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Internship Report

Research Internship at
Joensuun seudun monikulttuurisuusyhdisty ry



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Preface

During the last two years at Campus Fryslân I have acquired an immense amount on theoretical knowledge regarding the social responsibility towards those in need, have learned about the political as well as economic circumstances within different countries and even got insights to the processes of policy making. Nonetheless, with every new lecture I could feel how I did not only want to sit in the classroom anymore, learning more about the societal problems in the world, but that I actually wanted to help and take on an active role. Hence, the minor was the perfect opportunity for me to put the things I had learned into practice – in form of an internship.

When I applied to the “Global Responsibility and Leadership” programme I already knew that I wanted to work in a social field, finding ways to improve the wellbeing of individuals. More precisely, my focus had always been on reducing inequalities within different societies. Finding an organisation that specifically asked me to conduct research on new (policy) recommendations to improve the wellbeing of female refugees in their city seemed to be the perfect match. The fact that this internship was in Finland was of course an extra bonus, giving me the chance to experience the live in a different country I had never been to.

I got in contact with JoMoni via one of my classmates Iiris Väyryen, who also did her internship at the same organisation. Even though I had already gotten a confirmation from the Krakow University in Poland, I immediately knew that I wanted take the chance of this internship. After a few interviews and multiple conversations with Henna Middeke and Mitro Hyvärinen about my potential role at JoMoni I got in contact with my supervisor Berfu Ünal and changed my minor plan last minute.

The main part of the internship was dedicated to one specific research project, focussing on the wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu. However, the exact structure and type of research were still up to Iiris and me, giving us all the space to design our internship along the way. Furthermore, we were assigned additional smaller projects, giving us the chance to get some more insights to the work within a social organisation.

This internship has given me the opportunity to experience the joy, as well as the challenges that come in hand with social work. I have learned about the daunting processes of applying for funding, felt the frustration when talking to my co-workers regarding national regulations, was inspired by the strength of the wonderful women I got to spend time with at JoMoni and got to understand that it takes much more time and dedication to accomplish small goals.

I want to thank my internship supervisor, Henna Middeke, as well as my colleagues Nella Niemi, Anni Rannikko and Lalah Abdulqader at JoMoni, who have guided me along the way, were always open to answer any of my question and treated me like an equal member of their team. Further, I want to thank my university supervisor Berfu Ünal, who took me under her wing without hesitation and supported me through some of the tougher moments during my time in Joensuu. Finally, I am very thankful for the time I got to spend, as well as the eye opening conversations I got to have with the refugee women and their families at JoMoni.

The past few months have taught me a lot about myself and I am grateful to have been given such an opportunity. I hope you get to feel some of the highs and lows when reading this report and feel inspired to support the people around you!

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Introduction

As part of my bachelor studies at Campus Fryslân I was given the opportunity to fill my minor space with an internship at the organisation *Joensuun seudun monikulttuurisuusyhdisty ry*, in the following referred to as “JoMoni”. With their focus on the promotion of multiculturalism, antiracism strategies as well as the development of new policies to support immigrants and refugees (in Joensuu), JoMoni seemed to be the perfect link between my majors in *Responsible Governance* and *Responsible Humanities*. Even though JoMoni is a rather small scale, funding-dependent organisation focussed on one specific city, whereas my personal interests lay in the work of international organisations, I was eager to experience the “real world” of social work.

Given their branch office location in Joensuu, Finland, I was required to move to my new working environment by the end of August, although the actual internship took place from September 1st, 2021 until February 7th, 2022. During the whole time I was supervised by Henna Middeke, one of the main project managers at JoMoni, as well as Berfu Ünal, who had been my highly-valued psychology teacher during the previous years of my study.

Main focus of the internship was a research project on the wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu. Specifically, the wellbeing of the women who had already been in contact with JoMoni (in the following often referred to as “the women at JoMoni”). As the design of the assignment was left open with only a few minor boundary conditions, I was able to schedule my time flexibly, resulting in an average of 32 working hours per week. While the first month of the internship was mostly dedicated to getting acquainted with the new field of research and getting to know my colleagues, as well as the women at JoMoni (sometimes only 25h/week), the remaining months were assigned to working meetings regarding the research structure, group sessions with the women and hours devoted to the analysis of the research outcomes (up to 35/week). In addition to the main project I was also given a selection of side projects, which I was asked to focus on whenever possible.

By the end of the internship I was able to present JoMoni one summary report, a recommendation sheet, as well as all the research data (survey results as well as transcripts of a focus group discussion) regarding the main research project. Furthermore, I handed them a proposal draft for a new youth group in Joensuu and an overview of potential NGOs co-operations. It should be mentioned here, that I was working together with another student from the Global Responsibility and Leadership programme – Iiris Väyrynen. As we were working together during most of the different projects I will from now on refer to my work as “our work”, even though we were mostly working independently and only met once or twice a week to update each other.

Unfortunately, some planned assignments had to be cancelled due to COVID-19, namely the visit of partner organisations and schools, as well as the organisation of a social event. Nonetheless, I did get a broad insight into the work at a social organisation. I was able to improve in most of my competencies (adaptability, communication, analytical skills and professionalism) and could further meet the expected learning outcomes (improved teamwork and collaboration, as well as independent working behaviour).

Personally, this internship made me more aware of my interest and helped me to redefine the direction of my future career. I might not look back and say that this internship was exactly what I want to do in life, but it more importantly showed me where I hold my strengths and what other opportunities there are for me. The following will summarise my experiences and provide the reader with an overview of my time at JoMoni.

Organisational Analysis of JoMoni

Since 2009, JoMoni is one of the few organizations in the city of Joensuu, Eastern Finland, promoting multiculturalism and actively working against racism. While supporting refugees and asylum seekers in their struggles to find their new home in Joensuu, JoMoni is trying to strengthen the dialogue and collaboration between people in the city (JoMoni, n.d.). What started as one small project, has by now consolidated in an organisation that is trying to balance several projects at the same time (H. Middeke, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2021).

Based in the capital of the North Karelia region, JoMoni is in the great position of setting an example when it comes to diversity and inclusion. One of Joensuu's goals is to help people integrate fast and sustainably into the community, while still enabling them to follow their cultural traditions (City of Joensuu, n.d.). Still, many families and especially female refugees are facing big challenges when it comes to finding their place in the city. Therefore, JoMoni is trying to focus on the individual by helping with any bureaucratic issues, translations and the social support of refugees and asylum seekers (H. Middeke, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2021).

Vision and Mission

JoMoni's focus is on actively working against racism, with the vision of enabling an open-minded and multicultural society. Following their mission to reduce situations in which people are experiencing racists behaviour or discrimination, they are encouraging individuals and groups in their attempts of preventing the opportunities for discrimination. Furthermore, they are offering support to those who have encountered racist behaviour and further assist them during the integration process (JoMoni, n.d.).

Structure

As mentioned above, JoMoni started as a small project which slowly expanded and grew into an organisation (H. Middeke, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2021). The core of this organisation is the Board, including the president Karl Hancock, the vice-chair Henna Karhapää, the treasurer Anni Rannikko and both

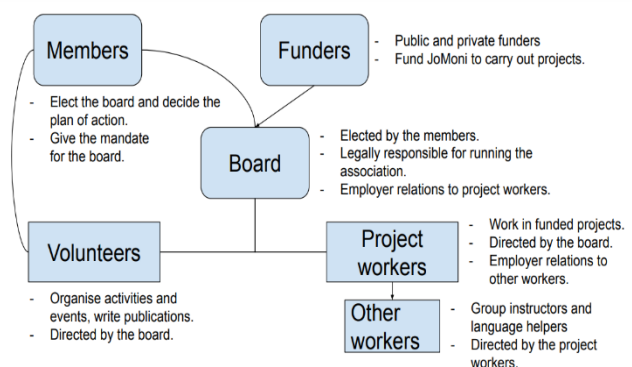


Figure 1: Organisational Overview of JoMoni (JoMoni, 2022)

secretaries Sami Tanskanen and Claire Ramsey (JoMoni, n.d).. While not all of them are working in the office on a daily basis, they are responsible for the work within the association, as well as the communication with external funders (H. Middeke & M. Hyvärinen, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2022).

The Board is elected by members of JoMoni. They hold a similar position as the volunteer workers, with the difference of a their financial contribution in form of a membership fee (JoMoni, n.d.). The volunteers and members are mostly responsible for organising activities and events, which are supervised by the Board itself or by individual project managers/workers (M. Hyvärinen, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2021). These project workers dedicate their time to specific projects, mostly in connection to generate new fundings, and supervise other worker and interns in that endeavour (H. Middeke, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2021).

In general, JoMoni is working on a very loose basis with low hierarchies. I have mostly been in contact with the project managers Henna Middeke and Nella Niemi, who have been with JoMoni since the beginning. Due to their position and connection to different projects they are the main contact person to the refugees and asylum seekers at JoMoni (H. Middeke, Personal conversation, November 15th, 2021).

Current and Future Projects

JoMoni is working on different individual projects on a daily basis, helping out refugees and asylum seekers with different issues in regard to their resident permits, provision of housing, translation cases and other social support. Next to that, there are a few bigger projects that are aimed at helping a larger number of people at the same time. These projects often take several months in their planning and are ongoing undertakings.

One of JoMoni's recent projects is the women's language group, in the following referred to as the women's group. Its aim is to teach the women at JoMoni the Finnish language as well as the societal structures and practices in Joensuu specifically, as well as in Finland generally. This group is meets once a week and the structure of the group is more of a flowing process together with the women.

Furthermore, JoMoni is taking part in a research project together with the University of Eastern Finland. The MATILDE project is a "3-year project funded by the EU Horizon 2020 facility, focusing on the impact of migration on the local development of rural and mountain regions" (JoMoni, n.d.; Matilde, 2021). As a research partner JoMoni is providing the project with further insights on a local level.

As one of their other bigger projects, JoMoni is working the inclusion of youth groups in the integration process. The GOALS 2020-2023 project targets different youth groups of immigrant communities in Joensuu, focusing on their social and financial welfare. This project includes several smaller side projects – one of them is shortly touched upon in this report – all with the goal of providing more “opportunities for hobbies, volunteering, training and job search guidance” (JoMoni, n.d).

The Internship

The internship at JoMoni consisted of one main project, the “Qualitative Research Project” and a selection of smaller “Side Projects”. The following will begin with a description of the main assignment, the connected tasks as well as an overview of the results. Afterwards, the side projects will be summarised, including an explanation of their relevance for JoMoni. Finally, this section provides an overview of all outputs that were created during the internship.

Main Project - Qualitative Research for JoMoni

The main focus of my internship was the research on the wellbeing on female refugees in Joensuu. Even though our supervisor left it open to us to decide on the specific focus and research method, she gave us some indication on what information might be useful for JoMoni. They were specifically interested in the family relations of the women, pointing at potential abuses at home. Unfortunately, JoMoni has much more contact with the male refugees, which of course is great by its own. However, they are missing important information regarding the women and their life in Joensuu which makes it difficult to establish potential new projects to support them in any ways necessary.

While gathering our information from the literature and from interviews with other researchers, we further discovered that post-migration stressors are affecting the wellbeing of refugees on a financial, mental, as well social level (T. Sotkasiira, Personal communication, September 29th, 2021). It is particularly difficult for women to integrate into a new society, as they are often traditionally made solely responsible for the household and the children. Outdated traditional roles within the family and the prevailing gender gap are thus causing the women to feel left behind and alone in the community (P. Pöllänen, Personal communication, October 6th, 2021), resulting in stronger declines in women’s relative wellbeing and happiness compared to men. The problem that follows additionally is that the wellbeing is not only important for the women themselves, but for their families and children as well (Stevenson & Wolfers, 2009).

We therefore saw the importance of enabling female refugees a more independent future. With the approval of JoMoni we decided to learn more about the women’s everyday life, to understand their needs and demands to improve their wellbeing.

Tasks during the Project

Like in any other research project we had to **read through the existing literature** to defend the significance of our study. We concluded, that while there is no clear definition, wellbeing can be broadly defined as the “state of being happy, healthy and prosperous” (Merriam-Webster, 2022). The

importance and benefits of higher wellbeing have also become increasingly important in relation to immigration, as post-migration stress, cultural and language barriers as well as unresolved traumas are impacting especially refugees and asylum seekers (Ornnet, 2020). Often, the consequences are reduced confidence, fear, the feeling of being unsafe and physical or mental sickness (CDC, 2018). It makes it difficult for people to find a job, integrate into the community or set a foundation for their future.

With these information, we were then responsible for ***designing the research methodology***. We decided to make use of different methods. To begin with, we held two interviews with external researchers with their expertise in the integration and wellbeing of refugees in Eastern Finland. We then sent out a survey to different refugee women groups in Joensuu, furthermore talked to the women at JoMoni in (bi-)weekly meetings and finally organised a focus group discussion. During this project we followed the activism approach, meaning that we did not do the research about the women, but together with them. Therefore, our results have been discussed and formulated together with the women, to ensure that their wishes and demands are included and they are being represented as accurate as possible.

During the active process of the project, Iiris and I had to ***design and send out a survey***, including both qualitative and quantitative questions. Afterwards, we had to analyse the results and summarize them in a comprehensive way for JoMoni. As a final step, we had to ***organise a focus group discussion***, in which we tried to collect more in-depth information from the participating women. After analysing the transcripts and locating some problem areas regarding the women's wellbeing, we generated suitable recommendations for JoMoni and ***formulated a summary report***.

In general, we had to take on the ***responsibility of organising the research by ourself***, keeping up with deadlines, informing our supervisors throughout the process and ensuring the confidential use of the collected data. Especially the work with the refugee women required us to organise the group sessions beforehand and plan the activities.

Results

We identified five key outcomes from our research which will be summarized shortly in the following. Further, we were able to point out three main problem areas, namely the lack of time, lack of network and the lack of education, which all influence the wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu. With that in mind, we formulated our recommendations for JoMoni to improve the women's wellbeing. A short overview can also be found below.

Key Findings

To begin with, we discovered that (1) the refugee women in Joensuu don't have enough time for themselves. There are too few (affordable) offers regarding activities for children or the women themselves, which leads to them being surrounded by their family all the time. Furthermore, (2) the women are missing stores or events that are connected to their culture, making them feel excluded and very foreign to the Finnish society. It follows from that, that even though Joensuu feels safe and peaceful, (3) women often feel lonely and can not integrate well. They would enjoy more group activities and groups in which they can share their thoughts without judgment. The research further showed, that (4) social media is a strong platform for connecting people with JoMöni and informing them about new groups and events. It would thus be the next thing for JoMöni to focus on, when advertising newly established groups. Last, we could conclude that overall (5) learning the Finnish language enables the women to learn more about their rights, as well as the Finnish culture, and helps them to become more independent.

Problem Areas

With these outcomes in mind, we determined three key problems. The first one can be summarized as a **lack of time**. It was mentioned as the most prevalent issue, that the women do not have time for themselves as they are always required to look out for their family. As mentioned before, this is due to the small amount of activities for the children in Joensuu. Furthermore, they are often solely made responsible for all house chores, making it difficult for them to follow their own interests.

The next problem we could point out is the **lack of network**. The women indicated that they are feeling alone and excluded from the community, on one side due to the language barrier, but on the other due to missing opportunities to meet new people. Many women described the difficulty of building new friendships and finding a safe support system. The additional absence of events or stores connected to their culture is only increasing the feelings of being alone and left out.

Finally, one last but all the more important issue raised is the factor of **education**. During our research, all women confirmed that their life improved after they started to learn the Finnish language and further learned about their rights. It gave them more agency and independence. However we then recognised, that there are almost no social groups in which they can learn together. And even more urgent, there are no environments for the women to feel safe and free to talk about topics like discrimination or their difficulties of letting go of old traditions and expectations with other refugee women. There are many more women who are not even aware of groups like the one of JoMöni. Thus, it is more difficult for them to get the necessary education they would need to improve their wellbeing.

Recommendations

Following these outcomes, we generated five key recommendations for JoMoni, that should tackle the identified problem areas. For the purpose of this report, they will only be shortly mentioned below (more detailed explanation the in Summary Report, see Appendix 1).

1. To create safe environments for the refugee women, JoMoni should further support and establish social groups, in which the women can share their thoughts, seek for advice, create new relationships or simply talk about personal experiences without judgment.
2. JoMoni should establish more groups for children, as well as young adults to provide refugees with more activity options. This could be done in cooperation with volunteers of the university or clubs in Joensuu.
3. The focus of JoMoni's work should be on educating women about their rights, the Finnish language as well as society. Hence, the current (or a new) women's group should be hosted regularly and structured more precisely, with an emphasis on educating the women on these topics.
4. Collaborations or partnerships with businesses in and around Joensuu should be established, to negotiate group activities and/or discounts for the refugee families. This also includes finding psychological support groups.
5. To ensure that the recommendations will show effect, JoMoni should present the groups and activities on their website. It would also be a positive contribution to increase JoMoni' presence on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

Side Projects

As the main project was not very time intensive in the beginning and we were mostly focussed on collecting information and planning the research itself, JoMoni provided us with additional tasks that gave us new insight to other work areas. Some of them were rather small and spontaneous on a day to day basis, while others were ongoing projects during the whole five months. A short description of each can be found below.

Teaching and Support of Refugees coming to JoMoni

JoMoni is the main contact point for many refugees and asylums seekers when it comes to problems regarding bureaucratic matters or issues in translation and educational support. Thus, Iiris and I were also asked to help out whenever possible. Specifically, we were supposed to help students with any questions regarding their school work and it was even planned to visit the schools themselves to offer our help onsite. The latter was unfortunately cancelled due to the COVID-19 developments.

Nonetheless, one of the times I was called spontaneously was to help a woman from Russia, who had troubles with her luggage being delivered to Joensuu. Without getting too deep into the case, I had to call several different offices to get the right documents for her, had to help her with the translations and also needed to discuss the problem with the customs office. This had been quite the challenge as I personally never even had such issues myself, however, I was able to get her luggage back.

Even though cases like these are very time consuming for JoMoni and only help one individual at a time instead of all together, they are indispensable. My time as a voluntary intern has shown me the daily struggles of many refugees, some of which I did not even think of, and I hope that I helped at least some of them, as well as that I was an effective support to JoMoni.

Overview of NGOs across Europe

As one of the longer projects, we were asked to collect the contact details of different NGOs and social organisations across Europe. The purpose was to generate an overview of potential partners, when it comes to transporting refugees across borders. Thus, we created a document listing all (small) organisations we were able to find, their contact details and the type of help they would be able to offer. We also started to contact some of them, to get acquainted and collect further information.

JoMoni might use these contacts in emergency cases of rejected asylum seekers. In general, it will help them to build a strong network with other social organisations, to plan interventions or new projects together.

Youth Group

While JoMoni is trying their best to accommodate the needs and wishes of the refugees they are working with, they are highly dependent on financial funding by the government. Therefore, as part of their GOALS project, one task given to me was to prepare a proposal draft for a youth group in Joensuu, specifically for male refugees aged 15 to 27 years. While my task was not focussed on a financial strategy plan, I had to define the aim and focus of the group, as well as create an overview of potential activities the group could facilitate.

The proposal draft was taken as a basis of the official proposal that is currently used to apply for funding. We are hoping that the boys group can already start this year in summer, otherwise latest next year. It would not only provide the boys with new activities and support in Joensuu, it would further help JoMoni to implement some of our recommendations in regards to creating more free time for the women we have been working with.

Paper Publication

One last project developed spontaneously during the internship, when Henna Middeke was contacted by the American researcher Claire Ramsey, who had also been working as the secretary for JoMoni. Claire was interested in connecting her PhD with our research, so shortly after we met and organised several meetings after to merge our ideas and create a new strategy for a combined project. Together with her we developed a clearer focus regarding our main project for JoMoni and she provided us with her knowledge and experiences in doing research. Similar to the main project described above, the merged project is looking at the perceived wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu, focussing on their everyday life. We used the Appreciative Inquiry approach, a “strength-based, positive approach to leadership development and organizational change” (Centre for Values Driven Leadership, 2017). Including five main stages (Define, Discover, Dream, Design and Deliver) this approach is used to analyse the current situation of a group, and to develop a shared vision and strategy for future development, focussed on the present strengths within that group (Moore, 2021).

The work with Claire is continuing, as we are planning to public a paper together later this year. We are currently analysing and coding the outcomes of the focus group discussion, hoping to finish with that by the end of March. While this project has been outsourced from JoMoni, we will still inform them about all of our findings, which will help them to redefine some of their strategies and projects. It will give them a more detailed insight to the women’s wellbeing, and more importantly their strengths, which can help to improve their situations.

Output List

The following includes an overview of all the outputs that were created by or together with me.

- **Summary Report for JoMoni:** A report summarizing our research and the key findings. It concludes in a selection of recommendations for JoMoni, based on the conducted research (see Appendix 1).
- **Recommendations Sheet:** Infographic for stakeholders and other interested parties containing the recommendations featured in the summary report (see Appendix 2).
- **NGO contact overview:** An overview of potential NGOs that could support JoMoni in transporting refugees across borders. This overview includes contact detail and a respective summary of the type of help they would be able to provide. Due to data privacy, this overview can not be included in this report.
- **Qualitative & Quantitative Survey:** Survey created with “Qualtrics”, including qualitative as well as quantitative questions regarding the wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu (see Appendix 3). The survey was sent to two different women groups in Joensuu, as well as to schools and other refugee women at JoMoni.
- **Survey Data:** Results from the survey we sent out to different refugee women groups. The results have been analysed and structured. Due to privacy, the data cannot be included in the report.
- **Transcripts of Focus Group Discussion:** Transcripts (and translations) of the focus group discussion. At this point, thanks to Iiris for taking on most of this part, as I could not translate the discussion. Due to privacy, the transcripts can not be included in the report.
- **Proposal for Youth Group:** Proposal for a boys youth group in Joensuu (see Appendix 4). It includes an overview of the aim, vision and mission, potential activities, and an advertisement strategy plan. This proposal is currently being used to apply for funding.
- **Multi-cultural Family Event:** Plan to organise a multi-cultural event with the refugee women and their families, including homemade food from different cultures, music and activities. Due to COVID-19 the event was cancelled last minute.
- **Women’s Group Meetings:** We joined JoMoni’s women’s group every week (if it was not cancelled due to COVID-19) and had the opportunity to facilitate some of the meetings ourselves. Next to teaching the women the Finnish language and culture, we created a safe space for the women to share their thoughts and plan activities together.
- **Interviews with other researchers:** As part of our research we talked to two different researchers at the University of Eastern Finland. We met with them independently and held an one hour interview with each of them.

Evaluation of the internship

The internship has been a great opportunity to not only experience the work in a social organisation, but also to develop my professional skills. The following will touch upon my acquired competencies and learning outcomes and will furthermore reflect on my contributions to JoMoni. In addition, it will review the usefulness of my previously gained knowledge during my bachelor and provide an outlook to my future career.

Learning Outcomes and Acquired Competencies

Prior to the start of my internship I was asked to formulate my expected learning outcomes. Together with my internship supervisor I posed six desired learning outcomes, which I will shortly touch up individually and elaborate, whether I acquired these new competencies or not.

The first outcome we stated was general **professionalism**. The main thought behind that was a competent demeanour and the ability to follow the tasks of my colleagues and supervisors. This included meeting deadlines and carefully completing assignments. While I do not want to praise myself too much, I can confidently say that I already followed a very professional way of working and could therefore only proof my competence. The feedback of my supervisor is confirming this and my colleagues have been very satisfied with my working behaviour.

Next, this internship was supposed to increase my **independent working behaviour**. I remember pointing out this learning outcome myself, as we are often working in groups at Campus Fryslân. During the internship I often worked with Iiris, which of course reduced my independence a bit, however, we often worked separate from each other and only met during the week for some updates. Overall, I trained myself in meeting deadlines and organising a whole research project by myself (and together with Iiris). While our supervisor was always there in case of any problems, we never really needed her support in any major areas. I would therefore say that I did improve my independent working behaviour.

On the other hand, this internship was meant to improve my **teamwork and collaboration**. As mentioned, we already work on quite a lot of group projects at university, so I could prove my skills in that regard. However, I have to say that it was different working together with people who are already well-informed and skilled in their position. While it was a bit intimidating in the beginning, I could quickly keep up with my colleagues and also present my own knowledge.

In connection to that, the internship trained my **adaptability to new environments and situations**. Not only in regards to the people around me, but also to the way of working. While I am used to my

independent work schedule at university, I was know bound to some more deadlines and update meetings. Furthermore, I got to experience the cultural differences between Finns and Germans. I had to learn to be less demanding and slow down a bit with my plans. That also included being more patient and empathetic.

Consequently, the expected learning outcome of **clear and direct communication skills** did turn out differently than expected. Not that I did not acquire this competence, however in a more adapted way. Instead of directly stating ideas or critique, I learned to phrase my thoughts in a way that is still direct but covered in a more polite tone.

Finally, this research was supposed to **improve my analytical skills**, and looking back at the research project I can proudly say that I acquired this competence. Especially the work with Claire Ramsey has taught me a lot about research methods and how to analyse results, for examples of surveys or the focus group discussion.

Reflection on Contribution

After working on the same research project for over five months, I hope that the results will be helpful to JoMoni in regard to improving the wellbeing of the refugee women in Joensuu. I do see so much potential and while I know that JoMoni would love to put all the recommendations into practise, the biggest challenge will be to gather enough funding for new projects.

In general I want to believe that JoMoni benefitted from our work, as we provided them with qualitative insights. I am looking forward to the publication we are currently writing on, as this might provide them with further information. Additionally, it might support JoMoni in raising awareness of their work and help them connect with other organisations.

On a more personal level I hope that, even though I was spending most of my time in my personal office at home, I was able to contribute to the social environment at JoMoni, thinking of all the conversations we had in the office and the laughter during the women's group.

Usefulness of Bachelor Knowledge & Skills

The past two years of my studies have provided me with both specific as well as general knowledge in regard to social responsibility. When it comes to understanding people and working with others I can definitely see the benefits of the psychology courses. Specifically the course "Psychological Perspectives on Leadership and Organisations" already gave me the chance to work on a similar research project. Combined with the "Activism and Global Health" course during which I learned about

different ways of fostering change, I was well prepared for this internship. Furthermore, the courses “Global Environmental Governance” and “Behavioural Economics” trained me in formulating policy recommendations and thinking out of the box. I wish to follow more courses like that, maybe in a Master, as they perfectly matched my interests.

Something I would have liked to be more experienced in beforehand was the direct work with people. We are still working on a very theoretical level on campus. It would be nice to include more research projects like the Living Lab – maybe on a smaller scale. There should also be an improved research methods course as the one we currently have is not covering the important aspects of doing research properly.

Future Career Outlook

What I mostly take with me from this internship is a more realistic picture of social work in a small community. Next to all the joy I see in helping others, I got to experience all the challenges and frustration that also come with it. That does not mean that I do not want to follow this career path anymore. However, I am considering to focus on bigger organisations. It might sound hypocritical, saying you want to help people, but only if you can already work with enough resources, aka money. But what I want to say is that I know that my strengths are in working with people, listening to them and then using this knowledge to generate new policies. I do not see myself in an organisation in which I will help people with translations or start new social groups. I am more than happy to work with JoMoni again, however not as an intern who helps out here and there, but as someone who analyses a problem and tries everything to put a new policy into practice.

Personal Reflection

My time at JoMoni has been a rollercoaster with some ups, but also many downs. Especially in the beginning I felt useless and like I was wasting my time. In addition, the ongoing pandemic was making it difficult to get in contact with other people in Joensuu. However, these circumstances made me realise that I am the one responsible for my experience in Finland, and that I had to put in more work if I wanted a positive outcome. This realisation gave me the motivation to push through and focus on my research.

I can now say that I learned more about my abilities of thinking out of the box, creating new projects and seeing the positive in any challenges. I could argue that the Leadership Lab had prepared me for that, but I honestly think one can only experience this development when actually facing a difficult situation. Nevertheless, perhaps the Portfolio assignments strengthened my ability to be reflective to a certain extent.

I am more aware than before that the work in a social organisation is not my future. I do see its importance and that there is a huge potential of making a change. However, I personally know that I will be more motivated and content at an international organisation that works on a broader level. While this is probably not the feedback an internship provider would like to hear, I cannot thank JoMoni enough for showing me what I do not want to do and where I would like to dedicate my time and knowledge to instead.

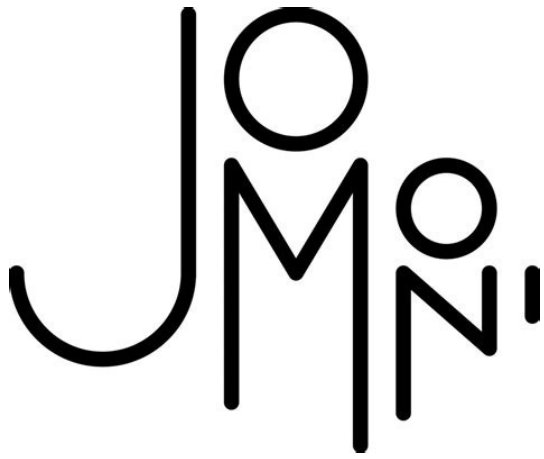
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Appendix

1. Summary Report
2. Recommendations Sheet
3. Qualitative and Quantitative Survey
4. Proposal for Youth Group

Appendix 1 – Summary Report



Recommendations

on increasing the wellbeing of
Female Refugees in Joensuu



university of
 groningen

campus fryslân

This report was developed by Theresa Görs & Iiris Väyryen

Post-migration stressors are affecting the wellbeing of refugees on a financial, mental, as well as social level. It is particularly difficult for women to integrate into a new society, as they are often traditionally made solely responsible for the household and the children. Therefore, this report presents several recommendations for JoMoni to enhance the wellbeing of female refugees and further support them in creating a feeling of belonging in Joensuu.

Key Findings



The refugee women in Joensuu don't have enough time for themselves, especially as there are too few (affordable) offers regarding activities for children or the women themselves.



The women are missing stores or events that are connected to their culture.



Joensuu feels safe and peaceful, but women often feel lonely and can't integrate well. They would enjoy more groups in which they can share their thoughts without judgment.



Social Media is a strong platform for connecting people with JoMoni and informing them about new groups and events.



Learning the Finnish language enables the women to learn more about their rights and to become more independent.

JoMoni

Change in Joensuu

Since 2009, JoMoni is one of the few organizations in the Joensuu region, promoting multiculturalism and actively working against racism. While supporting refugees and asylum seekers in their struggles to find their new home in Joensuu, JoMoni is trying to strengthen the dialogue and collaboration between people in the city¹.

In Joensuu one can already find a colorful mix of people, with over 2000 foreign citizens. As the capital of the North Karelia region, they are in the great position of setting an example when it comes to diversity and inclusion. Thus, one of Joensuu's goals is to help people integrate fast and sustainably into the community, while still enabling them to follow their cultural traditions².

Still, many families and especially female refugees are facing big challenges when it comes to finding their place in the city. It is therefore of utmost importance to learn more about the people's needs and to understand how it is possible to increase their wellbeing.

The Importance of Wellbeing

While there is no clear definition, wellbeing can be broadly defined as the "state of being happy, healthy and prosperous"³. Even though it is a subjective experience and therefore individual to every person, scholars have recognised the importance and benefits of higher wellbeing and much research has been done on its different dimensions.

The topic of wellbeing is also becoming increasingly important in relation to immigration. Post-migration stress, cultural and language barriers as well as unresolved traumas are impacting especially refugees and asylum seekers⁴. The consequences are reduced confidence, fear, the feeling of being unsafe and physical or mental sickness⁵. It makes it difficult for people to find a job, integrate into the community or set a foundation for their future.

Unfortunately, data shows stronger declines in women's relative wellbeing and happiness compared to men. Outdated traditional roles within the family and the prevailing gender gap are causing the women to feel left behind and alone in the community. The problem that follows additionally is that the wellbeing is not only important for the women themselves, but for their families and children as well⁶.

Thus, JoMoni has made it one of their goals to find out more about the wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu. With the aim to enable the women a more independent future, the following research is set out to learn more about the women's everyday life and understand their needs and demands to improve their wellbeing.

¹ <https://www.jomoni.fi/>

² https://www.joensuu.fi/documents/144181/14787150/31716805_Kuntakohtainen_kasikirja_joensuu_B5_ENG_NETTI_21_08_19.pdf/eeff4603-7a90-e215-8b49-b02e5da25d0b

³ <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/well-being>

⁴ https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/736_Refugee_well_being.pdf

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/hrqol/wellbeing.htm>

⁶ https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w14969/w14969.pdf

The Research

1

JoMoni Women's Group

- In person conversation with up to 13 women
- Weekly meetings
- Different topics about their life in Joensuu

2

Survey

- Sent to JoMoni Women's Group and Lähiötalo
- 19 anonymous participants
- Questions about their experience and wellbeing living in Joensuu

3

Focus Group

- Open discussion
- Three voluntary participants, contacted via the survey
- Focus on their wishes and demands for Joensuu

4

Expert - Interviews

- Two interviews
- Researchers from the University of Eastern Finland
- Additional references to their published work



For this research we used four different methods to collect the necessary data about the women's perceptions and experiences of their wellbeing. In the period from September 1st, 2021 until January 31st, 2022, we have been talking to several women in person, sent out a survey to two different women groups in Joensuu and organized a small focus group discussion. Additionally, we have been in contact with two external researchers, that hold their expertise in the integration and wellbeing of refugees in Eastern Finland. All participants were aware of our research and gave consent to make use of the collected data.

It is important to mention, that we followed an activism approach. Therefore, we did not do the research *about* the women, but *together with them*. Our results have been discussed and formulated together with the women, to ensure that their wishes and demands are included and they are being represented as accurate as possible.

Facing the Challenges Of female refugees

Three key problems in particular emerged from the data we collected from the women. One of the issues mentioned most is the **lack of time** the women have for themselves. The offer on activities for their children is simply too little or not affordable. Thus, the women are constantly surrounded by their family. Additionally, the women are often solely made responsible for all house chores, making it difficult for them to follow their own interests.

We therefore see the need to establish more groups for children and young adults. JoMoni could start a new group, maybe under supervision of students from the University of Eastern Finland or start collaborations with existing clubs in Joensuu. This way cheaper activity options can be created and the women have the opportunity to find more time for themselves. Other collaborations could be started with self-care centers or cafes, to provide the women with discounts of small personal treatments. JoMoni could further encourage and support the women in creating these opportunities for themselves – e.g. by providing the resources to start their own association.

In addition to the lack of time, the women experience a **lack of a network**. They are feeling alone and excluded from the community. Due to the language barrier but also because of missing opportunities to meet new people, many women are describing the difficulty of building new friendships and finding a safe support system. Further, the absence of events or stores connected to their culture is making them feel more excluded and foreign.

Following the needs of the women, it would be important to establish more social groups like the women's group of JoMoni. This way we could create safe environments for the women to share their thoughts and experience, seek help and learn the language. The latter is especially important, to enable the women to learn more about their rights and make them independent from translators. These groups could also plan activities together, like trips to Helsinki, doing sports together or planning small events. It would give them the opportunity to indulge their culture and follow their interests. It would also train them in organizational and social skills. Further, it might be an idea to start a collaboration with a local psychologist, to provide psychological support for women who experienced trauma.

One last but all the more important issue raised is the factor of **education**. All women confirmed that their life improved after they started to learn the Finnish language and further learned about their rights. It gave them more agency and independence. Nonetheless, the women are missing social groups in which they can learn together and feel free to talk about topics like discrimination or their difficulties of letting go of old traditions and expectations with other refugee women. There are many more women who are not even aware of groups like the one of JoMoni. Thus, it is more difficult for them to get the necessary education they would need to improve their wellbeing.

Groups like the one mentioned above should therefore also include and strongly focus on the educational aspect. JoMoni could work together with university students or professionals, who are willing to teach the women and engage them in conversations. To reach out to more women JoMoni should additionally increase their social media presence and provide all necessary information about groups and events. Platforms like Instagram could further be used to educate and connect the women in Joensuu.

Recommendations

A brief overview



To create safe environments for the refugee women, JoMoni should further support and establish social groups, in which the women can share their thoughts, seek for advice, create new relationships or simply talk about personal experiences without judgment.



JoMoni should establish more groups for children, as well as young adults to provide refugees with more activity options. This could be done in cooperation with volunteers of the university or clubs in Joensuu.



Collaborations or partnerships with businesses in and around Joensuu should be established, to negotiate group activities and/or discounts for the refugee families. This also includes finding psychological support groups.



The focus of JoMoni's work should be on educating women about their rights, the Finnish language as well as society. Hence, the current (or a new) women's group should be hosted regularly and structured more precisely, with an emphasis on educating the women on these topics.



To ensure that the recommendations will show effect, JoMoni should present the groups and activities on their website. It would also be a positive contribution to increase JoMoni's presence on social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook.

Conclusion

JoMoni has always been a big supporter of refugees and asylum seekers in Joensuu. By implementing the recommendations above, they will take the next step in making the refugees, especially the women, feel more "at home". We recommend to provide the women with more opportunities to have time for themselves, combined with additional social groups to create safe environments for them. By increasing their social media presence JoMoni could reach out to more women in Joensuu. Finally, educating the women further in the Finnish language and their rights is essential to give the women the necessary agency to live a more independent life.

Appendix 2 – Recommendations Sheet

1



Increasing the Social Network

- Create safe environments for the refugee women to find support in
- Establish social groups for women where they can share their thoughts or seek (psychological) advice
- Planning activities or cultural events together

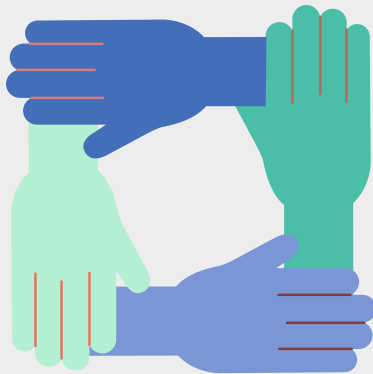
2

Activities for all

- More groups for children, as well as young adults
- Trips and day activities
- New groups or collaboration with existing clubs



3



Collaborations for more opportunities

- Collaborations or partnerships with businesses in and around Joensuu
- Negotiate group activities and/or discounts for the refugee families
- Also includes finding psychological support groups

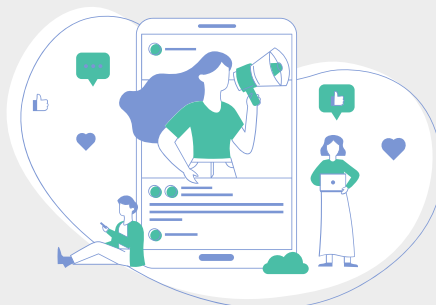
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Education and Independence

- Educating women about their rights to gain more independence
- Language cafés to provide opportunities to learn the Finnish language
- Regular study groups with a clear structure
- Encourage the women to start their own association



5



Social Media Presence

- Presenting groups and activities on JoMoni's website
- Increase JoMoni's presence on social media platforms (Instagram & Facebook)
- Use platforms to educate and connect women in Joensuu

Final Remarks

By focussing on the wellbeing of female refugees in Joensuu, JoMoni is taking the next step in supporting the women in finding a new home. This will have positive effects on their daily life and enables them to build a strong foundation for their future.

REFERENCES

Appendix 3 – Qualitative and Quantitative Survey

SURVEY

[Mode: Qualtrics or Printed (depending on participant accessibility)]

Part I:

1. Age range:
 - a. 18-25
 - b. 25-30
 - c. 30-40
 - d. 40-50
 - e. 50-60
 - f. 60+
2. Where are you from? (i.e., country, region) _____
3. What is your native language? _____
4. What languages are you comfortable speaking in? (multiple correct)
 - a. Finnish
 - b. Arabic
 - c. English
 - d. Somali
 - e. Something else: _____
5. When did you arrive in Finland? (Month, year) _____
6. When did you arrive in Joensuu? (Month, year) _____
7. Who is part of your household in Finland? (Multiple correct)
 - a. Spouse
 - b. Child/Children
 - c. Just me
 - d. Other
 - i. Specify: _____
8. How did you find out about JoMoni? (Multiple correct)
 - a. Social media platform
 - i. Specify: _____
 - b. Flyer
 - c. Local Event
 - d. School Presentation
 - e. Other
 - i. Specify: _____

Part II:

9. How much time do you spend with your family per day? (rough estimate)
[select 1 response]
- 0-1 hours
 - 1-2 hours
 - 2-4 hours
 - 4-6 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 8+ hours
10. How much time do you have for yourself during the day? (rough estimate)
[select 1 response]
- 0-1 hours
 - 1-2 hours
 - 2-4 hours
 - 4-6 hours
 - 6-8 hours
 - 8+ hours
11. How comfortable are you living in Joensuu?
- It still feels very strange and unwelcoming.
 - It is very new, but I am adjusting.
 - It is okay.
 - I am beginning to feel like I am part of a community here.
 - It feels like home.
12. Optional: Explain your response to question #12. (How comfortable are you living in Joensuu?) _____
13. How easy is it to find resources in Joensuu? (e.g., traveling to the grocery store, hospital, or post office; applying for healthcare services or social services; finding social groups or event postings; etc.)
- Extremely difficult.
 - Somewhat difficult.
 - Neither easy nor difficult.
 - Somewhat easy.
 - Extremely easy.
14. Optional: Explain your response to question #14. (How easy is it to find resources in Joensuu?) _____

15. How do you experience your mental well-being?
- I feel really good
 - I feel well
 - I don't know/I feel neither good or bad
 - I feel unwell
 - I feel really bad
16. Optional: Explain your response to question #16. (How do you experience your mental well-being?)_____
17. How do you experience your physical well-being?
- I feel really good
 - I feel well
 - I don't know/I feel neither good or bad
 - I feel unwell
 - I feel really bad
18. Optional: Explain your response to question #18. (How do you experience your physical well-being?)_____
19. Have you experienced discrimination in Joensuu in the past five years?
- Yes.
 - No.
20. Optional: Explain your response to question #20. (Have you experienced discrimination in Joensuu in the past five years?)_____
21. Are you willing to share your experiences in more detail at a small group interview?
- Yes. (Please leave your email or phone number below.)

 - No.
 - I would like more information. (Please leave your email or phone number below.)

22. Is there anything else you want JoMoni to know about your transition to Joensuu? If so, please write your response below.

-

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTION

This is a semi-structured interview. As such, the below questions are examples of what may be discussed and used as a guide for the researchers. However, not all questions will be asked and some clarifying questions may need to be asked as they emerge in the focus-group interview. This guide is not to be passed out among participants.

1. Describe activities that are normal to complete in a day.
 - a. Possible probing questions: How much time do you have for yourself versus do you spend with your family? What do your family members do in Finland (e.g., work, attend school, volunteer, etc.)?
2. What do you enjoy about living in Joensuu?
 - a. Possible probing questions: In what ways are you social in this area (virtually or in person)? How would you describe your friend or social group? What hobbies do you enjoy? Are these similar to hobbies you did in your home country? Explain.
3. How comfortable do you feel in Joensuu?
 - a. Possible probing questions: From when you first arrived to now, how has your experience changed? How have your everyday experiences improved? What do you do to stay positive when you face challenges? What resources have you found to be most helpful? What makes or would make Joensuu feel more like home?
4. How do you plan for the future? (Examples?)
 - a. Possible probing questions: How do you connect with the local community or other communities in the area? What would make those connections easier? Are you familiar with any nonprofit or non-governmental organizations that you could join to enrich your experience? What do you wish you had known or done when you first arrived and how could you help make sure they know that/have those resources?

Appendix 4 – Proposal for Youth Group



Draft: Youth Group for Boys & Young Men in Joensuu

Name: Yhteisiä Ystäviä ("Joint Friends")

Age Group: 15-27 years; different sub-groups

Aim: Connecting young male Refugees in Joensuu and creating a stable support system



Mission: Empower young refugees and make them feel at home in Joensuu

Vision: Making Joensuu more inclusive for everyone

Advertisement Strategy: Promotion Ideas



Social Media:

- Facebook Page of JoMöni
- Facebook Page of Joensuu itself (Events)
- Instagram of JoMöni
- Maybe even start own Instagram Page

- Weekly posts about meetings
- Introducing the members individually
- Using current insta-reel-trends to make it more fun for the youth
- Reporting on events
- Educating (posting common questions and answering them)
- Account take-over of individuals
- Maybe interviews with interesting personalities
- Cooperation with other youth groups



JoMöni:

- Launch Event/Introduction Event
- Visiting schools and promoting the group
- Distributing flyers in sports clubs/library/cinema...



Responsible:

- In the beginning the group organisation (someone from JoMöni)
- As soon as group is more independent the "group leader / council / PR"

Program: Potential Activities and Project

(Names open to change)	Teens	Youngsters	Young Adults	“Adults”
Age Group	15-17 years	18-21 years	22-24 years	25-27 years
Main Topics (besides: - creating a support system and a place to exchange thoughts and ideas - including all topics that are mentioned by the members - offering outside activities and sport events)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support in school related topics (e.g. looking for internships, study groups) - Support in general life topics (family, relationships, hobbies) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support in finding a side job - Support in school related topics (e.g. graduating, financial support, stress management) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support in finding study programs - Application for jobs - Adult stuff (e.g. drivers license) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support in job finding - Support with any work issues (taxes, termination, application, HR, training)
Activities (besides: - general meet-ups to discuss desired topics - open sport events (s. below))	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Study groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Application training - Night-life (going out) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University Open Door Events - Application Training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Training in Financial Matters
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Different sport events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Football - Volleyball - Karting Centre - Canoeing and Kayaking - Sailing - Indoor climbing/Buldern - Running Group - Skiing - Other events <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - BBQ - Outside survival day/Camping 101 - Going to the cinema/theatre/concert - Creative nights (art, music dance, comedy) - Group Council Meetings / General Assembly <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Monthly meetings to discuss future of the group(s) - Voting group leader(s) - Planning and announcement of coming activities 				