



## PUSH AND PULL: UNPACKING THE CAUSES OF ILLEGAL MIGRATION FROM PAKISTAN TO EUROPE

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### *Abstract*

*A very ancient phenomenon, migration has been a part of human history for thousands of years. The process of illegal migration in Upper Punjab Pakistan's is depicted in this study. The aim of this study is to study the factors prompting to illegal migration. A qualitative research method was applied. The research design is descriptive in nature. To do this, twenty-two in-depth interviews were conducted by using Snowball and Purposive Sampling Technique. The age of research participants is between 25 to 40 years. This research examines the core motivations behind illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe, uncovering that the pursuit of improved economic standing and enhanced social status plays a significant role. Contrary to the widespread belief that such migration stems solely from poverty, the study reveals that many individuals who choose to migrate already hold jobs or operate small businesses within Pakistan. Their choice is often shaped by a desire to compete with or emulate the achievements of family members and peers living abroad. In many cases, migration represent not just an escape from economic hardship, but a means of gaining respect and recognition within their communities. However, this pattern has had a disruptive effect on family dynamics and traditional social relationships. The issue illustrates a nuanced interaction between financial ambition and social expectations, indicating a broader shift in societal values that warrants further investigation. For this issue countries can approach migration from a holistic point of view, which tries to boost the economy of the countries and overcome the risks and causes.*

**Keywords:** *Illegal Migration, Hardship, Aspiration, prestige, Immigrants, Emigrants*

### **1. Introduction**

Migration is a very old phenomena occurring in human history since the millennium. The first historical record of migration is found in religions text when children of Yaqoob migrated Egypt to exodus of Israeli from Egypt to cannon and then this activity goes on recently when the people migrated from Syria and Iraq to Europe. Every year, thousands of Pakistanis risk their own life to reach Europe in search of a better future. Human smuggling is a national disgrace. Some promise to travel through Iran, Turkiye, and Baluchistan to reach their desired destinations. Not all are successful in their journey, some are successful, and some are failed (Frederiks, 2015). There have been many legal migration waves from Pakistan to other parts of the world over the years, but illegal movement began in early 1990s (Maroufof & Kouki, 2017).

According to the report of IOM, Pakistan considering the top twenty Asian countries in migration and 8.84 million Pakistanis are employed, enrolled in school, and residing abroad in other nations. However, it's important to comprehend the factual order (Leghari, 2009). This migration was primarily of educated middle class people, and it significantly increased in the 1990s (Lee, 2015). In addition, a lot of unskilled migrants move to the Middle East for temporary contracts in oil companies in 1970 and 1980s (Shah T. H., 2020). Kuwait, Saudia Arabia and UAE are the landing place (Gazdar, 2003).

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Nothing is meant by all of the noise and roar. That, in a nutshell, is the most succinct way to describe the government's storm of condemnation and the country's antihuman smuggling operations, thousands of miles from the watery grave where hundreds of Pakistanis died last week. The doomed vessel was conveying something like 800 individuals, including purportedly 400 Pakistanis, when it overturned in the Mediterranean Ocean. There are only 104 known survivors, and it is virtually impossible to locate additional survivors. Around 80 bodies have been pulled out of the water, and worried relatives are waiting for news in the hope that at least they will be able to give their loved ones a burial (DAWN, 2023).

There could be a number of push factors that induce people to migrate from under-developing to developed countries, such as low-paid jobs, bad infrastructure, population growth, unemployment, inflation, and poverty. Inadequate production in agriculture brought on by droughts, floods, and other natural calamities can also be a contributing factor in migration. A person's migration may also be influenced by factors such as less industrialization, inadequate medical facilities, low educational attainment, and discrimination in the community (Khan, 2021).

One of the main drivers of migration in the majority of the studies is economic factors. According to a survey, the main reasons people migrate to Poland and Romania are the country's improved economic prospects, the expectation of finding better employment, welfare programmes, and higher living standards (Urbanski, 2022). According to the survey, low earnings, unstable work, low-quality healthcare systems, and general poor living conditions are the main causes of Mongolians' migration to the nation of South Korea (Aktamov & Grigoreva, 2021).

As individuals seek safety and stability in neighboring nations, these conflicts may result in refugee flows and illegal migration. The presence of coordinated pirating networks that work with unlawful movement by giving manufactured reports, transportation, and different method for unlawful passage adds to the issue. These organizations exploit weak people and charge high expenses for their administrations. Generally speaking, a person requires freedom, security, a steady and acceptable level of living, and an acceptance in society in order to properly experience life (IOM, 2020).

Previous study indicated that, dehydration can cause people's brains to get smaller, which can result in heat stroke. He adds that long distance migrants may be more vulnerable to risk (Tandon, 2021). According to some studies, Representatives of Pakistani associations in Greece have stated that since the beginning of 2011, the Pakistani community has been the victim of racist attacks that have taken worrying forms. In the first quarter of 2011, 60 acts of racist violence were reported by the Pakistani community. It should be highlighted that unofficial mosques, stores, and community lounges run by immigrants have also become targets in addition to members of the migrant and refugee groups (Pavlou, 2007).

### **Research Gap**

Although numerous studies have explored migration patterns from Pakistan, much of the existing literature primarily focuses on legal migration, economic remittances, or broader regional migration trends. Limited scholarly attention has been given to the specific push and pull factors that drive individuals towards illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe. As a result, there is a pressing need for in-depth, localized studies that examine illegal migration as a complex social phenomenon, rather than merely a legal or economic issue. This research seeks to fill this gap by providing a contextualized and holistic understanding



of the factors prompting illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe, with a particular focus on individual experiences, community influence, and the role of informal migration facilitators.

### 1.2 Problem Statement

The focus of the study is to find out the reasons as to why people migrate at their first place. This kind of migration has three dimensions cultural, social and economic. This study has covered all these aspects and recommended a solution to the problem. The push and pull factors have been discussed to expanding its scope to the hidden realities that have supported the illegal migration on massive level.

### 1.3 Research Objective

- o To study the factors prompting to illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe and understanding the network

### 1.4 Research Question

- o What are the reasons behind illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe?

### 1.5 Significance of the Study

This study has been depicting a picture of the province upper Punjab. Punjab second largest province by land area and by population. This study has added significantly to literature both academically and practically. During the interview it was assessed that people were not aware of the consequences of illegal migration. Through seminars conferences and research publication awareness can be provided to general public about illegal migration as most of the people were not aware whether their migration was legal or illegal. Illegal migration is considered a threat in most of the European countries and there are strict laws about illegal migration that can lead to imprisonment and detention. Human trafficking is only controlled by awareness and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) taking action against human traffickers and support the victim of crime. Other steps needed to reduce illegal migration include empowering the youth, providing opportunities to learn and implement.

## 2. Literature Review

One of the fundamental characteristics of human history, from birth to death, is the migration of individuals between nations, especially in a world where a number of international legal instruments deeply enshrine freedom of movement. The majority of people relocate to other nations for educational purposes, and some people even migrate abroad for this reason (Matheson, 2016). Some studies revealed that, migration can be thought of as a "network building" process in and of itself (Foner, 2001).

In The Gambia, illegal migration occurs for a variety of reasons, including curiosity and adventure, a lack of work, poverty, a desire for better living conditions, a desire for flashy cars and beautiful buildings, and the desire to be acknowledge and receive in society due to money. and inaccurate information about European countries, particularly from individuals who are already there, which can be safely categorized as individual factors (Afandi, Elvin, Kermani, & Majid, 2012).

From Tehran to the border with Greece, a large network of agents benefits from the trafficking of people. While some people travel with the false hope of becoming wealthy and living in a liberal culture, others migrate because they fear for their lives. These individuals who enter the country illegally and travel through dangerous routes face further exploitation, a language and cultural barrier, and a lack of social support. The agents involved in people smuggling have gone through the illicit channels before and eventually failed. These agents are knowledgeable on unofficial routes. Some of the women and girls



are stuck in prostitution even though they had intended to travel to the Middle East in order to find work (DAWN, 2023).

Potential migrants are susceptible to fraud, exploitation, and human trafficking because they lack specific information about potential unfavorable outcomes that would enable them to genuinely prepare. Since prospective migrants already possess a high level of risk awareness, more risk information and awareness may not have much of an impact on migration behavior (Aslany & Carling, 2021).

The official term for irregular migration in Pakistan is "*Ghair Qanooni*," which is literally translated as "illegal" in Urdu. However, "donkey" or "*dunki*" is a common phrase in Punjabi for unauthorized migration. This phrase is also used in the Indian Punjab to describe unauthorized immigration to European nations, particularly to the UK (Smith, 2014). According to the current study, "donkey movement" refers to the illegal migration of rural Gujrat district, Punjab, Pakistani citizens to Italy and other member nations of the EU, which is organized and supported by a network of agents.

A fishing vessel transporting illegal migrants capsized in June 14, 2023, in international seas in the Ionian sea off the coast of Pylos, Greece, Messenia. On June 10, the boat departed from Tobruk, Libya, with an estimated 400-750 migrants on board. Greek officials launched a search and rescue operation that resulted in the recovery of 82 remains and the rescue of 104 survivors, including Pakistanis, Egyptians, Pakistanis, Afghans, Syrians and Palestinians. Hundreds more people are still missing and are thought dead. Survivors were transferred to Kalamata and military initiated a rescue operation for searching the remaining 500 migrants (DAWN, 2023).

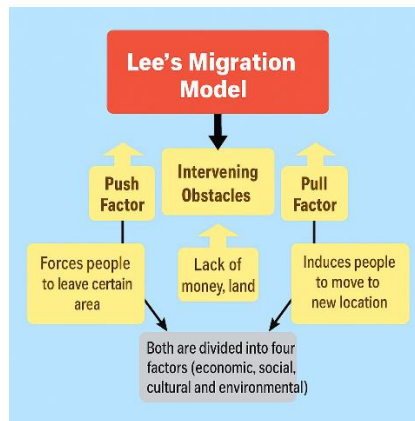
According to FIA, 12 survivors are Pakistanis, and 209 people are still missing, including 181 Pakistanis and 28 Kashmiris under Pakistani administration. According to earlier estimates, 135 of the 298 Pakistanis missing were from Kashmir. Here are those people who are saved, rescued and sending to Kalamata and the families of those migrants who are still missing and their parents are so depressed and sad. Twelve Pakistani migrants are rescued and those are; Haseeb Ur Rehman, District Kotli, S/o Habib Ur Rehman Muhammad Adnan Bashir, District Kotli, S/o Muhammad Bashir Asmat Khan S/o Muhammad Saleeho, District Gujrat; Zahid Akbar S/o Akbar Ali, District Sheikhpura; Muhammad Hamza S/o Abdul Ghafoor, District Gujranwala; Muhammad Sunny S/o Farooq Ahmed, District Sheikhpura District Sialkot, Rana Husnain S/o Rana Naseer Ahmad Irfan Ahmad S/o Shafi (Hospitalized), Imran Arain S/o Maqbool (Hospitalized), Zeeshan Sarwar S/o Ghulam Sarwar, District Gujranwala, Mehtab Ali S/o Muhammad Ashraf, District Mandi Bahauddin, Usman Siddique S/o Muhammad Siddique, District Gujrat.

## 2.1 Lee's Migration Model

In 1966, Everett Lee presented a comprehensive theory of migration. In order to predict migration patterns, Lee's migration model takes push/pull factors into account as well as intervening obstacles. It advocates that interceding hindrances can hinder movement to specific regions, while factors can advance relocation out of an old region to another one. Simply put, a push factor is anything that makes people leave a certain area. To put it another way, it is the factors that lead a group to migrate to a particular region. Both are partitioned into financial, social and natural variables. The reasons for leaving and the reasons for moving to a particular area are referred to as push factors. Interceding deterrents are the things that forestall a movement to a specific region, essentially to do with highlights

of the land. Cultural and physical/environmental intervening obstacles are the two most common types of intervening obstacles.

**Figure 2.1 Lee’s Migration Model of Illegal Migration**



### 3. Methodology

The main purpose of conducting this research was to find out the reasons of illegal migration from Upper Punjab to Europe. Research design for this study is descriptive. In this study, qualitative research was done. According to Creswell, when little is known about the phenomenon and topic needs to be explored then qualitative nature of inquiry is appropriate (Lilly, 1998). This study used snowball sampling. The areas include Gujrat, Kharian, Gujar Khan, Chakwal, Attock and Rawalpindi. This study used the primary data. The data collected from 22 sample participants of youngster and adult in upper Punjab. The data was collected through in-depth interviews.

### 4 Data Analysis

In this study, used thematic analysis for analyzing the data. At the end data were analyzed by making themes. Initially generate codes and then make themes on the bases of data obtained during data collection process.

#### 4.1 Results and Discussion

This section represents the findings of the data that are collected through field work.

Table 4.1 Percentage distribution of responses regarding sex ratio

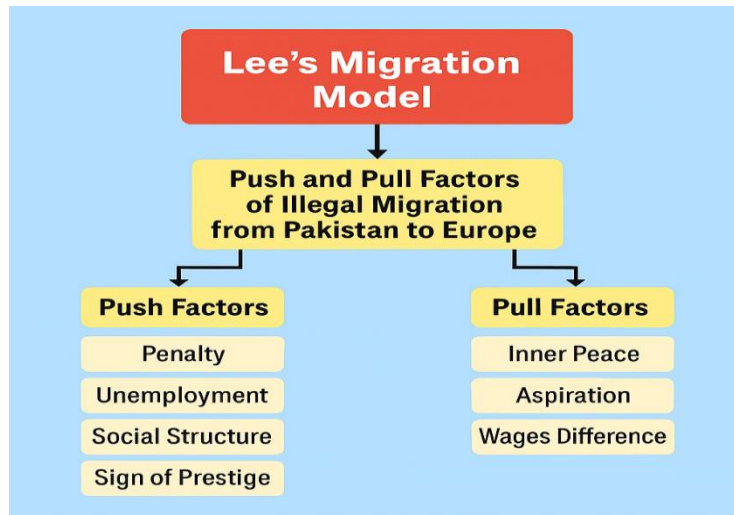
Responses	Frequency	Percent
Male	18	80%
Female	04	20%
Total	22	100%

In this study, 18 males and 04 females were selected for the collection of data. Most of the data is collected by men, because most men face this situation.

#### 4.2 Conceptual Framework

Lee’s Migration Model was used in this study. With the help of theoretical framework, researcher identified the push and pull factors in this study. The findings of this study truly linked with the model that are used in this study. Here is the conceptual framework of this study, in this framework discussing all the push and pull factors, model and findings of this study in the form of theme.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual Framework of Illegal Migration (Lee’s Migration Model)

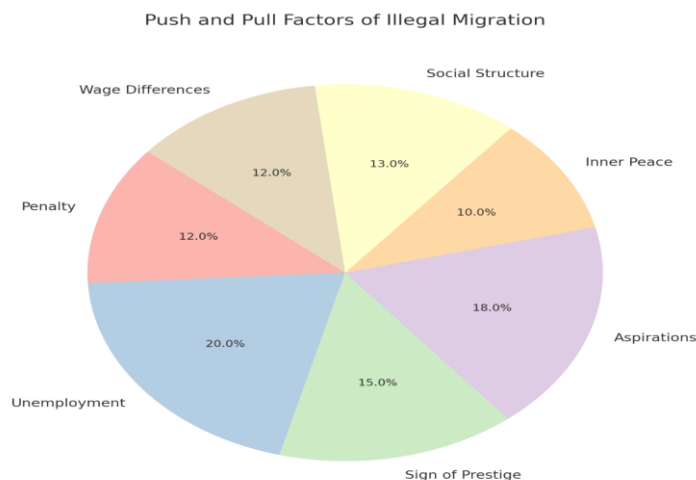


### 4.3 Causes of illegal migration

In this study, it finds that economic and social structure are the causes of illegal migration. Economic and social structure factors such as poverty, unemployment, wages differences, aspiration and goals, sign of prestige and search for a better life were consistently cited as a push factor for migration. Some participants mentioned that migration is not only associated with poverty but also inequality in the larger social structure is the main cause of migration. Economic opportunities are considering the pull factors in this study such as better life and jobs opportunities.

All the selected migrants in this study migrate illegally, some are successful in their life and some are failed but the motivations can be varied from individual to individual. So, here are some major consequences of illegal migration that are obtained by research participants.

Figure 4.2 Pie chart of Push and Pull Factors of Illegal Migration



**4.3.1 Impact of Socio-economic conditions:** In this study, finds that socio-economic factors such as poverty, unemployment and lack of opportunities in Pakistan were consistently cited as push factors for migration. participants emphasized the role of economic desperation driving individuals to undertake risky migration journeys.

**4.3.2 Penalty:** This study finds that poverty in Pakistan is at its highest peak, but it's not the main cause of migration. According to the data collected from this study, for moving abroad, many of the parents mortgage our homes; some people take out loans; and some sell the gold for sending their child abroad. People who went to Europe are not poor; they have enough money to start businesses in Pakistan, but they don't do that. Poor people in Pakistan are living in those areas that are unprivileged. These people don't try to go abroad. These people started working in Pakistan as laborers. These people were considered poor, and they faced poverty. Mostly semi middle-class people try to migrate illegally. And these semi middle-class people convert into laborers in destination countries.

One of my participant said that:

*Shamraz, a 34-years-old married man with two children, went to Libya by ship six months ago after paying 22 lakhs to an agent. He mortgaged their house to arrange the money, hoping to lift his family out of poverty. Due to a dispute, the agent tortured him during the journey. Driven by hardship, shamraz risked everything to secure a better future for his family.*

But if these people invested this money in small businesses in Pakistan, then they live a better life. But inner peace and aspiration force these people to move abroad, whether legally or illegally.

**4.3.3 Unemployment/Job Opportunities:** Research participants mentioned that Job opportunities in Pakistan is less that's why we are moving abroad for better job opportunities. One of my participants said that I borrowed money from my friends and unable to pay such huge amount of money which encourage me to choose this way. And I don't have money to use legal way for migration. Participants expressed that when a person is unable to locate a job that fits their skills, migration takes place.

One of my participants said that:

*In this country, the managers and HR departments of higher organizations and government ministries advertise job requirements. A lot of people pay fees and apply, but in the end, these authoritative people hire only those who are lined up with them.*

**4.3.4 Sign of Prestige:** In this study, sign of prestige is another cause of migration by 11 out of 22 migrants. Migrants said that it is a sign of prestige if they have family members abroad. In Gujrat city, if one of the family members is not moving abroad, they are considered curse in society. People go abroad by looking at others, even if they have to use illegal means for that. They spend a lot of money to move illegally to Europe.

**4.3.5 Aspiration and Goals:** In this study, participants expressed that aspiration for economic stability, better education and improved living conditions for themselves and their families are the primary goal of migration. Some participants mention that aspiration for social mobility and personal fulfillment through migration is the key goal.

**4.3.6 Inner Peace and Search for a Better Life:** In this study, Inner peace and search for better life is another factor prompting to illegal migration. Participants expressed that, migrating illegally to European countries is to live a better life, solve the problem of the families that are living in Pakistan, provide better education to their children, make homes,



and fulfill all their dreams. This is the reason for migration. They don't have enough money to pay for medical and other purposes, get a visa, and go abroad legally with official documents.

One of my participants said that:

*I was in a frenzy. I want to go to Europe and settle there. I wish I could give anything to my family that they need. I wish my mother perform Umrah. My Father is passed away in 2020. Absence of father, I faced a 47 lot of problems. Because at that time I was a child. I don't know what's happening with me. I went to Europe to live a better life and fulfil all my dreams.*

Researchers stated that since those who are wealthy have high social standing, others are encouraged to travel abroad in order to increase their income and advance their social and financial condition. These individuals first apply legally, but if the legal process is burdened with excessive fees, they may choose to immigrate illegally instead. So the wages differences encourage others to migrate.

**4.3.7 Wage Difference:** Family Pressure and Labor Salary is the another reason behind migration. Many of the participants thought that in Pakistan, the salaries of workers and laborers are very low. Workers work hard, and at the end, they earn 25 to 35k. If you are living in Pakistan, there is no redeem and investing and this cause little capital development. Which stops the economic development of the society as well as the country. And low wages lead to poverty. That is not enough to live better.

Ragner Nurkse also points out this concept. Low wages lead to poverty. There is no saving and investment that leads to poverty. And stops the economic development of the country (Bass, 2009). And then the circle of poverty moving from generation to generation. One of my participant said that:

*Since salaries in Pakistan are insufficient for a family's existence, especially when one must prepare dowry for the marriage of one's daughters, I'm unsure about some stable employment. Due to some peer pressure, I make this choice.*

## 5. Conclusion

The phenomenon of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe is fueled by a combination of economic goals and the desire for social status, rather than solely by only the poverty. Many individuals pursue migration not just for improved income but also to gain respect and recognition within their communities. It was a social atmosphere which forced people to take decision to migrate without knowing the consequences. Not only this, but people also suffer during illegal journeys and in the destination country. Once migrated the new migrants enter into vicious circle of hiding the actual conditions to the family members. This as badly affected the social fabric of the society and the family relations. They laying between past and fake future. In nutshell, this is an intriguing situation. The role played by travel agents, human traffickers, governmental officials and the families of old migrants play a devastating role in this situation. Migration, in this context, emerges not merely as a reaction to deprivation but as an active pursuit of aspiration and dignity. These insights underscore the need for holistic policy interventions that address both the root causes at home and the unrealistic perceptions of prosperity abroad. Understanding migration through this dual lens is essential for crafting more humane, effective, and sustainable migration strategies.



## 6. Recommendations

- The government should introduce training sessions that truly link to these skills that people use to get better jobs in Pakistan.
- The special courses on the causes and consequences of illegal migration should be taken to the schools and universities.
- The government should arrange an awareness session for rural/middle class people about illegal migration.
- The government should encourage strength, job opportunities and education. It should also work to lessen the factors that lead to forced migration, such as by building resilience, which gives people the freedom to decide whether to stay or migrate.
- Close ports of entry to discourage migration and focus on border control as a solution. And strict control over the human traffickers and travel agents.
- Effectively addressing this issue requires a multifaceted strategy that extends beyond simply tightening borders.
- For this issue countries can approach migration from a holistic point of view, which tries to boost the economy of the countries and overcome the risks and causes.

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