



Title	Bridges and Barriers: A Participatory Exploration of Welcome Classes for Young Women with Forced Migration Experiences in Mitte <i>*Working Title</i>
Subtitle	<i>Unveiling the Complexities, Challenges, and Opportunities Young Women Face in Their Journey Towards Social Integration in Berlin</i>

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Exploring the Impact of Educational Environments on Integration: A Deeper Dive

Exploring the Impact of Educational Environments on Integration: A Deeper Dive:

Through our extensive consultations and discussions, a recurring theme illuminated the profound influence of formal educational settings, such as welcome classes and language courses, on the integration journey of our peer researchers. These environments, while pivotal for many, also posed challenges for some. This crucial insight prompted our collaborative decision to venture deeper into this realm, unveiling a more nuanced understanding of its role in shaping their experiences

Research Goal: Understand how activities in welcome classes and language courses incl. language cafes affect the social integration experiences and confidence of refugee girls in Berlin Mitte. The study will also identify areas that could be improved.

Main Research Question: How do activities in welcome classes and language courses, such as language cafes, contribute to the social integration experiences of refugee girls in Berlin Mitte?

Sub-Questions:

1. How do refugee girls understand their interactions and relationship-building with native German peers in educational settings?
2. What are the main challenges refugee girls face when participating and connecting with native Germans outside of these settings? How do they overcome these hurdles?
3. What specific activities within these classes can boost the confidence of refugee girls and encourage them to engage in broader social spheres?
4. What can be done to improve social integration in educational settings? How can the experiences of refugee girls inform and enhance these efforts?

By exploring these questions, we want to uncover how current integration structures, such as welcome classes, impact these young women's integration into German society. This research is a crucial step in understanding their experiences and making integration more inclusive and supportive.

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<p>Discover their Stories</p>	<p>Consultation Sessions - Pivotal Moments of Collaboration:</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● What are the challenges and needs of girls in your home countries? ● What are the needs and challenges of girls in Germany? <p>Train of Hope Dortmund e.V., NRW <i>Feb 4 and 28, 2023</i></p> <p>Core Themes Explored:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Education and Enlightenment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Emphasis on the expansive nature of education beyond traditional confines. ● Advocating enlightenment as a means to bridge societal divides. 2. Gender Dynamics & Discrimination: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Anecdotes of societal biases both from homeland and in Germany. ● Discussions on how clothing standards can impact professional opportunities. 3. Acceptance & Open-mindedness: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A vision for a more inclusive German society and the significance of acceptance. 4. Economic Stability & Opportunities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dialogue on economic adversities, spotlighting the non-acknowledgement of qualifications in Germany. 5. Cultural and Religious Practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Dissection of cultural and religious rites and their role as potential integration barriers. 6. Conditions & Needs in Home Countries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Accounts of the circumstances left behind, emphasising discrimination, violence, and an urgent call for societal change. <p>MPower e.V., Berlin <i>March 5, 2023</i></p> <p>Core Themes Explored:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Societal Pressure & Religious Norms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● A comprehensive look into the symbolism of the headscarf, from a mark of modesty to potential imposition.
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2. **Beauty Standards:**

- Insight into stringent Syrian beauty standards and their impact on individual self-worth.

3. **Power Dynamics & Discrimination:**

- Acknowledgment of differentiation based on heritage, economic standing, and marginalisation encounters.

4. **Rights and Freedoms in Somalia:**

- Conversations on the curtailment of women's rights, with a focus on education and forced matrimonial practices.

5. **Aspirations:**

- A collective call for representation, equal rights, and celebrating successful women emerging from their community.

6. **Integration Challenges:**

- Addressing biases based on origin, linguistic abilities, and differential treatment grounded in attire.

7. **Educational Biases:**

- Delving into perceived educational system biases, especially against those who aren't native German speakers.

8. **Seeking Safe Spaces & Understanding:**

- The collective plea for welcoming environments in Germany and the essence of shared experiences in tackling discrimination.

Mastering Participatory Research: Peer Training Journey

April 2023 (ongoing)

Core Themes of Discussions on Community, Identities, Power Dynamics and Intersectionality:

1. **Community, Identity, and Origin:**

- Exploring fluidity in identity and the significant role of language in community and self-recognition.

2. **Power Dynamics and Societal Structure:**

- Recognizing individual and structural power disparities, especially in institutions like schools and housing.

3. **Generational Differences and Interpersonal Interactions:**

- The influence of age and personal encounters in forming identity and feelings of belonging.

4. **The Multifaceted Role of Language:**

- Understanding language as both a unifier and divider in societal interactions.

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5. Intersectionality, Religion, and Ethnicity:

- Acknowledging the intertwined nature of identities and the distinct experiences they create.

6. Discrimination, Privilege, and Community Dynamics:

- Navigating shared discriminatory experiences while recognising privileges associated with specific identities.

7. Gender Dynamics and Inequality:

- Investigating gender expectations within ethnic communities and broader societal inequities.

8. Perception and Community Interplay:

- Identifying the underlying "us vs. them" sentiment influencing interactions and perceptions between communities.

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<p>Dive into the Research Process</p>	<p>I. Engaging Communities: Our Collaborative Journey</p> <p>Recognizing Berlin and NRW as two of the regions with the highest number of first-time asylum applications and forced migrant populations in Germany, we initiated our engagement there. Our collaboration with key agencies ensured our research remained relevant, connecting us directly with young women who would later become the backbone of our research as peer researchers.</p> <p>Guiding Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the challenges and needs of girls in your home countries? • What are the needs and challenges of girls in Germany? <p>Consultation Sessions - Pivotal Moments of Collaboration:</p> <p>Consultation Sessions with Train of Hope Dortmund e.V., NRW - Feb 4 and 28, 2023:</p> <p>In a partnership with Train of Hope Dortmund e.V., we facilitated two profound sessions in Dortmund, NRW, immersing ourselves in the intricate life experiences of young women from forced migration backgrounds, notably from Afghanistan. These consultations were thoughtfully crafted to uncover the intertwined challenges and need they confront, spanning both their countries of origin and their new home in Germany.</p> <p>In these sessions, education emerged as a focal point, revealing the pressing necessity for comprehensive learning to tackle issues like forced marriages and gender-based violence prevalent in their home countries. The discussions also laid bare deeply ingrained gender biases and societal norms, both within Afghanistan and Germany. The theme of acceptance resonated strongly, spotlighting the yearning for inclusivity and open-mindedness. As we delved into their experiences in Germany, concerns about economic stability and the recognition of qualifications came to the forefront. The struggle to preserve cultural and religious practices while integrating into a new society was also explored. The stark realities faced in Afghanistan were bravely shared, shedding light on themes of child labour, gender discrimination, forced marriages, and limited educational opportunities.</p> <p>Consultation Sessions with MPower e.V., Berlin - March 5, 2023</p> <p>Charting a new path of collaboration, we extended our outreach to MPower e.V., embarking on an exciting journey of partnership and fresh exploration of the diverse experiences and perspectives arising from forced migration. The result was a captivating tapestry of experiences, offering profound insights into sustainability from the vantage point</p>
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of young women with varied forced migration backgrounds. With the active participation of four girls, this orientation and workshop uncovered core themes that echo the intricacies of these women's journeys.

The themes encompass the weight of societal expectations, traversing religious norms and beauty standards while delving into power dynamics and discrimination. Their fight for rights and freedoms, intertwined with aspirations in a new land, underscored the tenacity that defines their narratives. These themes also illuminated biases embedded within the educational system, alongside an ardent desire for spaces that embrace understanding and empathy. Together, these themes coalesce into a mosaic that paints the challenges, aspirations, and intricacies that shape the lives of these young women as they navigate the juncture between their past and present realities.

Catalysts for Empowerment: The Emergence of Peer Researchers

Our commitment to genuine representation and diverse perspectives materialised through our partnership with organisations. This collaborative effort led us to identify four dedicated peer researchers from M Power e.V. These engaged co-collaborators have become pivotal in steering our research trajectory, providing invaluable insights that influence the research direction. Their authentic voices, stemming from personal experiences, mark a milestone in our project. Transitioning from participants to active contributors underscores our commitment to amplifying diverse voices and co-creating impactful solutions for the multifaceted challenges young women from forced migration backgrounds face.

Partnership with Mpower e.V.:

Our formal partnership with Mpower e.V. emerged as a crucial anchor in our collaborative research journey. We set the foundation with an official project orientation and consultation meeting on March 5, 2023, and solidified our partnership through a comprehensive memorandum of agreement. This document explicitly outlined our shared roles, responsibilities, and collaborative activities.

Peer Research Training - April 2023 (ongoing)

To effectively harness the depth of insights, skills, and strengths of our peer researchers from Mpower e.V., we launched the Peer Research Training in April 2023. This training is meticulously crafted to introduce research fundamentals, with a spotlight on participatory methodologies. Its prime objective is to furnish participants with pivotal research concepts, thereby bolstering their ability to conduct participatory research adeptly.

Core Facets of Our Training Encompass:

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- Understanding essential concepts and viewpoints that are crucial in the field of research.
- Exploring the importance of research ethics, which includes implementing measures to protect participants.
- Creating meaningful research inquiries, selecting suitable research techniques, collaborating on data analysis, and disseminating results.
- Harnessing insights from the Training Needs Assessment (TNA) to include topics that address participants' specific training needs and goals.

Our Specific Training Goals Include:

- Introduce participants to the research process while refining their skills in participatory research.
- Sharing knowledge and tools essential for formulating research questions, selecting the right research methods, gathering and analysing data, and disseminating results.
- Enriching understanding regarding the paramount importance of research ethics.
- Encouraging a robust comprehension of salient concepts related to sustainability and inclusive participation.

As a result of this intensive training, significant milestones were achieved:

- Finalization of the research focus.
- Calibration of participant selection criteria.
- Creation of precise research questions.
- Design of critical research tools, like consent forms and guiding questions.

II. Data Collection

Our dedicated peer researchers have led the way in conducting 27 (as of the current date) semi-structured interviews, conducted in both Deutsch and Arabic, to accommodate participants' language preferences. Upholding stringent ethical standards, we ensure privacy by employing online consent forms. Before each interview, participants are provided with a PDF copy of the consent form and the same is sent after the interview for their records. These interviews are thoughtfully arranged in discreet locations like schools and masjids/mosques, fostering an environment of security for open and candid discussions. Spanning between 15 to 45 minutes, these sessions are focused on building trust and rapport with participants. Our commitment to collaboration shines through regular meetings and discussions with our peer researchers, forming the essence of our cohesive research approach.

Our Participants Align with the Following Criteria:

- Female

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- Aged 14 to 26
- Forced Migration Experience
- Residing in Berlin, Mitte
- Currently or previously attended welcome classes or language courses
- Open and willing to participate, sharing their unique experiences
- Representing diverse backgrounds including various nationalities, ethnicities, socio-economic statuses, and educational backgrounds

Through this comprehensive approach, we are dedicated to capturing a broad spectrum of perspectives and experiences that authentically represent the diversity within the community we are studying.

III. Data Analysis

As of August 2023, we are reviewing the collected interviews and transcripts, thanks to the valuable partnership with MPower e.V. We are dedicated to conducting a careful and comprehensive analysis to honour the participants' voices and experiences. We eagerly anticipate gaining insights to deepen our understanding of these young women's integration journeys. Stay tuned for updates as we progress with this vital research phase.

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Partnerships and Collaboration	<p>Our Peer Researchers MPower e.V.:</p> <p>We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the four dedicated peer researchers, staff, and representatives from MPower e.V. They have been active co-collaborators in this research project, contributing invaluable insights, experiences, and perspectives. Their involvement has significantly influenced the direction of our study, adding depth to our findings.</p> <p>We also thank the young women who participated in the interviews, generously sharing their stories and insights with us. Your contributions are at the heart of this project, and we are honoured to amplify your voices. Together, alongside our partners and participants, we are committed to creating a more inclusive and empathetic society for all.</p>
	<p>Train of Hope Dortmund e.V.:</p> <p>We sincerely thank Train of Hope Dortmund e.V. for their invaluable collaboration and support in organising the consultation sessions. These sessions gave us a unique opportunity to engage with young women from forced migration backgrounds and gain profound insights into their challenges and needs. Train of Hope Dortmund's commitment to creating a platform for these important discussions and their dedication to making a positive impact on the lives of these young women are truly commendable. Your partnership has played a pivotal role in shaping our research and fostering mutual understanding and empathy.</p>
	<p>IBZ Bielefeld and BARAKA Köln:</p> <p>We express our deep appreciation to IBZ Bielefeld and BARAKA Köln for their warm welcome and gracious support in allowing our team to share our research ideas and conduct project orientation with their members and reach out to potential participants. Your openness and collaboration have been instrumental in introducing our project to a wider audience, and your commitment to fostering engagement, learning, and understanding is deeply valued. Thank you for your generosity and support.</p>

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