

Original Paper

Evaluating the Roles and Challenges of Government in Social Protection for Immigrants in Sweden: A Qualitative Analysis

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Received: June 19, 2025

Accepted: August 22, 2025

Online Published: September 11, 2025

doi:10.22158/assc.v7n5p16

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22158/assc.v7n5p16>

Abstract

People are constantly migrating in modern times, either permanently or temporarily, to reside in new regions. Sweden has long been a popular destination for immigrants seeking better prospects for its extensive welfare state. However, the government and society at large face a number of challenges in integrating immigrants into Sweden's social protection system. The functions and challenges the Swedish government faces in offering immigrants equitable social protection are examined in this study, with a focus on implementation tactics and societal dynamics. Qualitative research methods were applied using primary data sources through thirteen interviews between migrants and government service providers. By analyzing the data, it can be said that through the execution of constitutional principles, the Swedish government should follow a comprehensive, inclusive approach to Sweden's immigrant communities, revising existing support programs and regular monitoring of social protection measures to ensure long-term economic benefits.

Keywords

Immigrants, Social protection, Integration, Sweden, Government

1. Introduction

Sweden is now one of the top destinations in Europe for immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers due to immigration, which has become a distinguishing feature of the country's cultural and demographic evolution. For people looking for better living conditions, economic opportunity, or safety from violence, Sweden is a popular destination due to its robust economy, human rights commitment, and

large social welfare system. Sweden's foreign-born population has grown dramatically over the last 20 years, more than doubling from 2000 to 2022, when 2.14 million of the country's 10.61 million citizens were foreign-born. That's roughly more than 20 percent. The percentage increases to 26% if a more inclusive definition is applied, encompassing those who were born in Sweden but have two parents who are foreign-born (Hedlund, 2024). In general, Sweden is well-known for its extensive welfare system and has long maintained the values of equality and universal access to social protection. The Swedish welfare state, often referred to as the Social Democratic model, is a social policy based on equality-promoting principles and a strategy to include the middle class in the social protection system. It combines universal benefits for residents and earnings-related entitlements for the economically active population (Ahlén & Palme, 2020). Besides, in Sweden, recent immigration had a negative impact on views toward universal spending, suggesting that ethnic heterogeneity has a negative impact on support for social welfare spending (Eger, 2010). The growing diversity caused by immigration has made it more difficult for the Swedish government to guarantee that everyone, especially immigrants, receives services in an efficient and equal manner. The way that structures and policies of the government change to accommodate a changing population while protecting the integrity of Sweden's welfare state is called into question by this complexity. Economic, social, and administrative complexity make it difficult for the Swedish government to provide social protection for immigrants. Language hurdles, unrecognized credentials, and mismatched talents are just a few of the obstacles that immigrants frequently encounter; they might result in unemployment and a greater need on welfare payments. Attempts to develop inclusive policies are hampered by housing constraints and societal discussions regarding national identity and cultural integration. Other difficulties include administrative hold-ups and inefficiency in social services and asylum claim processing. So, it is essential for the welfare state of the Swedish government to strike a balance between immediate humanitarian demands and long-term financial viability.

The qualitative research method is applied where the main aim of this study is to explore the role and challenges of the Swedish government in providing social protection to immigrants. Specifically, the main research question is how does the government make decisions about organizing immigrants, and what challenges does the government face in providing them with social protection. This study focuses on analyzing decision-making processes, reviewing the practical and structural obstacles that the government faces, and determining the broader impact of these issues on immigrants and society. Again, this also helps to find out the services gap needs and demands of immigrants in Sweden.

The recommendations suggest a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing the unique needs of immigrant communities in Sweden. The government should revise existing support programs to better meet these needs. Economic integration is crucial for social protection, with collaboration with companies to establish apprenticeships, vocational training programs, and job routes for immigrants. Adequate funding is necessary for these initiatives, considering the long-term economic benefits of well-integrated immigrant populations. Cultural integration is also essential. After all regular

monitoring and evaluation of social protection measures can help identify gaps and make necessary revisions.

2. Literature Review

The three main concepts of the study are: immigrants, social protection under government intervention, and roles & challenges. These fundamental concepts have aided in the development of this study as well as in relating to theories, evaluating the results, and having discussions. Zolberg defines immigrant as the people who move as a result of larger political, social, and economic changes are known as immigrants, highlighting migration as a structural process (Zolberg, 1989). According to Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), an individual who was born outside of their country of citizenship and currently resides in the host nation is an immigrant (OECD, International Migration Outlook 2017, 2017). When immigrants are separated from their families of origin, they are less likely to adjust to their new situation than those who have close family ties or who have family members with them (Crush & Dodson, 2010). On the other hand, social protection is a framework for lowering vulnerability and poverty through government initiatives including unemployment insurance, healthcare, and cash transfers (Barrientos & Hulme, 2009). Devereux and Sabates-Wheeler propose a transformative approach to social protection, extending beyond safety nets to address structural inequalities (Devereux & Sabates-Wheeler, 2004). Social protection is defined by the International Labour Organization (ILO) as policies aimed at guaranteeing healthcare access and income security, especially for vulnerable groups, as a fundamental right. The ILO's commitment to sustainable development and human rights places a strong emphasis on the role that government action plays in creating universal social protection programs (ILO, 2017). Ian Gough and Geoff Woods analyze the global government's role in social protection, highlighting the need to balance economic efficiency with social equity (Gough & Woods, 2004). The Swedish government has made it clear that everyone should have equal rights, duties, and opportunities in regards to discrimination and segregation, regardless of the ethnic or cultural background of immigrants (Cetrez, DeMarinis, Pettersson, & Shakra, 2020). In one report, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) examines that, Sweden's well-established asylum system, dedication to resettlement, and integration initiatives have made a substantial contribution to global vulnerable immigrants' protection. It advocates for the empowerment of displaced women and girls and is a powerful voice for solidarity and just EU refugee policies. Sweden is commended by UNHCR for its social protection and humanitarian leadership (UNHCR, 2022). Sweden lacks a single regulation for immigrants' integration into society and the labor market. Since the 1970s, various strategies have been implemented, including the Ministry of Integration and Gender Equality in 2007 and the Ministry of Labor in 2014. The integration of immigrants in Sweden is governed by a number of laws and regulations, including the Act on the Responsibility of Measures for the Introduction of Certain Newcomers (Cetrez, DeMarinis, Pettersson, & Shakra, 2020). Regardless of their country of origin, immigrants in Sweden are granted universal social benefits, such

as housing, healthcare, education, and income support, after they are permitted residence (Esping-Andersen, 1990). Numerous integration initiatives are offered by the Swedish government, including civic orientation programs, vocational training, and Swedish language instruction. These are designed to give immigrants the skills they need to enter the workforce and fit in with society (Andersson Joona, Wennemo Lanninger, & Sundström, 2016). Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) provides pensions and unemployment insurance are available to immigrants once they meet certain residency and work requirements (Försäkringskassan). In spite of those, immigration has put more strain on Sweden's social system, especially after the 2015 refugee crisis, which has resulted in lengthier wait times for integration, housing, and medical care (OECD, Social Protection in Sweden, 2020). Sweden's welfare system faces financial challenges due to the increasing number of immigrants, some of whom take longer to contribute due to unemployment or low wages (Lindbeck, 1997). Public opposition to high immigration levels has led to political pressure to restrict welfare benefits for immigrants, complicating the government's ability to maintain equitable social protection policies (Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2013). One report shows that the Swedish government is preparing a study on migration costs and benefits, focusing on integrating large numbers of illiterate adults with children, a challenge compared to previous waves. It also writes that even the Social Democratic party (which always supports immigrants) has now released a report acknowledging that the country is in crisis as a result of two decades of failing integration and uncontrolled immigration (Hedlund, 2024). From the overall discussion, it is evident that the Swedish government is making every effort to offer immigrants social security, despite a number of issues with the policy's implementation and some flaws. These government initiatives are being questioned and partly impeded. This discussion also helps to find the gap between the lack of services and the needs of immigrants in Sweden.

3. Theoretical Frameworks

Sir William Beveridge, known as the "father of the welfare state," introduced a comprehensive welfare state in 1942, based on universalism, providing coverage for all citizens. A welfare state uses organized power to modify market forces by guaranteeing minimum income, narrowing insecurity by allowing individuals to meet social contingencies like sickness, old age, and unemployment, and offering the best standards of social services to all citizens, regardless of status or class (Andersen, 2012). A welfare state with open borders could become a haven for poor immigrants, putting a fiscal burden on the state, leading to less-generous benefits or restricted immigration (Razin, Sadka, & Suwankiri, 2011). Increasing the rights and accommodating for migrants can exacerbate the sustainability of a large welfare state (Banting & Kymlicka, 2006). Sweden's postwar open borders and migratory trends have led to one of Europe's largest foreign-born populations and the seventh-largest proportion of refugees globally. Even, introduced dual citizenship benefits for immigrants who have lived in Sweden for five consecutive years, although it did not impose any language requirements or citizenship tests. In general, immigrants are given the same social and economic rights as Swedish employees (Cantrell, 2022).

On the other hand, integration theory explores how immigrants adapt to new societies, focusing on the balance between cultural identity preservation and participation in the host country's social, economic, and political life. John Berry emphasizes the significance of social protection in promoting immigrant inclusion, balancing cultural identity with societal participation, by addressing fundamental needs like housing, healthcare, education, and employment (Berry, 1997).

In the case of Sweden, welfare state theory and integration theory are crucial in ensuring immigrant inclusion and social cohesion. These theories highlight the challenges of maintaining a universal welfare state amid growing immigration. The success of integration depends on the welfare state's ability to adapt policies and resources to meet diverse needs and foster mutual acceptance. Therefore, these two theories are important for this study to explore the research question and the objectives.

4. Objectives and Research Question

The main objective of the study was to understand the role and challenges of government in social protection for immigrants in Sweden. The main research question was: How does the government make decisions about organizing immigrants, and what challenges does the government face in providing them with social protection? The specific objectives of the study were to: 1) Understand the professional standards that government-sponsored social protection services follow while coordinating with immigrants. 2) To explore the present scenario of social protection for immigration in Sweden. 3) To find out the services gap needs and demands of immigrants in Sweden.

5. Research Methodology

5.1 Study Area and Location

This study was conducted in two well-known cities (Stockholm and Malmö) of Sweden. Stockholm, Sweden's capital and largest urban area, is home to 27% of its population, primarily immigrants, with a history of receiving refugees from war zones. With a municipal population of 357,377 in 2022. Malmö is the sixth-largest city in the Nordic area and the third-largest city in Sweden, behind Stockholm and Gothenburg. Approximately one-third of Malmö's population was immigrants (Visit Sweden, 2025). The nation's overall percentage of foreign-born citizens has risen. Compared to the rest of the country, the large cities have a higher proportion of foreign-born residents.

5.2 Data Collection Methods and Instruments

Certain data collection techniques, including questionnaires and interviews, are likely more recognizable to many readers than others (Bryman, 2016). In this research, two different kinds of questionnaires were used in the study, which was directed by the qualitative method. One was an interview with immigrant's respondents, and the other was govt. service providers. The interview questionnaire was divided into various sections, and solely asked descriptive or opinion-based questions. The goal of both interviews was to examine the government's social protection program in order to gauge the current state of affairs and the complexity of immigrants in Sweden. For ease of

comprehension, the questionnaire was developed in English. Prior to its ultimate use, the questionnaire underwent pre-testing to assess its validity and usefulness. Reports from numerous national and international organizations as well as national and international periodicals were the sources of secondary level data.

5.3 Sampling

Non-probability purposive sampling was utilized in this study to gather qualitative data through Interviews. This study was completed with only thirteen samples for the lockdown situation (Covid-19), seven from Malmö and six from Stockholm. Selection criteria were based on Swedish immigration laws, which stipulate that individuals with work permits and related documentation are eligible for residency within four years and can acquire Swedish citizenship within 5-10 years. Therefore, respondents were chosen from those who had legally lived in Sweden at list 5 years. This demographic provided valuable insights into social protection mechanisms for immigrants. Data collection was conducted in two phases during 2022. In the first half of the study period, data were gathered from Malmö, and the process concluded in March with data collection from Stockholm. The immigrant participant comprised four males (two from each city) and five females (three from Malmö and two from Stockholm). Other participants of four (two male and two female) government service providers were those who defined the government's function and difficulties. There were two from Malmö and two from Stockholm. The purposive approach ensured that respondents' profiles aligned with the study's objectives, providing relevant and meaningful data.

5.4 Data Analysis Techniques

Interviews are a qualitative research technique that entails in-depth discussions with individuals who possess specialized information on a subject. So, with the participants' permission, these interviews were audio recorded utilizing an encrypted recording device. Conversely, the interviews, including open-ended questions, were taken by note. Each interview took between 60 and 70 minutes. Despite taking a lot of effort, this allowed for a deeper understanding of the data. To ensure secrecy, no outside help was requested for data processing. Each interview's transcriptions were kept in a different file. Here, the coding scheme was as follows: For instance, five Malmö-based respondents (immigrants) were assigned the codes m001, m002, m003, m004, and m005. Similarly, the codes for Stockholm respondents were s001, s002, s003, and s004. Among the four government service providers, Stockholm was labeled as gs01 and gs02, whereas Malmö was coded as gm01 and gm02.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

Questions about the treatment of study participants who serve as subjects or informants are central to the field of research ethics. It may seem obvious that these individuals should have the best protection available from any harm or wrong that may arise from their involvement in research (Swedish Research Council, D. E., 2017). In this research participants gave their specific verbal and written agreement in a standard manner after being fully informed of the study's goals, and I placed a high priority on protecting their privacy and confidentiality as well as their opinions. In reporting the

statistics, only particular IDs and gender are mentioned in order to protect participant identities. We took steps to guarantee that the results are presented in a transparent manner during the reporting and publication process, paying special attention to preventing harm to any parties involved in the study process. Overall, this research took full care to maintain research ethics.

6. Results

The results of the role and challenges of the Swedish government in social protection for immigrants reveal a complex interaction of its progressive welfare state principles with the pragmatic problems of how these principles are implemented. The following themes are used to discuss the results: roles and challenges pertaining to the Swedish government social assistance program for immigrants.

6.1 Policy Development and Implementation

The Swedish government is actively engaged in creating inclusive policies that give immigrants access to housing, financial support, healthcare, and education. And to do this, the first thing the Swedish government does is to shelter these vulnerable immigrants in asylum camps. One of the respondents narrated the following:

My family and I didn't have a place to stay when we first arrived. We settled into the camp primarily. Some government service provider groups, however, had made arrangements for our safe housing after a few days. We started our stay there by paying the bare minimum in rent." (ID: m002).

Immediately, the municipalities have been tasked by the Swedish Migration Board with building temporary housing for immigrants from several war-torn nations. The local municipality provides them loans so that they can arrange accommodation to stay and meet primary expenses. Simultaneously, the government makes a list of immigrants and submits it to Migrationsverket (the Swedish Migration Agency) in order to secure their initial residence permit or visa in Sweden. The Swedish government first issues LMA cards to these immigrants as evidence of residency. The card certifies that the individual is an asylum applicant and may be in Sweden while awaiting a decision, even though it is not an identity card (Migrationsverket, 2025). One of the government service providers said:

We generally concern about how soon new immigrants in Sweden get their LMA cards. (ID: gs01).

Another government service provider said:

The LMA card is a plastic card bearing the immigrant's photo proving they are applying for asylum. (ID: gm02).

6.2 Integration Programs

The Swedish government offers specialized programs to help immigrants gain socioeconomic skills, including labor market integration and Swedish language instruction. Immigrants with Swedish personal numbers must register with the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsformedlingen) for priority jobs, training, and allowances. Swedish fluency is a prerequisite for employment, and the government offers free Swedish for Immigrants (SFI) language classes for rapid language acquisition.

Schools are also established to educate immigrant children in their native tongue, with some communes having other language schools, such as Arabic or English-language schools. One person said, *Without a Swedish personal number, I was unable to access SFI. However, I was able to enroll in the SFI sessions and develop my fluency in Swedish after I eventually obtained my personal number (ID: s003).*

In this regard, government service providers stated:

We make every effort to provide new immigrants with Swedish personal numbers as soon as possible. However, because to the large number of candidates, there are occasionally minor delays (ID: gm02). SFI classes require a Swedish personal number and help immigrants get employment. (ID: gs02).

6.3 Protections under Law

To protect immigrant rights and guarantee equitable access to social services, the government upholds anti-discrimination laws and regulations. Many of these immigrants have suffered serious violations of their human rights. According to a government service provider,

Our government strives to ensure that all immigrants enjoy all civil rights equally with native citizens (ID: gs01).

But since arriving in Sweden, they have been able to use all the benefits of their citizenship. The majority of respondents said that they are grateful to be here. Sweden's strong human rights foundation ensures equal rights and legal assistance for all citizens, regardless of race or ethnicity. Most immigrants from Muslim-majority countries face religious obstacles and harassment, leading to trauma. However, after arriving in Sweden, experts provide motivational training to help traumatized immigrants heal and start a new life. Another government service providers affirmed,

Many immigrants discover new purpose and learn to live again, after receiving motivational training from Swedish government social services programs. (ID: gm02)

6.4 Long-term Planning

Replacing short-term crisis management with long-term integration strategies that tackle structural injustices. The Swedish government brings these immigrants into long-term facilities to address systemic inequities by replacing short-term crisis management with long-term integration strategies. So that, these immigrants are granted a permanent residence permit after completing certain procedures and remaining in Sweden for five years without engaging in any offensive behavior. It should be noted here that some of the respondents had a Swedish passport before to the year of five. According to most of the immigrants' responses, the migration process in Sweden is easier than in other countries, and the Swedish government helps a lot to get resident permits. Government service providers assured,

The Swedish government is more active in granting residency permits compared to other nations, but due to the high number of immigrants, final decisions can take longer (ID: gm01).

Immigrants must return the LMA cards to Migrationsverket once they have obtained a Swedish passport and a permanent resident permit. (ID: gm02)

6.5 Integration Challenges

Moving to a new country can present many difficulties for migrants, especially when it comes to adjusting to the language, culture, and way of life of the new country. In Sweden, learning Swedish is frequently required in order to get employment, which might be a difficult undertaking for certain immigrants. This situation often leads to financial challenges, which increases the pressure on immigrants and their families. One respondent stated,

I didn't even know Swedish, so I couldn't even handle a job or participate in any manual labor. I didn't have much financial means when I first came to Sweden from my war-torn country. (ID: m005).

In difficult circumstances, some people may resort to illegal activities to make a living. Host countries should address this problem by enacting flexible laws that enable immigrants to find acceptable jobs while also trying to improve their language skills. Immigrants with children face challenges in integrating into the educational system due to cultural differences, bullying, linguistic difficulties, and ostracization, while parents struggle to support their children academically due to limited understanding. As, Sweden is very strict about their language education, so both immigrants and the government face many problems. In this case, govt. service providers said,

It is true that many immigrants do not obtain employment despite possessing the necessary qualifications or abilities due to language barriers. (ID: gs02)

The language barrier is one of the biggest challenges. Without being able to communicate in the language of their new nation, migrants find it difficult to find work in any industry, even those that could normally hire them. (ID: gs01)

6.6 Financial Instability

Financial difficulties might result from a lack of employment possibilities, low pay, and excessive living expenses. Moreover, according to the new rules of the Swedish government since June last year, the minimum monthly salary for an immigrant to get a work permit should be 28,480 Swedish kronor. Whereas previously it was 13,000 Swedish kronor per month. The least uneducated or semi-educated immigrants are the ones who are affected the most. Because they usually do industrial or labor-intensive jobs. And the monthly income in these jobs is not that high. As a result, they are facing a financial crisis, and on the other hand, their stay in Sweden is also becoming increasingly uncertain. This new initiative taken by the Swedish government has become one of the social protection challenges for immigrants. This financial uncertainty affects their ability to sustain themselves, making it more difficult for them to invest in the local economy. One responder stated,

I work as a laborer because I am not much educated. Furthermore, the monthly wages of this kind of worker are extremely low. It would be quite challenging to obtain a work permit if I were to demonstrate a monthly wage of more than 13,000 kronor. I might even have to leave Sweden. (ID: m003)

6.7 Anti-discrimination Policies

Anti-discrimination laws are crucial for creating an inclusive society for immigrants, ensuring equal opportunities in social protection, employment, and housing, and are exemplified by Sweden's Discrimination Act, which rejects racism and xenophobia. A government official stated that,

The Swedish government has zero tolerance for racism, so it is our responsibility to make sure that these rules are carefully upheld. However, it is true that we hardly ever hear of unexpected occurrences (ID: gs02).

However, racism still exists in a few. While speaking with several responders, a few of the immigrants revealed some of their experiences in this area. The Swedish government can take the required steps to increase public awareness of racism and xenophobia. But in practice, very few instances show that the government takes action to address these problems. They are able to increase awareness and awareness of these issues by launching campaigns. One immigrant said,

Sometimes we face some discrimination either. Regardless of an immigrant's nationality or immigration status, the Swedish government must ensure that they have equal access to welfare benefits, healthcare, education and legal assistance (ID: s001).

6.8 Administrative Barriers

Immigrants in Sweden face administrative barriers such as long processing times for welfare applications and residence permit cards, which hinder access to social services, healthcare, employment, and education. These delays can be emotionally and financially taxing, and can also cause emotional pain and familial separation for those seeking settlements. These challenges pose significant challenges for the Swedish government in social protection. Two immigrant stated,

I had to wait 18 months when I applied for a residence permit. I was consequently unable to visit my homeland for a considerable amount of time, even though my father was gravely ill there" (ID: m001).

The government should take necessary steps to eliminate this administrative complexity" was said by another immigrant (ID: s002).

7. Discussion

Sweden's welfare system is well known throughout the world for being inclusive and equitable, focusing on all aspects of society. The two aspects of government participation in social protection for immigrants in Sweden are critically examined in this discussion: the functions it performs in guaranteeing fair access to welfare and the difficulties it encounters in upholding an inclusive and sustainable system. By discussing these aspects, this section draws attention to the difficulties in striking a balance between the particular requirements of immigrant communities and general welfare concepts. Based on both theoretical and empirical data, this discussion examines the responsibilities and difficulties the Swedish government faces in offering social support to immigrants.

The Swedish welfare state is individualistic, focusing on individual welfare rather than household. Its social security model combines universal benefits for residents and earnings-related entitlements for economically active individuals. Securing income and joint financing depends on high labor force

participation, employment rates, taxes, and social security contributions (Ahlén & Palme, 2020). Sweden's social-democratic welfare model prioritizes equality and universalism, but the strain from rising immigration challenges its resilience. The government extends benefits to legal immigrants, asylum seekers, and refugees through policies like temporary housing and language training. Sweden has all the characteristics that a welfare state should have, and the Swedish government has always given immigrants all the same benefits as native people. In this regard, welfare theory is revealing an important aspect in our study. Open borders and a welfare state like Sweden can serve as a refuge for vulnerable immigrants (Razin, Sadka, & Suwankiri, 2011). Sweden has a long history of migration, with Germans from merchant trading communities being the largest immigrant group during the middle Ages. In 2015, over 160,000 asylum seekers sought asylum, with an estimated 280 million international migrants in 2020 (SI, 2022). Sweden's approach to immigrant aid is still one of the most inclusive when compared to other EU countries. However, the government is under pressure to change its policies to conform to EU-wide migration rules, which do not always take Sweden's particular economic and demographic circumstances into consideration. In this case UNHCR report shows that Sweden's asylum system, resettlement initiatives, and advocacy for displaced women and girls have significantly contributed to global vulnerable immigrants' protection and solidarity in EU refugee policies (UNHCR, 2022).

In Sweden, in terms of social protection, social assistance (försjönningsstöd/ekonomiskt bistånd) is one of the benefits that can be considered a minimum income scheme. Social assistance is a right of all legal citizens to ensure a good standard of living. This benefit is administered by the municipalities. Social assistance is a system of last resort (Ahlén & Palme, 2020). Even, for immigrants who fulfill residency and job requirements, the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (Försäkringskassan) provides unemployment insurance and pensions, which is one of the benefit for immigrants as social protection given by government. The first responsibility when a large number of people depart their home countries and seek asylum in Sweden is to provide them with shelter and protection. Mostly, municipalities are in charge of this. Municipalities always keep an eye on changes under the direction of the Swedish government. They are unable to sustain themselves when migrants flee their nations because of conflict or political instability. They are confronted with various financial obstacles in this scenario. They are therefore compensated by the Swedish government through a number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and social assistance agencies. On the other hand, these migrants also receive loans to assist with their living expenditures (Khanam, 2022). Moreover, the government plays a crucial role in promoting societal integration through programs like SFI, job matching services, and language skills training, aiming to transition immigrants from welfare dependency to active labor market participation.

Although labor market integration has been given a lot of attention by the Swedish government and is the primary goal of its integration program, but Sweden's welfare system is under structural and financial pressure. Sweden's financial difficulties are due to the rising number of immigrants, some of

whom are taking longer to contribute due to unemployment or low wages (Lindbeck, 1997). Moreover, inclusive welfare programs are more difficult to implement when there are policy gaps, such as the lack of assistance for undocumented immigrants.

The function of the government is further complicated by societal opposition to immigration. The Swedish Parliament's temporary law, adopted in 2016, restricts asylum seekers' ability to obtain permanent residence permits. The previous government extended the legislation for two years beyond 2019, requiring work-related income and a maintenance requirement for family reunification. Despite a decrease in asylum seekers since 2015, immigration concerns remain a significant political issue. Even, new ruling party proposes policy restrictions on migrants' social benefits, including language and work-based requirements for parental insurance, social assistance, and guaranteed pension (Ahlén & Palme, 2020). While the large influx of immigrants is increasingly feeling the need for more social protection, these recent actions by the Swedish government raise serious concerns about the advantageous social protections they have implemented for immigrants and also shows the services gap needs and demands of immigrants.

When relocating to a new nation, immigrants may encounter financial challenges and language problems. Swedish is difficult to learn. Immigrants find it quite challenging to handle a work until they are proficient in Swedish (Khanam, 2022). Although, the government has already launched numerous language-teaching efforts. However, the primary issue with these programs is that they frequently take a lot of time. This causes severe financial hardship for immigrants, which occasionally pushes them to turn to illegal means of assistance. Host nations should assist immigrants in finding acceptable jobs by offering social service organizations in Sweden and lenient legislation. The most worrying aspect is that even minor employment are now unavailable since the Swedish government has recently placed a greater focus on language acquisition. Despite their numerous credentials, even highly educated individuals struggle to manage successful careers only for language barrier.

The Swedish social protection system, which combines universal benefits and earnings entitlements, has evolved since 1990 due to market orientation, tax cuts, and changes in welfare programs. However, social security benefits have been deviating somewhat from the fundamentals of an all-encompassing model, where the middle class is likewise sufficiently protected by the social protection model. Restricting the qualifying conditions for social insurance benefits (unemployment insurance, illness insurance) and further reducing their duration are other changes made to the Swedish social security system (Palme, 2017).

Most Swedes believe that foreigners enrich Sweden's cultural landscape (74%, 2022). However, they also perceive a need for immigrants to adapt to Swedish culture and traditions. This contradiction can be seen as positivity towards foreign culture if it aligns with Swedish values and traditions, or as enriching Sweden with exotic food, music, or cultural expressions. However, a rigid view of what constitutes the dominant culture can also construct other cultures and people with foreign backgrounds as non-belonging to the nation and non-equals (Groglop, Ahmadi, & Munobwa, 2023). Although the

Swedish government admits that racism and xenophobia are not present, racism does nevertheless exist across numerous small fields. Raising awareness can be achieved by government involvement, social work advocacy, and awareness campaigns (Khanam, 2022). Additionally, the participation of immigrants in the Swedish workforce is praised for their essential contribution to the economy. However, some native Swedes see them as a burden on the workplace and view their work negatively. Immigrants can only have social welfare or citizenship if they demonstrate skills and productivity (Groglop, Ahmadi, & Munobwa, 2023).

In addition, the Swedish government has revised its regulations since June of last year, requiring an immigrant to earn at least 28,480 Swedish kronor per month in order to be eligible for a work permit. Where it was 13,000 Swedish kronor before. Rumor has it that this sum will be raised even more. The new pay scale has already caused numerous issues for a large number of immigrants. Sweden is losing a lot of workers, especially industrial workers or labor intensive job workers. Now-a-days, Swedish government is trying to encourage repatriation, so that The Swedish Migration Agency or Migrationsverket offers financial support for repatriation, allowing individuals to seek protection in Sweden and move to their own country or another with the right to reside. Each adult will receive SEK 10,000, and each child under the age of 18 will receive SEK 5,000. The most a family can get is SEK 40,000 (Migrationsverket, 2025).

Immigrants significantly enrich the economies, cultures and societies of host countries by filling labor market gaps, acquiring specialized skills, driving innovation, introducing diversity, balancing demographics, strengthening global connections and inspiring social growth through resilience and adaptability. Sweden is also benefiting in many ways from these immigrants. But under a center-right coalition government lead by the Sweden Democrats party, the liberal utopia of Sweden is enacting more stringent immigration laws. These include expanded deportation and repatriation programs, tougher regulations on family members joining immigrants, and more stringent asylum laws. Additionally, the government hopes to significantly lower the number of low-skilled workers that relocate to Sweden (Ellyatt, 2024).

In summary, the Swedish government's strategy for providing social protection for immigrants is a prime example of its dedication to striking a balance between adaptation and universalism. Even if there are still issues like public opposition, administrative hurdles, and financial limitations, Sweden continues to be a global leader in inclusive welfare. For the welfare state to remain an integral component of social justice and sustainable economic growth, future changes must address these problems. By doing this, Sweden may continue to be a leader in developing welfare systems that are resilient and egalitarian for a range of demographics.

8. Limitations of the Study

The study has a number of shortcomings that could affect how comprehensive and applicable it is. The results of this qualitative study are unique to Sweden and might not apply to other nations with

dissimilar welfare systems. Purposive sampling may induce bias in participant selection, and the small sample size, typical of qualitative research, may not adequately capture the diversity of experiences among immigrants. The interpretive character of thematic analysis raises the possibility of researcher bias since, despite the implementation of reflexivity measures, the researcher's perspective might still affect how the data is interpreted. Participants may provide socially desirable answers rather than candid responses, particularly on sensitive topics like discrimination or political influence (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Policies for social protection are complex and involve several agencies and governmental levels. An incomplete picture could result from simplifying this intricacy in the analysis. It's possible that some unofficial or non-governmental ways of helping immigrants aren't thoroughly investigated. Participants with poor Swedish or English competence may not be able to respond as fully or accurately due to language hurdles, including the possible need for translators. This limitation is particularly significant to research with individuals with varying cultural and language backgrounds. Due to its temporal focus, the study only offers a moment in time, failing to capture the long-term changes in patterns or policy. Participants' candor on touchy subjects like discrimination or political pressures may be restricted by ethical issues. Furthermore, because the study may oversimplify the many facets of governmental duties, the complexity of social protection measures may lead to an inadequate image. Legal and safety concerns may limit access to some participant groups, such as undocumented immigrants, which would limit the inclusion of underrepresented perspectives that are essential to the study's goals. Participants' truthfulness on sensitive topics like political pressures or discrimination may be restricted by ethical issues. Furthermore, the study might overgeneralize the complicated duties of the government, which could lead to an incomplete view of social protection measures.

9. Conclusion and Recommendations

The study's conclusion emphasizes the importance of the Swedish government's social protection role for immigrants as well as the major obstacles that come with carrying out this duty. Although the inclusiveness of Sweden's welfare system is well known, meeting the special requirements of immigrants has shown shortcomings in both its conception and execution. The government has attempted to develop policies that address the social protection needs of immigrants, but their successful implementation has been hampered by systemic inefficiencies, resource constraints, and sociopolitical opposition. The study also shows that there is a gap between the goals of these programs and what immigrants actually experience, that means the services gap needs and demands of immigrants in Sweden, especially when it comes to integrating into Swedish culture, overcoming linguistic and cultural difficulties, and obtaining welfare assistance. Again, the discrepancy between the creation of policies and their actual execution is one of the main problems found. Sweden's policies may not adequately address the unique difficulties experienced by immigrants, such as a lack of documents, complicated legal issues, or the requirement for specialized support systems, even if they

frequently seek to offer universal assistance. Although the existing institutional and structural frameworks are strong for the general public, the study emphasizes that they are not always adaptable enough to the particular needs of immigrant groups. This leads to unequal results, with immigrants frequently slipping through the cracks of a system that isn't fully prepared to meet their requirements.

- The recommendations emphasize adopting a comprehensive and inclusive approach to addressing these issues. Existing support programs by the government should be revised to better meet the unique needs of immigrant communities. While the government already has a number of initiatives in areas such as housing, access to healthcare, child support and employment assistance, more emphasis needs to be placed on these areas. The particular disadvantages of undocumented immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers need to be taken into account to ensure that they are not deprived of essential support services.

- For social protection to be effective, economic integration is essential. The government ought to collaborate with companies to establish apprenticeships, vocational training programs, and job routes for immigrants. By recognizing and certifying foreign credentials, competent immigrants can more promptly enter the workforce, minimizing underemployment and maximizing their potential contributions.

- Adequate funding is necessary to ensure the success of initiatives targeting immigrants. The government must allot enough funds to finance these programs. The long-term economic advantages of well-integrated immigrant populations, such as their contributions to the labor force and local economies, should be considered when creating budgets.

- For social protection programs to be successful in the long run, cultural integration is essential. Immigrants will benefit from easier integration into the workforce and society if free and easily available language training programs are expanded. Cultural competence training should be provided to public sector workers and service providers to guarantee courteous and sympathetic interactions with immigrants, lowering the possibility of prejudice or miscommunication. Furthermore, establishing community areas for cultural interchange helps promote acceptance and understanding between immigrants and the general public.

- The intricacy of Sweden's social welfare system may discourage foreigners from applying for assistance. Immigrants will find it simpler to comprehend and utilize the benefits that are available to them if administrative processes are made simpler, documentation requirements are decreased, and bilingual resources are made available. Efficiency and accessibility can also be improved by establishing "one-stop" service centers that house several services under one roof.

- Social protection measures must be regularly monitored and evaluated in order to identify gaps, evaluate their efficacy, and make any required revisions. Both quantifiable metrics, such as employment rates and service uptake, as well as qualitative insights from immigrants' actual experiences should be included in data gathering and analysis. Investing in longitudinal research can yield important insights into how policies and programs will perform over the long run.

- By implementing these all-encompassing policies, Sweden may improve the quality of its social protection system for immigrant communities and bring its policies into line with the inclusion and equity tenets that form the foundation of its welfare state. This will help the country's overall social and economic cohesiveness in addition to helping immigrants.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Dr. Brigitte Pircher, Assistant Professor at Linnaeus University (LNU), for her assistance and insightful criticism during the course of the study. Despite their hectic schedules, we appreciate the time and voluntary contributions of our research participants. We would like to express our appreciation to Swedish government service providers and immigrants who made it possible to reach the appropriate respondents and gather study data. It is noted, we occasionally applied AI technologies (QuillBot- grammar checker) to preserve linguistic accuracy.

Disclosure statement

The author or authors did not disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

Funding

No special funding was given to the investigation. However, this study was completed as a component of a thesis for an MSS in International Affairs at Linnaeus University's political science department.

Ethical approval

The study was approved by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). The data collected was controlled by Linnaeus University Authority, as these data monitored by thesis supervisor Dr. Brigitte Pircher, Assistant Professor at Linnaeus University (LNU) on a regular basis.

Authors' contribution

Based on the first author's master's thesis, the paper was written. However, the study was overseen by the second author, who also made significant contributions, such as a thorough review and substantial feedback on every aspect from the proposal to the article's submission to this journal, substantial assistance in developing conceptual thought and writing methodology, as well as inputs from a substantial number of literature reviews and language editing.

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