/2013).

Mustapha agreed that adult learning opportunities should be applied to both men and women - besides that he was also aware of the South Africa Constitution which allows all to study regardless of gender - however, he complained that the opportunities which are given only benefit the locals, not adult refugees, unlike their children who are included in the system.

Furthermore, he expressed the following sentiment:

*We Somali males are stronger and far much better than our Somali females who are cowards, that is the reason we work at dangerous and insecure locations such as Khayelitsha, although I agree that education is for both men and women, but still I cannot study in a place like that one if there was a chance, how about our women who are weak and fear a lot, it means they cannot even attempt to go to school in such areas.* (Abdul – Rahaman - interviewed on 22/06/2013).

Abdul – Rahaman also agreed that adult learning is meant for both men and women, but he saw women as ‘weak’ and therefore more exposed to danger and expressed concern for their safety. He showed his patriarchal views in which he pointed out that women are ‘cowards’ as they cannot cope with working in dangerous areas such as Khayelitsha where he also has fears as a man, but he is able to work there.

The above section looked at the barriers experienced by both genders, but more especially the women refugees.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter focused on the findings in the research data and also provided a glimpse into the experiences of the Somali refugees in the study, as well as the barriers they encountered in seeking access to and participation in learning. Furthermore, the chapter discussed how both men and women have experienced barriers, which prevented them from participating in adult learning programmes.

The study found that women are more often victims and have limited opportunities because of cultural and religious constraints than men when it comes to decision-making. The chapter suggests that migration has had a positive impact generally on refugees' wellbeing and offers the opportunity for learning even though there are challenges. Such opportunities were not easily available in their home country Somalia. The chapter offers empirical evidence gathered and also builds a narrative of thick description, which brought to life the experiences of the Somali refugees in the study. It was evident that many barriers to participation in learning have been and continue to be experienced, which seem to cause substantial difficulty for refugees and their life chances, as well possibilities to achieve sustainable livelihoods. The following chapter hones in on some of the themes raised earlier in the literature, in relation to findings, the research questions and the discussions herein.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This study was aimed at investigating the barriers, which impede access to participation in adult learning among Somalis refugees in South Africa. Access to learning opportunities was a major challenge for refugees as many of them experienced situational, dispositional and academic barriers such as financial constraints, expectations of women as child carers and home makers, low levels of prior learning attainment, self-perceptions of being ‘too old’ for learning, and so on.

To reiterate, the study focused on the following research questions:

As a main question:

- What barriers do Somali refugees, men and women, experience when attempting to access adult learning in South Africa?

And furthermore, my study sought to understand:

- What opportunities for adult learning are available to Somali women and men refugees in their location in South Africa?
- What barriers to participation in learning have women refugees in particular experienced?

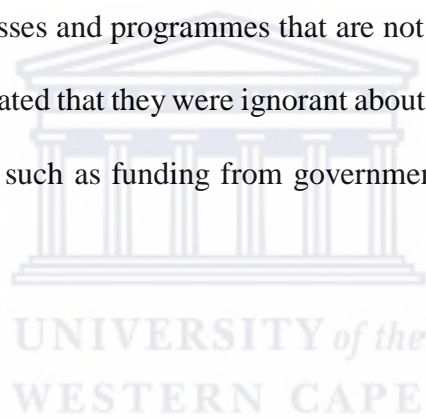
From the literature review, it was clear that scholarship exists and there have been studies investigating barriers to participation in adult learning. However, the reference point has not specifically been that of Somali refugees in South Africa or of women refugees. I saw this as a gap that my research could contribute towards.



Research data from the study confirmed that Somali refugees in South Africa experienced barriers to participation in adult learning, which could be summarised within the following categories:

### **5.1 Institutional Barriers**

According to MacKeracher et al. (2006), institutional barriers are those practices and procedures that exclude or discourage students or adult learners from participating, such as lack of credentials required for admission, lack of transportation services, and unavailability of resources such as library, computers, timing of classes and programmes that are not cognisant of the needs of adult learners. Many participants indicated that they were ignorant about adult learning programmes and that there was a lack of support such as funding from government, which could enable them to participate in these programmes.



### **5.2 Dispositional Barriers**

Cross (1981) and Fagan (1991) refer to dispositional barriers as those factors which are related to low motivation, attitudes, as well as self-perceptions about the students or that they themselves hold as adult learners, i.e. 'inherent or attitudinal factors which relate to learners' perceptions of their ability to seek out, register in, attend and successfully complete learning activities'. Dispositional barriers are similar to institutional barriers as pointed out by MacKeracher et al. (2006, p. 3).

Findings confirmed that indeed some of the participants experienced dispositional barriers, which prevented them from fully participating in adult learning programmes. Two of the participants who were in their late 40s and 50s expressed that they felt ‘too old’ and ‘did not see the value of adult learning since it would not benefit them in any way’, while others mentioned that it was difficult to study since they worked tirelessly to sustain their families. Other participants lacked the confidence to carry on with studies since they did not have a good educational foundation.

### **5.3 Situational Barriers**

These are factors, which arise from one's situation in life at a given point in time. Such barriers experienced included lack of money, no time to study, conflicting family roles and responsibilities, existing poor skills and experience, and lack of childcare especially in the case of women.

Barriers of time, finances, language, age, and cultural norms affected both genders, however women participants in the study expressed that they are disadvantaged more because of gender roles assigned to them as women. Cultural norms emerged as a barrier experienced by a significant number of women. These include forced early marriages, having children early and being unable to participate in adult learning programmes without the permission of their husbands. This resonated with the findings of scholars reviewed herein.

### **5.4 Academic Barriers**

These barriers include literacy skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking, as stated by Potter and Alderman (1992), MacKeracher et al. (2006) and Cross (1981). Academic barriers to accessing learning opportunities experienced by participants were largely related to their lack of English language proficiency, and to low levels of prior academic attainment. Due to war in their home

country, many Somali refugees had not been able to study further than basic or incomplete secondary education levels. Religious Arabic/Quran classes in the Madrassa, which many of them attended, represented their basic academic foundation. Most refugees therefore required a school exit level qualification in order to access tertiary studies or skills development courses.

### **5.5 Opportunities for adult learning available to Somali women and men refugees**

According to the respondents, available opportunities for adult learning were categorised as knowledge upgrading, job opportunity training, and business and skills. Participants indicated that they desired to seek knowledge through adult learning, although participants indicated that they would prefer job related training, and business skills to enhance their businesses. Mainly men indicated the latter desire.

### **5.6 Barriers to learning participation among refugee Somali women in particular**

Findings indicated that both men and women experienced similar barriers related to their status as refugees in a foreign country. However, women experienced barriers related to cultural and religious norms and the pressures these placed on women with regard to expectations of them in their homes and families.

Firstly, participants such as Abibba and Hadijja indicated that they were married off at an early age and as such, they started bearing children very early. As childcare is their primary responsibility, they had no time to participate in learning programmes. In their society, they said,

men are the managers and the decision-makers, which makes it difficult for women to participate since they have to seek permission from their husbands, and such permission may be withheld.

As discussed by Bonifacio (2012) earlier herein, gender inequality in the Somali community is a major barrier preventing women from participating in adult learning. This barrier arises from a strong cultural and religious background in which the community is embedded, and which migration has not diluted.

Gender theorists such as Harding (1986), argue that women have the potential to do what men do in order to sustain themselves economically, rather than depending on their husbands as dictated by culture and traditional values, which have deterred many women from access to learning opportunities Harding (1986), Moser (1998), Moemi (2006). But this potential was not realised in the participants in the study. Referring to the findings and the experiences of some participants in the study, in Islamic religion it is perceived, and upheld in their experiences, that men are regarded as strong and powerful, while women are regarded as weak and submissive.

A challenge impacting on both men and women was a lack of awareness about adult learning opportunities locally that might be accessed, and a perception that government was not overly concerned about the learning rights afforded to foreigners in terms of its policy on refugees.

### **5.7 Summary of major barriers to learning experienced by Somali refugees**

The following are the major barriers to learning that were encountered in this research among a refugee Somali community in a localised area in South Africa, summarised as follows:

- **Challenges experienced in the host country upon arrival**

Most of the participants, both men and women, indicated that they had experienced many hardships in terms of discrimination, xenophobia, lack of documentation, work related difficulties, as well as English language difficulty.

- **Educational experience in Somalia**

Due to the catastrophic effects of war in their home country, corruption, insecurity, economic decline, poor policy, government mismanagement of resources, the majority of the participants only achieved low levels of education. This constitutes a barrier to skills development at tertiary levels, which would afford more job opportunities.

- **Accessibility of adult learning centres**

A major problem in the host country South Africa was that adult learning centres, which were reported as not known to most participants, were not located within their vicinity, and transport facilities were poor and reported to be costly.

- **Motivation to learn**

Several participants in the study indicated that they would seek skills and knowledge given a chance to do so, since they believed such opportunities could lead them to improve their lives and attain career objectives.

- **Learning through the medium of English**

Participants said they desired to learn to speak English, and would attend lessons that are conducted in English, which they see as an international language, even though learning in this medium would be very challenging for them. They were willing to see the longer-term benefit of English as a language of business and communication with other locals.

- **Financial constraints**

Finance was a major barrier identified among the entire group of the participants, both men and women, which prevented them from participating in adult learning. If given access to funding they said, they would be very willing to enrol and participate fully in adult learning programmes.

- **Cultural and religious constraints**

The issue of culture and religion was a major barrier, which many women in particular reported, preventing them from accessing education in their community. In the study, it appeared that men had enough time for studies while women are mostly involved in household activities such as child rearing and cooking. However, men reported they were being groomed to be in business, which, they indicated, takes priority over education, as they had families to support as well.

- **Legislative constraints**

As discussed earlier herein, the South African Refugee Act of 1998 clearly recognizes the right of access to education for all people who reside in South Africa regardless of gender, age and race. Nonetheless, this research showed that refugees do not appear to benefit from this legislation. Furthermore, many participants noted that they were ignorant of refugee rights and this was a

barrier for them. The Somali refugees reported that they feel vulnerable and insecure and are at risk of being victims of xenophobia and discrimination. They mentioned that there is a crisis around integration and social cohesion, which requires serious intervention.

## **5.8 Recommendations and conclusions**

In broad terms this section, attempted to present the summary of recommendations and the conclusions of the research study. The aim was to illuminate the problems that were identified and at the same time point to recommendations arising out of the lessons learnt from the study.

## **5.9 Tentative recommendations from the research**

From the findings, and given the challenges that confront Somali refugees, the following suggestions are made in relation to alleviating some of the barriers to adult learning for refugee communities in particular:

- Awareness campaigns highlighting the right to education for refugees and advising them of appropriate avenues for education and training, or skills development opportunities, should be done by the stakeholders such as the Government, NGOs. Similar campaigns for awareness rising of the plight of refugees in this regard should also be aimed at the public to build local empathy.
- It was suggested that awareness campaigns about adult learning should be held through workshops, seminars, one-on-one meetings, which need to be facilitated by stakeholders such as the government, people from the community who have benefited from adult learning centres, and Community based organisations (CBOs) in charge, as well as

introducing centres in public advocacy, which can help overcome the lack of visibility of some of them. Some participants suggested that the above concerned stakeholders could recruit and train Somali members themselves to assist this could build role models among the refugee community.

- Funding for access to adult learning centres, the lack of which makes it difficult for adults to study, should be sourced and provided for those interested in learning programmes. Some of the refugees felt that access to education is geared to children rather than adults.
- The issue of policy and legislation was identified as a barrier, since it is stipulated within the South African Refugee Act of 1998, the South African Constitution, and the Bill of Rights that education in South Africa applies to all and is guided by the law. However, participants pointed out that although the law is there and many of them are aware of it, it is on paper only and ineffective since only lip service is paid to it. Participants suggested that some of these policies need to be implemented and be revisited urgently by the government (especially the departments of Home Affairs and Basic Education) in order to address some of the shortcomings around them.
- English classes should be offered by the stakeholders concerned in order to overcome the language barrier, which is often costly, as refugees require an interpreter for simple daily transactions especially in banks and hospitals.
- As stated earlier in the literature by Aitchison (2018) and some other scholars, here in South Africa, adult education is underfunded and there are too few institutions offering this kind



of education. Hence, it is not readily available even for SA citizens, and foreigners are thus more disadvantaged. In this regard, adult education learning centres/facilities should be established closer to the community in order to create easier access. Institutions such as UNHCR, CBOs, Civil Society Organisations, and Business, offer limited opportunities, which are not always accessible though. For example, HCI has been providing limited funding for both local and foreigners through CBOs such as ARESTA, as indicated earlier.

- NGOs such as UNHCR, including other institutional sectors, leaders, and all stakeholders concerned should come up with some initiatives that promote social integration and social cohesion between locals and foreign nationals.
- Technology should be integrated into adult learning programmes to enhance and motivate adult learners since some participants indicated that they prefer computer lesson because it offered the necessary technology for the future.
- The fact that most women face more hurdles in accessing adult learning than men, means that there should be targeted policy for women for them to benefit, and education also of men around discriminatory practices. Bodies concerned with gender equity should emphasise raising the issue among men in the Somali community, in order to sensitise them to the aspirations of women, and how empowerment of women might benefit their families.

- Finally, relevant interventions by concerned stakeholders should be taken seriously to improve the opportunities available to both men and women to access and participate in adult learning.

### **5.10 Recommendations for further research**

Further research is recommended to contextualize policies and strategies in relation to educational access for refugees, especially adults, in other refugee contexts, so that relevant learnings may be gleaned. As Chisholm and Leyendecker (2008, p. 202) argue, ‘much more research on the gap between policy and implementation in terms of adult education is needed to identify specific conditions, requirements, processes and approaches, both historically and in the present’.

Barriers, which prevent adult learners from participating in adult learning programmes, have been established as critical problems, which affected many of the participants. Therefore, future studies should be extended to the other areas of limitation encountered by refugees, and perhaps barriers found in this study could be investigated further.

In the findings, there were some challenges experienced by participants in terms of service delivery at the Department of Home Affairs while processing their documentation. These include long queues and unfriendly staff members. Furthermore, the participants also lamented about the maltreatment by the staff of the Department of Home Affairs being rude and unwelcoming. The issues that give rise to the long delays in processing of refugee documentation should be further investigated and addressed.

These are just some recommendations with regard to research and to alleviating the plight of refugees more broadly.

## 5.11 Concluding remarks

My motivation for this research was derived in part from personal experiences as a refugee student in South Africa who encountered similar struggles during my stay here. I am a founder member of an organisation called Unity for Tertiary Refugee Students (UTRS), which strives to assist refugees to access higher education as well as seeking the means for them to complete their studies, engaging in socially responsive and relevant activities, and networking, and lobbying civil society organisations. Based on my own experiences and these research findings I am convinced that far more could be done to address the current situation of refugees seeking education at all levels.

In analysing the barriers to participation in adult learning among the Somali refugees in Cape Town, this research also examined the barriers to participation that other scholars have found. For these Somali refugees the burden of history, culture and religion weigh heavily, particularly on the aspirations of women. Gender inequality is a significant barrier to women's participation. While migration potentially opens the door to opportunities which are not impeded by war and political danger, economic empowerment is mainly the benefit and preserve of men in this culture, and cultural norms still dictate the subservient position of women in spite of the many advances that have been made internationally in recognition of the rights of women.

The study has highlighted the importance and the envisaged potential of adult learning for the Somali refugee society in South Africa, despite all the constraints that such refugees face. The hope is that this exposition of their experiences will encourage strategies and policies, which will be beneficial to all refugees seeking a better future for themselves and their children. In spite of their often-desperate circumstances and thwarted learning ambitions, they still acknowledge

education as a pathway to make their dreams come true, and to ultimately gain more control of their lives.



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Dissertation submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of Master of Education with specialization in Natural Science Education at the University of South Africa.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Interview Guide

#### Demographic information

1. What is your age?

- a. 18- 20
- b. 21- 35
- c. 36 – 50
- d. 50 and above

2. What is your gender?

- 1. Female
- 2. Male

3. What is your marital status?

- 1. Married
- 2. Single
- 3. Divorced

4. How many people stay in your house?

- 1. 2 - 4
- 2. 5 -10
- 10 and above

5. How many children do you have?



1. 0 -1
2. 2 - 4
3. 5 - 9
4. 10 and above

6. Which ethnic group/tribal group do you belong to? Please specify

7. What is your religion, or which religious sector do you belong to?

8. When did you arrive in South Africa?

9. For how long have you been in South Africa?

10. Would you give reasons why you left your country and came to South Africa?

11. As a woman/man in your capacity, which problems did you experience here in South Africa when you arrived?

12. Did you at any point attend school in your country before you came to South Africa?

Please explain.

13. What level of education among the following have you attained?

1. Madras

2. Primary
3. Secondary
4. Collage
5. University

If any other forms of education, please explain

14. Are you aware about adult education programmes in South Africa/Cape Town/Bellville?

15. If given opportunity to study, would you attempt to enrol and participate in adult learning education lessons?

16. What reasons do you think prevent you from studying? Please explain.

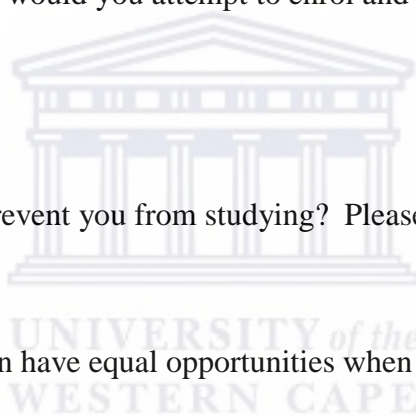
17. Do you think men and women have equal opportunities when it comes to adult learning?

What is your opinion?

18. What kind of opportunity/programme would you seek in adult learning?

19. Do you think there are equal opportunities for learning for both genders?

20. Do you think adult education has any relevance for your community, especially here in Cape Town/Bellville?





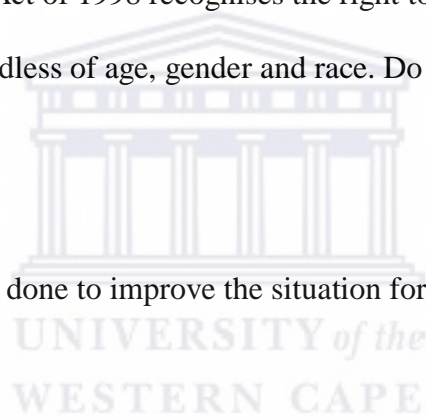
21. What are the reasons that contributed to you leaving your studies early in Somalia? Please feel free to explain.

22. Do you have adult learning centres here in Bellville or elsewhere in the northern suburbs? Please explain.

23. What type of adult learning lessons does your community provide for you?

24. The South African Refugee Act of 1998 recognises the right to access to education for all who reside in South Africa regardless of age, gender and race. Do you think this objective is being met?

25. What do you think should be done to improve the situation for you with regard to education?





**Appendix C: Informed Consent - Letter of Consent**

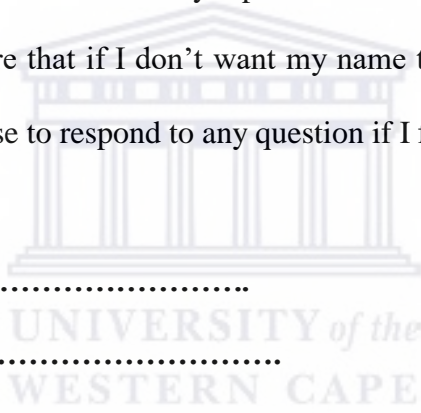
**Study: An investigation of barriers to participation in adult learning among refugees: The case of the Somali in the Northern suburbs.**

I \_\_\_\_\_ hereby consent to being interviewed by Kasifa Kakai in order to contribute to the above-mentioned study. The study has been described to me in a language that I understand, it is voluntary and in case I no longer wish to participate at any time, I may withdraw without giving reasons. I also understand that my data will be kept confidential and that I will not be personally identified in any report or other written products that may come from the research. I'm also aware that if I don't want my name to be used, the researcher must respect my wish. I may also refuse to respond to any question if I feel I do not wish to answer it.

***Participant's name***.....

**Participant's signature**.....

**Date**.....



## Appendix D: Ethical clearance Request/Form



### OFFICE OF THE DEAN DEPARTMENT OF RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT

14 November 2014

#### To Whom It May Concern

I hereby certify that the Senate Research Committee of the University of the Western Cape approved the methodology and ethics of the following research project by: Ms K Kakai (Education)

Research Project: An investigation of barriers to participation in adult learning among refugees: The case of the Somalis in the Northern Suburbs of Cape Town.

Registration no: 13/2/9

Any amendments, extension or other modifications to the protocol must be submitted to the Ethics Committee for approval.

The Committee must be informed of any serious adverse event and/or termination of the study.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Patricia Josias'.

*Ms Patricia Josias  
Research Ethics Committee Officer  
University of the Western Cape*

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A place of quality,  
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to action through knowledge