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**State of Israel's Internal and External Policy with regard  
to Work Immigrants**

**Long Abstract**

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# INTRODUCTION

Immigration is primarily driven by the lack of job opportunities in developing countries, along with other factors such as resource shortages, armed conflicts, authoritarian regimes, and genocide. Consequently, many individuals seeking better living conditions for themselves and their families choose to leave their homes and migrate to other countries in pursuit of a fresh start and improved opportunities. Over the past decades, significant global changes have contributed to a substantial rise in immigration, particularly from developing nations to more established, developed ones. This large-scale migration has fostered multicultural and multilingual societies in developed countries, where people from diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds come together to form new communities.

These changes can lead to positive outcomes, to the embracement of new and different cultures, languages, and customs. Yet, it can also lead to negative results, frictions between the different cultures and resentment of the local population towards the immigrants, since the latter are taking jobs which can be held by locals.

In Israel, immigration is a complex and multifaceted issue. Historically, the Jewish population has faced widespread discrimination, hatred, fear, and resentment, spanning centuries and even millennia. In the aftermath of the Second World War, it became evident that the Jewish people required a secure homeland—a place where they could live safely and without persecution. This recognition ultimately led to the establishment of the State of Israel. Since these were the main reasons for its foundation, it stands to reason that the main immigrant population which the country seeks, are Jews from the diaspora. These immigrants will expand the Jewish demographics and actualize the Zionist dream and ideal, of Jewish people living together, safe in their own country.

Over the years, Israel has welcomed many Jews from around the world, granting them rights, citizenship, and privileges to which they are entitled just by being Jewish. However, Jewish people are not the only people who come to live in Israel. People from different ethnicities, origins, races, and religions immigrate to the country, hoping to find a safe place for themselves and their families. In many cases, these people come from war zones, e.g., Sudan, looking to start over in a new location.

While Israel allows many of these immigrants, refugees, or asylum seekers, to enter its boundaries, it does not necessarily grant them the same rights as those of the Jewish immigrants. The non-Jewish immigrants must undergo a long procedure, meet certain criteria,

and deal with much paperwork and bureaucracy, in order to become citizens and receive equal rights. Yet even then, they experience discrimination, fear, and suspicion by the local Israeli population. The Israeli immigration policy towards asylum seekers and refugees does not make it easy for non-Jewish immigrants to find a safe place in Israel, and it seems that the State prefers to deter them from coming to Israel at all. Over the years, and as part of my professional career, I have dealt with asylum seekers and refugees and have interacted with them. This study sought to explore immigration policy, firstly because there is little knowledge about this topic. Secondly, there was much to improve in the current policy. Therefore, it was decided to focus attention mainly on work immigrants due to the fact that they enter the country legally and are given the right to stay here. Moreover, work immigrants are in some kind of a middle position. On the one hand, they are legal, and they do not seek refuge or try to escape a war zone. On the other hand, they are not citizens, they do not have all the rights which citizens have. They are here for a limited amount of time and if they want to stay, they encounter the same problems faced by other non-Jewish immigrants. I believe that this population is intriguing as they cope with a unique set of issues that needs to be addressed.

When considering international relations and its connection to immigration policy, we can see that one impacts the other quite substantially. Pluralist approaches emphasize the role of domestic politics, proposing that when the state formulates immigration policy, it considers the costs of immigration as broadly distributed across the general population, while its benefits are largely concentrated among a select group of interested parties, such as employers. This approach can be extended to a global point of view, being considered as a situation in which the interested parties are several powerful states, and the costs are distributed between them and other, weaker countries<sup>1</sup>.

Europe has addressed the issue of immigration, immigration policy, and immigration integration over the years, and especially over the past few years in a certain way, clearly illustrating that, even though we refer to different countries in terms of culture, language, customs, and beliefs, many European countries have undergone a process of denouncement when dealing with immigrants and immigration integration. This means that for many countries in Europe today, the official and non-official policy regarding immigrants and their integration,

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<sup>1</sup> Natter, K. (2018). Rethinking immigration policy theory beyond 'Western liberal democracies'. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6(1), DOI 10.1186/s40878-018-0071-9.

is a negative one<sup>2</sup>. This relates to the fact that as a liberal, western, modern country, Israel is following the footsteps of its counterparts around the western world.

With the foundation of the EU, the general perception formed around it was that of an organization, or a collective of shared interests of countries, focusing on human rights issues, mainly to provide help to people in need or distress around the world. However, the refugee crisis of 2015 has shattered this perception, as it became clear that the member-states and the European commission mainly engaged in keeping the refugees out. They did set up funds and raised money to help the refugees, trying to find solutions for them; yet, they tried doing all this outside their borders. This very clearly contradicted the known principles which formed the basis of the European Union, namely democracy, equality, freedom, human dignity, solidarity, and human rights<sup>3</sup>. All this, combined with the large and unprecedented number of immigrants coming to Europe, entailed the development of negative opinions against immigrants throughout Europe. These opinions were formed out of fear - fear of strain on the local resources, fear of losing jobs in favor of the immigrants, and fear of a rise in unemployment, crime, and violence<sup>4</sup>.

When talking about immigration and immigration policy, it is important to consider the fact that immigration does not happen in a vacuum. That is, many parties are involved in the process of immigration, among them: the countries of origin, the hosting countries, and countries which maintain political, social, and economic ties with all the other parties. As a result of all these connections, the immigration policy of each country is highly affected by its ties to other international players<sup>5</sup>. Another factor which affects to certain extent the formulation of immigration policies, is the "quality" of the immigrants. When a country absorbs immigrants, it classifies them, knowingly or not, into categories based on their ethnicity, race, religion, and profession. Some immigrants are considered favorable, and some are not. This classification could impact the immigration, when favorable immigrants receive preferential treatment over others, based on their education or desirability to the hosting country<sup>6</sup>. All these

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<sup>2</sup> Schinkel, W. (2018). Against 'Immigrants integration': For an end to neocolonial knowledge production. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6(1), DOI 10.1186/s40878-018-0095-1

<sup>3</sup> Aydemir, E. (2021). Soft power of the European Union and the problem of immigration. In E. Aydemir & S. Saglik (Eds.). *Research and Reviews in Social, Human and Administrative Sciences-I* (pp.23-32). Turkey: Gece Publishing.

<sup>4</sup> Esposito, P., Collingnon, S. & Scicchitano, S. (2019). *Immigration and Unemployment in Europe: Does the Core-Periphery Dualism Matter?* INAPP WP n.11

<sup>5</sup> Natter, K. (2018). Rethinking immigration policy theory beyond 'Western liberal democracies'. *Comparative Migration Studies*, 6(1), DOI 10.1186/s40878-018-0071-9.

<sup>6</sup> FitzGerald, D. S. (2022). The sociology of international immigration. In C.B. Brettell & J. F. Hollifield (Eds.). *Migration Theory* (pp160-193). Routledge.

factors play a role in the immigration process, and especially in the formulation of immigration policy in different countries, when these policies can be opposed to one another, even inside a union such as the EU. This can cause problems in cohesion, leaving the local population and the immigrants confused and unsure as to their next move.

As to the Israeli context of immigration, promotion of the Jewish immigration is the main objective of this type of immigration, both for the State of Israel and for many immigrants. Already before its official foundation, Israel has always been known as a Jewish home, the promised land. Consequently, even as early as 1880, there were large waves of Jewish immigration to the land, and later the State of Israel. The statistical figures show that between 1880-1918, 2.4 million Jews immigrated to Israel; between 1919-1948 (the foundation of the State of Israel), 1.6 million Jews immigrated; between 1948-1960, over 1.3 million Jews immigrated; between 1961-1988, about 1.6 million Jews immigrated; and between 1989-1995, about 1.1 million Jews immigrated to Israel<sup>7</sup>. The fact that Israel has welcomed mainly Jewish immigration, has implication not only for the number and origin of immigrants, but for the integration process and the sense of belonging experienced by immigrants coming to Israel. When dealing with Jewish immigrants, rights are granted to them rather quickly and easily due to the Law of Return. Furthermore, the local population tends to look at Jewish immigrants more favorably, integrating them in society in terms of work, social connections, and social services. On the other hand, when it comes to non-Jewish immigrants, the local population does not always embrace them quite easily. The attitudes towards them are those of fear and resentment. They often struggle to get permits and get jobs, and their social connections, namely making friends and finding a support system, are less easily obtained<sup>8</sup>.

Taking all this into consideration, the current research aimed to explore the issue of foreign workers, immigrants, and refugees in Israel. As stated, the main theories today regarding immigration, especially immigration in Israel for non-Jewish immigrants, focus on their religion and ethnicity as a point of view for looking at the immigrants. These examinations showed that it was necessary to take this matter further. That is, if foreign immigrants coming to Israel are considered as second-class immigrants, what does this mean in terms of legislation, the way that the government treats the immigrant, their rights and obligations, their general acceptance by the local population, the public opinion about them, as well as their general

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<sup>7</sup> DellaPergola, S. (1998). The global context of migration to Israel. In E. Leshem & J. Shuval (eds.). *Immigration to Israel- Sociological Perspectives*. New Brunswick, Transactions, pp.51-92.

<sup>8</sup> Rajjman, R. & Geffen, R. (2018). Sense of belonging and life satisfaction among post-1990 immigrants in Israel. *International Migration*, 56(3), 142-157.

rights, such as employment, education, and healthcare. Additionally, data were gathered for this research during the years 2022-2023.

Each part of the research is limited to a different group of immigrants, e.g., work immigrants, illegal immigrants, and non-Jewish immigrants. This was done in order to examine the overall policy regarding non-Jewish immigrants living in Israel and the way the public and the decision makers perceived them. We believe that focusing each section on a specific group yields a complete and thorough understanding of the experience of non-Jewish immigrants in Israel.

The current research focuses on a population that, most of the time, prefers remaining under the radar. Hence, it is important to indicate some difficulties in recruiting interviewees. Despite their legality in Israel, work immigrants tend to keep a low key and avoid opening up about their experience, especially not to people they do not know or trust. This is due to the fact that they are working under contractors, and they are somewhat afraid to expose their real feelings and experiences, in fear of retribution. Therefore, it was somewhat difficult to locate work immigrants who were willing to participate in this study. Hence, social organizations that work with them were approached, who set up the first connection. With this help, we managed to locate our interviewees.

When looking at the overall current research and its importance in the field of international relations and in the field of immigration in Israel, first, no system is perfect and every such system, especially one that has existed for many years, e.g., the immigration policy in Israel, and any public policy for that matter, deserves review and revision every few years. This is particularly important when taking into consideration issues such as global changes, immigration trends, demographic shifts, and the growing popularity of Israel as an immigration country, especially for work immigrants from third world countries. Thus, examination of the existing situation, analyzing it, and trying to solve the prominent problems and difficulties, are important actions, with relevant and actionable repercussions, which may be useful in the actual field of internal affairs in Israel. Moreover, the topic of policy and legislation in Israel is very controversial, with many political forces sometimes working against each other, to promote their own political and personal agenda. In that regard, the current research exerted all efforts for the purpose of keeping all political opinions and agenda out of the picture and maintaining utmost objectivity. It relied solely on the existing situation and the point of view of the different participants, whether work immigrants or decision-makers.



## **Research aims and research questions**

### *Main research aim:*

- To develop a new framework for thought regarding the foreign and domestic policy about work immigrant/asylum-seekers.

### *Subsidiary research aims:*

- To explore the constitutional aspects of the way work immigrants in Israel are being treated.
- To explore the human rights related to the work immigrant in Israel.
- To explore the cultural aspects involved in this issue in Israel.

This prompted the aim to explore issues such as human rights, culture, and legal aspects as they came into play in the work immigrants' daily lives.

### *Main research question:*

Which factors could constitute the framework for thought about Israel's policy regarding work immigrants?

### *Subsidiary research questions:*

1. What are the legal aspects regarding the attitude towards work immigrants and refugees in Israel?
2. What are the human rights of work immigrants and refugees in Israel?
3. What cultural issues are involved in the matter of work immigrants and refugees in Israel?

### *Research hypothesis:*

1. Israel's current immigration policy will prove to be harmful to the country's economy. Moreover, the current immigration policy will prove to be harmful to the work immigrants' living conditions.
2. The legal aspects regarding the attitudes towards work immigrants and refugees in Israel will focus on their possible threat to the Jewish identity and the wide public's safety.
3. Human right issues will be prominent in the experience of work immigrants in Israel, and they will be mistreated in this regard.
4. The cultural issues which will be involved in the topic of work immigrants and refugees in Israel will focus on cultural separation, not integration.

When formulating the research hypotheses, we assumed that the main opinion regarding all kinds of immigrants in Israel is that they pose a threat to the Jewish identity of the country, the wide public's personal safety, and that in general, they do not belong here. Consequently, we

assumed that work immigrants were not going to be fully integrated, culturally or otherwise, and that the main state of mind would be suspicion and separation. Furthermore, when formulating the hypotheses, we assumed that a lack of integration could negatively impact the country's economy, as immigrants who are not well integrated are likely to spend less.

### **Expected results**

Following the current research, a number of findings were expected. First, it was expected that the immigrant population living in Israel today would have an issue with the current immigration policy, as well as issues related to Israeli government's attitude towards them. Second, by exploring the immigration policy and the internal policy related to immigrants and asylum-seekers in Israel, an outdated policy was based on previous circumstances. Moreover, we expected that the Israeli government would base its decisions and legislation on a state of survival, resulting in a strict legislation designed to increase the Jewish population in the country.

It is noteworthy that after the events of October 7, 2023, the immigration policy and the general attitude towards immigrants and asylum-seekers might have changed again. Furthermore, the political climate and the state of war that the country finds itself, might have affected the atmosphere, both in the government and in the wide public. This could entail a stricter policy once again, while the Jewish population in Israel strived to re-find peace. This could imply that the policy and the atmosphere would focus again on the increase of the Jewish population, rendering the country a safe place for Jews everywhere and protecting the borders from anyone who is not Jewish.

# **I. LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

## **I.1 Conceptual Analysis and Literature Review**

### ***I.1.1 Globalization***

The modern world is evolving rapidly, with these changes notably reflected in the social and cultural landscapes of various countries-particularly developed nations that are becoming increasingly globalized. This shift means that people today, especially in developed regions, share their environments with individuals from diverse countries, cultures, and historical backgrounds. The new globalized world is creating an integrated new environment for people in which they live and grow<sup>9</sup>. However, globalization does not necessarily mean that people need to live in the same country in order to integrate their cultures together, or to share their history with one another. The most fascinating thing about globalization is the fact that people from around the world can interact with one another via the Internet and share elements from their life with people from the other side of the world<sup>10</sup>.

### ***I.1.2 Third world countries***

When discussing the concept of third world countries, or developing countries, as they are known in today's world, it is first necessary to define the term. What does, "developing countries" mean? In 2010, the World Bank defined developing countries as countries with gross national income of US\$ 12,195, or less, per capita. Other factors include quality of life, such as life expectancy and literacy rates, as well as economic diversification, which encompasses labor force participation and personal consumption. Currently, over 80% of the global population resides in developing countries.<sup>11</sup>.

### ***I.1.3. Immigration from third world countries***

In recent decades, numerous international changes and upheavals have occurred. These events have contributed to the process of globalization, which has allowed individuals to leave their home countries and relocate to different nations-sometimes even across continents-in search of better opportunities for themselves and their families<sup>12</sup>. On the other hand, these changes have divided the world into two separate and distinct parts: rich,

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<sup>9</sup> Abergel M. (2020). Between work immigrants and refugees. *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context*, 1, 75-78.

<sup>10</sup> Acheson, A. L. K. (2010). Globalization. *IDEAS Working Paper Series from RePec*.

<sup>11</sup> Ibrahim, M. M. & Damasceno, A. (2012). Hypertension in developing countries. *Lancet*, 380, 611-619.

<sup>12</sup> Abergel M. (2020). Between work immigrants and refugees. *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context*, 1, 75-78.

advanced countries which are mostly part of the western, modern world, and are referred to as "developed countries", and poor, war-filled countries, which most of the time are at a disadvantage in terms of resources and living conditions. These countries are known as "third world countries", or "developing countries".

#### ***1.1.4 Multiculturalism, multilingualism, and interculturalism***

The world today is undergoing significant change, with borders becoming more open and cultural boundaries gradually diminishing. This is especially evident in countries around the world that are becoming increasingly multicultural and multilingual due to the blending of diverse cultures within the same society<sup>13</sup>. For instance, in Serbia, the population has evolved over time due to immigration from various countries. According to the 2011 census, Serbia's population included Roma, Hungarians, and Bosnians, all living together and sharing the rights and responsibilities of the country<sup>14</sup>.

#### ***1.1.5 Interculturalism***

There can be many advantages to interculturalism. In addition to the possible collaboration and integration between different cultures, when discussing interculturalism in the context of immigration, the benefits are mainly towards the immigrants themselves. As opposed to multiculturalism, which relates mainly to the concept of allowing several cultures to coexist with one another, interculturalism refers to an actual integration of the cultures together, while trying to avoid a situation in which one of the cultures, usually the weaker one, is discriminated against by the stronger culture, and the people belonging to it<sup>15</sup>.

#### ***1.1.6 Issues related to human rights of work immigrants and refugees***

Before addressing the issue of human rights for immigrants and refugees, it is important to distinguish between the two groups, as they often receive different treatment in host countries. Following the mass refugee crisis of 2015, both media and politicians in the European Union and its member states found it necessary to clarify these differences. According to the 1951 Refugee Convention, a refugee is defined as someone who has been forced to flee their country due to persecution, war, or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution based

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<sup>13</sup> Abergel M. (2020). Between work immigrants and refugees. *Redefining Community in Intercultural Context*, 1, 75-78.

<sup>14</sup> Basic, G. & Markovic, K. (2018). Social Status of the Roma in Serbia- Demographic Aspects in Public Multiculturalism Policies. *Stanovnistvo*, 56(1), 43-1.

<sup>15</sup> Navas-Camargo, F. & Montoya-Ruiz, S. (2018). The need of having an intercultural approach, in the welcome mechanisms of migrants and refugees in Bogota. Policy review, learning from others, making proposals. *Utopia Praxis Latinoamericana*, 23(2), 114-126.

on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group<sup>16</sup>. Conversely, migrants are considered people that have decided of their own free will, out of personal reasons, to leave their original country. Moreover, they made this decision on the basis of internal factors, without external interference of influence, such as war or persecution<sup>17</sup>.

### ***1.1.7. Human rights of immigrants and refugees in Israel***

One of the countries which has been at the focus of many immigrants and refugees, mainly from Africa and sub-Saharan countries over the past few years is Israel. Since 2007, Israel has absorbed more than 50,000 immigrants, and an estimated number of about 15,000 undocumented more have entered the country illegally. Most of these undocumented immigrants have been staying illegally and do not have work permits, namely they must find employment in unconventional and illegal ways. Thus, most of the work that these immigrants can find is dangerous, physically challenging, and often puts them in hazardous situations. They have to get access to healthcare, but without being a legal part of the society, they need to find alternative medical solutions, which can put them in danger<sup>18</sup>.

## **I.2 Public Policy Regarding Immigration - Theoretical Framework**

### ***1.2.1 Social Constructivism theory***

According to the theory at hand, the thesis is underpinned by three elements: (1) Reality which encompasses human activity, merging different members of the same society. Reality is viewed as a social construct; (2) Knowledge – according to social constructivists, knowledge arises from human interaction within a shared social environment; and (3) Learning – is a social process. It is not passive, nor can it occur in isolation, but rather through the active interaction of individuals, ideally through social activities<sup>19</sup>. Social Constructivism is somewhat hereditary, it passes from instructors to learners in the constructivism paradigm. Instructors are initializers of learning, they provide the basis and support for the learners, who gradually develop skills for learning by themselves. It is assumed that the heavier the weight attributed

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<sup>16</sup> United Nations. (1951). *Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*. <http://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocolrelating-status-refugees.html/22.10.2024>.

<sup>17</sup> De Coninck, D. (2020). Migrant categorizations and European public opinion: Diverging attitudes towards immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 46(9), 1667-1686.

<sup>18</sup> Mor, Z., Raveh, Y., Lurie, I., Leventhal, A., Gamzu, R., Davidovitch, N., Benari, O. & Grotto, I. (2017). Medical condition and care of undocumented migrants in ambulatory clinics in Tel Aviv, Israel: Assessing unmet needs. *BMC Health Services Research*, 17, 484-491.

<sup>19</sup> Kim, B. (2001). Social constructivism. In M. Orey (Ed.). *Emerging Perspectives on Learning, Teaching, and Technology*. Retrieved August 1<sup>st</sup> from <http://projects.coe.uga.edu/epltt/>

to knowledge, creativity, and collaboration, the more learners are likely to learn by pair work, group work, and teamwork. Thus, they are offered the opportunity to manifest and implicate the world of knowledge<sup>20</sup>.

### ***1.2.2 Theories of culture***

Before addressing culture in today's modern world, we first need to define culture or discuss the main theories of culture in recent research. One of the most prominent researchers in this field is Eisenstadt, who conceived a definition of culture. A review of his work illustrates that he defined culture as "an autonomous, plural, multi-level, and dynamic structure, with its own internal patterns, processes, and generative potential for critique, reinterpretation and transformation. As such, culture also operates as a pool or repertoire of symbolic orientations of various sorts and kinds, potentially capable of deeply 'interweaving' with other aspects of social life and even evolving into an influential, defining feature of institutional formations, societal configurations, and civilization"<sup>21</sup>.

### ***1.2.3 The European Union***

The globalization process that the modern world has been undergoing in the past few decades entailed, among other things, the establishment of associations between countries that join forces in many fields, mainly financial and political. One of these associations is the European Union, the EU, which is a union of European member-states brought together by common interests, such as financial and political decision-making throughout Western Europe. The main characteristic of this union is the transition to a common currency - the Euro - which is used in all the member-states of the union. The union also holds regular elections and has a parliament that legislates laws and regulations relevant to all the member-states. In order to describe the European Union, we could say that it functions as a state which is responsible for the well-being of its citizens, in this case, residents of the European countries that belong to the union. The official bodies of the EU include a Commission that acts as the union's government; a Council that acts as a collective presidency; a Court of Justice; and a Central Bank<sup>22</sup>.

### ***1.2.4 Public policy regarding immigration in the European Union***

Immigration in Europe is not new. Over the years, people have moved in and out of many European countries, especially those that were member-states. This is due to the fact that these

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<sup>20</sup> Amineh, R. J. & Asl, H. D. (2015). Review of constructivism and social constructivism. *Journal of Social Sciences, Literature and Languages*, 1(1), 9-16

<sup>21</sup> Silber, L. F. (2020). S.N. Eisenstadt's theory of culture. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 23(3), p.134.

<sup>22</sup> Borocz, J. & Sarkar, M. (2005). What is the EU? *International Sociology*, 20(2), 153-173.

states are considered more established financially and have more job opportunities for immigrants who try achieving a better life for themselves. Hence, the immigration policy and the public opinion have always been positive or have not changed over time. Attitudes towards immigration in Europe vary and they depend on many factors, including the heterogeneity in individual characteristics, country characteristics, climate change impact, and general political climate in Europe. For example, after the 1970s and the restrictive immigration policies prominent around Europe, the establishment of the EU and the general agreements for trade have led to liberalization of immigration policies within Europe. This has remained quite stable until the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and the massive refugee crisis<sup>23</sup>.

### **I.3 Israel's Immigration Management System and the Refugees' Status**

#### ***I.3.1 Immigration to Israel***

The State of Israel was founded and declared as an independent country in 1948, freeing the land from the British mandate. Following the decision to turn Israel into a state, a new government was elected, headed by David Ben Gurion, one of the founding fathers of the country and a long-time fighter for the liberation of Israel from British administration. The new government of the new country understood that one of the first and most important agendas should be filling the land with Jews. Thus, it would attain a demographic majority and keep the country safe from occupation and any foreign interference. In order to accomplish this goal, one of the first decision made by the government was to open the country's borders to any Jew who was willing to come. This decision was validated by the Declaration of Independence<sup>24</sup>.

#### ***I.3.2 Legislation and policy regarding immigrants and refugees in Israel***

##### ***A. Public policy regarding work immigrants in Israel***

In Israel, the main immigration policy is oriented at Jewish people living in other countries, which are referred to as "the Jewish diaspora". Despite this, and even though the State of Israel strongly and positively encourages Jews to immigrate to its territory, the general immigration policy in the Israel is quite strict with respect of non-Jewish populations. As far as work immigrants are concerned, Israel allows a few authorized entries each year, under some restrictions, with an increase in the number of authorizations granted each year. Most of the work immigrants allowed in the country are mainly unskilled workers, who arrive to work in

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<sup>23</sup> Serban, A. C., Aceleanu, M. L., Dospinescu, A. S., Tirca, D. M. & Novo-Corti, I. (2020). The impact of EU immigration on economic growth through the skill composition channel. *Technological and Economic Development of Economy*, 26(2), 479-503.

<sup>24</sup> Picard, A. (2018). *Building the country or rescuing the people: Ben Gurion's attitude towards mass Jewish immigration to Israel in the mid-1950s*. *Middle Eastern Studies*, 54(3), 382-399.

nursing, agriculture, and construction. However, over the past several years, Israel has started targeting skilled workers to immigrate into its territory, offering them benefits which unskilled workers usually do not get<sup>25</sup>.

***B. Bodies responsible for handling immigration, refugees, and asylum seekers in Israel.***

Until 2009, the body which was responsible for handling refugees and asylum seekers in Israel was the UNHCR, which operated as a representative of the UN. Since 2009, the State of Israel took has undertaken to function as the main body responsible for these populations, and the main office which is responsible for the processing of applications and requests submitted by refugees and asylum seekers, is the office of population and immigration<sup>26</sup>. The operation of this office has been quite extensively criticized, as was described above in great detail. On the other hand, this section aims to examine their protocol for dealing with refugees and asylum seekers.

## **II. METHODOLOGY**

### **II.1 Research Approach: Mixed Methods Paradigm**

The work premise behind the concept of mixed method research is the idea that a combination of quantitative and qualitative research leads to a more comprehensive research method, integrating two complementary research methods. Research findings indicate that using mixed method research leads to a deeper understanding of the studied topic. Quantitative research facilitates generalization of the research findings to the general population, or to several different populations. On the other hand, the qualitative approach enables researchers to focus on one specific case. Thus, by using the answers obtained from that study, the quantitative research findings can be highlighted<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Sigad, L. J., Eisikovitz, Z., Strier, R. & Buchbinder, E. (2018). The meaning of work among immigrants living in poverty in Israel: Replanting roots of belonging. *International Journal of Social Welfare*, 27, 197-206.

<sup>26</sup> UNHRC – Israel. Retrieved from <https://www.unhcr.org/news/israel-takes-over-review-local-asylum-claims-unhcr/2022/20.10.2023>

<sup>27</sup> Fessinger, R. & Morrow, S. L. (2013). *Toward Best Practices in Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Method Research: A Social Justice Perspective*. *Journal for Social Action in Counseling and Psychology*, 5(2), 69-83.



### ***II.1.1 Research design***

The following section presents the research design of this study.

**Table 1: Research design**

Stage	Research Aim	Research instrument	Data analysis methods
1.Qualitative	To explore the constitutional aspects of the way work immigrants in Israel are being treated.	Document analysis	Content analysis
2.Qualitative	To explore the cultural aspects involved in this issue in Israel	Interviews	Content analysis
3. uantitative	To develop a new framework for thought regarding the foreign and domestic policy about work immigrant/ asylum-seekers.	Closed-ended questionnaire	Statistics
4.Qualitative	To explore the human rights related to the work immigrants' issue in Israel.	Focus group, discussion	Content Analysis

### ***II.1.2 Ethical consideration***

To protect the interviewees' anonymity and keep their privacy, none of their identifying information was used for the current research and all of it was kept private, in order not to allow for any identification. Furthermore, the questionnaires were filled out anonymously, to protect the respondents' privacy and prevent their identification.

Since all the people who participated in the current research were legally adults, there were no ethical considerations regarding parental consent. All the participants gave their informed consent to participate in this study.

### **III. Results**

#### ***III.1. Results emerging from research question 1: What are the legal aspects regarding the attitude towards work immigrants and refugees in Israel?***

1. Employers should provide several social conditions to the workers: social security, early notice in case of termination, severance pay, minimum wage at the very least, housing, medical insurance, and an employment contract written in a language the worker understands.
2. The workers are entitled to a weekly resting day and an annual vacation, whether they actually take or whether they get money instead.
3. The workers are entitled to days off during holidays and paid vacation days for holidays if the holiday does not fall on a worker's day off.
4. Foreign workers should be hired under the supervision of the International Immigration Organization (IOM), or any other arrangement.

#### ***III.2. Results emerging from research question 2: What are the human rights of work immigrants and refugees in Israel?***

1. The human rights of work immigrants in Israel, are mainly the most basic human rights.
2. Work immigrants in Israel are not physically harmed and they receive basic treatment, but the country does not encourage their stay in its territory.
3. Moreover, through its current immigration policy and the general attitudes manifested by government members, the current immigration policy is designed to limit as much as possible the human rights of work immigrants in Israel.

#### ***III.3. Results emerging from research question 3: What cultural issues are involved in the matter of work immigrants and refugees in Israel?***

1. The cultural issues involved in the integration of work immigrants into the Israeli society in terms of culture, language, religious customs, and solidarity, were quite scarce.
2. The government and the Israeli population preferred making a distinct separation between local and foreign population and making as little integration efforts as possible.
3. This separation was mainly caused by negative attitudes towards the immigrants and the belief that they posed a threat to the Zionist idea.

### *III.4. Summary of hypotheses*

<b>Hypothesis</b>	<b>Confirmed</b>	<b>Partially confirmed</b>
Israel's current immigration policy will prove to be harmful to the country's economy. Moreover, the current immigration policy will prove to be harmful to the work immigrants' living conditions.		<b>V</b>
The legal aspects regarding the attitudes towards work immigrants and refugees in Israel will focus on their possible threat to the Jewish identity and the wide public's safety.  Human right issues will be prominent in the experience of work immigrants in Israel, and they will be mistreated in this regard.	<b>V</b>	
Human right issues will be prominent in the experience of work immigrants in Israel, and they will be mistreated in this regard.		<b>V</b>
Israel's cultural issues which will be involved in the topic of work immigrants and refugees in Israel will focus on cultural separation, not integration.	<b>V</b>	

## **IV. DEVELOPMENT OF A PUBLIC POLICY MODEL REGARDING IMMIGRANTS AND REFUGEES**

### *IV.1 Dimensions of the New Framework*

When designing a new framework for a public policy model regarding immigrants and refugees in Israel, I would like first to address the different dimensions which are relevant for working with immigrants and refugees. The purpose is to develop a model which will truly be directed towards integration and inclusion, affecting different elements and factors at the sectorial level. These dimensions include:

- Public policies
- Programs

- Institutions
- Integration tools
- Involvement of civil society
- Involvement of international organizations



**Figure 1: The qualification and supervision process for human resources contractors**



**Figure 2: The implementation stages of the new internal immigration policy**

## **V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***V.1 Conclusions***

The issue of economic damage was hardly addressed in the current research. Both the immigrants interviewed and the officials who took part in the focus group paid very little attention to this issue. Hence, I cannot say that I have received any kind of answer to this hypothesis.

In terms of legal aspects regarding the attitudes towards work immigrants and refugees in Israel, I concluded that the second hypothesis was corroborated, since the legislation towards these populations was discriminatory, and was based on the belief that they posed an obvious and immediate threat to the Jewish identity of Israel. That is why their numbers should be limited and reduced as much as possible, and their interaction with the local population should also be restricted by means of detention.

As for the human rights issues, I hypothesized that work immigrants would be discriminated in this regard. When looking at the perspective of the work immigrants themselves, this hypothesis was refuted, since the immigrants did not feel discriminated, nor did they feel that they were treated in this way. The opinions of the officials, however, told a different story, since they mostly believed that immigrants were being denied some basic human rights. This discrepancy might have something to do with the distinction between work immigrants and refugees and asylum seekers. For the most part, work immigrants have steady jobs and are entitled to many social rights. On the other hand, refugees and asylum seekers are not allowed to work during their waiting process and, as a result, suffer from poverty, while their basic human rights are not being granted.

As far as the cultural issues which are involved in the matter of work immigrants and refugees in Israel, the current research found that the main policy and actual actions were oriented more towards cultural separation, not integration. Hence, the fourth research hypothesis was corroborated. Even in places which did act for the well-being of the refugees and work immigrants, such as the case of Tel Aviv's municipality, which implemented the MESILA program for the benefit of immigrants living in the city, the focus was on providing them with information and assistance, and less on actions that would integrate them into the local community.

The research process took time, and during that time the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, occurred, putting Israel once more in a state of survival. Based on this point of view, I speculated that the

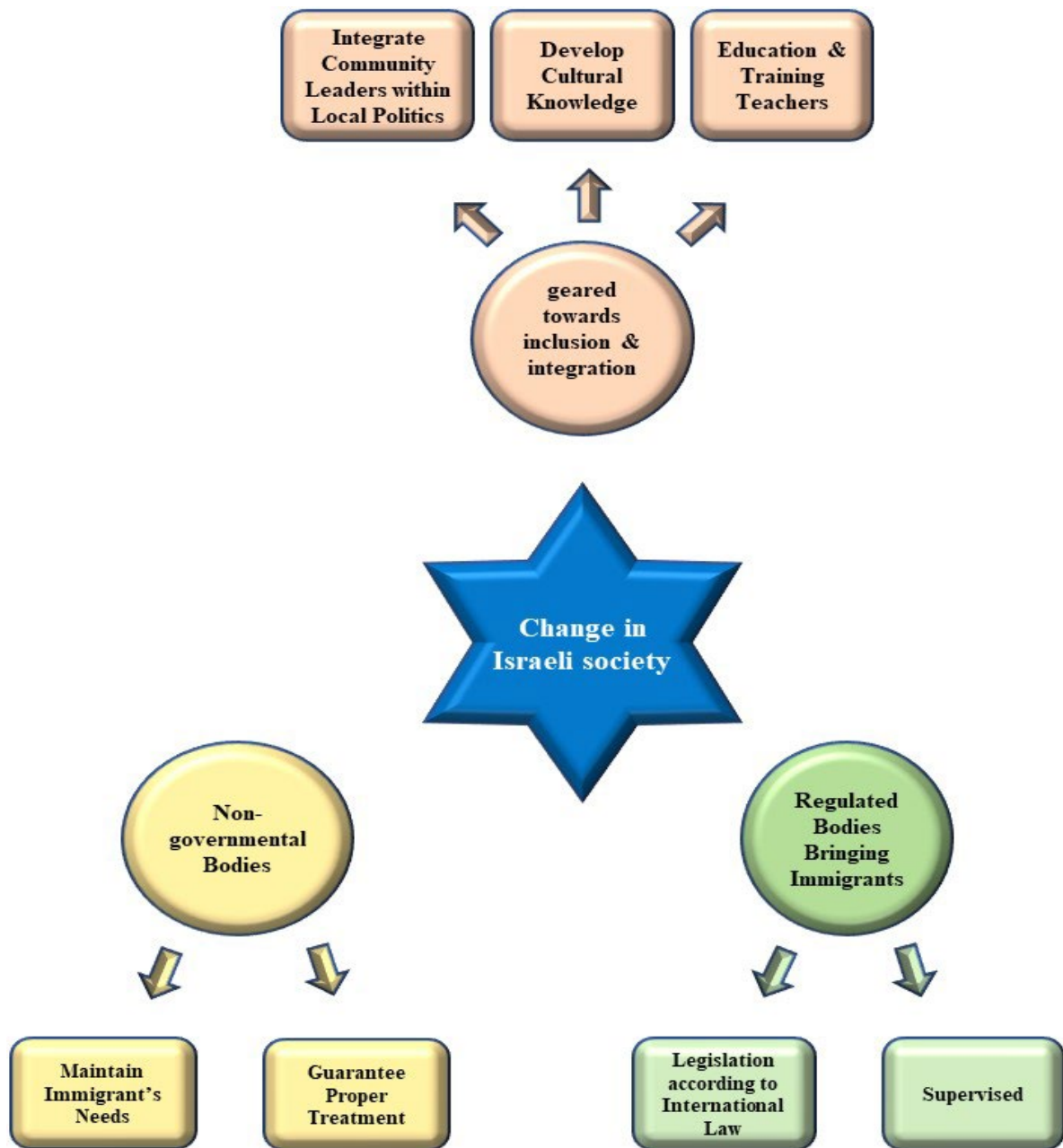
immigration policy and the general attitude towards immigrants and asylum-seekers might change again, and that the political climate and the state of war in which the country found itself, might have affected the atmosphere, both in the government and among the public, leading again to a stricter atmosphere. Throughout the process, my main conclusion was that my theory was corroborated: the current immigration policy was based on outdated decision-making, which had not been drastically improved over the years. Moreover, I could argue that since over the years, the governments of Israel had shifted more towards right wing of the political map, the attitudes towards immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers became less accepting in terms of living conditions and human rights. The different governments that ruled Israel over the past few decades did a lot to exacerbate the way in which immigrants, refugees and asylum-seekers were being treated. This made them not only unwelcome but also perceived as threats to the population and to the Jewish identity of Israel. One should only remember the statement by Knesset member Miri Regev, who said in 2012 that "the Sudanese are a cancer in our bodies", to understand the atmosphere of hate and discrimination the different governments have spread over the years.

As a result of these discriminating attitudes, it was not surprising that the immigration policy was strict. It mainly focused on Jewish immigrants and empowered the Jewish population in Israel, making it difficult for non-Jews to be integrated into the population. Non-Jewish immigrants faced hardships, being granted only temporary permits that required constant renewals. Hence, the immigrants encountered difficulties in finding decent jobs, providing for themselves and their families, and attaining stability.

As for work immigrants, the circumstances were somewhat better, but not much. They could come to Israel through international immigration agencies or through human resources contractors. Nevertheless, the second option was more common and less favorable for the immigrants, since they often suffered from unfair treatment, hard living conditions, nor were they granted all the rights stipulated by law.

## ***V.2 Conceptual Conclusions***

The data gathered for this research allowed the emergence of a model of integration policy that can create change in Israeli society regarding the attitude toward immigrants. Figure 3 presents the model.



**Figure 3: A Three-Dimension Model of Integration Policy: Change in Israeli society**

After collecting all the information, I defined guidelines of a model for a new immigration policy, taking into consideration all these issues. The new model suggested that all bodies responsible for bringing work immigrants should be regulated and constantly supervised, to guarantee proper treatment of the immigrants. Furthermore, the model suggested that the policy should not be subject to change by the government. It should rather be subject to external supervision by a non-governmental body, that will not formulate the policy based on political and personal beliefs, but on the needs of the immigrants and of the local population. Finally,

the new model should act towards inclusion, acculturation, and integration of immigrants in their new surroundings, by education, needs adapted legislation, and the integration of community leaders in local politics, making sure to represent all these interests.

It is noteworthy that after October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023, the issue of immigration was somewhat neglected, due to the fact that Israel was in the middle of a war, and the mind of the public and of the government was preoccupied by matters of war circumstances. However, this did not mean that we should have neglected this issue with reference to future legislation.

### ***V.3 Implications and Recommendations***

The first implication was the understanding that the immigration policy was currently subject to constant change, and it was based on personal opinions and beliefs of the people in a position of power as part of the Israeli government. As a result, and considering the fact that Israel had five different election rounds between 2019 and 2022, there was no political stability in Israel in the past few years. Hence, the personal beliefs, opinions, and even agendas of political figures could impact the lives of immigrants living and working in Israel. As long as the power to impact the policy was in hands of the government, the immigrants in Israel would never feel safe and they would live in fear of deportation or a change in policy which would worsen their lives here.

The second implication was the development of an integration policy, designed both to educate the local population about the immigrants, and to help the immigrants in being assimilated into the local population. This integration policy was derived from the understanding that one of the main issues which harmed the immigrants today, was the sense of fear and suspicion by the local population, reinforced by the government's negative attitudes the government towards immigrants and foreign workers in Israel.

By developing an integration program that would educate the local population about the history, cultures, and customs of immigrants living in Israel, the local population could stop being afraid of them and even find some common grounds with them. Furthermore, one of the findings obtained from the current research was people's belief that immigrants, mainly refugees, were not in serious danger in their home countries. Consequently, the local population believed that it was safe for immigrants to go back to their homeland, or to leave their family members there. By educating the Israeli public about the dangers which these people face in their origin countries, I believe that we could change people's attitudes towards them and, thus, they would be receptive and open to "foreigners" in Israel. This could be achieved especially when



considering the fact that the Israeli people knew all too well the meaning of being persecuted for just being who you were.

Another implication of the current research should focus on public policy. Today, the public policy in Israel regarding immigrants considers them as a burden and a liability on society, public resources, as well as a threat to the national security and the Jewish identity of the country. This policy is obsolete and does not take into consideration the changes that have been made in the Israeli society over the past few decades. Immigrants from the former Soviet Union who came to Israel during the 1990s, were integrated successfully in the population and became prominent members of all aspects of society. The same could be done for immigrants currently living in Israel who came from countries such as Sudan and Eritrea. If given the chance to be integrated in all aspects of society, including the political aspect of society, the community would embrace them, unite them, and promote their interests. Moreover, successful immigrant political leaders could have positive and beneficial implications for the entire society.

Legislation is another area which could be affected by the current research. One of the findings was that the current legislation regarding immigrants in Israel is ineffective. This is due to the fact that it does not consider the lack of resources for the different governmental offices, causing massive delays for immigrants who are waiting for various permits. Moreover, the current legislation restricts the possibility to work and provide for the immigrants' family, and often restricts freedom of movement, by incarceration and detention. This legislation is not in line with the international law and undermines the basic human rights of the immigrants. Addressing these issues by further legislation could improve their well-being and quality of life.

Furthermore, the current research can have an impact on the education system. The fact that many immigrants living in Israel have a family with children, is common knowledge. Another fact is that these children are admitted to the education system until they are 18 years old, under the Israeli Compulsory Education Law. In the education system, teachers and administrators do not necessarily know how to deal with them in terms of language, history, customs, and level of education. As a result, many of these children suffer from a certain degree of educational neglect, which needs to be corrected so that they have a chance to succeed later in life. In order for this to happen, an implication of the current research should be generation of changes to the education system in terms of training and education of teachers, enabling them to provide tools and proper education to the children.

As far as civil society is concerned, the implications of the current research could come into play with the civil education system which was proposed in the framework. By doing this, the Israeli society will be informed about the history and circumstances which have brought the refugees and immigrants to Israel. Thus, with time they could learn to accept them, stop fearing them, and allow them to be integrated into the Israeli society. This is also true for societal security. Today, the main source of fear and threat, whether it is real or not, is based on fear of the immigrants and their lack of connection to the Israeli society. Consequently, I believe that by changing this, the societal security will increase, and people will not be as scared of immigrants and "foreigners" as they are now.

Another implication that can be addressed at this point is related to the immigrants and refugees themselves. These people are currently living in a certain amount of fear and uncertainty. With the implementation of a new policy that aims to improve their legal and consequently, their social status, the immigrants and refugees living in Israel will become more confident and a more integrated part of the Israeli society. This could have positive implications for their personal sense of self-esteem and enhance their impact on the country's finances. When people feel they belong to a place, as if it is their home, they tend to spend more money domestically.

#### ***V.4 Contribution to Theoretical Knowledge***

The current research yielded extensive knowledge about the situation of immigrants in Israel, and especially that of work immigrants. This knowledge could contribute to the existing theoretical knowledge since it had collected current and relevant information about the state of work immigrants in Israel. This information related to work conditions, the way they were brought to Israel, the rights the country and their employers granted them, as well as to the immigrants' duties vis-à-vis their employers and the country.

International relations have often dealt with the issue of work immigrants and immigration in general, especially over the past few years. This area is of vast interest to all parties involved, from decision-makers to the different public and private bodies which are responsible for coping with the immigrants' integration, employment, rights, and so on. The findings of the current research provide valuable information about the way immigrants should be treated, for the purpose of attaining a successful integration and satisfaction of all parties involved. Furthermore, the current research provides valuable information regarding mistakes that can be avoided by the decision-makers and local governments. These mistakes, difficult as they

are, can provide insights into the possible damages caused by the insufficient consideration of immigrants' needs.

In the field of European studies, the current research can also provide valuable insights in terms of immigrants' rights and the way they should be treated by host countries. Since Europe has been dealing with change in the immigration demographics over the past few years, it becomes necessary to examine the existing conditions and possibly revise them. I believe that the current research can assist in this regard.

Political science is another field which can benefit from current research and its findings. Many of the problems which have been detailed in length in the literature review and Discussion chapters, have been directly or indirectly connected to political issues. This implies that politics can affect the climate, especially when considering the fact that the current research aims at developing a new immigration policy, which is usually the responsibility of political parties. Furthermore, societal security is a field which can benefit from the findings of current research. The presence of immigrants, especially in large numbers, can impact the societal security of any given society. This is true, especially if society treats them as threats, burdens, or a liability, instead of addressing their needs and rights and, thus, turning them into contributing members of the population.

Much of the information used by academics for the purpose of consolidating their arguments comes from theoretical knowledge and empirical literature. Hence, the findings of the current research could be quite helpful in that respect.

### ***V.5 Contribution to Practical Knowledge***

The current research tried finding a clear explanation for existing condition of work immigrants, in terms of their entire immigration and work process. By interviewing work immigrants and getting first-hand knowledge, as well as talking to people involved in the decision-making process, the current research tried explaining how work immigrants were being treated, either through their perspective, or through that of the decision-makers. The purpose was to formulate and define some clear guidelines for a new internal policy that would deal with immigrants, and especially with work immigrants.

Moreover, by administering questionnaires to people who worked in the Israeli immigration control authority, the current research was able to collect information about the attitudes towards these immigrants. This information was important, as it helped in understanding the

lacunas and the places in which the decision-makers need to make changes for improving the immigrants' lives and the integration process.

Local municipalities, such as that of Tel Aviv, have already exerted quite extensive efforts in order to integrate and inform the immigrants about their rights and obligations on both state and local level. However, when examining the perceptions of certain sectors that deal with the immigrants directly, such as civil servants, policemen and teachers, we can see that there is lack of education, training, and allocation of resources for these specific sectors. Hence, they need to fend for themselves, relying on their experience and often on their intuition, which inevitably leads to mistakes. As part of the purposed framework, I suggested a new examination of the allocation of resources and funds to manpower and professional training programs. This suggestion could be taken in consideration when examining the findings and conclusions of the current research and be used in order to train and fund the different professional sectors that work with immigrants.

#### ***V.6 Further Research***

As stated, the current research had some limitations, and by addressing them, future research could improve some of the problems which arose from them.

First, the current research performed content analysis of a variety of documents engaging in immigrants' work rights and duties. Moreover, documents regarding the rights and duties of employers were examined. However, the current research did not address any documentation regarding standards work contracts offered to work immigrants, or any written documents about internal policy or immigration. Future research could seek more extensive documentation and explore the different policies, perhaps even compare different policies formulated over the years and the differences between them. Furthermore, since the issue of work contracts did not come up in the interviews, it would be important to address this issue in future research.

Second, the sample size for all the different parts of the research, albeit extensive, might not fully represent the specific population and its sentiment. Future research could interview a greater number of work immigrants, who lived in Israel for different periods of time, to compare the different views and attitudes towards the internal policy. Future research could also conduct more than one focus group and compare the results, to see if different people came to different conclusions about the lacunas in today's policy.

Third, the current research did not take into consideration the public in Israel as part of the research sample. This was due to the fact that the main research aim was to formulate a new

policy, which required inside information and people who were directly related to the legislation process. However, combining the information collected by the current research with the information that could be collected from the Israeli public, could help in fine-tuning the suggestions for a new policy even more.

Fourth, the current research was mostly conducted before the events of October 7<sup>th</sup>, 2023. These events impacted and changed dramatically the atmosphere in Israel, whether by affecting our sense of security, or whether by affecting the way we perceived foreigners living in our country. Future research, which would probably be conducted after these events, would shed some light on the way these events had changed the perceptions and attitudes in Israel.

### ***V.7 Importance of the Research***

The current research was important in a number of ways. First, it provided first-hand insights and information about the lives of work immigrants who live and work in Israel. This information was crucial for understanding the way the current policy impacted their lives.

Second, the current research offered an insight about people who had very high-level positions in the decision-making process in Israel. These people, much like the work immigrants, provided crucial insight about the process, which was not collected merely by academic information. Much like with the work immigrants, the conversation with these senior participants, provided important and first-hand information.

The questionnaires offered a unique perspective about the state of mind of people who are part of the immigration control process in Israel, which was also invaluable. This information, combined with the previously collected data, offered first-hand insights about immigration policy in Israel, the way the immigrants were being treated, their perspective of Israel, its people, culture and customs, and its attitude towards the immigrants. Furthermore, the current research did its best to examine the internal policy for work immigrants, in order to find the places where there were lacunas and suggest solutions for them.

Finally, the current research offers a new paradigm for immigration policy. This new policy, using all the information gathered along the way, takes into consideration all the existing and noticeable problems in the current immigration policy, and does its best to provide solutions, alternatives, and a new point of view, along with practical suggestions for course of action, for a successful integration and assimilation of work immigrants.

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