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The American University in Cairo

School of Global Affairs & Public Policy (GAPP)

**Syrian Investments and the Insertion of Displaced Syrians in the  
Egyptian Labor Market**

A Thesis Submitted by

Sajeda Khattab

Submitted to the Center for Migration and Refugee Studies

Fall 2023

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
The degree of Master of Arts  
in Migration and Refugee Studies

has been approved by

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## **Abstract:**

This study explores Syrian investments and the economic insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market, specifically focusing on middle/large scale investments in the hospitality and textile sectors. It addresses a gap in the theoretical literature concerning Syrian investments during displacement and their economic insertion in Egypt, examining the legal framework and provisions related to employment. The conceptual framework investigates how Syrian business owners' investments contribute to the insertion of displaced Syrians, emphasizing business size, legal status, and economic resources. The findings reveal a positive impact on economic integration, highlighting entrepreneurial strategies, local growth, difficulties, and their transformative role in generating employment opportunities. The research identifies a correlation between economic insertion, skill diversity, and cultural influences, emphasizing the resilience introduced by displaced Syrians. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of legal frameworks, social engagement, and tailored policies in facilitating successful insertion, acknowledging challenges faced by Syrian entrepreneurs.

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## *Chapter 1: Introduction*

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### **1.1. Introduction**

The 2011 Syrian revolution resulted in a devastating civil war and a significant wave of Syrian refugees seeking safety and stability in neighboring countries and beyond. This humanitarian crisis has had a profound impact on both Syria and the countries that have taken in Syrian refugees, such as Jordan, Lebanon, Turkey, and Egypt. During the early stages of the Syrian revolution, many Syrians fled to neighboring countries to escape the escalating violence and instability. Egypt initially adopted an open-door policy towards Syrian refugees, allowing them to enter the country and seek assistance through the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other humanitarian organizations. With the security situation following the 2013 uprising, visa restriction was imposed on Syrians, and many were unable to enter the country.

If the resources of developing countries are limited, they may encounter various challenges, such as financial and administrative risks, when accepting Syrian refugees. Refugees and natives may compete for employment, public services, and other livelihood resources such as housing, health care, and education, which could potentially lead to an economic crisis; hence, creating a need for more public spending (Turner, 2015; Cherri et al., 2016; Akar & Erdoğan, 2019; Bahçekapili, C., & Cetin; 2015; Khawaldah & Alzboun, 2022). Currently, 6.6 million Syrians are refugees (UNHCR, 2021). As of June 2023, UNHCR recorded that there are approximately 147,999 registered Syrian refugees living in Egypt (UNHCR, 2023). However, the actual number of Syrians in Egypt, including unregistered refugees, may be higher.

According to the Egyptian government, there are around 500,000 Syrians in Egypt (Noureldin, 2019).

The Syrian community in Egypt has a rich and multifaceted history, characterized by the continuous migration of Syrians to Egypt over the years, driven by factors such as political instability, conflict, and economic challenges in their home country. This historical connection has roots that extend even further, including periods when Syria and Egypt were united countries, fostering a shared cultural and social heritage that continues to shape the dynamics of the Syrian community within Egypt. As a result, a large number of Syrians have established businesses and invested in various sectors of the Egyptian economy (Hassan, 2021; Chang, 2018). The refugee crisis aftermath renewed the attention of policy-makers towards entrepreneurship as a potential alternative to employment in generating sources of livelihood that could aid in promoting self-sufficiency among refugees and their integration into the economies of their host countries (UNDP, ILO, WFP, 2017; Embiricos, 2020). International investment classification sources, such as the Financial Times Stock Exchange (FTSE) (2022) and Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) (2022), as well as business research studies (Marquis & Raynard, 2015; Witt et al., 2018), have classified Egypt as an emerging market.

According to Ching-An Chang (2018), Syrian entrepreneurs in Egypt have played a noteworthy role in the country's economy, making considerable contributions to its business environment. Moreover, the presence of Syrian businesses in Egypt has led to cultural exchange and diversification, as noted by Berglund (2016). Through the introduction of Syrian cuisine, traditions, and cultural experiences, the culinary and cultural landscape of Egypt has been enriched. As a result, Syrian business owners in Egypt have made significant contributions to both countries, as highlighted by Daher (2023).

Newcomer immigrants and refugees often face limited access to formal employment opportunities in the host country due to various factors such as language barriers, lack of legal status, work permits, and low wages (Aiyar et al., 2016; Akar & Erdoğan). As a result, they tend to rely on self-employment as a means of supporting themselves (Kizil, 2016; Chand & Ghorbani, 2011). The hospitality industry is particularly attractive for Syrian refugees starting their own businesses (Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Pechlaner et al., 2012). This sector can contribute to creating a conducive environment for refugee entrepreneurs in the host society, facilitating their quick integration and supporting entrepreneurship policies (Alrawadieh et al., 2019). Despite extensive studies on the integration policies of refugees in local societies (Berry, 2012; Hetaba et al., 2020; Esses et al., 2017; Bloemraad, 2018), there is still a lack of research on the impact of refugee businesses and entrepreneurs on the integration process (Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019; Chang, 2022; 2021; Hassan, 2021; Kabbani, 2018).

According to the ILO (2018), Syrian entrepreneurs in Egypt are involved in a range of industries, including manufacturing, trading, tourism, real estate, and hospitality. Within these industries, they have invested in sectors such as textiles, pharmaceuticals, food processing, construction materials, and electronics, among others. Many Syrian businesses have also opened retail outlets, restaurants, and cafes across Egypt. The main investment areas for Syrians in Egypt are Greater Cairo and Alexandria, with areas like 10th of Ramadan, Al-Obour city, 6th of October, and Al-Badr being particularly attractive due to the availability of industrial facilities that allow them to invest independently of local governments (Chang, 2018). In 2016, one estimate suggests that around 15,000 Syrian business owners - close to 30% of the total in Syria - have arrived in Egypt since 2011, representing approximately USD 400 to 500 million worth of investment (Hassan et al., 2022). In that same year, over 6,000 Syrian businesses were officially registered with the Egyptian Board of Investment (Shahine, 2016). Additionally, around 365



companies were established by Syrian entrepreneurs in Egypt during this period. Egypt also reported the relocation of the top 10 Syrian business owners in Egypt (Al Arabiya, 2012).

It is important to note that the study will focus on the medium and large-scale Syrian businesses established formally in Egypt before and after the 2011 uprising. To delineate medium and large-scale businesses, medium-sized enterprises typically employ between 10 and 50 individuals, while large-sized enterprises have an average workforce exceeding 50 people. Additionally, the study's focus will be restricted to both business industries, hospitality, and textile, in order to measure their impacts on the employment, insertion of Syrians', and diversification of production. These businesses are typically established by entrepreneurs who have the financial means to establish and register a business in Egypt. As such, most of them are not in need of UNHCR's protection and services and are usually not registered with the agency. Given the above, the study will use the term "displaced" Syrians to refer to those who were forced to flee to Egypt because of the conflict but are not necessarily registering with UNHCR. The term 'displaced; better aligns with the purpose of the study in comparison 'refugees.'

## **1.2. Objectives and Interest of the Research**

Much of the existing literature on Syrians in Egypt focuses on humanitarian aspects like their access to healthcare, education, legal status, and the labor market (Elshokeiry, 2016; UNDP, ILO, and WFP, 2017; Hassan, 2021). Some studies provide general overviews of Syrians' economic activities and integration in Egypt (Yehia, 2018). Syrians have a long history of investment in Egypt that predates the Syrian civil war in 2011. Upon arriving in Egypt in 2011, Syrians initially engaged in informal work with the hope of returning to Syria. However, as the conflict dragged on, Syrians increasingly pursued self-employment and started their own businesses and investments in Egypt (Hassan, 2021). While many Syrians work in the informal sector due to a lack of legal status, work permits, and lack of financial means, others have

successfully established medium and large formal businesses (Daher, 2023; Chang, 2022; Hassan et al., 2022). To contribute to the existing literature, this study aims to explore the ways in which the investments made by Syrian business owners have facilitated the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market.

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## *Chapter 2: Literature review*

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Given the limited literature available on formal Syrian businesses in host countries, the review of the literature will predominantly center on concepts relevant to the research, Syrian refugees in general, emphasizing their overall experiences in host countries, with a specific focus on Egypt.

### **2.1. Syrians in Egypt**

Egypt and Syria had comparable political systems and followed similar paths of economic development before the Arab Spring uprising. Both nations, as lower middle-income countries, their economies depended primarily on agriculture, services, in addition to exporting natural resources. However, the mere presence of natural resource exports does not guarantee overall economic development. Sustainable and inclusive development involves a diversified and resilient economy that fosters growth in various sectors, ensuring stability and prosperity for the population. Acknowledging this aspect is important to provide a nuanced understanding of the economic conditions in both countries and the potential challenges faced by Syrian migrants in their inclusion into Egyptian society.

There exists a diverse body of literature that delves into various facets of Syrians' lives in Egypt. However, scant attention has been directed towards an exploration of the economic contributions made by Syrians in the host country. One illustrative instance is the work of Ayoub and Khallaf (2014), who underscored the enduring Syrian-Egyptian historical ties as a pivotal factor influencing the positive perception of Syrians in Egypt subsequent to their displacement. Notably, this study scrutinized the Egyptian government's public policies in response to the influx

of Syrian refugees, providing insights into the evolutionary trajectory of Egyptian immigration policies over time.

In addition to the aforementioned focus, other studies have addressed the challenges faced by refugees in accessing fundamental rights in Egypt. Notable among these challenges are the limited avenues for securing residency, healthcare, education, and employment opportunities. For instance, Hetaba et al. (2020) conducted an analysis of Egyptian domestic policies and regulations governing refugees' entitlements in Egypt. Their study encompassed a comprehensive examination of all international conventions ratified by Egypt, with the aim of elucidating the legal implementation of these laws and regulations. The findings revealed a disconcerting gap wherein the rights granted by international and national laws were not seamlessly integrated into domestic implementation. This disconnection resulted in a lack of awareness among government officials, leading to the inadvertent misapplication of these laws. Consequently, the intended benefits of these legal frameworks were not fully realized in addressing the refugee situation in Egypt.

Badawy (2010) emphasized a crucial issue regarding the uncertainty surrounding the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Egyptian government and UNHCR, which was intended to enhance the protection of refugees. In alignment with this concern, Jacobsen et al. (2014) asserted that refugee workers in Egypt face substantial risks, including exploitation, as a result of the absence of access to work permits. This interconnected perspective highlights the challenges and uncertainties surrounding the protection and employment conditions of refugees in Egypt. Furthermore, Elshokeiry's (2016) comprehensive analysis of the Egyptian public administration and policy context sheds light on the intricate dynamics at play. In particular, she posits that the influx of Syrians into Egypt triggered a swift transformation in political approaches towards Syrians, accompanied by shifts in their status and associated rights.

In conclusion, the economic conditions in Egypt and Syria, characterized by similarities in political systems and economic development paths, provide a backdrop for understanding the challenges faced by displaced Syrians in their inclusion into Egyptian society. Sustainable and inclusive development requires a diversified and resilient economy, aspects crucial for the stability and prosperity of the population. While there is a diverse body of literature on various aspects of Syrians' lives in Egypt, there is a notable research gap concerning the economic contributions of Syrian businesses and their impact on the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market.

## **2.2. Concepts relevant to the research**

According to the APA dictionary of psychology, social integration is “the process by which separate groups are combined into a unified society, especially when this is pursued as a deliberate policy.” (Bemak & Chung, 2014). In other words, this process brings different groups, cultures, or individuals together into a cohesive and functioning whole within a society. It involves achieving social cohesion and minimizing social divisions. Integration is a multifaceted term, and its meaning varies among policymakers, migrants, members of receiving societies, and researchers. The concept of integration is a debatable and controversial subject in research. As noted by Robinson (1998), ‘integration is a chaotic concept: a word used by many but understood differently by most.’ Castles et al. (2002) also further complicates the comprehension of integration by asserting that “there is no single generally accepted definition, theory or model of immigrant and refugee integration.” The definition of integration varies not only based on the definer, but also shifts concerning the categories of migrants, like integration of economic migrants versus the integration of forced migrants (Phillimore, 2012). Regarding the definition of integration of economic migrants, the UK research on immigrants indicates that there is a notable lack of a precise integration definition for immigrants (Favell, 2001; Banton, 2001). Overall, the multifaceted nature of integration introduces complexities and variations in its definition, as observed among

policymakers, migrants, members of receiving societies, and researchers. The debatable and controversial nature of integration, noted by Robinson (1998) and underscored by Castles et al. (2002), further emphasizes the challenges in establishing a universally accepted definition, particularly in the context of different migrant categories. This diversity of perspectives highlights the need for nuanced approaches to understanding and achieving successful integration in diverse societal contexts.

A significant portion of empirical research seems to emphasize elements that could impede the integration of immigrants, including challenges within the labor market, racial discrimination, limited political engagement, and issues related to social and welfare policies (Castles et al., 2002). However, Robinson (1998) views refugees' integration as multifaceted and nuanced as it is constantly subject to diverse interpretations and perceptions, highlighting the challenges and varying perspectives in defining and achieving successful integration for this specific type of migrants. The legal standing tied to distinct migrant groups can significantly influence integration dynamics. For instance, among Syrians in Egypt, despite their initial forced migration, not all of them sought asylum through registration with UNHCR, particularly business owners. Consequently, their legal status varies from one individual to another. As a result, their integration processes may deviate from the trajectories typical of refugees.

According to Lacroix (2013), the definition of integration should be modified in order to emphasize the 'methodological individualism,' that focuses on the refugees in order to spotlight the experiences of refugees and how these experiences are shaped by integration policies. Understanding the experiences of refugees and how their lives are impacted by structural determinants is crucial for gaining deeper insights into their integration processes. For example, Bloch (2004) emphasized that refugees face heightened labor-market discrimination in the United Kingdom, posing a barrier to their integration. Research that delves into the integration processes

of refugees settling in developing countries has also shed light on the positive influence of economic resources. For example, refugees in Nairobi could only stand for long periods if they have economic means, while others with no economic resources should search for other available durable solutions to survive (Campbell, 2006). This underscores the need for alternative durable solutions for refugees enduring prolonged periods of exile. Much like Al-Sharmani (2003), Campbell (2006) highlights the interconnectedness of refugee livelihoods and integration. In summary, adopting the definition of integration to prioritize 'methodological individualism' allows for a comprehensive focus on refugees' unique experiences and sheds light on the critical role of integration policies in shaping their lives. Understanding these experiences, particularly the impact of structural determinants like labor-market discrimination and access to economic resources is vital for gaining a deeper understanding of the integration processes faced by refugees. It underscores the necessity for innovative durable solutions to support refugees enduring extended periods of exile, emphasizing the interconnectedness of refugee livelihoods and the broader concept of integration.

Conversely, some research endeavors investigating refugee integration delve into the functional dimensions of the concept, highlighting the importance of various factors in determining whether individuals are considered 'integrated.' This perspective emphasizes criteria such as legal status, ensuring the safety of refugees, and promoting stability in their living conditions. These factors collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of integration, moving beyond mere theoretical frameworks to practical aspects that directly impact the well-being and successful adaptation of refugees within their host communities. These factors encompass access to education, healthcare, the labor market, and housing, forming critical components for the initiation of integration processes (McKeary & Newbold, 2010; Valenta & Bunar, 2010; Vrečer, 2010). For instance, when scrutinizing the integration policies related to refugees in Sweden and Norway, Valenta and Bunar (2010) contend that despite these countries providing housing aid and training

opportunities, refugees often do not feel secure. A similar standpoint is advanced by Lomba (2010), who posits that legal status holds considerable implications for the integration of refugees. Furthermore, integration encompasses multiple interconnected stages of the migration cycle, involving shifts in identities, including establishing relationships with both the sending and hosting communities. It is vital to analyze the multifaceted processes within receiving societies, considering economic and social engagement levels and their interconnections. Instead of solely assessing quantifiable factors like housing, employment, education, and health access, a holistic view of integration should encompass a broader understanding of these dynamics (Korac, 2003). In conclusion, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of integration processes is crucial for formulating effective policies that address the complexities of integration and promote a sense of security and stability for refugees.

According to the framework Ager and Strang (2008) had developed for the integration process, there are around 10 domains categorized into four main headings: 'social connections' that includes social bridges, social bonds, and social links, 'means and markers,' which includes employment, education, housing, and health, 'foundation' which includes citizenship and rights, and finally, 'facilitators' that includes language and cultural knowledge, safety and stability. Ager and Strang (2008) both highlighted access to the labor market as a crucial indicator for refugee integration. Unfortunately, this framework has been criticized as it does not take into consideration the conditions of refugees in the host country concerning their migratory status and the role of social class. According to Wimmer and Glick Schiller (2002), Ager and Strang's proposed framework primarily centers on the nation-state, favoring a 'methodological nationalism' that accentuates the refugee-actor level. This approach aims to enhance the understanding of refugees' experiences shaped by integration policies. Thus, acknowledging the multifaceted nature of integration and incorporating diverse perspectives can enhance the effectiveness of integration frameworks and better address the needs and experiences of refugees within the host country.



Examining the economic aspects of refugees, Jacobsen (2005) investigates how government authorities impede refugees from contributing economically, a vital aspect for their integration. Betts et al. (2017), focusing on the economic dynamics of refugees in Uganda, introduce the concept of 'refugee economies,' which encompasses the resource allocation systems relevant to refugees' lives. In their research, the authors stress the importance of a self-reliance model and assert that refugees exist within a distinct institutional context, 'refugeehood,' distinct from that of the host populations, which underscores their argument that refugees possess intricate economic lives and are not simply dependent victims. Betts et al. (2017) approach involves analyzing refugees' economic lives within a broader structure that includes market dynamics, presenting a self-sustaining model for refugee livelihoods. However, this approach does not adequately address the scale of businesses that refugees can establish in host countries and its ultimate impact on their integration process.

On the one hand, the consideration of 'market citizenship,' as explored by scholars like Brodie (1997), Fudge (2005), Grace et al. (2017), and Haw (2021), has notable implications for the integration concept of Syrian refugees in Egypt and their participation in the Egyptian labor market. The concept of 'market citizenship' suggests that the acquisition of citizenship is influenced by neo-liberal ideologies, where an individual's rights and entitlements are intricately linked to their economic contributions within a market-driven framework. This perspective challenges traditional notions of citizenship, as proposed by political theorist Arendt (1958), by placing a significant emphasis on the economic dimensions of belonging.

In light of this, the evolving discourse around citizenship, particularly as shaped by neo-liberalism, has potential repercussions for Syrian refugees seeking integration in Egypt. The focus on market-oriented criteria for citizenship may influence the ways in which refugees are perceived and integrated into the labor market. The lens of 'market citizenship' implies that the ability of

Syrian refugees to exercise their rights and entitlements, including participation in the labor market, might be closely tied to their economic contributions.

On the other hand, as globalization scholars traditionally argued for rights based on individual humanity rather than nationality (Jacobson 1996; Tambini, 2001; Bloemraad et al. 2008), recent shifts in the global landscape have introduced complexities. Economic globalization is now intricately connected with neoliberal strategies aimed at addressing global competition through austerity measures, limiting resources available for social and financial welfare (Deckard & Heslin 2016). This shift in economic strategies further complicates the landscape for Syrian refugees in Egypt, as the prioritization of market-oriented approaches may impact the resources and support structures available to them as they seek integration into the Egyptian labor market. Therefore, the consideration of 'market citizenship' and the interplay between economic globalization and neoliberal strategies introduce nuanced challenges and opportunities for Syrian refugees in Egypt. The evolving dynamics in the conceptualization of citizenship and globalization highlight the need for a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing the integration of refugees into the labor market, encompassing economic, social, and political dimensions.

In lieu of the term “integration,” the thesis strategically employs the concept of “insertion” to shed light on the nuanced dynamics of societal amalgamation. Unlike integration, insertion emphasizes the process of incorporating diverse elements into an existing framework while retaining their distinct identities. However, insertion places a specific emphasis on preserving the unique characteristics of each element being incorporated, acknowledging that diversity is crucial aspect of a vibrant and thriving society. This choice is particularly relevant given the thesis’s focus on the perspectives of different stakeholders and the impact of distinct legal standings. The term “insertion” allows for a more nuanced exploration of how these diverse perspectives and legal

frameworks contribute to the intricate tapestry of societal cohesion. The importance of using “insertion” in the thesis lies in its ability to capture the subtleties of the integration process.

By employing “insertion” and delving into its multifaceted definition, the thesis aims to offer a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of societal amalgamation. It seeks to emphasize that the process involves not just the blending of various elements but the intentional and respectful incorporation of diverse perspectives and legal considerations, making it a challenging yet enriching concept to navigate.

### **2.3. Legal and Economic Situation of Syrians in Egypt**

Each of the host countries reacted differently to the Syrian influx to their countries according to their views of the Assad regime following the 2011 revolution. Fussel (2014) argued that the livelihood situation of migrants in host countries is heavily dependent on local public opinion. However, very little literature has discussed how host-home countries' relations have impacted migrant settlement or relocation (Chang, 2022). However, political relations between host-home countries have a dual role in swaying Syrian business owners' relocation decisions (Chang, 2022). Chang indicates in his study that Syrian business owners are more encouraged and motivated to immigrate to a host country where its government's political orientation is contrary to their home country's government; however, some business owners prefer to relocate to a country whose government has a similar political ideology to their own political views (2022).

Egypt lacks domestic legislation specifically addressing refugees, and typically, the government shows little proactive engagement with refugees unless it perceives them as potential risks to national security (El-Shaarawi, 2015). The primary responsibility of the Egyptian government regarding refugee protection is limited to non-refoulement, while the UNHCR assumes a “surrogate state” role by assuming the administration and provision of assistance to refugee populations (Kagan, 2011). Furthermore, the lack of national policy for refugees and

asylum seekers, the legal institutional frameworks attempting to address refugee issues are ambiguous and inconsistent in their strategic approach (Kagan, 2011). Therefore, in 2019, Egypt initiated the drafting of an asylum law to address the needs of refugees and asylum seekers and their situation in Egypt (Sharafeldin, 2020). Kagan (2012) indicates that refugee policies often struggle with the contradiction between the presence of refugees and their lack of integration. In the same vein, Montaser (2020) explains that the policy in question intends to maintain the existing situation for refugees in the host society, neither excluding them nor fully incorporating them. Similarly, Yiftachel (2009) introduces the concept of “gray spaces” to describe the challenges faced by refugees in urban areas, where they exist beyond the purview of state authorities and urban planning without being fully integrated or eliminated.

The right to work and access to labor markets is crucial for refugees as it can reduce their vulnerability, enhance resilience, secure dignity, and support sustainable livelihoods. Therefore, the 1951 Refugee Convention recognizes the right to work for refugees through articles 17-18-19, providing opportunities for wage-earning employment, self-employment, and employment in liberal professions. According to the 1951 Convention, similar to nationals, refugees are also entitled to remuneration, working conditions, and social security (Hetaba et al., 2020). Furthermore, the Convention emphasizes the importance of providing refugees with working conditions that are on par with those enjoyed by the host country's citizens (Hetaba et al., 2020). This not only safeguards refugees against exploitation but also fosters a sense of dignity and equality within the workplace.

In addition to the 1951 Convention, various other international laws safeguard the rights of foreign workers. For instance, Article 23 of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Articles 6-8 of the 1966 International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, and various ILO conventions (Zetter & Ruauadel, 2016). Refugees in Egypt retain the right to

participate in wage-earning employment, as outlined in Articles 17 and 18 of the 1951 Convention. Nevertheless, Egypt maintains reservations specifically related to Article 24, which concerns equal treatment with nationals concerning labor legislation and social security. According to Hathaway's conception of refugees' attachment to states, it determines that refugees' right to work is determined by their attachment to the host country, which is measured by the nature and duration of their stay (Hathaway, 2021). In terms of categorization, Hetaba et al. (2020) distinguish between two categories of attachment. The first category, labeled "lawfully staying in," encompasses refugees who have received a positive determination in their Refugee Status Determination (RSD) process, representing the highest level of attachment. On the other hand, the "lawfully in" category encompasses refugees and asylum seekers with a lower level of attachment. The right to wage-employment in Article 17 is granted to refugees who are "lawfully staying in," while the right to self-employment in Article 18 is granted to refugees who are "lawfully in" (Hetaba et al., 2020). In other words, Syrian refugees in Egypt are eligible for self-employment, but the process of obtaining a work permit is difficult and expensive, with strict criteria that make it challenging for most refugees to access formal employment. As a result, the majority of Syrian refugees in Egypt are either unemployed or working in the informal sector (Sharafeldin, 2020).

Throughout Mohamed Morsi's presidency, the government explicitly denounced the Assad regime and issued an Anti-Assad declaration along with facilitating the entrance of Syrians to Egypt. However, after Morsi was overthrown in mid-2013, there was a shift in public opinion towards Syrians in Egypt, particularly during the sit-in at Rabaa Square (Elshokeiry, 2016). This change resulted in a notable decline in the number of Syrians coming to Egypt, as well as the departure of numerous Syrian entrepreneurs who relocated their businesses to Turkey (Kaymaz & Kadkoy, 2016; Yehia, 2018). Therefore, political and security concerns often shape the legal provisions for refugees' right to work, leading to protectionist policies that limit their access to the labor market (Zetter & Ruaudel, 2016). Such policies are often driven by the fear that refugee

participation will negatively impact the labor market by reducing job opportunities for citizens and lowering wages and working conditions for all workers (Fakih & Ibrahim, 2016). Furthermore, governments fear that allowing refugees to participate in the workplace for extended periods will lead them to settle permanently in the host countries (Thorleifsson, 2016).

In 2013, tensions between Syrian refugees and host communities in Egypt escalated. Nevertheless, UNHCR reports indicate that the situation began to improve following a period of increasing political stability in June 2014, marked by the election of President Abdel Fatah El-Sisi. However, heightened security concerns led to an increase in visa restrictions for refugees, potentially affecting their ability to seek asylum and access territory (UNHCR, 2015). Furthermore, the year witnessed a surge in irregular migration by sea towards Europe among asylum-seekers and refugees, leading to the detention of up 1,000 Syrians from January to mid-September 2015 (UNHCR, 2015). While some individuals were subsequently released, others were resettled in a third country.

During this time, the founding of the Syrian Businessmen's Association in 2014 played a crucial role in both solidifying and broadening Syrian investments in Egypt (Daher, 2023). By 2015, a significant milestone was reached, as 80 percent of the Syrian factories established abroad were now located in Egypt, with a particular emphasis on textiles and food (SANA, 2015). The expansion of these investments has not only facilitated Syrian business owners in creating job opportunities for fellow Syrian refugees but has also paved the way for entrepreneurial refugees to establish their own enterprises. This multifaceted support includes guidance and counseling on legal regulations, networking opportunities with government officials, and access to industrial assets, emphasizing the association's multifaceted role in fostering economic resilience (Daher, 2023).

Egypt was ranked 114th out of 190 countries worldwide by the World Bank in terms of ease of doing business (World Bank, 2021a). This ranking is influenced by various factors that can be broadly grouped into regulatory, capital, and labor markets (Soliman et al., 2023). While some improvements have been made since 2008, there are some other regulatory issues, such as contract enforcement continuing to be problematic (World Bank, 2021a), which caused challenges while creating business in Egypt (Zamzam, 2017). On the scale of the overall Egyptian economy, it has been estimated that the informal sector represents 40% to 68% of the Egyptian economy and that is mostly populated by small/medium businesses (PWC, 2019).

In conclusion, the exploration of medium and large-scale Syrian businesses in Egypt is of paramount importance to understand their role in the insertion of Syrian refugees into the Egyptian labor market. Despite the abundance of literature on the socio-political aspects of Syrian refugees in Egypt, there is a significant gap in research pertaining to their economic contributions, particularly at a macroeconomic level. The dearth of knowledge in this area underscores the necessity of this study, as it endeavors to shed light on the economic activities of Syrian businesses and their consequential impact on the insertion into the Egyptian market. The lack of existing literature in this domain also emphasizes the novelty and significance of this research, which aims to bridge this critical gap by delving into the economic dimensions of Syrian businesses, their overall business value, tax contributions, and their influence on the broader Egyptian society. This study's findings are anticipated to contribute substantially to the existing body of knowledge and provide valuable insights for policymakers, researchers, and stakeholders interested in the economic dynamics of displaced Syrians in Egypt.

#### **2.4. Refugees and immigrants' businesses in host countries**

Extensive research has been conducted on international migration to developed countries and its impact on economic growth and development (Castles et al., 2014; Cohen, 2006;

Kangasniemi et al., 2012; Ozden et al., 2007). This research has primarily focused on immigrants from regions like Asia and Latin America, while neglecting refugees and asylum seekers in the MENA region. Self-employment has often been seen as a potential solution to address issues faced by immigrants in host countries, such as unemployment and poverty. However, the success of self-employment is influenced by the human capital of both the country of origin and the destination country (Aliaga-Isla, 2013; Kanas et al., 2009; Tengeh, 2013). Immigrants tend to rely on self-employment more due to the perception that their education and experience are of lower quality in host countries compared to their countries of origin and in comparison, to native populations (Alexandre et al., 2019).

Naville et al. (2014) discovered that immigrants often lack human and social capital from their home countries, including social networks, they may also face discrimination from native populations and encounter difficulties in accessing external capital. On the other hand, Ibrahim and Galt (2011) emphasized the importance of factor that influence human capital, such as education and other characteristics that impact productivity.

According to Tengeh (2013), while entrepreneurs primarily start businesses in host countries with the main goals of generating revenue and income for themselves, entrepreneurs also aim to generate jobs for others, even if these positions are not permanent, thereby contributing to the sustenance of livelihoods. The ability to create employment opportunities is contingent upon specific macroeconomic factors, as elucidated by Liedholm et al. (1994). In a broader context, immigrant entrepreneurs, as outlined by studies such as Virdee (2006) and Vinogradov & Isaksen (2008), are individuals who have left their countries of origin to initiate businesses as a means of survival in host countries. Conversely, Fairlie's study offers a different perspective, emphasizing the profit-driven nature of immigrant entrepreneurs' businesses (2012). This group actively seeks access to financial resources to support their ventures and maximize their economic gains.



Building on this, research indicates that economic considerations, such as earning potential and wealth accumulation, significantly influence immigrants' decisions to embark on entrepreneurial endeavors (Vinogradov & Isaksen, 2008; Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015).

Raijman and Tienda (2000) contended that immigrants who initially work in enterprises, even if they receive low wages, have significant opportunities to eventually establish their own businesses. In their research conducted in the United States on entrepreneurship among Mexican, Korean, non-Hispanic white, and Middle-Eastern/South-Asian entrepreneurs in co-ethnic firms and informal self-employment, Raijman and Tienda (2000) discovered that immigrants who initially work in enterprises, even if they receive low wages, have significant opportunities to eventually establish their own businesses. The same study also highlighted the potential transformation of informal self-employment ventures into formal business ownership through the acquisition of relevant experience. Moreover, the impact of immigrants' businesses on native self-employed individuals is not a straightforward narrative. According to Fairlie & Meyer (2003), concrete evidence regarding the effects of immigrants' businesses in host countries is not readily apparent. The study suggests that immigrant entrepreneurship may displace native businesses within the country. Nevertheless, it also reveals a positive aspect, showing an increase in native self-employment incomes resulting from immigrant entrepreneurship (Fairlie & Meyer, 2003). Further studies have found that immigrant entrepreneurs tend to create jobs not only for themselves but also for the native population (Fairlie & Lofstrom, 2015).

On the contrary, while there is a substantial body of research on the employment of refugees and asylum seekers in countries hosting them, there is a scarcity of studies examining their self-employment endeavors (Wauters & Lambrecht, 2008; Bollinger & Hagstrom, 2004). For instance, Gold's (1992) study on Vietnamese refugees and Soviet Jews in the USA sheds light on their business ownership and its significant impact on the country's development. Consequently,

the literature on migrants remains intertwined with research on minority or diversity entrepreneurship (Alexandre-Leclair, 2014). Policymakers and politicians perceive the refugee movement as a contentious issue. Farmaki and Christou (2018) assert that due to refugees' reliance on support from host countries and international organizations, there is an ethical imperative to address their needs. Similarly, Holmes and Castañeda (2016) demonstrate that the substantial influx of refugees can present significant challenges related to regional and security concerns for receiving countries. Likewise, in the aftermath of the 2011 Syrian conflict, many host countries expressed apprehension about the security implications. Shneikat and Ryan (2018) highlight that while a majority of research on the Syrian refugee influx has focused on the negative impact on the financial and social capital of host countries, it tends to overlook the educational qualifications and motivations of refugees that could potentially benefit them. Conversely, studies such as Tumen (2016) and Bizri (2017) have found that refugee businesses can have a positive impact on the economies of the receiving countries.

Numerous studies in cross-cultural literature explore the cultural, religious, and economic disparities between refugees and host communities (Festing & Harsch, 2018; Vershinina et al., 2018). An example of this is seen in the case of Syrian refugees, where cultural values closely tied to a subsistence-based economy play a significant role (Bizri, 2017). In Europe, the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2017) reported that refugees in Europe face daily challenges such as language barriers and limited support from host countries. However, the same report highlighted that in Germany, refugees and migrants are more actively involved in establishing businesses compared to non-migrants. On the other hand, although refugees in the UK have the legal right to engage in self-employment, they often face stigmatization, which hinders their access to business resources (Lyon et al., 2007). One argument suggests that the willingness to take the risk of immigrating to another country may indicate a propensity for risk-taking, which can have negative implications for immigrants when engaging in business ventures (Marchand & Siegel, 2014).

While cultural values are connected to various forms of entrepreneurial behavior, national culture can impose limitations on entrepreneurial activities (Meister & Mauer, 2019). For instance, the cultural values and social norms of a country can influence how opportunities are identified and the extent of entrepreneurial activity (Vershina et al., 2018).

Refugees are different from other migrant groups due to the forced circumstances of their migration. As a result, refugees seek new income sources after escaping their country of origin. Research by The Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (2016) indicates that refugees do not start businesses in host countries as a potential career path, but rather due to limited economic opportunities. Studies have found that many refugees do not intend to return to Syria, even after the war ends, as they have lost their homes and livelihoods in Syria and fear persisting security issues there (Bizri, 2017; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; İçduygu & Millet, 2016). Therefore, refugee entrepreneurship in the host country involves more complex social and cultural values than native entrepreneurs or immigrants (Bemak & Chung, 2014). Refugees are primarily encouraged to start businesses by prior work experience and the motivation to survive (Bizri, 2017). According to Chang (2022; 2021), pre-refugee Syrian business owners are more adapted to the challenging situation in Turkey due to their previous status as professional business owners with social and economic capital.

## **2.5. Businesses Impact on Insertion in Host Countries**

The Insertion of migrants and refugees into the labor market of the host societies is identified as an essential element for ensuring successful integration into these societies. For example, Ager and Strang (2008) included integration into the labor market among the four essential elements for successful integration. Their study highlighted that in countries with potential economic growth and labor demand, the integration of migrants and refugees in the labor market benefited them as well as the host countries that are in need of labor. Another important

study by Entzinger and Biezevels (2003) asserted that successful integration could be indicated through accessing the labor market. Jacobsen (2001) indicated that successful integration in the labor market improves the refugee-host relationship, which is an essential factor for integration; this factor is associated with the impact refugees might have on host states (Berry, 2008). Many barriers exist that affect successful integration into the host societies, including integration into the labor market. For example, Alrawadieh et al. (2019) identified four challenges refugees face in host countries prohibiting successful integration. These include legislative and administrative challenges, market-related issues, financial issues, and socio-cultural challenges. Mestheneos and Ioannidi (2002) included language barriers and access to citizenship as other obstacles to education.

According to Desai et al. (2020), the influence of refugee entrepreneurs on receiving countries is a significant topic, but it is understudied. It is important to distinguish between types of entrepreneurs even though they may have some similar characteristics (Rezaei & Goli, 2020). The most significant difference between refugees and other types of migrant entrepreneurs is the freedom of mobility between the latter and the former (Desai et al., 2020). It has been found that the discrimination and difficulties refugees face from the natives pushed them into entrepreneurship in host countries (Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019). Further, extensive literature discussed the legal and access of funds in the host countries as the difficulties refugees face starting their business (Sandberg et al., 2018; Meister & Mauer, 2019). Şimşek (2020) suggested that refugee entrepreneurship is the more straightforward strategy for refugees to integrate into local societies. Studies on both immigrant and refugee entrepreneurs argue that social capital is considered to be another success factor for refugee entrepreneurship integration into host countries (Zapata-Barrero & Rezaei, 2020; Rezaei et al., 2019). Further, refugee businesses establishment in host societies may put local business owners in competition with them (Lyon et al., 2007).

On the other hand, literature on the refugees' business context incorporate refugees who became business owners after moving to host countries and those who had a previous business established in their country of origin. Additionally, while some business owners work in the formal economy, others work in the informal economy. Despite the fact that they are all able to be categorized as entrepreneurs, business owners with previous work experience and those who engage in the formal economy have more financial resources and working skills than people with zero experience or business owners working in the informal sector (Chang, 2022;2021;). Similarly, the lack of awareness regarding various socioeconomic dynamics not only fails to highlight key distinctions between initiatives and scaling but also undermines the value and contribution that refugee entrepreneurs could bring to the context of Syrian refugees in Turkey (Chang, 2022;2021;).

In recent years, there has been a significant body of research focusing on Syrian refugee entrepreneurs in various host countries, including Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, and several European countries. These studies underscore the importance of supporting refugee entrepreneurs in host countries to facilitate their integration into local societies, resulting in mutual benefits for both refugees and native populations (Kabbani, 2018; Hassan, 2021; Shneikat & Alrawadieh, 2019; Şimşek, 2020; Alrawadieh et al., 2019; Refai et al., 2018; Cagaptay & Menekse, 2014). For instance, Şimşek's (2020) study revealed that by the end of 2017, there were approximately 18,000 Syrian businesses, both formal and informal, in Turkey. This economic dominance positioned them as the largest group of foreign entrepreneurs, fostering job creation for both Syrian refugees and local residents, and promoting international trade with Arabic-speaking countries (Atar, 2017). Similarly, Mahmoud's (2017) investigation of El-Rehab city in Egypt highlighted the full integration of Syrians through their economic engagements and entrepreneurship, particularly in the hospitality sector. Consequently, Syrians have emerged as significant investors in Egypt. According to Yehia (2018), an estimated 30,000 Syrian investors were residing in the country in 2018, with a primary focus on industries such as food, furniture, textiles, and integrative sectors.

The study also estimated that Syrian investments have been estimated to be around \$800 million between 2011 and 2018 (Yehia, 2018).

Moreover, in the context of Lebanon, Harb et al. (2019) discovered that Syrian businesses in Beirut complemented Lebanese businesses and contributed to the reinforcement of spatial practices within the country. Moving to the Netherlands, refugee entrepreneurs had a positive impact on the country's economy. However, the perception of locals towards refugees during their stay in the country was predominantly negative (Berns, 2017). In Jordan, it has been reported that by 2014, Syrians owned more than 5,000 businesses, with 12 factories concentrated in Irbid and 160 stores operated by Syrian business owners (Whitman, 2014; Freihat, 2015). Apart from excelling in the hospitality and textile industries for years, Syrians also established a presence in tech entrepreneurship, bringing diversity to the labor market (Philips, 2016). Consequently, Syrian refugee business owners have thrived in the Jordanian economy, particularly in the investment and rental profit sectors (Alafi, 2014).

However, most of the studies on refugees' entrepreneurship in host countries aim to investigate the socioeconomic characteristics, motivations for establishing the business, and challenges they might face (Bristol-Faulhammer, 2017; Berns, 2017; Refai et al., 2018). According to Şimşek (2020), refugee business owners and entrepreneurs are in a better position than refugee employees to establish social linkage between refugees and natives, thereby facilitating the insertion process. Due to the lack of research on the contribution of refugee business owners to host societies, it is difficult to measure how the hospitality and textile industries facilitate socioeconomic integration into these societies. Tourism and hospitality industries have a significant role in the integration of refugees into host countries due to their sociable and multicultural nature (Janta et al., 2011), and this is why refugee entrepreneurship in these industries should be encouraged in order to reinforce refugees' integration. In addition, Hassan (2021)

highlighted the huge success of the food industry of Syrians in Egypt and how it positively impacted the insertion of Syrians into the labor market. In the same vein, Kabbani (2018) demonstrated that Syrians in Egypt transferred political and economic challenges into push factors, such as common language, cultural and social bonds, in order to kick off their own businesses as self-employed rather than informal employees.

Focusing on large-scale businesses in the realm of refugee entrepreneurship is imperative due to various compelling reasons. Firstly, the prevailing perception of refugees as burdens on host countries, primarily in need of aid, has resulted in a lack of attention to their potential as economic contributors. Shifting this perspective is essential for recognizing the capacity of refugees to actively participate in the economic development of their host nations. By emphasizing large-scale businesses, researchers and policymakers can reshape the narrative, showcasing refugees not merely as recipients of assistance but as agents of economic growth.

Moreover, the limited research on refugee entrepreneurship highlights a critical gap in understanding the economic dynamics of refugee communities. Large-scale businesses have the potential to make a substantial impact on the economic landscape, creating employment opportunities and fostering economic self-sufficiency. By delving into this aspect, researchers can provide valuable insights into the factors that enable or hinder refugees in establishing significant enterprises. This understanding is crucial for developing targeted policies and support mechanisms that facilitate the growth of refugee-led businesses.

The literature on Syrians, in particular, has predominantly focused on their perceived impact on host communities, often neglecting the examination of their potential for integration and investment. Large-scale businesses play a crucial role in fostering insertion by creating social linkages between refugees and natives. The focus on impact studies should shift towards exploring the positive contributions that refugees, particularly Syrians, can make through formal and

substantial business ventures. This shift in emphasis acknowledges displaced Syrians not only as survivors but as contributors to the social and economic fabric of their host countries.

Additionally, while existing studies may touch upon Syrians working in the informal sector, there is a notable dearth of research exploring their ability to establish formal, large-scale businesses, especially in host countries like Egypt. Investigating this aspect is essential for understanding the challenges and opportunities refugees face in navigating formal business environments. Large-scale businesses, in contrast to informal ventures, contribute more visibly to the formal economy and are subject to different regulatory frameworks. Therefore, a comprehensive examination of refugees' ability to establish and sustain large-scale enterprises provides a nuanced understanding of their economic potential and contributes to more informed policy decisions.

In conclusion, the importance of focusing on large-scale businesses within the context of displaced persons entrepreneurship lies in challenging stereotypes, filling research gaps, fostering economic self-sufficiency, and promoting the inclusion of displaced Syrians into host societies. It is a critical shift that recognizes the resilience and potential of refugees to not only rebuild their lives but also actively contribute to the prosperity and diversity of their host nations.



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## *Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework, Research Questions, and Methodology*

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### **3.1. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study centers on a nuanced examination of investments made by Syrian business owners and their role in facilitating the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. In contrast to prior research, which often concentrated on generalized aspects of refugee integration, this study takes a unique approach by delving into the specific dimensions of the size and formal legal status of businesses established by Syrian entrepreneurs. The deliberate decision to explore these dimensions is fundamental to comprehending the intricate dynamics at play and the potential influence of these businesses on the insertion process.

A central element of this framework is the recognition that entrepreneurship and economic activity are pivotal components of successful integration. By delving into the specifics of Syrian-owned businesses, the study aims to uncover insights that can inform targeted policies and interventions to foster sustainable economic participation among Syrian refugees. This approach acknowledges the significance of economic contributions in the integration process.

Furthermore, the framework extends beyond a positive outlook on insertion by actively investigating potential hindrances faced by Syrian refugees in their pursuit of economic participation. This includes a realistic portrayal of the existing obstacles and an assessment of the feasibility for displaced individuals to overcome these challenges. The framework considers this a crucial step in formulating comprehensive strategies that not only address barriers but also foster successful integration over time.

The dynamic nature of insertion is a key element in this conceptual framework. The study recognizes insertion as a multifaceted and evolving process shaped by the diverse experiences and backgrounds of refugees within the host country. To delve into the intricate dynamics of insertion, the study narrows its focus to the specific context of Syrian business owners and their investments in Egypt. By homing in on this aspect, the research aims to uncover how these business ventures impact the insertion of Syrian workers into the Egyptian labor market. The strategic decision to examine the investments made by Syrian entrepreneurs is grounded in the belief that understanding the economic dimensions of insertion is essential for developing comprehensive strategies.

The measurement of insertion within this framework takes into account legal status, access to rights, and social connections between refugees and citizens. These metrics provide a comprehensive understanding of the position of Syrian refugees within the Egyptian economic and social landscape. The emphasis on economic, social, and legal dimensions underscores the interconnectedness of these factors in shaping the insertion process.

Moreover, the framework emphasizes the influence of economic resources on the insertion of displaced persons. By highlighting the interconnectedness of legal-political, socioeconomic, and cultural dimensions, the research recognizes that economic participation cannot be studied in isolation. Instead, it is seen as a complex interplay of various factors collectively contributing to the ultimate successful integration of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market.

Finally, the conceptual framework extends to a specific examination of the involvement of Syrian business owners in the economic insertion process. This targeted analysis is crucial for understanding the role of entrepreneurship and economic initiatives in facilitating the insertion of displaced Syrians. Simultaneously, the identification of potential barriers provides valuable insights for policymakers aiming to create an environment conducive to the successful economic integration of Syrian refugees into the Egyptian labor market. In essence, this study's conceptual

framework strives to offer a comprehensive understanding of how displaced Syrian have been inserted into the Egyptian labor market, shedding light on both challenges and opportunities in the process.

### **3.2. Research questions**

The research aims to examine displaced Syrians who arrived in Egypt, possess social and financial capital and have established businesses. Given the generally favorable reception of Syrians in Egypt compared to other refugees, owing to a shared history, this study will delve into how Syrian business owners developed their enterprises after the Arab Spring to facilitate their insertion into Egyptian society. The research will explore the ways in which Syrian businesses and investments have not only enabled Syrians to participate in the Egyptian labor market, but also provided job opportunities for the Egyptian workers. The overarching goal is to provide valuable insights into the economic activities of displaced Syrians in Egypt and to understand how their businesses have played a role in the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market.

#### **Main Research Question**

The main research question is: How do Syrian businesses contribute to the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market?

Sub-questions are the following:

- What is the volume of the workforce business owners employ in their businesses (including the demographic and socioeconomic characteristics), and gender?
- What are the backward and forward linkages of Syrian-owned businesses? In other words, where do they get inputs of production and to whom do they sell this production?
- How do Syrian business owners contribute to the diversification of production to local markets in Egypt?

- In which way Egyptian policies and regulations facilitate or hinder the successful insertion of Syrians through their businesses?
- What are the challenges Syrian business owners in Egypt face while running a formal business?
- Do the displaced Syrians employed in these businesses have work permits?
- What were the occupational changes for Syrians employed in these businesses before arriving in Egypt?
- Which are the wages and other working terms and conditions of the displaced Syrians employed in these businesses?

The various research questions posed aim to comprehensively address the overarching inquiry into the role of Syrian businesses in the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. The investigation into the volume of the workforce, encompassing demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, provides a quantitative foundation for understanding the scale and nature of the businesses' contribution to local employment. Exploring the backward and forward linkages of Syrian-owned businesses delves into their economic interactions, shedding light on their insertion into the broader supply chain and local market. The inquiry into the diversification of production contributes insights into how these businesses enhance product variety and competitiveness within local markets. Additionally, examining the impact of Egyptian policies and regulations uncovers external factors influencing the businesses' contribution to labor market insertion. Insight into the challenges faced by Syrian business owners provides context to their operations, while inquiries into work permits, occupations, and working conditions of employed Syrian refugees offer a nuanced understanding of their role and experiences within these businesses. Collectively, these questions form a comprehensive framework to unravel the

multifaceted aspects of Syrian businesses' involvement in the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market.

### **3.3. Methodology**

This study aims to explore the experiences of displaced Syrian business owners in Egypt, with a specific focus on their contribution to the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. Consequently, a qualitative method of analysis has been chosen for this research.

To conduct this study, the adopted approach involves desk research that delve into the historical and economic context of Egypt and Syria. The desk research specifically focused on Syrian migration experience examining their businesses in Egypt and the facilitation of the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. Additionally, a series of 12 semi-structured interviews was conducted with 11 male business owners and one female business owner. The interviews involved Syrian businessowners engaged in medium and large-scale enterprises, all of whom have formal businesses established in Egypt. The primary objective of these interviews was to gain insights into the factors that facilitated their contribution to the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market.

Moreover, one interview was carried out with an informal Syrian business owner to explore his experiences in operating an informal business in Egypt. The aim was to understand how its informal enterprises might differ from formal ones and to assess their potential impact on the Egyptian market. To assess displaced Syrians' insertion from a micro level, interviews were conducted with 10 male Syrian workers in order to provide valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities they encounter in the Egyptian labor market.

In addition to the individual perspectives, the study engaged in interviews with a Syrian association chairperson and an economic expert. These interviews aimed to elucidate their perspectives on Syrian businesses in Egypt and assess how they perceive the insertion of displaced

Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. The multifaceted approach, combining firsthand accounts, expert opinions, and insights obtained through desk research, contributes to a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics surrounding Syrian businesses in Egypt and their impact on the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market.

### **3.3.1. Data collection**

To address the research questions of the study, primary data were collected. In exploring the context of Syrian business owners impact the insertion of displaced Syrians insertion into the Egyptian labor market, reliance was placed on primary data that had been gathered through 12 semi-structured interviews. These interviews involved Syrian business owners engaged in medium and large-scale enterprises, specifically within the hospitality and textile industries, who had formally established their businesses. The main topic discussed in the interviews were the demographic characteristics of participants, reason for flight from Syria, antecedents in Syria, businesses in Egypt at start, contextual challenges in Egypt, business development in Egypt, clientele diversity in business, labor and inclusive workplace, employment policies and practices, and finally, the eventual outcome of potential contribution to the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. To supplement this information, interviews were conducted with 10 Syrian workers working in the same fields. In order to enrich the research and delve deeply into the Syrian business owners' experience with business establishment process and their perceptions surrounding Syrian business activity in Egypt, interviews were conducted with a Syrian association chairperson and an economic expert. The goal is to gain an in-depth understanding of the volume and impact of Syrian business to the insertion of Syrian workers into the Egyptian labor market. As the researcher was outside Egypt, the majority of interviews were conducted online.

This study utilizes a mixed sampling approach of convenience and purposive methods to collect primary data from Syrian business owners. Both are non-probability sampling techniques

that use non-random criteria to select the sample population. With these methods, studying a sufficiently large sample can represent the broader population (Acharya et al., 2013). Using mixed convenience and purposive sampling reduces the costs, time, and effort associated with conducting the study (Acharya et al., 2013). The goal is to recruit an appropriate sample of Syrian business owners in an efficient manner by relying on convenient access and purposeful selection based on specific criteria relevant to the research questions. This allows for generating insights on the target population without requiring a randomized sample.

Purposive sampling involves selecting individuals from the population who are likely to have certain characteristics or experiences relevant to the research questions (Campbell et al., 2020). This method was chosen to reach data saturation while avoiding repetition (Bryman, 2015). Since the participants in this study share similar socioeconomic backgrounds and fields of businesses, purposive sampling allows for selecting a small representative sample of this population. Convenience sampling relies on selecting participants due to their easy accessibility to the researcher (Sedgwick, 2013). This method is also utilized in this study, as the researcher leverages her social network, including relatives and acquaintances, as well as knowledge of the Syrian context in Egypt, to identify potential participants fitting the sampling criteria. Using both purposive and convenience sampling facilitates recruiting an appropriate sample in an efficient manner. The selected business owners were specifically chosen from both the hospitality and textile industries, ensuring representation from diverse sectors. Additionally, all participants are legally established in Egypt, except one business.

### **3.2.2. Data Analysis**

This study involved analyzing data obtained from interviews with Syrian business owners, workers, a Syrian association chairperson, and an economic expert to gain a deeper understanding of how Syrian businesses contribute to the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor

market. The analysis commenced by coding and labeling the key concepts derived from the participants' responses. The findings of the analysis unveiled a relatively consistent process of business establishment, the challenges faced by business owners in setting up operations in Egypt, and the extent of their integration in the Egyptian economy, all of which significantly contribute to insertion of Syrian workers in the Egyptian labor market.

### **3.4. Limitations and Ethical Consideration**

While there is a wealth of literature on refugees and asylum seekers, the exploration of their feasible insertion to host countries remains relatively scarce. This scarcity is particularly pronounced in studies focusing on the MENA region, which has continuously absorbed a substantial number of refugees and asylum seekers from within the region. This study acknowledges a limitation in not including interviews with Egyptian policymakers, which could have offered valuable insights into the perception of Syrian businesses in Egypt from a policymaker's standpoint. Regrettably, attempts to interview policymakers were met with non-cooperation.

Another notable limitation stems from the reluctance of business owners to share their experiences with Egyptian institutions due to concerns about potential security issues, particularly in relation to bribery, given the sensitive nature of the situation. Furthermore, many large-scale business owners cited scheduling constraints as a reason for refusing interviews, while others, facing similar time constraints, provided brief responses. This limitation highlights the challenges of accessing and gathering comprehensive insights from busy and potentially cautious business owners.

It is crucial to recognize these limitations as they impact the comprehensiveness of the study's findings and underscore the complexities associated with researching such a sensitive and



multifaceted topic. Efforts were made to navigate these challenges, but the constraints outlined above inevitably influenced the scope and depth of the data collected.

Inclusion in this study was contingent upon obtaining informed consent. Prior to commencing interviews, the researcher adhered to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines and secured their verbal approval, given that the interviews were conducted online. The confidentiality of the information provided by participants is fully guaranteed.

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## *Chapter 4: Data analysis*

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In this chapter, we will present the results of the fieldwork involving 23 Syrian business owners and workers who relocated to Egypt after 2011, along with insights from an economic expert and a chairperson of a Syrian association. These insights are based on semi-structured interviews conducted with the aforementioned groups.

The first part of this chapter will provide a concise overview of the profiles of the interviewees, emphasizing their demographic details, the reasons prompting their departure from Syria, and their circumstances before relocating to Egypt. The subsequent sections will delve into an evaluation of the extent to which Syrian businesses have integrated into the Egyptian labor market, looking into the economic, social, and legal dimensions.

### **4.1. Demographic Information of the Participants**

#### **4.1.1. Age, Gender, and Education**

In this study, a total of 12 interviews were conducted with Syrian business owners. The participants comprised four adults (20-39), seven middle-aged individuals (40-59), and one senior adult (+60), with a gender distribution of one female out of the total twelve participants. Regarding education, five individuals held university degrees, two completed high school, two finished secondary school, and two completed elementary education. One participant reported not receiving any formal education. In summary, the diverse group of Syrian business owners exhibited a range of educational backgrounds and a notable gender imbalance, with only one female participant.

While the respondents displayed diverse educational backgrounds, the impact of their experiences on both personal and business matters appeared more closely tied to factors other

than education. For example, one participant noted immaturity in decision-making, attributing it to the hurried and inexperienced handling of business issues. Others acknowledged a lack of experience, particularly in instances where this was their inaugural venture into the business realm. Interestingly, a subset of respondents drew upon experiences gained from involvement in a family business established before their current endeavors, suggesting a nuanced interplay between familial background and the development of business acumen. The findings suggest that, while diverse educational backgrounds were evident among the respondents, factors such as decision-making maturity, overall business experience, and the influence of family businesses played pivotal roles in shaping their perspectives and outcomes in the business realm.

As outlined in the methodology section, while the primary focus of this study is on Syrian business owners, it also includes interviews with Syrian employees operating in the same sectors covered by the study. This approach aims to gain insights into their work experience as employees in Egypt and to understand their perspectives on the insertion of Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. The interviewed group predominantly falls within the adults category, with all ten participants belonging to this demographic. This indicates a mature and experienced workforce, potentially contributing a wealth of skills and knowledge to the Egyptian labor market. Educationally, the participants exhibit a diverse background, with one individual having completed elementary school education, two with secondary school education, five with high school education, and three holding university degrees.

In terms of employment history, the participants in the study had varied experiences before arriving in Egypt. Four individuals maintained the same profession they had in Syria, demonstrating continuity in their career paths. Another group of four respondents shifted their professions upon relocation to Egypt, highlighting the adaptability and flexibility of their skills. Furthermore, three participants were students before coming to Egypt, emphasizing their educational background and possibly a shift in career focus. For instance, one participant

explained that he changed his profession from a confectioner to a restaurant chef due to the low salaries of confectioners in Egypt. These diverse trajectories underscore the dynamic nature of their work experiences before and during their time in Egypt.

#### **4.1.2. Reason for Leaving Syria**

Motivations for departing Syria varied among the participants. Among Syrian business owners, twelve respondents identified the pervasive impact of the war as the overarching factor for leaving Syria. Moreover, a number of individuals left Syria, influenced by the collective movement of other Syrians who sought refuge in Egypt during that period, alongside their concerns about the persisting security issues and conflict in Syria. For instance, a lingerie factor owner, who is also a civil engineer, shared his experiences, stating, *“I initiated the business in Egypt in early 2013, right after arriving during the deteriorated situation in Syria during the war. Many people were coming to Egypt at that time, so I decided to come to Egypt as well.”*

The timing of business owners’ departure from Syria has also varied, with six respondents leaving just after the war, one after a few years, and others having recently arrived. Those who recently arrived cited the enduring consequences of the war and challenging economic conditions in Syria as significant factors influencing their decision to relocate. Notably, one participant departed Syria in 2006 to work abroad and subsequently arrived in Egypt in 2023 with the aim of establishing a business. The participant’s journey highlights a unique trajectory, showcasing the intersection of work opportunities and entrepreneurial pursuits as motivations for international mobility.

The diverse motivations and timelines for leaving Syria among the participants underscore the complex interplay of factors, with the pervasive impact of the war being a common thread. The varying circumstances of departure, ranging from immediate post-war periods to recent arrivals, highlight the ongoing challenges in Syria and the multifaceted

considerations that influence individuals' decisions to relocate, whether driven by economic conditions, the aftermath of conflict, or opportunities for entrepreneurial endeavors. The unique trajectory of one participant, who left in 2006 for work abroad and arrived in Egypt in 2023 to pursue entrepreneurial goals, adds a nuanced layer to the understanding of the diverse pathways and motivations for international mobility.

On the other hand, the reasons for Syrian workers choosing Egypt are diverse. One participant indicated family reunification, four cited the conflict in Syria, and three evaded military service. This multifaceted motivation reflects the complexity of the Syrian diaspora in Egypt, with each group facing unique challenges and opportunities for integration. Regarding the timing of arrival, half of the participants arrived just after the conflict erupted, three after some years, and two recently. The varied timelines suggest a continuous influx of Syrian individuals seeking refuge and opportunities in Egypt. Before arriving in Egypt, the participants had engaged in different activities. Four continued the same profession they had in Syria, four underwent a career shift, and three pursued further studies. This diversity in pre-migration activities showcases adaptability and resilience within the Syrian workforce. In their current positions in Egypt, the participants hold roles such as chef, accountant, tailor, and restaurant manager. This diversity in occupations demonstrates the versatility of skills among Syrian workers, contributing to various sectors in the Egyptian job market.

#### **4.1.3. Antecedent in Syria**

In a comprehensive exploration of business dynamics in Syria, interviews were conducted with 12 prominent Syrian business owners, in addition to Khalid Almo'akeh, who serves as the chairman of the Syrian Investors Council in Egypt and has previously held the position of chairman at the Syrian chamber of commerce in Egypt. Out of the twelve business owners, only one business owner had not been an entrepreneur in Syria before arriving in Egypt. This business owner clarified that he opted to establish his business after gaining experience in

the restaurant industry in Egypt for a couple of years, eventually deciding to venture into entrepreneurship and open his own business.

Upon delving into the examination of business evolution in Egypt in contrast to their Syrian counterparts, a nuanced and intricate narrative unfolds. A substantial majority, comprising precisely six business owners, opted to replicate the same business model in Egypt as they had successfully implemented in Syria. However, the outcomes of this replication reveal a distinctive pattern marked by a discernible contraction in the scale of their ventures when measured against the magnitude of their Syrian operations.

The divergence between expectation and reality suggests that while the entrepreneurial spirit remained intact, the translation of business success from one market to another proved to be a more intricate endeavor. The intricacies of the Egyptian business landscape, with its unique challenges and market dynamics, manifested in the form of a notable contraction for these business owners. It promotes a deeper exploration into the factors contributing to this phenomenon, encompassing aspects such as cultural nuances, regulatory frameworks, and consumer behavior that may have played pivotal roles in shaping divergent trajectories of businesses transplanted from Syria to Egypt.

A noteworthy trend observed among four Syrian entrepreneurs making their foray into the Egyptian market is the strategic shift in the nature of their businesses. One business owner transitioned from being a car wash and lubricant owner to a textile factory owner, while the other three shifted from being a trader, event-organizer, and travel agency owner to becoming restaurant owners. This adaptation underscores a commendable flexibility in response to the nuances of the local business landscape. Such a dynamic approach suggests that these business owners are not only astute in recognizing the need for adjustment but are also proactive in

reshaping their ventures to align with the unique challenges and opportunities presented by the Egyptian market.

What stands out among the interviewed business owners is the daring initiative taken by a restaurant owner who ventured into starting a business in Egypt despite lacking prior business experience. The restaurant owner explained that “*before I open this business, I worked as a restaurant manager. I worked hard until I gained the money, experience, and knowledge before I decided to open the business.*” This bold move exemplifies the robust entrepreneurial spirit prevalent in the region. It highlights a willingness among individuals to take calculated risks and explore uncharted territories, showcasing the resilience and determination that characterize the entrepreneurial ecosystem in the area.

In a departure from the prevailing trend of business contraction, one business owner opted to buck the trend and expand his business operations in Egypt. This decision to not only maintain but also grow the initially established branch is particularly noteworthy. The sustained success of this expanded venture serves as a compelling case study, illustrating the untapped potential for business growth in the Egyptian market. It not only challenges the narrative of a contracting business environment but also underscores the viability of strategic expansion for business owners who navigate the intricacies of the Egyptian market effectively. This success story adds a positive dimension to the overall narrative, emphasizing the opportunities that exist for those who are adept at leveraging the unique dynamics of the local business landscape.

In conclusion, the diverse experiences of Syrian business owners in Egypt, as highlighted through interviews with prominent figures such as Almo’akeh, reveal a complex business landscape. While the majority faced a contraction in their ventures when compared to their Syrian operations, a notable trend of strategic adaptation emerged, with some business owners shifting the nature of their businesses to align with the local market. The one entrepreneur

launched a restaurant without prior business experience, having gained relevant expertise from working as a chef in the same field before. This business owner's decision to venture into business after gaining experience in the same industry highlights a willingness to take bold steps in establishing new ventures, demonstrating a proactive and enterprising approach to business development. Furthermore, the exceptional instance of a business owner choosing to expand and successfully grow his business in Egypt further demonstrates the potential for sustained growth within the Egyptian market.

#### **4.2. Economic Dimension**

Displaced persons can exert economic influence on both local and national levels in host countries. At the local level, their presence may have an impact on the labor market, influence the prices of local goods, and intensify market competition (Akgündüz et al., 2015; Orhan, 2014). On a national scale, refugees might contribute to an increase in budget revenue and stimulate cross-border trade for the host country (Kirişci, 2014; Orhan, 2014). The economic impact of the investments made by Syrian business owners based in Egypt can be initially illustrated through factors such as the number of employees, tax payments, and the export of products from the companies of the interviewees.

The initial landscape of businesses in Egypt, as observed among the 12 participants, showcased a diverse composition. Apart from the main sectors of textiles and restaurants, the sample revealed a notable presence of other business types. Textile businesses included a jeans pants factory, lingerie, clothes padding and embroidery factory, clothes manufacturing with fabric printing, pleat fabrics, and clothes accessories, as well as a loofah manufacturing factory along with manufacturing curtains string and plastic textiles. In addition to establishing restaurants, Syrian business owners have ventured into side businesses such as a butcher, livestock trading, coffee shop, and amusement park that support to their initial ventures. Six of



the enterprises were classified as large-scale businesses, while the remaining six fell into the medium-scale category. As mentioned earlier, to delineate medium and large-scale businesses, medium-sized enterprises typically employ between 10 and 50 individuals, while large-sized enterprises have an average workforce exceeding 50 people. This distribution underscores the spectrum of business sizes within participant pool.

Within this eclectic mix, a distinct pattern emerged regarding the nature of these businesses. Four of the enterprises were identified as engaging in work that was novel to the Egyptian industry, indicating a trend of diversification and innovation among the sampled business owners. Conversely, an equal number of businesses were established as family enterprises, highlighting the prevalence of familial ties in entrepreneurial ventures.

Elmo'akeh emphasized the global recognition of Syrian products, praising the ambitious nature of Syrians in global markets. In contrast, he noted that Egyptians tend to focus more on the local market. Elmo'akeh highlighted the role of Syrian businesses in motivating Egyptians to initiate their own ventures and reduce the need for importing raw materials.

Examining the expansion strategies employed by the participants, a variety of approaches were evident. The majority, represented by eight businesses, focused on local expansion, signifying a commitment to strengthening their presence within the Egyptian market. On the international front, one business exclusively pursued expansion beyond national borders, while three businesses adopted a dual strategy of expanding both locally and internationally, showcasing a balanced approach to geographical growth within the diverse business landscape. The observed pattern of diversification and innovation in four enterprises, along with an equal number operating as family enterprises, adds nuance to the entrepreneurial landscape. Moreover, the strategic adaptability and commitment to growth within this multifaceted business

community are underscored by the varied expansion strategies employed, ranging from local to international.

Linking these diverse expansion strategies, in the realm of business development in Egypt, a notable trend emerged among the participants, many of whom had previously operated businesses in Syria. Despite their long experience and familiarity with similar enterprises in Syria, a substantial number commenced their ventures on a modest scale upon entering the Egyptian market. Initiating small-scale operations, such as a shop with two employees or a workshop with a limited number of machines, these entrepreneurs gradually expanded within their respective business domains. Over time, they scaled up significantly, eventually establishing businesses of a broader scope.

Illustrating this evolution, one participant, who initially owned a restaurant chain (consisting of 5 restaurants around New Cairo) expanded his entrepreneurial portfolio by establishing two additional companies. One of these companies operates as a supply company serving his restaurants, providing items such as silverware, glassware, napkins, tablecloths, paper goods, and related necessities, showcasing an integrated approach to business development. The other is a real estate development company. Moreover, this business owner is actively involved in the establishment of a restaurant management company in the UAE, demonstrating a strategic expansion into international markets.

Similarly, two other participants diversified their business endeavors by engaging in side businesses such as exporting and importing goods, as well as the trade of cars, encompassing both sales and rentals. Their aim is to expand into different areas in the Egyptian market to increase their capital. This multifaceted approach to business development underscores these individuals' adaptability and entrepreneurial spirit as they navigate the dynamic business landscape in Egypt in order to increase their businesses.

From a broader concern that is associated with the impact of refugee inflow, particularly on employment, challenges conventional assumptions. It has been suggested that the increase in unemployment is a primary adverse outcome associated with the arrival of refugees in host societies (Esen & Binatlı, 2017). The impact on job markets, particularly affecting individuals from lower income groups, has been emphasized (Akgündüz et al., 2015). However, the data collected does not support the idea that the arrival of Syrians to Egypt is damaging the Egyptian labor market (Chang, 2018). A different perspective emerges when examining the numbers from the 12 Cairo-based Syrian businesses. The inclusion of Syrian business owners into the social fabric of Egypt is palpable through the observed employment practices within their ventures. The labor dynamics within the businesses of the participants underscore a deliberate effort to create a diverse and inclusive workforce. The majority of workers are both Syrians and Egyptians, with Egyptians taking precedence in six instances. This intentional mix is driven by multifaceted considerations, where business owners cite factors such as cost-effectiveness, alignment with investment laws, and preference of collaborating with Egyptian workers.

The decision to employ a significant number of Egyptians is not merely an economic choice but is indicative of a broader social integration strategy. For instance, a restaurant owner mentioned that *“We function as a close-knit family, and I am truly happy to have found such a dedicated team.”* By actively engaging and collaborating with Egyptian workers, Syrian business owners foster a sense of unity and inclusion within the local community. This social insertion is vital not only for the success of their businesses but also for building meaningful relationships with the broader Egyptian society.

Furthermore, the inclusivity extends beyond Syrian and Egyptian workers to include individuals from various nationalities, such as Sudanese, Lebanese, and Nigerians, reflecting a commitment to diversity within the workplace. The decision to recruit workers from different

nationalities is not based on any specific reason but depends solely on the work requirements and the experience of the workers. Nevertheless, it is important to note that challenges have been voiced by some business owners, specifically concerning Sudanese workers who were perceived as less committed and diligent. These challenges underscore the complexities and nuances involved in creating a socially integrated work environment that goes beyond national boundaries. In a unique case, one participant exclusively employed Egyptian girls, justifying this choice by asserting that female workers tend to be more committed to their work than their male counterparts.

In essence, the intentional inclusion of Egyptian workers in the labor force by Syrian business owners serves as a powerful testament to their commitment to becoming an integral part of the social fabric of Egypt. By actively involving Egyptian workers, it signifies a recognition and embrace of the cultural and social dynamics of Egypt, fostering a sense of collaboration and unity within the broader society. Through this inclusive employment strategy, Syrian business owners contribute not only to the economic landscape but also play a role in fostering social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding within the diverse tapestry of Egyptian society.

The recruitment methods employed by the participants further showcase the variety of approaches. Networking through relatives and acquaintances emerged as a prevalent method, with nine participants relying on personal connections. Social media platforms were also leveraged by six participants for recruitment, while five reported job seekers approaching their workplaces directly seeking employment. Professional platforms like LinkedIn were utilized by two participants, specifically for administrative positions. Notably, one participant employed unconventional methods, such as printing brochures and placing them on the factory gate or buses. An intriguing instance revolved around recruiting an entire staff following the closure of a neighboring restaurant, demonstrating adaptability in response to market conditions.

When considering the profile of workers, four participants emphasized the importance of experience, preferring to hire individuals with specific skills, such as operating specialized machines. These participants implemented probation periods to assess the suitability of new hires. In a distinct approach, one participant highlighted a limited reliance on labor due to the automation of business processes. This business owner, operating a machinery-based business, employs a few workers in two shifts, emphasizing the significant role machines play in carrying out essential tasks with minimal human intervention. This diverse range of labor practices underscores business owners' adaptability and strategic considerations in managing their workforce within the Egyptian business landscape and illustrates the diverse strategies adopted by business owners in navigating the complex landscape of human resources within the Egyptian business environment. As noted by the economic expert, Syrian businesses, acting as pioneers in the Egyptian economy, have made a significant impact on sectors such as food and hospitality. He also acknowledges the broader contributions of medium and small enterprises established by Syrians, which encompass substantial employment of Egyptian workers, highlighting their integration into the social fabric. Government support for these businesses is deemed essential for sustained growth.

By fostering diversity and inclusion within their ventures, these business owners contribute not only to the economic landscape but also play a crucial role in promoting social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding within the diverse tapestry of Egyptian society. The various recruitment methods and diverse labor practices employed by the participants underscore their adaptability and strategic considerations in managing their workforce, highlighting the complexities involved in navigating the human resources landscape within the Egyptian business environment. All in all, the employment of over 1,421 workers across all 12 businesses indicates that Syrian business owners are creating new job opportunities in Egypt.

The economic insertion of Syrian businesses into the Egyptian market is reflected through their engagement with tax obligations. According to the interviewed business owners, their monthly tax payment surpasses over LE 660,000, excluding additional expenses such as rent, workers' insurance, other business expenditures, and daily living costs. Among the 12 participants, the disclosure of tax payments showcases a range of contributions to the Egyptian fiscal system. The majority of the participants reported paying over LE 50,000 in taxes. While these figures may not definitively indicate Syrian businesses' contribution to the Egyptian market, particularly due to the absence of state reports on the percentage of Syrian businesses' contribution to foreign investment, they do, to some extent, underscore Syrian business owners' commitment to adhering to Egyptian legislations and requirements.

The tax landscape becomes more nuanced with the acknowledgment of a participant whose business is relatively new and, as a result, has not yet made tax payments. This reveals the dynamic nature of economic activities, with emerging businesses gradually becoming contributors to the national tax revenue as they mature. Interestingly, the data unveils some unconventional practices related to tax reporting. One participant mentioned a strategic approach of not submitting the exact benefits number to minimize tax obligations, showcasing a calculated financial management strategy. Another participant, however, introduced a less conventional practice by admitting to having previously bribed a tax officer to reduce the tax burden. These revelations highlight the intricate intersection between business practices and the regulatory environment, underscoring the various strategies employed by Syrian businesses to navigate and integrate into the Egyptian labor market, both legally and otherwise.

All in all, the examination of tax engagements among Syrian businesses in the Egyptian labor market provides valuable insights into their economic insertion. The diverse range of tax payments, from moderate contributions to substantial financial commitments, reflects the multifaceted nature of their participation in the Egyptian fiscal system. Furthermore, as

evidenced by emerging businesses yet to make tax payments, emphasizes the evolving role of Syrian enterprises as contributors to national revenue over time. The identified unconventional practices in tax reporting underscore the complexities faced by Syrian businesses in adapting to the regulatory environment, shedding light on the diverse strategies employed for navigating and integrating into the Egyptian market, whether through legal means or otherwise.

Boosting local trade with refugees' home countries has been covered in previous research. Displaced Syrians have a better understanding of their own country, Syria, and they already have established social networks there (Taylor et al., 2016; White & Tadesse, 2010). In 2022, Egypt witnessed a 19.4% surge in exports, totaling \$52.1 billion, a significant rise from the \$43.6 billion recorded in 2021. Notably, the annual exports of Egypt nearly doubled in 2022 compared to the \$10.9 billion reported in 2016. The nation has set an ambitious goal, aiming to achieve a total annual export value of \$100 billion by 2030 (Ahram online, 2023). Additionally, three participants highlighted their export activities, specifically in the lingerie sector, outside Egypt to countries such as Jordan and Gulf countries.

As per the 2023 ILO report, the textile and ready-made garments industry is currently experiencing rapid expansion, driven by the strategic efforts of both the government and key international investors (ILO, 2023). This industry generates approximately LE 300 billion annually, with exports showing a notable increase of 38% from January to the end of November 2021 (ILO, 2023). The same report highlights the food sector's impressive average growth rate of 20% over the five-year period from 2015 to 2020. In 2019, the number of restaurants grew to 40,605, surpassing the previous year by over a thousand units. Sales values reached \$7.5 billion, marking a significant increase of \$900 million or 14% compared to 2018 (ILO, 2023)

In the diverse landscape of customers among the interviewed business owners, the majority of clientele comprises Syrians and Egyptians, as reported by nine participants. Notably,

Egyptians represent the predominant customer base for two business owners, highlighting the significance of local patronage. Beyond this, a noteworthy demographic mix was observed, with customers hailing from various nationalities, including Iraqis, Saudis, Nigerian, Sudanese, and Jordanians, as indicated by five participants. Syrians have a well-established history of trade with Iraq and Saudi Arabia. Between 2006 and 2010, Iraq and Saudi Arabia ranked among Syria's top five export trading partners (World Bank, 2020b). Importantly, one participant stands out by exclusively catering to foreign nationalities, focusing on exporting products outside of Egypt.

Furthermore, the economic expert emphasizes this information, stating that Syrians' contributions to the Egyptian market go beyond economic integration. The expert underscores the positive impact on local businesses, fostering healthy competition, innovation, and knowledge transfer. Moreover, he explains that the quality of Syrian products has motivated Egyptians to enhance the quality of their own products. Local businesses have also begun to adopt Syrian innovations, contributing to a healthy competitive environment.

Within this varied customer base, distinct preferences and considerations were articulated by the business owners. Notably, one participant expressed a preference for working with Egyptians over Syrians, citing reservations about the latter's business practices. Specifically, the participant expressed discomfort with perceived manipulative tendencies exhibited by Syrians, especially in negotiating discounts and payment terms. He explained, *“The customers are mainly Egyptians. I prefer not to deal with Syrians frequently as they tend to resort to manipulation and try to avoid paying what they owe. Therefore, I decided to make all my customers Egyptian.”* This preference sheds light on the nuanced dynamics that business owners navigate in their interactions with customers, underlining the importance of understanding and adapting to different cultural and business norms within the diverse Egyptian market. That having been said, the diverse customer landscape among the interviewed business owners reflects a majority clientele of Syrians and Egyptians, emphasizing the significance of local patronage for most



business owners. The nuances and preferences articulated by the business owners underscore the importance of understanding and adapting to different cultural and business norms within the diverse Egyptian market.

Workers underscored their active participation in the Egyptian market by explicitly stating that they regularly send remittances to their families in Syria. Remittance patterns reveal variations in financial contributions to families back in Syria. Five participants do not send remittances, four send small amounts irregularly, and two used to send remittances but have since stopped. This diversity in remittance frequency and amount may reflect fluctuating financial capacities influenced by factors such as job stability and economic conditions.

The economic performance of the Syrian business owners shows that they are able to yield positive outcomes for the host country's economy. At the local level, these businesses have generated employment opportunities in Egypt and fulfilled tax obligations to the Egyptian authorities. On a national scale, Syrian businesses have a noticeable contribution to Egyptian tax revenue and participation in international trade. Their approach to providing employment for Syrian refugees primarily focuses on sectors where they have prior experience in Syria (see Table 1) and aims to tap into a parallel Syrian/Arab market. As Almo'akeh stated, while Syrians may not have significantly altered the Egyptian economy; however, they have added value to the local market. Almo'akeh emphasized that Syrians focus on middle-level industries, which constitute about 2.7% of the Egyptian economy, with a significant presence in the textile, food, and service sectors. The summary of the data collected for this study is provided in the table below.

**Table 1<sup>1</sup>: Summary of the data collection**

Type of business		Business scale			
Pre-relocation in Egypt <sup>2</sup>	Post-relocation in Egypt	Number of Employees	Tax (per year) <sup>3</sup>	Export to	Customers
C	C+S	110 (80 Egyptians, 30 Syrians)	X		50% Egyptians + 50% Syrians
C+I	I	16 (All Egyptians)	30	Gulf	Gulf
I	I + C	25 (22 Egyptians, 3 Syrians)	120		65% Egyptians + 35% Syrians
S	I	10 (4 Egyptians, 3 Syrians, 3 Sudanese)	X		80% Syrians + 20% Egyptians
I + C	I + C	50 (25 Egyptians, 25 Syrians)	150	Gulf and Arab countries	Gulf, Arab countries, and Egyptian
C + I + S	C + I	50 (35 Egyptians, 10 Syrians, 5 Sudanese)	50		60% Syrians + 40% Egyptians

C + I	C + I	200 (100 Egyptians, 100 Syrians)	X	Gulf, African and Arab countries	Gulf, African and Arab countries, and Egyptians.
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S	S	22 (14 Egyptians, 8 Syrians)	50		70% Egyptians + 20% Syrians + 10% Arabs
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S	S	100 (60 Egyptians, 40 Syrians)	X		60% Syrians + 35% Egyptians + 5% Arabs.
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S	S	13 (12 Egyptians, 1 Syrian)	200		45% Syrians + 45% Egyptians + 10% Arabs
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C	S + C	800 (640 Egyptians, 160 other nationalities including Syrians)	X		45% Syrians + 45% Egyptians + 10% Arabs
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S	S	25 (5 Egyptians, 20 Syrians)	60		60% Syrians + 35% Egyptians + 5% Arabs
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<sup>1</sup>Source: The data presented in this table is derived from interviews conducted with business owners as part of the study.

<sup>2</sup>S refers to Service, C refers to Commercial, I refer to Industrial.

<sup>3</sup>The term "tax" in this context refers to the annual average payment made by Syrian refugee business owners for their business tax, excluding any additional costs related to facilities and worker insurance.

### **4.3. Social and legal dimension**

The integration of refugees into a host country is influenced by the social conditions and legal framework in place. Socially, a refugee's experience in the host country can be either hindered or enhanced based on the nature of the relationship between refugees and the local population, whether it is unfriendly or harmonious. This dynamic also extends to their settlement and overall integration (Fussell, 2014; Kira et al., 2010; Miraftab, 2000). From a legal perspective, it is argued that a more comprehensive policy toward refugees plays a crucial role in facilitating their integration into host societies (Nyaoro, 2010). It has been argued that displaced people with higher economic resources are in better positions to integrate (Şimsek, 2020). The Egyptian government's recognition of varied procedures based on business types, showcasing an understanding of the diverse nature of investments and the implementation of tailored approaches. The privileges extended to foreign investors, such as protection against the imposition of additional fees after registering the business and the provision of investor residency rights, reflect the government's proactive efforts to attract and retain investors. However, as the economic expert noted, besides the legal status, other challenges, including macroeconomic issues and transparency concerns, emphasize the continuous need for improvement to build investor trust. Additionally, the discussion touches on currency-related risks and the impact of macroeconomic issues on foreign investment, emphasizing the delicate economic environment and the importance of addressing uncertainties to encourage investment and privatization.

On the Egyptian business landscape, the establishment procedures followed by the participants exhibited a uniformity characterized by the issuance of essential documents such as the commercial registry, tax evasion certificate, and company establishment documents. However, distinctions arose when examining the specific requirements for restaurants and factories. For restaurants, an additional step included obtaining a health certificate and conducting medical checks for all kitchen employees, while factories necessitated the acquisition of an industrial registry.

The Syrian business owners encountered a spectrum of challenges during the process of establishing their ventures in Egypt. Legally, four participants highlighted the extensive requirements for the industrial registry, coupled with a notably protracted process. For instance, a business owner operating a clothes manufacturing factory lamented, *“The cooperation from the authorities. Each completed stage brings forth new laws and regulations, requiring additional time and financial resource.”* Further, two business owners expressed the complexity of navigating legal regulations, while an equal number emphasized the overall length and exhaustion associated with the procedural aspects. When queried about holding an investor visa or their preferences regarding one, four business owners confirmed possession of an investor visa. In contrast, seven business owners noted the absence of an investor visa, relying primarily on educational visas obtained through their children’s enrollment in Egyptian schools. Notably, only one business owner is currently in the process of obtaining an investor residency. A jeans factory owner explained his experience in issue an investor residency before he decided to postpone the process and he mentioned that *“After completing the entire process for obtaining the industrial record and just before the final step, I opted to postpone the procedure. I discovered that an educational residency is more cost-effective and easier to obtain than an industrial residency.”*

Economically, the challenges were substantial, with five participants citing the deterioration in the Egyptian economy, another five pointing to concerns related to currency exchange rates, and two mentioning complications in importing and exporting goods. A restaurant owner noted that *“although I do not encounter procedural issues running a business in Egypt, the deteriorated economic situation and the high currency exchange rate due to currency floatation are causing severe problems. These issues include business-related challenges and decrease in our benefits.* Moreover, a plastic textures and loofah factory owner elaborated on distinct challenges in the export and import processes, stating, *“we consistently face issues every time we attempt to export/import goods because the government primarily focuses on the amount of foreign currency entering the country. Consequently, the government imposes stringent procedures”.*

Beyond legal and economic hurdles, various other difficulties surfaced. Bribing inspectors and officials emerged as a significant issue for five businesses, with some heavily depending on this practice to ensure the continuous operation of their ventures. For instance, an informal business owner managing clothes padding and embroidery factory stated, *“I don't have any official documentation, and my only recourse is to provide incentives to inspectors in order to prevent the imposition of fines.”*

Another business owner explained that despite having all the correct documents, inspectors approach him, pointing out minor issues, seemingly with the expectation of receiving some form of incentive. In a different scenario, a lingerie factory owner recounted difficulties encountered after providing an incentive to an officer during the industrial registry application process. The business owner explained, *“One of the essential documents was missing, and I was advised to offer an incentive to the officer to overlook it, thinking it would streamline the process. Unfortunately, the absence of that document later resulted in considerable challenges and delays, causing me to regret offering the incentive to the officer initially.”*

Two participants reported challenges in finding skilled labor, while another two highlighted issues with residency posing a risk to their businesses. Refusal to cooperate with paperwork by landowners posed challenges for two participants. Refusal to cooperate with paperwork by landowners posed challenges for two participants. Although residency is not a major issue for the majority of the participants, a lingerie business owner explained, "*Currently, I have my residency based on my son, who is enrolled in university. However, my son is graduating soon, and I do not know what to do for my residency.*" Interestingly, a clothes manufacturing factory owner mentioned, "*Trust in labor has become a common issue with the workforce these days. We now face a lack of trust in the workers due to their lack of commitment. Many workers worked with us, and after mastering the profession, they left, leading to a shortage of skilled workers.*"

Other difficulties included harassment by Bedouins seeking tribute, particularly in areas like Obour City (mentioned by one participant), complaints from local residents (mentioned by one participant), and competition with entrenched local brands (mentioned by two participants). Despite these challenges, three participants reported not encountering significant issues during the establishment process. Despite these challenges, three participants reported not encountering significant issues during the establishment process. For example, a female restaurant owner stated, "*I did not face any issues establishing a business in Egypt. On the contrary, I felt that we are more or less treated like Egyptians in the process of establishing the business.*" Another restaurant owner explained, "*Egyptians are very welcoming, and they love Syrians; thus, it facilitates our businesses more easily.*"

Confirming this information, both the economic expert and Almoa'keh mentioned the same challenges Syrian business owners might face when establishing their business in Egypt. For example, Almoa'keh highlighted the procedural challenges for Syrians starting businesses and stressed the need for improved communication between the Egyptian government and Syrian

business owners. He stated, "*More facilitations with stakeholders, decision-makers, and policymakers should be undertaken to discuss ways to ease the process for Syrian businesses in Egypt.*" He also identified residency and administrative procedures as the most significant challenges faced by Syrian business owners in Egypt.

Prior to their arrival in Egypt, two businesses demonstrated a proactive approach by conducting comprehensive research on the business landscape, in addition to assessing the specific area and the potential opportunities within the market. Notably, these business owners recognized the importance of being well-informed before establishing their ventures. A key factor contributing to the decision to establish businesses in Egypt was the warm and welcoming nature of the Egyptian people towards Syrians. One participant expressed the sentiment that "*Egypt is the land of business,*" emphasizing the favorable environment for entrepreneurial endeavors. Another participant highlighted the positive reception they received, stating, "*Egyptians love us, which is why our businesses are successful in Egypt.*" These insights underscore the significance of Egypt as a facilitator for the success of businesses initiated by foreign business owners.

In conclusion, the uniformity in essential document issuance for businesses in Egypt was apparent among the participants, but distinctions arose in specific requirements for restaurants and factories. The establishment process, however, proved challenging for Syrian business owners, encompassing legal complexities, economic obstacles, and a spectrum of operational difficulties. Despite these hurdles, the proactive research undertaken by some businesses before their arrival in Egypt, coupled with the warm reception from the Egyptian people, emphasizes the pivotal role of informed decision-making and the favorable business environment in contributing to the success of ventures initiated by foreign business owners in the Egyptian market.



Transitioning to the work environment within the businesses of the participants, various aspects were considered, including workers' insurance, days off, leave policies, and salary ranges. In terms of workers' insurance, four participants reported providing insurance coverage, but with variations in coverage based on nationality and legal status. Three of them specified that only Egyptian workers were insured due to challenges in ensuring Syrians. However, one participant bucked this trend by ensuring coverage for all workers, regardless of nationality. Notably, three participants highlighted that they only registered fixed, long-term employees for insurance, excluding newer hires.

The provision of days off exhibited diversity among participants. Some mentioned offering Fridays and Eid holidays as designated days off, while others provided one day off per week, allowing workers to choose the day. In contrast, one business owner adopted a stricter policy, granting no leaves throughout the week and deducting the day's wages if an employee was absent.

Leave policies varied, with two participants not deducting leave days from workers' salaries, while four deducted wages for leave periods. Regarding salary ranges, participants cited figures ranging from LE 4,000 to LE 30,000, depending on factors such as the worker's experience, the addition of bonuses, extra working hours, and seniority at work. Interestingly, one participant acknowledged paying office boys LE 2,000, which falls below the minimum wage in Egypt, highlighting potential labor disparities.

An additional dimension to salary considerations was introduced by one participant who revealed a unique approach to paying higher salaries to Syrian workers compared to Egyptians. This decision was justified by the participants based on the Syrians' challenging situation in their home country, necessitating higher earnings to cover additional expenses related to residency, rent, and other commitments. In terms of medical coverage, none of the participants provided

medical insurance for workers. However, five participants mentioned covering injuries sustained in the workplace. This nuanced approach to workers' well-being and financial compensation illustrates the varied policies and considerations adopted by business owners within the Egyptian business landscape.

From the workers' perspective and experience, the work environment is characterized by diverse working hour policies, with six participants working 9 hours and four working 10 hours. Days off policies vary, with four participants having no days off, five having one day off per week, and one having two days off per week. Leave policies are, primarily subtracted from the salary, with eight participants experiencing deductions for leaves, while two have leaves without corresponding deductions.

Regarding sick leaves, all participants indicated that only one day is granted if the injury occurs in the workplace. None of the participants reported having insurance, indicating a gap in social security and potential economic vulnerability for the workers. However, all participants mentioned having insurance coverage for injuries within the workplace, demonstrating a recognition of specific risks associated with their jobs.

The intricate web of financial responsibilities borne by Syrian workers in Egypt is vividly illustrated when examining the distribution of living expenses. This comprehensive breakdown encompasses a myriad of essential financial facets, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the financial challenges faced by the Syrian community. Among the primary components are housing costs, which include rent or mortgage payments and associated utilities. School fees for children's education emerge as another significant category, underlining the commitment to providing quality education for the younger generation and the sacrifices made to ensure their academic advancement.

Transportation expenses, covering daily commutes or vehicle maintenance, represent another crucial aspect of the financial landscape. Monthly expenses, ranging from groceries to miscellaneous bills, further compound the financial intricacies faced by Syrian workers. Family support, a cornerstone of many cultural values, is also factored into this financial equation, highlighting the responsibility and commitment to the well-being of extended family members.

The financial landscape extends to include healthcare considerations, with expenditures on medication and medical services forming a critical part of the overall living expenses. Additionally, preparations for marriage constitute a notable financial burden, underscoring the enduring cultural significance of weddings and the financial commitment associated with this milestone event.

In essence, the distribution of living expenses offers a nuanced glimpse into the layered financial obligations shouldered by Syrian workers in Egypt. It not only highlights the diverse and multifaceted nature of their financial responsibilities but also emphasizes the resilience and determination required to navigate and meet these challenges in a foreign land. This detailed breakdown serves as a testament to the economic intricacies that shape the daily lives of Syrian workers, shedding light on the multifaceted nature of their financial journey in Egypt.

In conclusion, the diverse policies and considerations related to workers' insurance, days off, leave policies, and salary ranges within the businesses of the participants underscore the complex nature of the work environment in the Egyptian business landscape. While some business owners demonstrate inclusivity by providing social insurance coverage for all workers, others face challenges in ensuring coverage for Syrians. The variations in leave policies, ranging from deductions for leave periods to more lenient approaches, highlight the flexibility and disparities in labor practices. Moreover, the introduction of a unique salary approach, paying higher wages to Syrian workers due to their challenging situation, adds another layer to the

multifaceted considerations that business owners navigate as they strive to create conducive and fair work environments within the diverse tapestry of the Egyptian business landscape. Further, the data suggests that Syrian workers in Egypt are actively participating in the labor market, utilizing social networks for employment, and displaying adaptability in their professional trajectories. However, challenges such as limited social insurance coverage and variations in income levels highlight potential areas for improvement in their social and economic insertion into the Egyptian labor market.

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## *Chapter 5: Discussion*

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In the exploration of the economic and social insertion of Syrian business owners in the Egyptian market, this chapter unfolds a narrative that is intricately woven within a diverse entrepreneurial landscape. Navigating through various dimensions, the data is meticulously aligned with existing literature that underscores the favorable influence of migrant businesses on host countries. The spotlight is directed towards the entrepreneurial diversity observed among the 12 participants, serving as a pivotal focal point that signifies the multifaceted nature characterizing Syrian ventures in Egypt. This diversity resonates with the documented adaptability within migrant entrepreneurial communities. A more in-depth examination of the expansion strategies employed by Syrian business owners, particularly those focused on local growth, establishes meaningful connections to the essential role migrants play in the insertion of displaced Syrians in the labor market. The examination of the involvement of Syrian businesses in taxable activities, their broader impact on the local market, and the noteworthy economic achievements of Syrian workers is thoughtfully aligned with insights drawn from established literature on economic assimilation, cultural considerations, and the positive social and economic contributions attributed to migrants. The exploration extends from the intricate dynamics surrounding legal structures and economic factors to government acknowledgments, all of which collectively influence the nuanced process of successful refugee inclusion. This chapter culminates by shedding light on the challenges faced by Syrian business owners during the establishment phase, providing a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted nature of the work environment.

First, the economic dimension of Syrian businesses in Egypt, as illuminated by the diverse entrepreneurial landscape, corresponds with existing literature that underscores the

positive influence of migrant businesses on host economies. Studies conducted by Akgündüz et al. (2015) and Orhan (2014) underscore that migrant businesses can exert a profound impact on both local and national economies. The entrepreneurial diversity observed among the 12 participants, encompassing various sectors beyond textiles and restaurants, aligns with the findings of these studies. This diversity serves as an indicator of the multifaceted nature of Syrian ventures in Egypt, echoing the adaptability and strategic innovation documented in migrant entrepreneurial communities (Dana, 2010).

The expansion strategies implemented by Syrian business owners, primarily concentrating on local growth, resonate with research underscoring the pivotal role of migrants in contributing to their insertion into the Egyptian market (Kloosterman & Rath, 2001). The commitment to fortifying their presence within the national business landscape reflects a nuanced and dynamic approach, as detailed by Kloosterman and Rath (2003) in their examination of migrant entrepreneurship. The capacity of Syrian business owners to transition from modest-scale ventures to substantial expansions aligns with the discoveries of Jones et al. (2018), who emphasize the entrepreneurial resilience and adaptability crucial for success in foreign business environments.

The purposeful incorporation of Egyptian workers into the workforce of Syrian enterprises corresponds with research that underscores the social inclusion dimensions of migrant entrepreneurship, as highlighted by Bakewell (2010). This conscious endeavor to cultivate a workforce that is diverse and inclusive transcends purely economic motivations, reflecting the conclusions drawn by Williams and Krasniqi (2018) regarding the social implications of migrant businesses. The flexibility and strategic considerations evident in recruitment strategies and labor practices are in harmony with the insights from Kloosterman et

al. (1999), underlining the significance of comprehending and maneuvering through the intricate dynamics within the host country's business environment.

The involvement of Syrian businesses in taxable activities is manifested in various ways, aligning with established literature on the economic assimilation of migrant business owners. Research conducted by Boschma and Fritsch (2009) emphasized the role played by migrant businesses in bolstering national revenue and underscores their dynamic impact on host countries. The atypical approaches observed, the taxable activities of Syrian businesses are characterized by atypical approaches to tax reporting. This aligns with the findings of Wadhwa et al. (2009), who highlight the intricacies encountered by migrant entrepreneurs in adapting to regulatory frameworks, including tax-related regulations. The observed spectrum of diverse strategies employed by Syrian business owners in taxable activities reflects their proactive efforts to navigate and involve into the complex labor to the broader economic assimilation of Syrian businesses within the Egyptian context.

The broader influence of Syrian enterprises on the local market, as demonstrated by their varied customer base, corresponds with research that highlights the favorable effects of migrant businesses on local economies (Dana, 2007). The intricate dynamics and preferences elucidated by business professionals emphasize the significance of comprehending and adjusting to diverse cultural and business norms within the heterogeneous Egyptian market, aligning with the insights from Drori et al. (2009) regarding the cultural aspects of migrant entrepreneurship. Furthermore, the introduction of new diversity businesses by Syrians in the Egyptian market resonates with the conclusions drawn by Saxenian (2006) regarding the ripple effects of migrant entrepreneurship in host economies.

This economic success story intertwines with the complex process of incorporating Syrian refugees into the Egyptian labor market, a journey shaped by various factors. Scholars

such as Hatton (2015) and Bloemraad (2006) underscore the significance of social conditions and interactions in the assimilation of refugees. The successful integration is closely linked to the establishment of harmonious relationships between Syrian refugees and the local population, as indicated by studies on refugee integration (Esses et al., 2017; Zetter, 2018). Positive engagements with the local community have a substantial impact on the smooth integration of Syrian refugees into Egyptian society, cultivating a sense of belonging and acceptance (Bloemraad, 2006).

From a legal standpoint, a clearly outlined legal structure is essential for the insertion of displaced Syrians and safeguarding their rights, protecting them against new fees, and providing them with residency rights. Betts and Milner's research (2018) emphasizes the significance of comprehensive refugee policies for successful incorporation into the labor market. Moreover, it is noteworthy that many Syrian business owners, in their pursuit of local growth, tend to recruit Egyptians more than fellow Syrians. Interestingly, some business owners mentioned a preference for Egyptian workers over Syrian workers, citing factors such as work ethic, skills, and adaptability.

These recruitment patterns highlight the complex dynamics of labor market integration and the need to understand the preferences and decisions of business owners. Economic factors, such as employment opportunities for Egyptian workers at Syrian businesses, income levels, and access to financial resources, underscore the role of a higher economic status in improving integration prospects for displaced individuals (Brell et al., 2020). The economic landscape and employment practices within the business community contribute to the successful insertion of displaced populations into the Egyptian labor market.

The acknowledgement by the Egyptian government of diverse procedures and privileges for various business types reflects an awareness of the heterogeneous nature of investments.



Blonigen and Piger (2014), stress the significance of customized strategies for different sectors. However, despite this recognition, challenges such as macroeconomic issues and transparency concerns, as identified by economic experts (World Bank, 2020), underscore the necessity for continual enhancements in policies and procedures to foster investor trust.

During the establishment phase, Syrian business owners encountered difficulties documented in research on migrant entrepreneurship (Drori et al., 2009). The intricate legal procedures, exemplified by the prolonged industrial registry process, underscore the imperative for more streamlined protocols (OECD, 2019). Economic hurdles tied to the Egyptian economy and fluctuations in currency exchange rates align with findings in studies addressing the economic challenges confronted by business owners in foreign environments (Saxenian, 2006). Operational challenges, such as bribery and the scarcity of skilled labor, parallel research on the obstacles faced by businesses in establishing operations abroad (Kloosterman et al., 1999). However, the study found that, while some specific details may differ, such as residency issues, many of the challenges faced by Syrian and Egyptian business owners are interconnected. Legal, economic, and operational hurdles are shared between Syrian and Egyptian business owners (Mansour, 2001; Schoof, 2006; Wieneke & Gries 2011; Saif 2011).

Shifting the focus to the work environment, the diverse policies observed across businesses are consistent with findings in studies that explore the variability of employment policies in different countries (Brewster et al., 2014). The financial burdens shouldered by Syrian workers, as documented in research addressing the financial challenges of migrant workers (Luthra et al., 2018), offer insights into the intricate nature of their struggles. This detailed analysis not only underscores the financial complexities experienced by Syrian workers but also highlights their resilience in navigating challenges in a foreign setting, as indicated by research on the adaptability of migrant workers (Drori et al., 2009).

Despite encountering challenges, the positive reception from the Egyptian people is consistent with research on social dynamics and their impact on foreign ventures (Johanson and Vahlne, 2011). The proactive research conducted by certain businesses prior to their arrival underscores the importance of thorough preparation and investigation to navigate the intricacies of a foreign business landscape (Drori et al., 2009). The multifaceted nature of the challenges faced by Syrian workers indicates areas where policies and practices can be improved, as emphasized in research on the social and economic integration of refugees (Brell et al., 2020; Esses et al., 2017). Addressing these challenges will contribute to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for Syrian refugees seeking to establish themselves in Egypt's business landscape.

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## *Chapter 6: Conclusions*

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The research sheds light on a critical aspect often overlooked in existing literature, emphasizing the positive impact of Syrian businesses on the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market. By examining the economic contributions and employment opportunities created by Syrian business owners, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role played by these businesses in facilitating the insertion of displaced Syrians in the Egyptian labor market.

The study emphasizes the transformative role of entrepreneurial strategies, particularly those focused on local growth, in facilitating the insertion of displaced Syrians into the Egyptian labor market. The commitment to strengthening their presence within the national business landscape reflects resilience and adaptability crucial for success. By concentrating on local expansion, Syrian businesses actively contribute to job creation, benefiting both Egyptians and Syrians and influencing broader labor market dynamics.

Moreover, the findings of the study highlight a significant correlation between the economic insertion of displaced Syrians and the overall skill diversity and competitiveness of the workforce. The active participation of Syrians in the labor market brings with it a valuable infusion of diverse expertise. This introduction of varied skills and knowledge is expected to have a positive impact on productivity levels, ultimately contributing to the development of a more adaptable and competitive labor force.

Beyond the economic considerations explored in this study, the anticipated impacts of displaced Syrians' insertion into the Egyptian labor market extend to positive influences on cultural and social dynamics within workplaces. The introduction of cultural diversity resulting from the economic engagement of displaced Syrians is poised to foster a range of positive

outcomes, enriching the overall work environment. One notable expected influence is the enhancement of creativity within workplaces. The diverse cultural backgrounds and perspectives brought by displaced Syrians can serve as a wellspring of creative ideas and innovative approaches. Exposure to different ways of thinking, problem-solving, and adapting to challenges can lead to the development of novel solutions and a more dynamic and inventive workplace culture. Furthermore, the economic insertion of displaced Syrians is anticipated to contribute to improved problem-solving capabilities within the workforce. The diverse experiences and viewpoints brought by individuals who have faced and overcome challenges in different contexts can be valuable assets in tackling complex issues. The varied skill sets and problem-solving approaches fostered by cultural diversity can lead to more comprehensive and effective solutions, benefitting the overall productivity and resilience of the workforce.

The findings of this study shed light on the resilience and adaptability introduced to the Egyptian labor market through the economic insertion of displaced Syrians. This infusion of resilience and adaptability is a noteworthy aspect that extends beyond the immediate economic considerations, carrying implications for the broader dynamics of the labor market. The resilience exhibited by displaced Syrians, often arising from their previous experiences of overcoming adversity, and displacement, becomes a valuable asset in the face of economic challenges. The labor force, now enriched with diverse backgrounds and experiences, is viewed as better equipped to navigate uncertainties and fluctuations in the market. The ability to persevere, innovate, and adapt to changing conditions contributes to the overall resilience of the labor market, making it more robust and capable of withstanding economic shocks. Essentially, the economic insertion of displaced Syrians not only enhances the immediate labor market dynamics but also introduces qualities of resilience and adaptability that contribute to the overall strength and sustainability of the labor market.

Moreover, the study demonstrates the deliberate insertion of Egyptian workers into the workforce of Syrian enterprises represents a conscious effort towards social inclusion. This strategic move goes beyond mere economic considerations and underscores the broader dimensions of migrant entrepreneurship, emphasizing diversity and inclusivity within the workplace. The decision to incorporate local talent into the fabric of Syrian businesses speaks to a collaborative approach, fostering a harmonious coexistence between the Syrian entrepreneurial community and the indigenous workforce. Such inclusive practices contribute not only to the economic development of the host country but also to the social fabric, fostering cross-cultural understanding and collaboration.

The process of insertion of Syrian displaced individuals into the Egyptian market is a nuanced and intricate journey influenced by a myriad of factors. As revealed in this study, a key element shaping this insertion is the positive engagements that Syrian displaced people foster with the local community. These interactions, characterized by mutual understanding and collaboration, significantly contribute to facilitating the inclusion process, fostering a deep sense of belonging and acceptance within the host society. The study underscores the significance of these engagements in not only facilitating the professional assimilation of Syrian displaced individuals but also in cultivating meaningful relationships within the broader community. This social cohesion becomes a cornerstone in the successful insertion of displaced populations, fostering an environment where individuals feel valued, respected, and an integral part of the societal fabric.

From a legal standpoint, the study sheds light on the critical importance of a clearly outlined legal structure in facilitating the successful incorporation of Syrian displaced individuals into the Egyptian market. A well-defined legal framework serves as a foundational pillar, providing a structured pathway for individuals to navigate and establish themselves within the

host country's workforce. The study highlights the importance of legal clarity, underscoring the need for policies that not only acknowledge the unique circumstances of displaced populations but also establish a supportive infrastructure for their smooth integration. The study underscores the interplay of social and legal factors in creating an environment conducive to the successful insertion of displaced individuals, emphasizing the need for comprehensive policies that recognize the unique challenges and contributions of this population in the host country's market.

The study presents the challenges faced by Syrian business owners during the establishment phase, such as intricate legal procedures and economic hurdles tied to the Egyptian economy. Furthermore, the study sheds light on the intricate economic hurdles that are inherently linked to the Egyptian economy, where these business owners choose to set up their businesses. The economic challenges encompass a spectrum of issues ranging from market fluctuations to currency exchange rates, intricately shaping the entrepreneurial landscape and necessitating strategic adaptations. Operational challenges also come to the forefront in the research, notably the pervasive issue of bribery that confronts business owners attempting to establish a foothold. The prevalence of corrupt practices not only adds an ethical dimension but also heightens the complexity of business operations, demanding astute maneuvering within a moral and legal framework.

By examining the experiences of Syrian business owners in Egypt, the research adds depth and nuance to our understanding of the challenges and opportunities inherent in the economic and social insertion of displaced populations. This nuanced perspective is invaluable for researchers, policymakers, and practitioners working in the fields of migration studies, entrepreneurship, and economic development. The study advocates for a holistic understanding of the socio-economic context and the implementation of strategies that foster not only economic contributions but also social inclusion and community resilience.

As the Syrian community continues to contribute to Egypt's market, it is essential for policymakers and stakeholders to recognize the value of entrepreneurship in fostering self-sufficiency and promoting inclusion. The findings of this study underscore the need for creating tailored policies that support and harness the entrepreneurial potential of displaced populations, ultimately contributing to the broader economic and social fabric of host countries like Egypt.

In essence, the study serves as a beacon guiding the way forward in harnessing the full potential of displaced populations, particularly Syrian business owners, in host countries like Egypt. By providing a rich tapestry of insights into both the contributions and challenges, the research lays the groundwork for informed decision-making, policy formulation, and collaborative efforts aimed at creating inclusive and sustainable environments for migrant business owners. To enhance the depth and breadth of this understanding, it is recommended to conduct longitudinal studies that track the economic and social assimilation of Syrian business owners over time in future research endeavors. This longitudinal approach would enable a comprehensive assessment of the sustainability of their contributions in Egypt and the effectiveness of policies and support mechanisms in the long run.

Furthermore, since this study does not have a specific gender focus, it is intriguing to explore the experiences of Syrian displaced female business owners. This targeted examination is crucial for understanding the unique challenges and opportunities that female business owners within the Syrian displaced population may encounter. By delving into the gender-specific dynamics of entrepreneurship, the research could offer valuable insights for developing gender-sensitive policies and support programs. This additional dimension of analysis will further enrich the understanding of the diverse facets of Syrian displaced entrepreneurship, thereby facilitating more targeted and inclusive initiatives to support this population in host countries like Egypt.

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## Appendix A: IRP Approval

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Please note that IRB approval does not automatically ensure approval by CAPMAS, an Egyptian government agency responsible for approving some types of off-campus research. CAPMAS issues are handled at AUC by the office of the University Counsellor. The IRB is not in a position to offer any opinion on CAPMAS issues, and takes no responsibility for obtaining CAPMAS approval.  
This approval is valid for only one year. In case you have not finished data collection within a year, you need to apply for an extension.

A small rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be "H. KOTB".

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## *Appendix B: Interviews Questions Guide:*

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### **Interviews with Syrian business owners;**

- Age/ gender/ education?
- When did you arrive in Egypt?
- The scale of the business. What is the business? When did it start? How did it start?
- Who are the customers (customers are from where and their nationalities are)?
- Do you have any business in any other country other than Egypt?
- Did you have a business back in Syria?
- How many workers do you have?
- What is the nationality composition of your workers (Syrians, Egyptians, others)?
- How do you recruit the worker?
- What are the difficulties of running a business as a Syrian here in Egypt?
- What is the salary range of workers in your business?
- Since your business is formal business, how much taxes you pay?
- Do you have medical insurance for your workers?

### **Interviews with Syrian workers:**

- Age/ sex/ education?
- When did you arrive in Egypt?
- What did you use to work in Syria before he came to Egypt?
- What is your current occupation? When did you start?
- How did you find this job?
- How long have you been working in this workplace?
- How much are you getting paid?
- Working hours?
- Do you have rest days?
- Do you have annual leaves?
- Do you have social security coverage?
- How do you spend your money? (housing, transportation, daily/monthly expenses, etc.)
- Do you have family members in Syria? Do you send them money? How many times frequently and how much approximately?

### **Interview with the Syrian association chairperson:**

- Age/ gender/ education?
- When did you arrive in Egypt?
- What do you think about the insertion of the Syrians in Egypt?
- Does that mean that they didn't impact the Egyptian economy?
- Any other significant change they did?
- What are the difficulties that investors face in Egypt?

- What do you think about the employers' environment in Syrian workplaces?

**Interview with the economic expert:**

- What are the procedures investors go through to get investment permits?
- What are the terms of the investment permit?
- What are the privileges given to investors in terms of residence permits and other facilities?
- What are the difficulties investors might face establishing a business in Egypt?
- Are there currency-related risks that foreign investors need to consider? How do you think the current economic situation impacts investment in Egypt?
- What do you think of Syrians' investments in Egypt?
- Do you think they are economically inserted in Egypt? If yes, how?
- How do you think foreign investment in general and Syrian businesses in Egypt impact local businesses?