



CASE STUDY OF IRREGULAR MIGRATION FROM PAKISTAN TO EUROPE: REFLECTIONS ON THE CONTEMPORARY TRENDS

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Abstract

Europe has experienced a high level of legal or illegal migration in recent years. Among those arrived in Europe without authorization and those who already lived there, the number reach into the millions, though together they make up a small share of Europe's total population. Regular or irregular migration is a global phenomenon, with movements both within nations and internationally across borders. The current article aims at exploring the prevalence of irregular migration from Pakistan to Europe and the main actors behind this hideous disorder. The main focus has been paid to the upper Punjab, especially the two adjacent districts of Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat, which remained the epicenters of the irregular migration to Europe since many decades. The presence of migrant handlers, (commonly known as agents) their fraudulent practices, and their illicit connections with the transnational network made it convenient to lay a web to trap the young population aspiring to find employments in unknown destinations.

Keywords: Irregular migration, Transnational networks, phenomenon, political instabilities.

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Introduction

In the recent past, the academia has paid special attention to the issues concerning human trafficking and nation-state's policies to safe-guard its territorial sanctity by restricting access to foreigners through unauthorized means.¹ Studying the irregular migration has become the core interest of many researchers especially in social sciences, finding its scope more interesting and its tangible affects in both sending and receiving regions across the world.² The prevalence of irregular migration, especially in regions across the developing world, over the time has augmented exponentially. It is very difficult to give the exact size of irregular migrants since there are no such institutions that could enumerate such cross-border flows. According to the rough estimates of United Nations Development Program (UNDP) there were about 50 million irregular migrants in the world about a decade ago but these estimates seem to be not good indicators of measuring the irregular migration since they might have included those migrants who overstayed in a country while entering through legal means.³

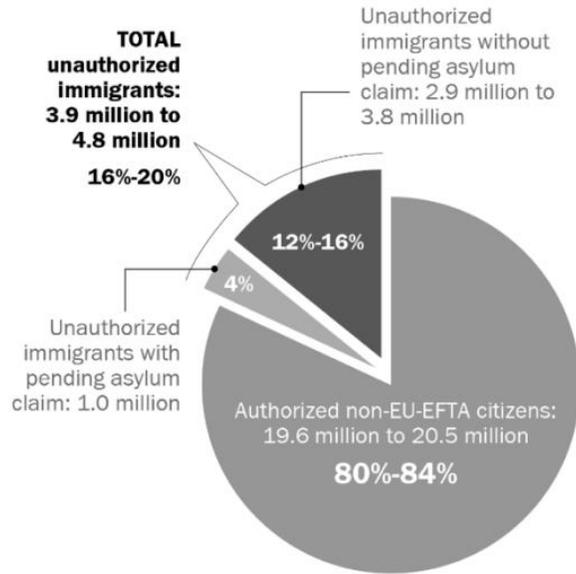
For the first time in 2016 Pew Research Centre estimated the size of Europe's unauthorized migrant population considered as the first comprehensive estimate for Europe in a decade. This new estimates by the Pew come at a time when public across Europe express mixed opinions on the place of migrants in their societies, and majorities in several European countries supported deportation of migrants living there.

¹ Joe Clancy, "Turkey: Illegal Gateway to Europe", *CNN World* (January 2, 2001), at <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/europe/01/02/immigration.turkey/index.html> (accessed May 1, 2020); Nicholas P. De Genova, "Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life", *Annual Review of Anthropology* 31 (2002): 419-447; Khalid Koser, "Why Migrant Smuggling Pays", *International Migration* 46, no. 2 (2008): 3-26; Matthias Neske, "Human Smuggling to and through Germany", *International Migration* 44, no. 4 (2006): 121-163; Richard Staring, "Facilitating the Arrival of Illegal Immigrants in the Netherlands: Irregular Chain Migration Versus Smuggling Chains", *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 5, no. 3 (2004): 273-294.

² Nicholas P. De Genova, "Migrant "Illegality" and Deportability in Everyday Life", 419; Khalid Koser, "Why Migrant Smuggling Pays", *International Migration* 46, no. 2 (2008): 4; Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser and Madeline Bury, "Irregular Migration toward Greece: Narratives of Irregular Migrants", *International Migration* 56, no. 1 (2018): 78-94.

³ United Nations Development Program, *Human Development Report 2009* (New York, United Nations Development Programme, 2009), 2.

Data of unauthorized migrants in Europe included here from Pew Research Centre, November 13, 2019.⁴



Human trafficking has been seen as one of the major challenges faced by nations in this modern age. Trafficking of human beings illegally into a country or outside from the country has augmented in recent years which is increasingly associated with serious human rights violations and deaths, in particular when it occurs by sea. The loss of migrants' lives at the hands of smugglers especially in the Mediterranean Sea is an acute reminder of the need to tackle migrant smuggling by using all the legal, operational, and administrative powers available. The fact that migrant smuggling networks are closely linked to other forms of serious and organized crimes including terrorism, human trafficking, and money laundering indicates that there is a dire need to control this illegal movement to avoid any catastrophic situation that may emerge in the future. Under the UN Protocol, migrant smuggling is defined as the procurement, in order to obtain, directly or indirectly, a financial or other material benefit, of the illegal entry of a person into a State Party of which the person is not a national or a permanent resident.⁵

⁴ Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2019/11/13/europes-unauthorized-immigrant-population-peaks-in-2016-then-levels-off/>.

⁵ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Protocol against the smuggling of migrants by land, sea and air, supplementing the United Nations Convention against transnational*

In addition to this, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), also defined irregular immigrant is a person who has entered the country without official authorization, and a migrant may be in an irregular situation from the time of arrival by entering the country without authorization or can become irregular for a variety of reasons.⁶ According to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) irregular migration is the movement that takes place outside the regulatory norms of the sending, transit and receiving countries. Irregular migration has become a cross-cutting issue in the recent past. It has not only affected the migrant-sending countries but also the receiving countries.⁷ Contemporary political and economic situations of the countries across the world provided chances to the migrant handlers to evolve their businesses, transnationally and globally especially in war-torn countries. Apart from the economic and political instabilities, there are certain other reasons for the migrants to move to those countries which include personal conflicts, threats to life especially for religious minorities, etc. They help them to expedite their movement to specific countries to seek asylum or refuge.

Pakistan is one of the world's leading countries from where irregular migrants move abroad through different networks and with variant modalities. Economic scarcity and political situation played crucial role as "pushing factor" in expanding those "business models" for irregular migration.⁸ According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) and International Centre for Migration Policy Development's (ICMPD) in between 300,000 to 500,000 Pakistanis travel abroad by using irregular means.⁹ The majority of such migrants belong to the upper and

organized crime (Vienna, Austria, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2000), 2; Cat Barker, *The People Smugglers' Business Model*, Research Paper no. 2, 2012–13 (Canberra: Department of Parliamentary Services, Parliament of Australia, 2013), 3.

⁶ G. Vasileios, "Irregular or Illegal Migration in Greece", (2009), at http://www.geostrategy.gr/pdf/20090916_Illegal%20migration%20in%20Greece.pdf (accessed March 25, 2019); Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser and Madeline Bury, "Irregular Migration toward Greece: Narratives of Irregular Migrants", 79.

⁷ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Drugs Smuggling in Asia: A Thematic Review of Literature* (Bangkok: United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2012), 27.

⁸ Cat Barker, *The People Smugglers' Business Model*, 1.

⁹ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Drugs Smuggling in Asia: A Thematic Review of Literature*, 197; International Centre for Migration Policy Development, *Pakistan: Migration Country Report, Budapest Process, A silk routes partnership for migration* (Vienna: International Centre for Migration Policy Development, 2013), 39; Khalid Koser, "Why Migrant Smuggling Pays", 8.

some other parts of Southern Punjab in addition to other regions of Pakistan especially Karachi.¹⁰

Migration from Pakistan to Europe (especially to Greece and Italy) is on the rise in the upper (Pothohar region) and some of the Southern parts of Punjab Province. The use of clandestine modes to move abroad is prominent in the uppermost levels from the region.¹¹ Approximately, 8 million irregular immigrants were living in European countries and the proportion of Pakistanis is significantly high.¹² In the case of Pakistan, handlers play a crucial role in trafficking the people abroad through clandestine means as they have strong connections with international cabal to accomplish their illicit goals.¹³ This practice of sending people abroad especially through irregular mean is termed as “business model” of traffickers - as majority of them take it as enterprising business with an increased income while inciting people to move abroad.¹⁴ To accomplish their business goals, they blatantly advertise their services to the aspirants¹⁵ and this phenomenon is widespread in Gujrat and adjacent regions.¹⁶

Table 1. Population and Emigrants from the Sampled Districts (Million)

District	Population*	Registered Emigrants**
Gujrat	2.75	.35
Mandi Bahauddin	1.59	.13
Total	4.34	.48

Source: *Government of Pakistan, 2018¹⁷; **Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, 2020¹⁸.

¹⁰ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *Drugs Smuggling in Asia: A Thematic Review of Literature*, 181.

¹¹ Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser, Rizwana Yousaf, Majid Ali Tahir, and Muhammad Awais Nazeer, “Pakistan to Greece: Mapping of Illegal Migration among Dwellers of Gujrat, Pakistan”, in *Revisiting Migration Issues in Pakistan: A Collection of Research Articles*, eds. Sarfraz Khan and Hafeez-ur-Rehman (Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Press, 2012), 78-94.

¹² G. Vasileios, “Irregular or Illegal Migration in Greece”.

¹³ International Centre for Migration Policy Development, *Pakistan: Migration Country Report*, 41.

¹⁴ Cat Barker, *The People Smugglers’ Business Model*, 1-2.

¹⁵ Khalid Koser, “Why Migrant Smuggling Pays”, 53.

¹⁶ Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser and Madeline Bury, “Irregular Migration toward Greece: Narratives of Irregular Migrants”, 85.

¹⁷ Government of Pakistan, *Block Wise Provisional Summary Results of 6th Population & Housing Census-2017 [As on January 03, 2018]* (Islamabad: Pakistan Bureau of Statistics, Government of Pakistan, 2018).

In this paper, the focus is on the various aspects of the irregular migration from upper Punjab while depending on the ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the two sampled districts (Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat) where key informant interviews (KIIs) were conducted with two migrant smugglers and four heads of the families of irregular migrants. In the second stage, with the help of already sampled key informants in both districts, sixteen in-depth interviews (IDIs) were also conducted with respondents of greater interest; (a) migrant smugglers, (b) repatriated irregular migrants, (c) heads of the families of irregular migrants and (d) community leaders. The selection of the respondents at both stages (for KIIs and IDIs) was made through the purposive sampling technique but with a special inclusion criterion as only those respondents were included who had any direct experience or possessed an in-depth knowledge about the process of irregular migration. In the proceeding section, a debate has been presented on; (a) the role of migrant smugglers in the process of migration, (b) common reasons behind irregular migration, (c) necessities of irregular migrants and their families.

The role of migrant handlers

The widely prevailing networks of human traffickers have been conducting unlawful business of attracting youth to irregularly send them to European countries in most of the cases. Irregular migrants or victim of trafficking normally categorize handlers on the basis of their success ratios, and the standard set by the network, the repute in the region, and the charges they ask to assist the irregular journeys. There were three major routes which Pakistani migrant network were using to send people to Europe; (a) Pakistan-Iran-Turkey-Greece-Spain (most popularly successful route), (b) Pakistan- (except Uzbekistan) -Ukraine or Russia-Eastern Europe- Western Europe, and (c) Pakistan-Middle East-West Africa-Spain (only few opt for this).¹⁹

¹⁸ Bureau of Emigration & Overseas Employment, *Statement Showing the Number of Pakistanis Proceeded Abroad for Employment Registered by Bureau of Emigration and Overseas Employment during the Year 1981-2020 (upto April)* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan, 2020). Available at <https://beoe.gov.pk/files/statistics/2020/district.pdf> (accessed on May 1, 2020).

¹⁹ Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser and Madeline Bury, "Irregular Migration toward Greece: Narratives of Irregular Migrants", 86; Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser, Rizwana Yousaf, Majid Ali Tahir, and Muhammad Awais Nazeer, "Pakistan to Greece: Mapping of Illegal Migration among Dwellers of Gujrat, Pakistan", 87.

These networks were very effective even in the faraway and remote rural settings of Gujrat and Mandi Bahauddin. These networks routinely advertised their expertise of facilitation to send people abroad. The journey begins with 15 to 20 persons accompanied by the human smuggler or one of his assistants.²⁰ The presence of such networks is very common phenomenon, the means of access to developed world. The socio-cultural scenario of the discussed areas is the indicative of the awareness level of the native population, lured by rosy pictures of their aspired destinations. The weak economic structure and vulnerable local population is a prime target in this given situation.

Pakistan-Iran-Turkey-Greece route is the most popular and traditional route involves many dynamics of transnational involvement. These transnational networks have designed their own strategies to cross these irregular migrants through state borders. Since the entire process is not regular, the migrants are bound to suffer mentally and physically. They face health hazards, scarcity of food, and hazardous environment. Most of time they had to walk for long distances and spend nights in dangerous places to fulfill their aspiration of a better life abroad.

In addition to the most common routes to Europe, some of the human traffickers also send people through air routes.²¹ They assess the trends of visa issuances by the EU Countries and apply only for those countries who are issuing more work visas. They normally send people to the most frequently visiting countries in Europe through forged documents. In the case of Pakistan, the role of migrant traffickers is very pivotal as they have developed systematic networks and strategies for conducting irregular migration and promoted those networks as a business model in expanding their businesses by all means.

Human traffickers use complex modus operandi based on their national and transnational, personal as well as business connections. Nonetheless,

²⁰ Sarfraz Khan, "Impact of Migration on Education and Health: A Case Study of Karrianwala Village, District Gujrat, Pakistan" (PhD diss. Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad), 84, at http://pr.hec.gov.pk/jspui/bitstream/123456789/8447/1/Sarfraz_khan_Anthropology_HSR_2017_QAU_30.08.2017.pdf (accessed on May 1, 2020).

²¹ Kleopatra Yousef, *The Vicious Circle of Irregular Migration from Pakistan to Greece and back to Pakistan, Background Report: Migratory System 3 (Pakistan)* (Athens, Greece, Hellenic Foundation for European and Foreign Policy, 2013), 10.

they use their personal contacts to promote their illicit human smuggling businesses by perpetuating the rumors about the success stories of illegally migrated migrants to different destinations. These success stories are considered as benchmarks for young aspirants who want to follow the footprints of others illegally migrated persons. Those irregular migrants who were successful in reaching their dream destinations remained in contact with their families at the origin of country and share their experiences of work and living conditions. Migrants, once they are settled and get a somewhat reasonable job, start earning, and then send remittances to their family that helps in uplifting the social and economic status of their families. These kind of success stories are a source of inspiration for the unemployed youth who gradually start thinking in terms of moving abroad, but ultimately fall into the trap. All those personal and business relations and flow of information regarding success abroad create a conducive business environment for handlers to generate demand in the market, and this depends upon the availability of their “potential customers” in the market to promote their business interests. Some of the irregular migrants shared their hard experiences even the loss of the lives of their co-irregular migrants during their grueling journeys.

Human traffickers not only motivate the aspiring people especially youth, at the same time, they establish strong connections with the international network for the smooth operation of migrants to the specific destinations, especially to Europe. It was necessary to decipher the business model of the network as it increases the risk for aspirants who consult them. Mode of payments made by the aspirants varies from region to region depending upon the paying or financial capacity. In most of the cases, the aspirants sell their agricultural land, houses, assets and livestock. They usually use all the available resources to pay-off the expenditures in shape of loans through personal means or through banking channels.

Common Reasons behind Irregular Migration

Chain migration²² or emulation²³/*rees/dekha-dikhi*²⁴ with the well-directed support mechanism through social and kinship networks escalated the out-

²² John M. Goering, “The Explosiveness of Chain Migration – Research and Policy Issues: Introduction and Overview”, *International Migration Review* 23, no.4 (1989): 797–812; Marlou Schrover, “Chain Migration (Network Migration)” in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Race, Ethnicity and Nationalism*, eds. John Stone, Rutledge M. Dennis, Polly S. Rizova, Anthony D. Smith, and Xiaoshuo Hou (Hoboken, USA: Wiley, 2015); Bin Yu,

migration from this region especially the irregular migration. This mechanism of stimulating migrants is also known as “culture of migration”.²⁵ International migration is cultural in the sense that the diligence to migrate is transmitted across generations and between people through social networks.²⁶ The patterns of culture of migration can also be seen in the current region. Migration remained an inspiration for younger populations in upper Punjab especially in Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat. Most of the youth constantly look forward to the opportunities of settling abroad. The most common reason of choosing irregular migration was that people perceive an escalating effect of it on the lives of migrant families in their neighborhoods in the term of socio-economic benefits.²⁷ Most of natives, especially young, get inspiration from the elevated social and economic positions of families of migrants and try to emulate it in the same way. The elevated socio-economic status is a mark of satisfaction among the families of migrants working abroad. This circle of migration results in the new recruitments for irregular migration in addition to the formal migration patterns. So, in a way the social and economic positions achieved by the people through the process of migration is a great push factor for others to try their fates through the same process of illegal migration.

Acute poverty is the major driving force and shall remain, the main reason behind migration from any given place. It was very difficult for people to earn livelihoods while living and working in the region since only few opportunities were available for them. The family structure is generally large and livelihoods are insufficient and limited. The social obligations are deemed necessary and in return create a financial burden on the family

“Chain Migration”, in *Encyclopedia of Immigrant Health*, Loue S., Sajatovic M. (eds) (New York, NY: Springer, 2012).

²³ Inam Ullah Leghari, “Pakistani Immigrants in Greece: From Changing Pattern of Migration to Diaspora Politics and Transnationalism”, paper presented at 4th LSE PhD Symposium on Contemporary Greece (London: London School of Economics, June 25-26, 2009).

²⁴ Sarfraz Khan, “Impact of Migration on Education and Health: A Case Study of Karriawala Village, District Gujrat, Pakistan”, 63.

²⁵ Jeffrey H. Cohen, *The Culture of Migration in Southern Mexico* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 5; William Kandel and Douglas S. Massey, “The Culture of Mexican Migration: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis”, *Social Forces* 80, no. 3 (2002): 981–1004.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 981.

²⁷ Sarfraz Khan, Mirza Rizwan Sajid, Maria Abbas Gondal and Nadeem Ahmad, “Impacts of Remittances on Living Standards of Emigrants’ Families in Gujrat-Pakistan”, *European Journal of Social Sciences* 12, no. 2 (2009): 205-215.

head, push them towards the alternative options like moving abroad since they were observed others who achieved relatively better socio-economic positions by doing so. The flow of remittances filled the much-wanted void in their lifestyle which showed marked improvement. It was very difficult for the common people to make livings while earning opportunities available in the village of Karianwala in Gujrat tehsil were very few and less lucrative. These villagers had to face many issues when it comes to agriculture since the barren nature of soil with insufficient result and above all the rain-fed (*barani*) cultivation made it more difficult for them to earn living through agriculture.²⁸

On the other hand, there were no cottage industries available in the region so the only option left with the young population was to take a calculated risk and move abroad. The majority of the households are depended on the foreign remittances as a means to support financially. It was very difficult for the common people to migrate abroad for fortune making even using the options of irregular migration as the cost related to this process was too high for them to bear. Unstable trade market situation and meager income levels were also pushing young people to emigrate illegally. Irregular migration is deliberated among the dwellers of villages as a routine matter in Gujrat.²⁹

Social prestige was the third major determinant of illegal migration from the community. They choose the irregular mode to achieve and enhance their social positions. Those who already had migrated play the role of icon with better social position in the society due to strong financial base.³⁰

The financial stability due to mobility through any means from abroad gave consultative roles to the families of migrant workers.³¹ It has usually helped them in achieving a better social prestige in the community. The investments for the purchase of land and business were very common phenomenon in the migrant prone areas/countries across the world. Some

²⁸ Sarfraz Khan, "Impact of Migration on Education and Health: A Case Study of Karrianwala Village, District Gujrat, Pakistan", 65.

²⁹ Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser and Madeline Bury, "Irregular Migration toward Greece: Narratives of Irregular Migrants", 85.

³⁰ Ibid, 91.

³¹ Sarfraz Khan, Mirza Rizwan Sajid, Maria Abbas Gondal and Nadeem Ahmad, "Impacts of Remittances on Living Standards of Emigrants' Families in Gujrat-Pakistan", 209.

of the researchers have already pointed out that migrants often maintain economic and social ties to their original communities.³² Similarly, remittances play a very important role in boosting social status of their families. The transitional change from mediocre lifestyle to somewhat superior way of living brings mental satisfaction and much wanted respect in the community.³³

Family feuds were very common part of the culture in the upper Punjab where caste (*baradri*) system was predominantly very strong. At time when any conflict or serious feud with some other family occurs, those directly involved try to escape by moving abroad in order to avoid any escalation.³⁴ At this time, they consult the migrant smugglers for facilitating them by regulating their process of migration on a fast track. About 16 percent of the respondents migrated abroad from Jhelum (an adjacent district to both Gujrat and Mandi Bahauddin) because of family conflicts.³⁵ A study mentioned about the conflict situation of irregular immigrants to Australia in following way; “the vast majority of respondents (85%) filed the plea that they faced both protection and non-protection related problems in their country of origin and/or left their origin country for both protection and non-protection reasons.”³⁶

Deutsche Welle (DW) Urdu published a report on the migration process from Gujrat and found that it was a very common practice among the inhabitants to get a visa, purchase tickets, and fly abroad when it was

³² Una Okonkwo Osili, “Migrants and Housing Investments: Theory and Evidence from Nigeria”, *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 52, no. 4 (2004): 821-850; Sarfraz Khan, Mirza Rizwan Sajid, Maria Abbas Gondal and Nadeem Ahmad, “Impacts of Remittances on Living Standards of Emigrants’ Families in Gujrat-Pakistan”, 208.

³³ Sarfraz Khan, “Impact of Migration on Education and Health: A Case Study of Karriawala Village, District Gujrat, Pakistan”, 45.

³⁴ Ibid, 71.

³⁵ Izhar Ahmad Khan Azhar, *Overseas Migration and its Socio-economic Impacts on Families left behind in Pakistan: A Case Study in the Province Punjab* (Kassel: Kassel University Press, 2008), 86.

³⁶ Marie McAuliffe, *Seeking the Views of Irregular Migrants: Decision making, Drivers and Migration Journeys*, *Irregular Migration Research Program Occasional Paper Series*, 5/2013 (Belconnen: Irregular Migration Research and Analysis Section, Department of Immigration and Border Protection, 2013), 4, at <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/08b1/800cc26a64fa214c04ea2a8c75fdd0dd8de5.pdf> (accessed on May 1, 2020).

inescapable for them to confront a potential clash with their opponents.³⁷ Some migrate as a means of achieving the new demand which may be called “innovating migration.” Others migrate in response to a change in conditions in order to retain what they had; they move geographically in order to remain where they are in all other respects. This may be called as “conservative migration.” Passionate irregular migrants can come under the first category of Petersen’s typology.³⁸

The role of social proximity of migrants is extremely pivotal which directly motivates such individuals in proximity who have never been in the process of migration before. Irregular immigrants had a reasonable social proximity to migrate prior to leaving their origin country to travel to Australia, although this tended to diminish the closer the respondent was in social terms to the actual migrant group.³⁹ In addition to the case of irregular immigrants to Australia, a study in Pakistan also found some common aspirations like greater social mobility amongst irregular migrants in Southern Punjab from where most of them had moved to Dubai to turn around their lives.⁴⁰ The ambitions to change the future of families amongst aspired young *Gujrati* irregular migrants were very high. In most of the cases, people do not weigh the consequences of the irregular migration before they actually practice it. It becomes an acutely difficult situation for them when they go through the different circumstances after starting a journey as an irregular migrant.⁴¹

Downside of irregular migration

Migration is a source of economic growth in many countries and Pakistan is no exception. Since every scenario has its own merits and demerits so the downsides of illegal migration are enormous for those who initiate it involving physical, mental, and financial. In addition, there is uncertainty, exploitation and deportation.

³⁷ “Migration from Gujrat, Pakistan”, *Deutsche Welle Urdu* (2015), at <http://www.dw.com/ur> (accessed on May 25, 2017).

³⁸ William Petersen, “A General Typology of Migration”, *American Sociological Review* 23, no. 3 (1958): 256-266.

³⁹ Marie McAuliffe, *Seeking the views of Irregular Migrants: Decision making, Drivers and Migration Journeys*, 3.

⁴⁰ Abdul Majeed, “Causes of Illegal Migration to Dubai” (Master’s thesis, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, 2011).

⁴¹ Muhammad Wajid Tahir, Rubina Kauser and Madeline Bury, “Irregular Migration toward Greece: Narratives of Irregular Migrants”, 85.

The illegal status of migrants pushed them towards uncertain future at each step of their journeys as most of human smugglers opt for traditional-cum-hazardous route Pakistan-Iran-Turkey-Greece. Different studies have mentioned about the unprecedented dangers which irregular migrants have faced during their journeys.⁴² A study in Pakistan found that, “many respondents reported that they had to drink polluted water on their way and sometime the aggravated situations lead to death.”⁴³ People risk their lives to choose most common but a dangerous irregular migration route passing through Pakistan, Iran, Turkey and reaching to Greece. They had to face many hurdles during this course of their travel. Only few of them were successful in making it to the other side. But there is no guarantee for them to get a legal status in Europe even after reaching the destination through such a dangerous journey.

The vicious circle of instant gains always leads to sufferings. Most of the irregular migrants spend years abroad away from their families and feel home sickness at every step of their lives.⁴⁴ They face adverse situations because of their irregular status. They come across many mental and psychological problems in addition to the physical, economic, social, and cultural issues. The families at origin may also face psychological problems.⁴⁵

The network of illegal migrant is highly regulated, still most of the migrants don't reach the destination as they are either caught by the security agencies during voyages or some of them die in the course of travel. Even if some of them reach their destination they have to face uncertainties as legal documents are not easy to get in Europe. The alien socio-cultural dynamics also perpetuate their hardship. They have to work in an inflexible and perplexing situation which is very difficult to cope with. Some of the irregular migrants receive legal documentation while others suffer for many years. Those who work as undocumented labor are exploited with low wages, and they have no option but to work for lengthy hours without break. So, exploitation and deportation are other major outcomes which

⁴² Ibid, 91-92.

⁴³ Abdul Majeed, “Causes of Illegal Migration to Dubai”.

⁴⁴ Sarfraz Khan, “Impact of Migration on Education and Health: A Case Study of Karrianwala Village, District Gujrat, Pakistan”, 168.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

irregular migrants face. Irregular migrants are exploited at every step of their journeys.

One major downside of the irregular migration is deportation. The majority of the irregular migrants are deported by the law enforcement agencies when apprehended at the borders of other countries. The number of deportees has shown an upward trend in the recent past. International Centre for Migration Policy Development (ICMPD) reported that according to the recent records of the Ministry of Interior during 1999 to 2008 total 313,513 Pakistani nationals were deported from EU region. Pakistan and EU signed agreement on readmission in 2009 and under this contract 171 people returned to Pakistan till 2013.⁴⁶ Deportation was very common in sampled districts. Most of them were deported from Europe and they were still struggling to resettle in the community.

Recommendations

The main focus of the current case study was to explore the pervasiveness of irregular migration in the upper Punjab, especially in two adjacent districts (Mandi Bahauddin and Gujrat) as said region is the most potential area for irregular migration to Europe. Every year number of irregular migrants, especially the young population, initiate their illegal journeys with the support of human handlers who further gain assistance from the transnational networks based in the travel route countries.

Illegal/irregular migrants irrespective of their destinations weigh up their chances and risk before entering a host country to work illegally. We assume people try to make the best of their opportunities and abilities. The most important incentive to work abroad is a boost in personal income. The expected earnings of an illegal migrants/workers are usually uncertain because possible apprehension and deportation by the host country authorities is accompanied by a loss in real or potential earnings.

The assessments of the whole picture of illegal migration suggestive of the fact that before embarking upon unknown journey they have to assess the difference between the expected gain from the uncertain income in the host country and the relatively fixed income in the source country. They need to take into account the probability of being detected and the

⁴⁶ International Centre for Migration Policy Development, *Pakistan: Migration Country Report*, 45.

severity of the potential penalty. The employer in any given circumstance usually provide no job protection for these types of clandestine workers. They have the power of hire and fire. The Covid-19 pandemic is a recent example where across Europe and Middle East even in the major western countries all types workers are being laid off. In a ceteris paribus analysis maximization of profit is very low. The directly affected are illegal migrants with identical minimization of wages or earning or no earnings at all.

It is obviously beyond the immediate power of the EU to eradicate the root cause of all the legal or illegal migration. Likewise, it is equally impossible for underdeveloped countries like Pakistan to supervise and eradicate the root cause of poverty, unemployment and governance issues. However, it needs to be better equipped to prevent illegal migration and address the trouble spots in and around through strict immigration policy. A media awareness campaign on the plight of sufferings of migrants will serve the purpose definitely.