

DO REFUGEES COMMIT CRIMES? UNDERSTANDING AFGHAN REFUGEES' INVOLVEMENT IN CRIMES IN QUETTA, PAKISTAN

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Abstract

The post-Soviet war situation in Afghanistan pushed a large number of natives out of country mainly to the two neighboring countries, a) Pakistan and b) Iran. It is estimated that more than three million (both documented and undocumented) Afghan refugees still inhabit in the different regions of Pakistan but most of them are concentrated in the borderlands adjacent to the Pakistan-Afghan border. The district Quetta houses a reasonable number of Afghan refugees since their arrival during 1980s. Afghan refugees are stigmatized as key actors in different kinds of crimes in the district Quetta. For the current research study 150 respondents were approached and responses were enumerated with the help of a well-structured interview schedule. For the selection of the respondents a purposive sampling method was used. The respondents were asked about the possible involvement of Afghan refugees in different crimes. In people's perceptions some of the Afghan refugees were actively participating in the following types of crimes in the city: a) terrorism, b) kidnapping, robbing and looting, c) killings, and d) drugs trafficking. They further highlighted that there is a positive association between the lower economic conditions of Afghan refugees and their involvement in the crimes. Rational choice theory was used in this research.

Keywords: Crimes, Afghan Refugees, Economic Conditions, Quetta, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

For the first time in the history of modern world, UNHCR (1951) took an initiative for the protection of refugees during 1950s. UNHCR during 1950s passed refugees convention to protect the refugees in an out-of-country situation. Preston (1992:843) mentioned about the two possible issues which could be faced by the refugees and stressed on the resolution of conflicts which lead towards the refugees' displacement. The first situation is of humanitarian nature in which is obviously different from the political scenario. On the other side the states involvement through

the use of military and other law enforcement agencies considers it as a political issue. In such situations the host nations have to share a part of burden for the welfare of the people who moved in as refugees. The protection of the refugees shall be the priority of the host states as in the recent past some cases have been observed that the refugees had to face many problems.

Cutts (2000:1-12) asserted about the safety of the people in a crisis situation. People should get-out of the conflicting regions and find some safe houses in the world around them. Most of the world religion also favors the process of hosting the refugees in a crisis circumstances but at the same time before the 20th century there were no such measures to protect the refugees. Most of the strategies are, however, temporary in nature and ad-hoc based to tackle the refugees. Hassan (2009:36) mentioned about the situation in Afghanistan which pushed people to become refugees across the world but mainly in Pakistan and Iran (also see Rizvi, 1984:42). Hassan (2009) further asserted that the Afghanis had to face the worst law and order situation in the post-Soviet invasion and afterwards which resulted in outflow of refugees from the region. Both invasions, Soviet and US, made it very difficult for the general public to survive in these circumstances. Pakistan being a neighboring state had to share the major burden of refugees which lasting from last four decades.

According the UNHCR (2019) Pakistan office there more than 1.4 million documented refugees in Pakistan by the end of year 2019. Further, UNHCR (2016) data depicts that 18% of the total refugees inhabit in Balochistan province. In the recent past the province has been facing a highest number terrorist attacks. South Asia Terrorism Portal (2015) calculated total 102 attacks in only Quetta city during 2015 with 102 deaths and 84 injuries. According to UNHCR (2014:1) factsheet, the Afghan refugees are scattered through borderland but mainly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan. Most of these refugees settle in the camps made by the state for them and are mainly financed by the United Nations. Those refugees who inhabit within general population, sometimes, become problematic for the cohabitants through their active participation in the criminal activities. Afghan refugees are one of the major challenges for Pakistani government throughout last three decades. The state has multiplied times stressed on Afghan government and UN for the repatriation. A reasonable number of refugees have been returned through repatriation project initiated and supervised by the UNHCR.

Many Afghan people living near the borderline breach the border security and enter in Pakistan for different purposes. The Afghan crisis situation badly affected Pakistan throughout decades. The refugees have been settled in Pakistan with about two main strategies a) they settled in the separate refugee camps, and b) they are allowed to disperse in the local population and settle wherever they want to settle. The aforementioned category is a common one for the refugees hosting regions in the world but at the same time the refugees or the migrants living with unregistered status could disperse in the communities. The second case is most common in Pakistan where the number of undocumented refugees is much higher. The refugees with undocumented status could become a problematic for not only

the law enforcement agencies but at the same time they could harm the local population by actively participating in the criminal activities.

It has become very challenging for the Pakistan to check the movement of undocumented refugees from Afghanistan during 1980s and 1990s. Such concentration of the refugees became a constant problem not only for the state but at the same time for the local inhabitants as well. The repatriation of these refugees is one of the better solutions for both the state and community but for that the stability in Afghanistan has be achieved. Government authorities over time tried their level best to close the businesses of the refugees and they were unable to do it.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: REFUGEES AND CRIMES

Various researchers across the globe have focused on the involvement of refugees in crimes as in some countries they have come across such activities after the refugees' influx. These are the crises in the country of origin that push people to move abroad as refugees to escape such situations. But when they move abroad their livelihoods greatly effect because they don't find equal earning opportunities as the native does (Bianchi, Buonanno & Pinotti, 2012). Such issues may lead these immigrants to indulge in crimes. LaLonde and Topel (1991) and Borjas (1998) found that "immigrants in the United States experience worse labor market conditions, which would predict a higher crime propensity." Labor opportunities and wage differences have been noticed in the case of immigrants in Italy where the native had more opportunities for job and their wages were also better in comparison to the immigrants (Del Boca & Venturini, 2003). When the native face the labor crisis they start indulging in crimes. Contrary to findings of Germany and Italy a case has been reported by Borjas, Grogger, and Hanson (2010) in the US where the black males were found involved in crimes just to overcome the labor market competition with immigrants.

Dehos (2017) analyzed the association between the increase in the refugees' size and crimes in the case of Germany from 2010-2015 and found a positive correlation between two variables as the refugees were intricate in two major types crimes such as non-violent property crimes and frauds. The 2015 crisis due to the civil war situation in Syrian Arab Republic (Tumen, 2016) and mass inflow of nearly one million in the Germany raised concerns for the natives (Huang & Kvasnicka, 2019:1). They perceived that such individuals may indulge in crimes and thus disrupt the smooth functioning of the society. These concerns of the public were rightly exploited by the populist right parties that the refugees could commit crimes against them (Frankfurter Allgemeine, 2017; Mitteldeutscher Rundfunk, 2017).

Bell, Fasani, and Machin (2013), focused on their research related to the refugees' inflows to UK from 1990s to the 2000s and they found a slight increase in the case of property crimes. Butcher and Piehl (1998) presented a comparison on the basis of their study results that the young immigrants are less likely to commit crimes in contrast to the same aged group of natives. Spenkuch (2014) also found a positive correlation between the immigration and property crimes as per the panel

data on US from 1980 to 2000. Gehrsitz and Ungerer (2018) conducted study in Germany and found a small positive effect of immigration on crimes in the case of drug offenses and fare-dodging between 2014 to 2015.

We directly didn't find any authentic research related to the involvement of Afghan refugees in crimes in the case of Pakistan. But there were some official statements by the law enforcement agencies or some newspapers' clippings which oddly presented the case of such crimes committed by Afghan refugees. There is widespread misconception about the involvement of Afghan refugees in heinous crimes such as murder, kidnapping, smuggling, and bombing but the statistics (from 2014 to 30th September 2016) of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government's Directorate of Prosecution and Department of Police show a contrary perspective as only one percent of the total registered cases were committed by Afghan refugees (Khan, 2017). Yusufzai (2014) in an online blog of Inter Press Service wrote about the fears shared by the high officials of the police department of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government narrating the old narrative of the government that we must check the movement of the undocumented afghan refugees to control the crimes rates in the province as about 50000 refugees daily cross the Pak-Afghan border and thus pose a threat to the public as majority of such refugees are involved in the heinous crimes in the province.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rational choice theory has been considered as one of the mainstream school of thoughts within the criminology and other social sciences disciplines which explain that that people use rationality to take decisions regarding committing crimes well before the actions they take. The theory was originally developed through the ideas of classical Italian thinker Cesare Beccaria (Devine, 1982:8-2). This theory has widely been used by the other thinkers following Beccaria. The classical school is mainly depending on the ideas of Italian thinker, Siegel (2010:96) mentioned that number of scholars like Beccaria and some other utilitarian philosophers added that it purely depends on the people to perform crimes with their open choices. They commit crimes because they either wanted to get pleasure and in some cases reduction in pain is to be considered as a priority. We can control crimes while attributing certain punishments to those who commit crimes and the criminal procedures shall also be made swift and clear.

In addition to the utilitarian, positive criminologists also added that rehabilitation shall be considered for those who commit crimes. In their views the crimes are committed by people because they face socio-psychological problems and such problems are the main root causes of crimes (Siegel, 2010:97). Wilson (1983:260) asserted that in positivist's view crime as it could be easily avoided if we manage the poverty through government programs. We should create a deterrence to control the offenders. The inclusiveness for the wage force participation could resultant in the reduction of the crimes in many cases as it could possibly be the solution for the current research study as most of the refugees consider themselves as excluded from the mainstream jobs and thus resultantly they indulge in criminal activities to cater the livelihood.

In lieu of the utilitarian and positivist's perspective the main reason behind the causation of crime is poverty which could be altered through efficient planning by the state. In the current scenario, people's think that poverty is the main reason behind the involvement of Afghan refugees in criminal activities in Quetta. Their offences could easily be controlled by espousing the rehabilitation plans anticipated by positivist criminologists, like Beccaria (1764) and Wilson (1983:260).

STUDY OBJECTIVES

1. To explore people's perceptions about the role of Afghan refugees in criminal activities in Quetta

HYPOTHESIS

- H₀. Bad economic conditions of Afghan refugees are negatively associated with their involvement in the criminal activities in Quetta.
- H₁. Bad economic conditions could lead to the involvement of Afghans refugees in criminal activities in Quetta.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Current research was conducted in Quetta, Balochistan-Pakistan. For this research, 150 respondents were selected by using purposive sampling methods. A well-structured interview schedule was used for a survey. These respondents were asked about the situation of crimes in the city and the possible role of Afghan refugees in fueling crimes. The respondents were asked about the possible involvement of Afghan refugees in the following crimes categories; a) terrorism, b) kidnapping, robbing and looting, c) killings, and d) drugs trafficking. Data was analyzed by using SPSS version 19.0. At first level of analysis, frequency distributions of the key variables were drawn and later on a cross-tabulation alongside correlational analyses were done to see the impact of independent variable (economic conditions of the Afghan refugees) on dependent variable (criminal activities).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following table 1 presents the frequency distributions of the key variables such as, 1) gender, 2) age, 3) education, 4) profession, and 5) income. The first variable was the 'gender of the respondents.' Majority (90%) of the respondents were male while only 10% were female. The second category of the demographic profile was 'age of the respondents.' 36% respondents' age was between 21 to 25 years while 35.3% respondents were below 20 years of age. Education was the third category of the demographic profile. About 45% of the respondents' education was intermediate and 32% were having bachelor degree. Only 11.3% respondents were having master degree or above level of education. Profession of the respondents was very important indicator. Majority (58.3%) respondents were unemployed while 13.3% were doing government jobs. The income of the respondents was the last category to ask about. About 40 % of the

respondents' income was more than 30,000 PKR while more than 50% respondents' income was lower than 20,000 PKR.

Table-1: Demographic Profile of Respondents (n=150)

Attributes	F	%
1. Gender of the Respondents		
Male	135	90.0
Female	15	10.0
2. Age		
< 20	53	35.3
21-25	54	36.0
26-30	18	12.0
31-35	14	9.3
36-40	4	2.7
41 >	7	4.7
3. Education		
< Primary	1	7.0
Middle	4	2.7
Matric	12	8.0
Intermediate	68	45.3
Bachelor	48	32.0
Master >	17	11.3
4. Profession		
Government servant	20	13.3
Businessman/self employed	16	10.7
Landowner	6	4.0
Private job	15	10.0
Daily wager	5	3.3
Unemployed	88	58.7
5. Income		
<10000	36	24.0
10001-20000	37	24.7
20001-30000	18	12.0
30001>	59	39.7

Table 2 demonstrates the data related to people's perception about the involvement of Afghan refugees in various criminal activities. The respondents were asked about following categories of crime, a) terrorism, b) kidnapping, robbing and looting, c) killings, and d) drugs trafficking. The responses of the respondents are presented in five categories Likert scale. On the question about 'Afghan refugees brought terrorism to Pakistan,' about 58% of the respondents were agreeing to strongly agreeing with the statement. More than 53% respondent said that Afghan refugees are actively participating in the 'terrorism activities' in Quetta.

About 45% respondents said that the Refugees are somehow indulged in unlawful activities such as “kidnapping and robberies” in the city. Majority of the respondents, about 60 percent, stated that these refugees were involved in crimes like “drugs’ trafficking”. It was also inquired from the respondents whether it is the pathetic economic situation of the majority of the afghan refugees which lead them to ‘brutal criminal activities’ in Quetta. About 61% of the respondents were agreeing to strongly agreeing with the statement. The findings of the current research are in line with what we saw in the case of Germany, US, and Italy. Most of the studies found a positive correlation between the economic instability and the crimes in these countries.

Table 2 Criminal Activities and Economic Conditions

Categories	Degree of Responses (n=150)				
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
<i>Refugees Cause Terrorism in Pakistan</i>	28.7	29.3	12.0	16.7	13.3
<i>Refugees Participate In Terror Activities</i>	20.7	32.7	13.3	19.3	14.0
<i>Refugees Involved in Kidnappings & Robberies</i>	20.7	24.7	18.7	20.0	16.0
<i>Refugees Involved in Drugs Trafficking</i>	28.0	32.0	12.7	13.3	14.3
<i>Most of the Refugees belong to Low-Class</i>	23.3	38.0	16.7	16.0	6.0

The probability of impact relationships between the elements of study exhibits diversified yet significant associations. Owing to the linear relationship between the variables of individuals participated in terrorism, individuals involved in kidnapping, robbery, Drugs and Smuggling with that of causing terrorism phenomena, Pearson Correlation is employed. From the correlations table (Table 3), it is evident that the correlation coefficient (r) for the variables participated in terrorism and caused terrorism is .393”, indicating a strong relationship, as surmised earlier, $p < 0.001$ indicates that the coefficient is significantly different from 0. So, for the first variable relationship it can be concluded that the more the individuals associated with terrorism the higher the probability of causing terrorism by them.

The correlational results also portray a strong relationship as higher the individual's involved in kidnapping, robbery the more the probability of causing terrorism. The correlation coefficient (r) is .433** and p value as .000 which indices a strong and significant relationship. The same lineage of results exhibiting strong relationship with correlation coefficient (r) .395** and $P < 0.001$ are associated with the variables of individuals involved more in drug and smuggling cause higher degree of terrorism. Unlike above results, a non-linear relationship was found

between the individuals belonging to poor class of society causing terrorism, wherein the correlation coefficient (r) is .12 with p value as .137.

These results depict that it is not necessary to be a fact that only individuals from poor class are convicts of terrorism, rather the other circles of society are clouded within this net. Yusufzai (2014) mentioned about the statement of the Police officials of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province during 2014 as they stated that it has become a routine matter for the Afghan refugees to commit heinous crimes in the province. The free movement of these refugees must be controlled if we wanted to check the criminal activities. There are thousands of undocumented refugees who cross border on daily basis which makes the situation more difficult for the agencies to control crimes.

Table-3: The Impact of Economic Condition on Criminal Activities

		<i>Afghan Refugees (n=150)</i>				
		Caused Terrorism	Participated to in Terrorism	Involved in Kidnapping & Robbery	Involved in Drugs Smuggling	From the Poor Strata of Population
<i>Afghan Refugees</i>						
Caused Terrorism	Pearson Correlation	1	.393**	.433**	.395**	.12
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.137
Participated to in Terrorism	Pearson Correlation	.393	1	.506	.374	.007
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.933
Involved in Kidnapping & Robbery	Pearson Correlation	.433	.506	1	.543	.017
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	.838
Involved in Drugs Smuggling	Pearson Correlation	.395	.374	.543	1	.103
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.000	.000	.000	.000	
From the Poor Strata of Population	Pearson Correlation	.122	.007	.017	.103	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	.137	.933	.838	.208	

**** Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed)**

It is not only in the case of Pakistan where the refugees bringing with them crime. It has also happened in Kurdistan, where Barzinji (2014) mentioned that, in the recent past with an increase in the size of the refugees mainly coming from Syria and Iraq the host nation had to face the new wave of crimes. Studies conducted in US, Germany, and Italy also mentioned about the possible involvement of the refugees in the crimes against native people. Findings of the current research are in line with the findings of these countries.

CONCLUSION

The subject criminology, since its emergence, has been addressing diverse issues related to the causation of crimes in the society. Its interests remained in the conflicting situations which push people from the origin. The war and other macro conflicts remained important aspects for the subject criminology which could lead a larger proportion of the world population for out-migration in search for safe heaven. Afghanistan has faced such nature of problems since the invasion of Russia. A major proportion of the native population moved out of the state in search of safe spaces. Pakistan being the neighboring state accepted these Afghan refugees and housed them for almost three decades. But at the same time Pakistan has faced many problems because of these refugees. As per the findings of the current research study and some statistics presented by the state, some of the Afghan refugees are indulged in unlawful activities, like; a) terrorism, b) kidnapping, robbing and looting, c) killings, and d) drugs trafficking. Many of the positivist criminologists, such as Beccaria (1764) and Wilson (1983:260), have identified that poverty could be the major root cause of the crime in the society and such nature of crimes could be prevented by providing better economic opportunities to the people. In the case of Quetta, people think that Afghan refugees' involvement to the criminal activities was mainly because of the poor economic conditions.

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