

SOCIAL IMPACTS OF AFGHAN REFUGEES ON PAKISTANI SOCIETY

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Abstract

This study was conducted in Chakdara, District Dir Lower, which is one of the major cities of District Dir Lower and where there is a huge camp for Afghan refugees. The objectives of this study are to find out the impacts of Afghan refugees on the security situation of Chakdara. Apart from the local population of Chakdara, which is 29,712, some 11,184 refugees live in camp while some of the refugees live out of camp in Chakdara and surrounding areas. In order to know whether these refugees have any impact on the security situation of the area, a sample size of 379 respondents was selected through stratified random sampling from the local community using Sekaran method (2003). Data was collected through interview schedule and their views about the impacts of refugees on security were found. The study proved that the massive influx of Afghan refugees to Chakdara has not only created social, political, economic, environmental and ecological problems, but also caused an alarming threat to Pakistan's internal security. Because of the presence of refugees, drastic changes came in the social setup of local community. Local people have adopted new trends of dressings, cooking, art, music etc. Besides, the crime rate such as theft, drug trafficking, street crimes, and beggary has been increased enormously in Chakdara. They also have a role in increased number of beggars in the area. It is clear from the study that the Afghan refugees have aggravated the local social system. The study also shows that the Afghan refugees are the main source of disputes in the area.

Keywords: Afghan Refugees, Security, Social Impact, Social System, Pakistan

INTRODUCTION

During the Afghan war, Pakistan provided asylum to almost three million Afghan refugees. On the basis of similarity in culture, religion or languages, Pakistan hosted all of the Afghan refugees of 1979 war (Douglas, 1999). Farr (1986) argued that making arrangements of stay and other basic facilities for such a huge number of refugees was too much difficult task for a poor country. The government of Pakistan demarcated areas for refugees' camps in various areas of Pakistan but they sprawled in the settled towns and open lands. After their arrival, the Afghan refugees were adjusted in various camps which were specially launched for them in specified areas. The refugees later left these camps and began living in areas outside the camps. In Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, camps for Afghan refugees were launched in Dir, Mansehra, Haripur, Nowshera, Mardan, Kohat, Charsadda and Peshawar districts. According to Express Tribune (2014), currently 2.8 million Afghan refugees are living in Pakistan.

The stay of such a large number of Afghan refugees created serious issues for Pakistan and its inhabitants. Their presence resulted in the conflict among local people as well as among the refugees. They brought cataclysmic changes in the social life of Pakistan that directly and indirectly affected every aspect of society since their arrival (Bradsher, 1999). The Afghan refugees have same ethnic background with local Pashtoons which was the main reason of their influence on the social life of local Pashtoons. They got the cultures of weapons, illegal trades, drugs, smuggling and crimes (Burki, 1991). A research study by Ghufraan (2008) finds that the supply of weapons to the Afghan Mujahideen from the United States was continued throughout the Afghan war via Pakistan. This badly affected Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan where Kalashnikov became a prominent fraction of Pakhtun culture. Display and use of arms became a part of the culture of Pukhtoons. The Afghan drugs traffickers started using Pakistan as a new drug rout from Afghanistan to the west. Many Afghan heroin producers moved their businesses to the tribal areas of Pakistan, after they started living as refugees in Pakistan. They too would use Pakistan as the supply route of their products to the western countries. The local farmers too started farming of poppy crop because they were impressed of its profit which the refugee farmers would get through it. Khyber Agency emerged as the main centre of heroin laboratories. Such activities presented a negative image of Pakistan in the world. It also promoted the use of drugs and its business in Pakistan. The young generation of Pakistan, especially the students of colleges and universities were greatly affected by drug trafficking (Haq, 2000). According to William (1994), with the advent of Afghan refugees, the arms, both heavy and light, became common in Pakistan and soon everyone could approach these. Because of the weaponization of Pakistani society, the law and order situation soon became the most horrible and the government lost its influence in

safeguarding the people from criminals, religious extremists and political target killers. Kidnappings, robbery, target killings and killings in the name of religion, sect and honor became ordinary things. The overall ratio of crimes touched the extreme level within few years. Because of the weaponization of Pakistani society, the people started use of heavy arms against each other even during their minute disputes.

Samdani (2008) argued that the existence of Afghan refugees in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Balochistan caused serious conflicts with the people there. The refugees would use the farms of local people for grazing their animals. They would do so without any permission from the owners of the lands. This unsystematic grazing and cutting considerably destroyed the natural balance of the hilly areas and other natural vegetation as well. The Afghan refugees frequently cut the forests in hilly areas because they would get firewood and wood for various other purposes from these forests. Some of the refugees would cut the wood for commercial purposes as well. This uncontrolled cutting destroyed the forest sectors of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Baluchistan and caused severe soil erosion in these areas.

The Afghan refugees have worsened the security situations in Pakistan because the locals are facing threats from them because of their weak economic position, low social status and their marginalized position in camps. Their political slogans and agendas are disturbing the harmony of community. After their settlement the refugees started to demand and put pressure on the already overpopulated communities of local Pashtoons on their scarce resources. These could be seen in the challenging wall chalking in Peshawar and Quetta, in fabrication of weapons, in the drug trafficking, sectarianism, nationalism, in the bombings and acts of intervention that mostly affected the North West Frontier Province (NWFP), current Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Baluchistan, in the atmosphere of political stress and creating conflict over internal economical resources between Afghans and local people Cronin (1985). Rossi (1990) argued that the rapid increase in population of both the locals as well as the refugees is also a causative factor for the increase in crime rate in Pakistan. As the Pakistani society is influenced by weaponization, crimes ratio increases to highest level. The planned crimes like kidnapping, vehicles snatching, murders of political and religious figures and the supporters of various organizations, formed on the basis of ethnicity or sect has become too much common. With increase in militancy in the country, the norms of the society are changed and display of arms has become a symbol of power and status which increases crimes and consequently, criminals and militants in the country. Some common incidents of crimes include drugs, illegal trade, prostitution and display and business of illegal arms. Apart from this, kidnapping for ransom is also at rise. After committing a crime, the culprit Afghan refugees go to Afghanistan and stay there till the case settles down. The main reason of the involvement of the

refugees in crimes is that police cannot enter their camps for search operation or arresting culprits. There are well prepared and professional groups of refugee criminals which are involved in different crimes, ranging from a small theft to huge robbery and murders. According to Hussain (2007), the Afghan refugees entered Pakistan with a huge quantity of domestic animals and pets. Some of the refugees had animals for domestic uses whereas the others were having animals for commercial purposes. The refugees started grazing their animals in the open fields of the local people and in the hilly areas where most of the plants and herbs are wild and is not the property of anyone. Such lands and pastures would be used by the local people for their animals and the refugees too started these. This caused not only grievances between the locals and the refugees, but also increased deforestation. The frequent grazing and cutting of grass badly affected the floral environment which resulted in increased pollution. Apart from the grazing animals, the refugees would cut wood for domestic as well as commercial uses this caused deforestation which affected the overall environment of the country. The areas where there are refugee camps; have more deforestation which is clear evidence that the refugees have hands in the climatic changes that occurred because of deforestation.

There was no trend of using drugs in Pakistan till the late 1970s and no one would have thought of cultivation of poppy. But during the Afghan war the drugs became very common and were accessible to everyone. The Afghan drugs businessmen shifted their refineries to the tribal areas of Pakistan and from there they started exports of drugs globally. Some of the refugees, with the support of government, established refineries in NWFP as well. By the late 1980s, the profit of heroin export was more than any legal export of Pakistan. Afghanistan turned into a drug heaven from where the drugs would be smuggled all over the world. This business resulted in the arms and drug mafias in the areas at borders between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Thus heroin became accessible in all parts of Pakistan. Gone were the days when drugs were unknown among people of Pakistan and very soon it got popularity. The number of drugs addicts in Pakistan increased remarkably, which also included heroin addicts. Pakistan has now rounded about 3.5 million drug addicts (Stedman, 2003).

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

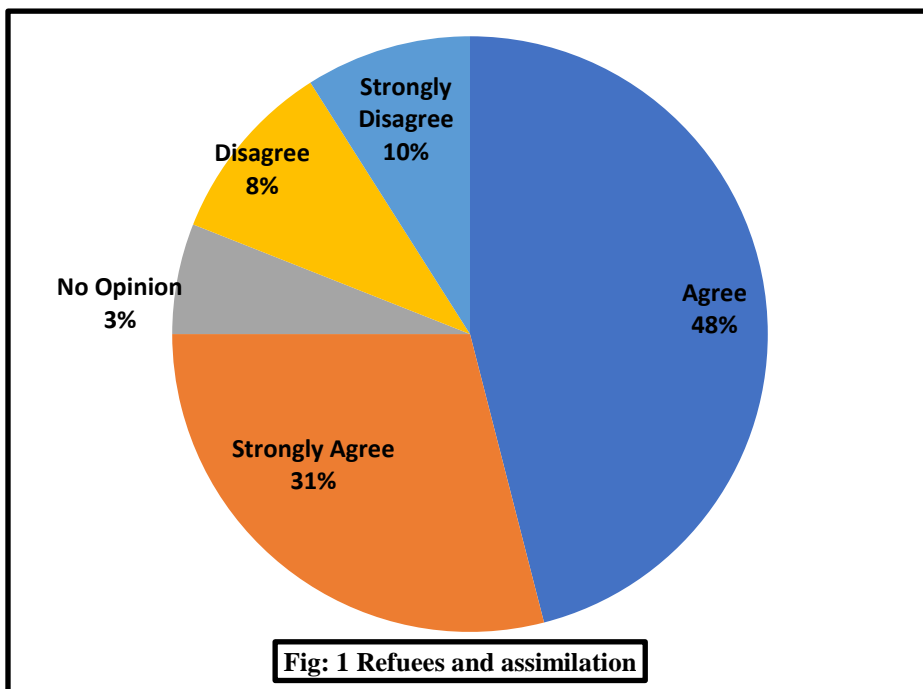
- To dig out if refugees have role in assimilation in the area
- To assess the role of refugees in deforestation and pollution
- To find out if refugees are involved in drug trafficking
- To find out if refugees have any role in supply of weapons in the study area

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Because of the nature of the research, all respondents were males and were selected from sampled locality in order to assess the social impacts of refugees on them. The respondents were interviewed through stratified random sampling. According District Census Report of Dir Lower (1998), the total population of Chakdara is 29,217 and as per Sekaran method (2003), the sample size for this study was chosen as 379. Thus, 379 individuals were selected from urban and rural areas of Chakdara through proportional allocation method. A structured interview schedule based on Likert scale was used for data collection. Data was entered and analyzed on SPSS software and then the Chi Square test was applied to find out association between various variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

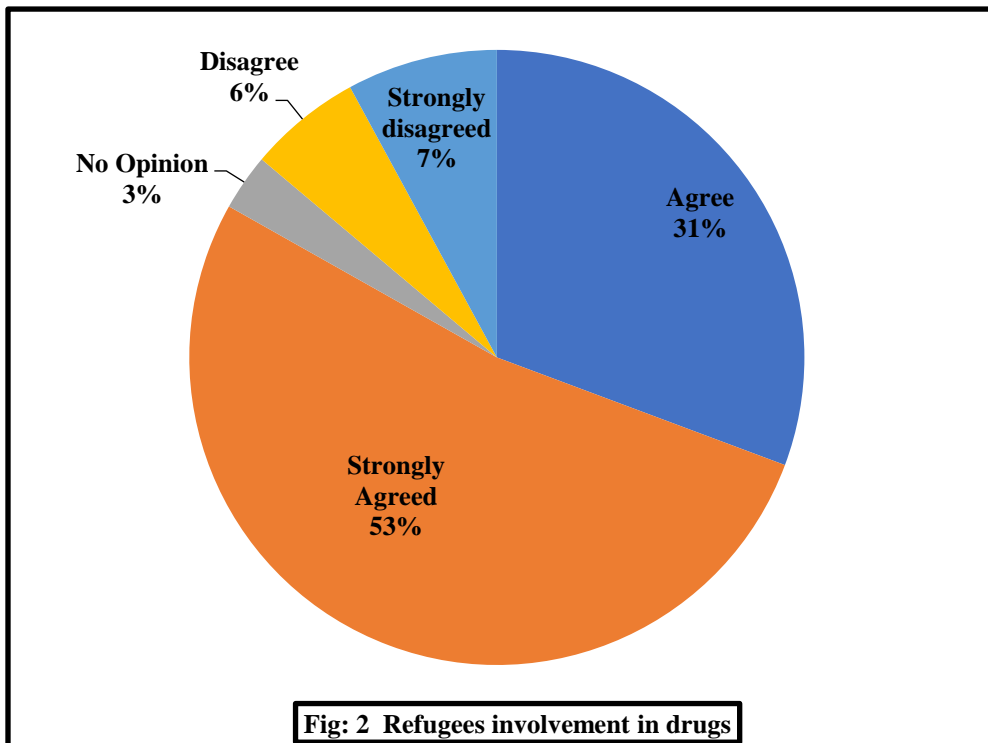
Figure 1: Refugees Caused Assimilation



The figure 1 shows the respondents' views if the presence of Afghan refugees has caused assimilation of cultures in the target area. The table and graph show that 181 respondents with 48% of the total sample size agreed to the above statement.

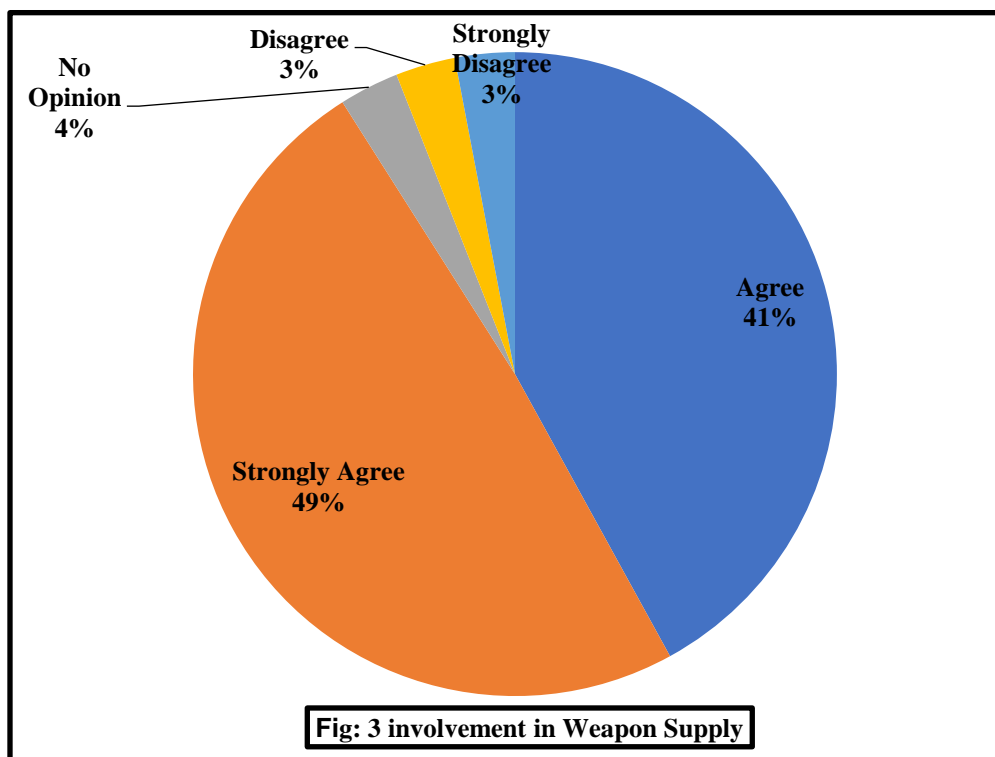
117 respondents with 31% strongly agreed. Further, 13 respondents with 3% had no opinion about it. 30 respondents with 8% disagreed whereas the remaining 38 respondents with 10% strongly disagreed to the above statement.

Figure 2: Involvement of Refugees in Drugs



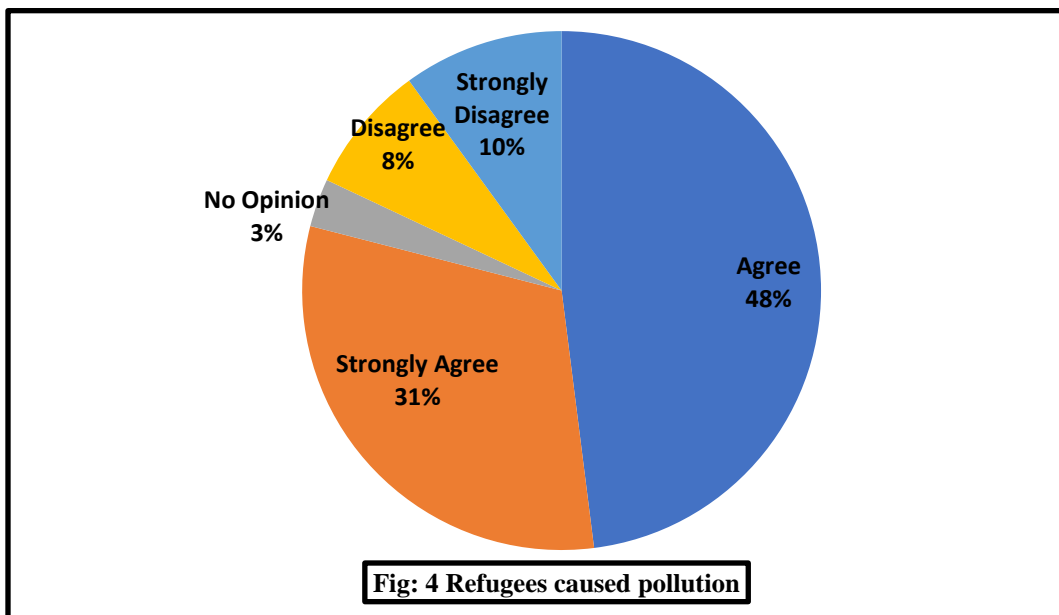
The above figure shows the respondents' views about refugees' involvement in drug trafficking. In this regard, out of the total respondents, 119 respondents with 31% of the total sample size agreed to the above statement. 198 respondents with 53% strongly agreed. 10 respondents with 3% had no opinion about it. In addition, 23 respondents with 6% disagreed whereas the remaining 28 respondents with 7% strongly disagreed with the above statement.

This figure concludes that drug spread in the area is particularly influenced by the presence of afghan refugees in the area. It also indicates that afghan refugees are influencing not only the broader cultural values as well as changing the micro cultural norms.

Figure 3: Involvement of Refugees in Weapon Supply

The above figure 3 explains respondents' views about afghan's refugees' presence and their involvement in weapon supply in the area. While responding to this question majority of the respondents i.e. 157 with 41% of the total sample size agreed that afghan refugees are involved in weapon supply in the area. Further, 183 respondents with 49% strongly agreed to the statement. In addition, 15 respondents with 4% expressed no opinion about it, and 12 respondents with 3% disagreed to the statement that afghan refugees are involved in weapon supply in the area. While a small number i.e. 12 respondents with 3% strongly disagreed with the above statement.

Thus, the figure concludes that excessive number of the respondents were of the opinion that actually afghan refugees are involved in weapon supply in the area. The weapon supply to the area is negatively influencing the socio-cultural scenario of the area and also had a negative impact on the youth, thus promoting Kalashankaow culture in the area. So, in one way or the other the presence of afghan refugees is impacting the social fabric ranging from food, dress, and language to environment and prevalence of drugs.

Table 4: Refugees caused pollution

The table and pie graph 4 shows the respondents' views if the Afghan refugees are responsible for making pollution in the target area. The table and graph show that 181 respondents with 48% of the total sample size agreed to the above statement. 117 respondents with 31% strongly agreed. 13 respondents with 3% had no opinion about it. 30 respondents with 8% disagreed whereas the remaining 38 respondents with 10% strongly disagreed to the above statement.

MAJOR FINDINGS

This study was carried out in Chakdara, Dir Lower, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. A total of 379 respondents were interviewed. According to the nature of the study, all of the respondents were male and were selected from various walks of life.

Majority of the respondents (48%) were agreed to the statement that the refugees have caused acculturation in their area. A significant association ($P=0.002$) has been found between the presence of refugees and absorption of cultures in an area. This result is supported by the study of Anderson and Dupree (1990). Their study says that the Afghan refugees always follow their own culture but sometimes they unwillingly admit and follow some parts of the culture of their area of refuge. Similarly, the local people are attracted by some parts of refugees' culture which

they follow. In this way absorption of two cultures occurs and the original culture of the local people goes missing to some extent.

Majority of the respondents (48%) were strongly agreed to the statement that the refugees have increased pollution in their areas. There is a significant association ($P=0.035$) between the presence of refugees and increase in pollution in target area. This result is supported by the research study of Hussain (2007). According to this study, the areas where refugees live are extremely polluted because majority of the refugees are illiterate and they are unaware of health hygiene. They do not care of cleanliness and throw the garbage beside their house. Instead of dumping, they often throw the garbage to the river. They do not have the trend of proper water and sanitation system. They just drove out the dirty water from their houses which make pond near their houses.

Majority of the respondents (53%) were strongly agreed to the statement that the refugees are involved in drug trafficking in their areas. The result presents that there is significant association ($P=0.050$) between the presence of refugees and increase in drug trafficking in target area. Same are the views of Sen (1992) which supports this result. The study of Sen says that the poppy grower refugees shifted their business to the tribal areas of Pakistan during the Afghan war. The refugees would smuggle drugs to various parts of Pakistan where it soon got popularity. The refugees then turned drug trafficking into a profitable business and they established a network for it throughout Pakistan. The Afghan Katchi Basti of Karachi was famous for drug trafficking in whole Asia.

Majority of the respondents (49%) were strongly agreed to the statement that the refugees are responsible for weapon supply in their areas. A significant association ($P=0.039$) can be seen between the presence of refugees and smuggling of weapons in the target area. This result is endorsed by Bhola (1989). According to the study of Bhola, during the Afghan war the US supplied a huge amount of weapons for the Afghan Mujahideen in order to fight against the USSR. Some of the Afghan mujahideen groups and other influential started smuggling of these weapons to Pakistan. When it was found a beneficial business, majority of the Afghan refugees started smuggling of weapons to Pakistan. So the refugees are responsible for introducing Kalashnikov culture in Pakistan.

CONCLUSION

The study has shown that the refugees have greatly affected the social structure of the study area. They have major role in changing the social setup of the area. They have introduced various new trends of businesses, food, art, dressing which the local people have adopted. They have introduced Kalashnikov culture in

Pukhtoon community. Apart from these they have a vital role in increasing crime rate of the area. They are found to be involved in various types of crimes like supply of weapons, drug trafficking etc. Refugees are a mean of increasing different types of pollution of the study area such as air, water and noise pollution. They have a pivotal role in deforestation. Their presence is a great threat to the law and order situation of the area. The Afghan refugees are burden on Pakistan because it is economically a weak country with limited resources and it cannot further afford the stay of millions of refugees. The refugees have contribution in all the serious issues which Pakistan has been facing like terrorism, killings, kidnappings, religious extremism, weapon culture, cultivation of poppy, drugs, smuggling of various products and corruption in various departments like police, NADRA etc. They are security risk for Pakistan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

On the basis of the overall findings and conclusions of this research, it has been recommended that the Afghan refugees should be restricted to their respective camps as long as they are in Pakistan. This will stop mixing of refugees with local people. The movement of refugees throughout Pakistan should be closely monitored in order to avoid threats to internal security. Police and other law enforcing agencies should check the supply of goods of the Afghan refugees in order to stop the smuggling of weapons, drugs and other harmful materials. Awareness about health hygiene must be created among refugees in order to stop pollution.

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