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Socio-Demographic Causes and Benefits of Internal and International Migration: A Case Study of Mazar-i-Sharif, in the Balkh Province of Afghanistan

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Abstract

Migration has a long history in Afghanistan, but it has increased remarkably over the last decade. This study examines the actual data of 1060 households in Mazar-i-Sharif, the capital of the Balkh province in Afghanistan to evaluate the main causes and benefits of migration. The data used in this study was obtained from a strictly random process. The study finds that the main reasons for internal and international migration are unemployment and income inequality, in addition to war and poverty, as international motivations for migration. Furthermore, the study demonstrates that households receive benefit from migrant remittances to increase their income and smooth consumption. Thus, the study suggests that to manage migration in Afghanistan, the government and international organizations should work together for peace and the reduction of poverty in Afghanistan to mitigate a further migration crisis in the future.

Introduction

Migration has traditionally provided people with chances to better their lives and the lives of their families (Wickramasekara et al. 2006). Individuals are also driven to migrate to escape poverty because of broad income inequalities between locations, especially among countries (Murrugarra et al., 2011). Because of this, the bulk of migrant flows from developing countries to developed countries has increased over the past years. People migrate from their origin communities to places overseas for several reasons, such as conflict, political and social uncertainty and economic motivations (Gartaula, 2009). Statistical figures reveal that in 2005 more than 191 million people were living outside their country of birth, this volume was surpassed to 221.7 million in 2010 and 250 million in 2015 (Ratha et al., 2016). These values represent more than three percent of the world population (Ratha et al., 2016).

The study of migration is a highly dynamic and multidimensional field that attracts interdisciplinary researchers. Due to its complexity and ever-changing nature, its causes, factors, and effects vary according to the situation. Migration is not only of interest to researchers; states also often seek to produce policies to sustainably manage migration (Dubey & Mallah, 2015). Migration is not only a problem in the destination country, but also causes tremendous changes in the origin and transit countries (Horváth & Anghel, 2009). Countries may be more or less exposed to immigration depending on their location. For example, countries with low economic and social development, deficient human rights, and countries with internal conflicts or ones that are located on a migration route are likely to experience migration (Dubey & Mallah, 2015). Migration is often prompted by various factors, both pushing and pulling people to the place they intend to go.

In Afghanistan, migration has been present for centuries and has increased drastically over the last decade for a variety of economic, political, demographic, social and environmental reasons (Murrugarra et al., 2011). Global warming, rising temperatures, melting polar glaciers and wars are further adding to the reasons for forced migration (Pete Spink, 2020). According to Kuschminder and Dora (2009), over the course of four decades marked by war, instability, economic hardship, and violence, a significant number of Afghan people have left their homeland in pursuit of refugee status both in neighboring countries and abroad. During the 1980s, over 5 million Afghans sought refuge in Iran and Pakistan, while thousands of families also migrated to countries such as India, the United States, and countries in Europe. Additionally, an estimated 2-3 million individuals have been internally displaced within Afghanistan, as noted in various sources (Rubin, 1996; Ruiz et al., 2001; Noor, 2006). The patterns of refugee and migration flows in Afghanistan are influenced by a complex interplay of political, environmental, social, and economic factors, making it difficult to attribute Afghan migration decisions to a single determinant (Garrote-Sanchez, 2017). According to a recent report by UNHCR in (2022), Afghanistan ranks as the third-largest source country for migration in the world, with 2.6 million documented refugees and more than 2.5 million undocumented ones, trailing only behind Syria and Venezuela in terms of migration numbers.

Thus, the main purpose of the study is to evaluate the push factors of internal and international migration in the case of the city of Mazar-i-Sharif, using comprehensive descriptive statistics and a recent household survey aiming to answer the following question: What are the main causes and benefits of migration for Afghan people?

Migration Theories

For many years, scholars have delved into the motivations behind human migration, exploring a variety of essential factors that influence people's decision to move. These factors include economic, political, social, cultural, demographic, and ecological elements, as extensively reviewed by Ghatak et al. (1996), Hagen-Zanker (2008), King (2012),

and Massey et al. (1993). These theories encompass functional perspectives, which view migration as a means to maximize income, and historical-structural theories, which interpret migration as a consequence of class-based disparities within global capitalist systems. Neoclassical migration theory, "rooted in Sjaastad's (1962) cost-benefit model and Lee's (1966) push-pull model," posits that individuals migrate primarily due to economic disparities between their current place of residence and potential destinations. Migration decisions, whether to migrate or where to migrate, hinge on substantial differences in income or overall well-being between these locations. People are inclined to move when they anticipate that the benefits of migration outweigh the costs. However, it's worth noting that, while Lee's push-pull model and the augmented gravity model effectively explain overall migration patterns between places, they have faced criticism for not fully accounting for why a significant portion of the population chooses not to migrate despite significant income disparities (Bogue, 1977; Hagen-Zanker, 2008). One explanation for this immobility is that migration isn't solely driven by external factors like wage gaps or disparities in livelihood opportunities. Instead, people's own agency and self-determination play a crucial role in deciding whether and where they relocate (Bakewell, 2010).

Furthermore, the New Economics of Labor Migration, pioneered by Stark and Bloom in 1985, places the family or household at the heart of migration decision-making. This theory argues that households have the ability to manage income uncertainties by strategically assigning family members to various income sources, including different migration opportunities (Haug, 2008; Massey et al., 1993). Family connections carry significant social influences that shape how migration choices are made (Mincer, 1978). To illustrate, strong attachments to one's place of origin and the people there create negative influences that reduce the likelihood of migration. Conversely, positive influences are established when family members and friends residing elsewhere provide valuable information that reduces the uncertainty associated with migration (Stark & Bloom, 1985). External factors also drive migration decisions when relative, rather than absolute, disparities in well-being, income, and living standards motivate people to contemplate moving. In such cases, individuals compare their own circumstances to those of others in their social circle (Stark & Taylor, 1989, 1991). Recent developments in migration decision-making models have evolved to incorporate individual factors while maintaining a central focus on the family or household as decision-making units (Anam & Chiang, 2007). In summary, this perspective highlights the pivotal role of families in shaping migration choices, where they act as both sources of support and constraints depending on the nature of their influence.

Network theory suggests that migration outcomes result from a complex interplay involving decisions made by individual actors, family members, friends, migrant organizations, and various economic and political factors (Boyd, 1989). Social networks not

only influence whether and how migration occurs but also play a role in determining the specific destinations migrants are drawn to (Haug, 2008). Ritchey (1976) points out that individuals who have access to relevant social connections have incentives to migrate because these networks provide valuable information, financial support, and practical assistance.

Empirical Literature Review

There is a consensus in academic literature that the primary catalyst for people to leave their homes is violence and conflict (Adhikari, 2012; Cummings et al., 2015). Quantitative studies conducted across various countries have consistently identified violence as the predominant factor driving displacement (Davenport et al., 2003; de Haas, 2011; and Schmeidl, 1995). These studies have primarily examined national-level data, treating refugees and internally displaced populations as the focal point. Furthermore, political factors have also been put forth and examined in this context, particularly the presence or absence of human and political rights. According to quantitative research findings, these variables seem to increase the likelihood of individuals leaving their places of residence (Davenport et al., 2003 and Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). Moore and Shellman (2004) found that instances of human rights violations, as measured by the Political Terror Scale (PTS), positively correlate with a country's refugee outflows.

Discrepancies in economic prospects, particularly disparities in employment opportunities and wages, have traditionally been viewed as the primary motivating factors behind migration. This concept forms the core of neo-classical migration theory, as seen in explanations for "rural-urban migration within the Harris-Todaro model (Harris & Todaro, 1970) and international migration patterns in the push-pull model (Lee, 1996)," as articulated by Borjas (1990). In these models, individuals' rational cost-benefit analyses, considering wage differences between their home country and their destination as indicators of improved economic prospects, are regarded as the decisive elements. These theoretical underpinnings have been extensively examined with empirical evidence, encompassing both national-level data and more detailed individual-level information (Amara & Jemmali, 2018 and Neumann & Hermans, 2017).

Numerous research studies have examined the connection between climate change and people moving from one place to another. Some of these studies focus on individuals and households. In Sub-Saharan Africa, researchers, such as Barrios et al. (2006) and Henderson et al. (2017) found that climate change had a significant impact on people leaving rural areas and moving to cities. Extensive research confirms that the majority of migrants are typically in an age group capable of working. This includes individuals who are moving within their own country, crossing international borders, seeking refugee status, or relocating for employment purposes (IMF [International Monetary Fund], 2016

and Kassar & Dourgnon, 2014). Migrants of working age have the highest likelihood of effectively dealing with the challenges they encounter before and during their migration journey. They are also better positioned to secure employment at their destination, often as part of a strategy to reduce risks for their families (Dasgupta et al., 2014 and Schwartz, 1976). Regarding traditional labor migration, there appears to be a positive connection with education (IMF, 2016). Skilled and educated migrants are often motivated to leave their home countries when they cannot find suitable jobs that match their level of education (Kirwin & Anderson, 2018). However, the impact of education on migration can vary from one country to another. For instance, in Ghana and Egypt, higher-educated individuals are more likely to migrate, while the opposite is true in Morocco, where lower-educated individuals tend to migrate more (van Dalen et al., 2005).

Migration Trend in Afghanistan

For over a century, Afghanistan has been a developing country. There was little industrialization and little employment available in the 1960s and 1970s. Consequently, the 1973 oil boom lured numerous Afghan laborers to Pakistan, Iran, and other Middle Eastern countries (Kronenfeld, 2008). Many Hazara families relocated to Iran in the 1850s to avoid natural catastrophes and other challenges, such as security threats because they are a religious minority (Shia) and face security threats in the country. An additional 15,000 Afghan households arrived in the area of Torbat-e Jam, east of Mashhad, Islamic Republic of Iran, between 1880 and 1903. (Abbasi-Shavazi et al., 2005).

In recent decades, Afghanistan's net migration rate has experienced substantial changes due to the nation's political developments. During the Soviet occupation period (1979-89), a large exodus of Afghans occurred, resulting in a "negative net migration rate of -56.7/1000 persons". Many Afghans left the country because of the war at that time. With the end of the Soviet occupation, many Afghans returned, bringing the rate to 44.4 per 1000 inhabitants between 1990 and 1995. As the Taliban's hold on power strengthened, this rate decreased to -6.5 per 1000 people between 1995 and 2000 because of the civil war that started in the country and Afghan people again began to leave the country. Over 6 million Afghans returned to their country between 2002 and 2013 after the Taliban's fall in 2001 (Marchand et al., 2014). This caused the net migration rate to shift from negative to positive, reaching 4.9 per 1000 people in 2013.

Although previous migration flows mostly consisted of refugees, economic migrants have been more widespread in the last decade, not just to Iran and Pakistan but also to the "Gulf Cooperation Council" and OECD countries. This happened because of lack of job opportunities in Afghanistan and in contrast more job opportunities abroad that attracted more Afghan economic migrants. For instance, in 1990, there were approximately 380,000 economic migrants; by 2000, this figure had risen to nearly 1 million, and by

2015, it had risen to 2.2 million. Over the last 15 years, this development has resulted in a net annual outflow of 85,000 Afghans (Garrote-Sanchez, 2017b). In addition, since 2015, nearly "146,000 young Afghan workers have migrated to Europe each year to have a better life" while the number of internal migrants is not available (Vieira, 2021). In 2020, 1.5 million fled to Pakistan and 780,000 to Iran. Furthermore, since the Taliban took over the country on 15 August 2021, about 3.5 million Afghans have been forced to flee their homes. About 73,500 people were taken out by US forces and about 8,000 Afghans by the British Army, and an unknown number of Afghans by other countries (see figure 1) (BBC News, 2021).
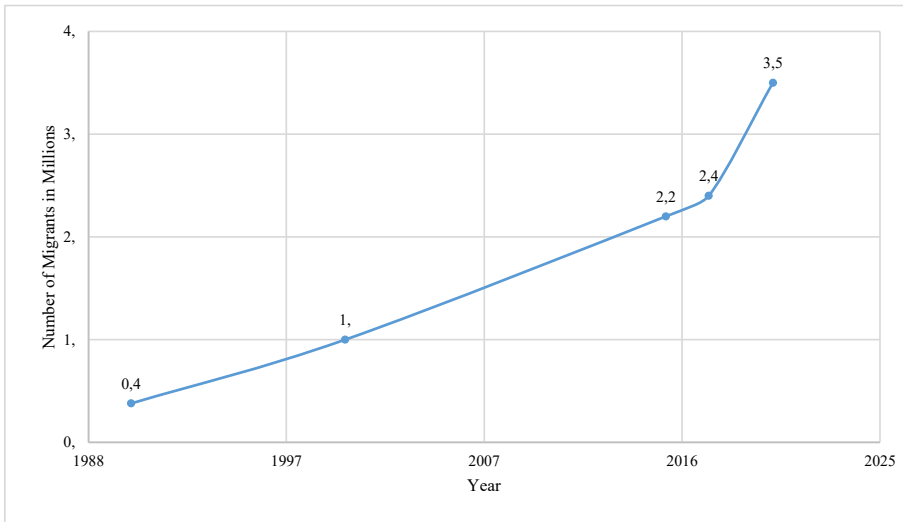
Figure 1. Migration Trend

According to the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) (2021) report, between 4,000 - 5,000 Afghans migrated to Iran daily. Since, August 2021, more than 300,000 Afghans have fled to Pakistan and about 200,000 of them entered illegally (Gul, 2021). On the other hand, the number of foreign nationals residing in Afghanistan has steadily increased over the past two decades. In 1990, there were 57,686 immigrants to the country; this figure rose to 75,917 in 2000 and increased further to 90,883 in 2010. Due to a shortage of locally available trained labor, the necessity to rebuild the Afghan economy led to a massive inflow of foreign migrant workers. In 2011, the "Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs" (MoFA) approved 17,833 work licenses for foreign citizens. It is estimated that around 100,000 foreigners who are currently employed in Afghanistan have an irregular status (Marchand et. al, 2014). Additionally, a number of foreign military and development personnel had come to Afghanistan for work (Marchand et.al, 2014), however, most of them have since left due to the Taliban's return to power.

Data and Variables

The study uses primary data based on a multi-random sampling method. The data was collected through an interview conducted in May-July 2021, based on a self-constructed survey with a total of 1060 household respondents. The data consists of two periods of information 1) before the pandemic, COVID-19, spreads in Afghanistan (21 March 2019-2020); 2) since the pandemic spreads into the country (21 March 2020-2021). Having the data and information at our disposal, the study uses it to analyze the socio-economic demographic characteristics of the households' heads, emigrants, and internal migrants. Also, the study analyzes what factors push Afghans to migrate and how migrants assist their family members left behind.

Description of the Sample

Figure 2 represents that the majority (91.60%) were male respondents, while the female represented 8.40 per cent. The reason for less participation of females in the study is mostly because of Afghan culture and some family restrictions that do not allow a female to talk with a young, stranger man in front of the house. In addition, it is indicated that 59.90% of the respondents designate themselves as the head of their families, while 40.1% of the participants were household members who gave the necessary information about the head and other members of the family on their behalf. Besides, it is shown that most of our respondents were young people between the ages of 18-29 and 30-39, with 34.6% and 24.7%, respectively. The rest of the respondents were greater than 39-year-old, with 40.7 per cent.
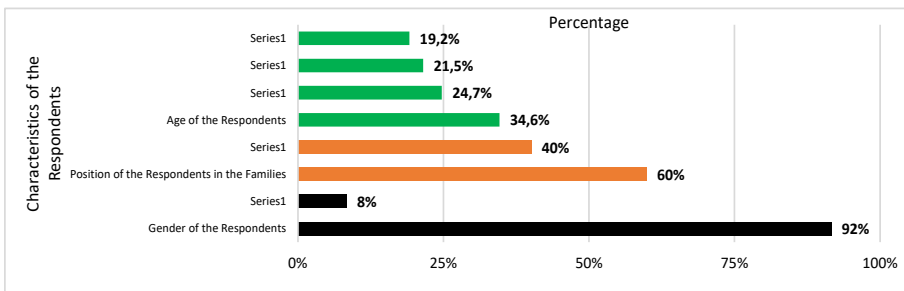
Figure 2. Characteristics of the Respondents

Table 1 displays the descriptive statistics of the demographic characteristics of 1060 household's head. The table shows that 88% of the households' heads were male while around 12% were female. Around (47%) of the households' heads fall above 50-year-old while the rest of the heads fall under the productive age group with 10% between the range of 18-28 years old and 44% between the range of 29-50 years old. In terms of marital status, a large percentage of the household's head (90%) were married people, followed by singles (6%) and divorced (0.5%) and widows (3.4%).

Regarding the education background, most households' heads have primary and secondary education, lower and upper, with (30%) and (27.5%) respectively. The participants reported 19.5% with Islamic education and 15.5% with university and above, while those who have zero level of education is 7.5%. Approximately 38% of the household heads have elementary occupations, professional (14%), manager (1%), plant and machine operators and assemblers (around 9%). The rest of the household heads (38%) have some other occupations. Moreover, it indicates that 37% and 33% of the household heads were employed and self-employed, while out of the remaining 30%, 6% were unemployed, around 23% were PAF[1], and only 1% were retired. The majority of employed heads of household work in the private sector (about 78%), followed by government sectors (20%) and foreign institutions (2%).

Table 1. Characteristics of the Households' Head

Variables	No Remittance		Internal Remittance		International Remittance		Both		Total	
	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%
Gender										
Male	451	97.6	234	75.7	245	87.5	7	77.8	937	88.4
Female	11	2.4	75	24.3	35	12.5	2	22.2	123	11.6
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Age										
18-28	29	6.3	31	10.0	34	12.1	0	0.0	94	8.9
29-50	238	51.5	130	42.1	98	35.0	6	66.7	472	44.5
above 50	195	42.2	148	47.9	148	52.9	3	33.3	494	46.6
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.00
Marital Status										
Single	25	5.4	21	6.8	18	6.4	0	0.0	64	6.0
Married	425	92.0	271	87.7	252	90.0	7	77.8	955	90.1
Divorced	0	0.0	3	1.0	2	0.7	0	0.0	5	0.5
Separated	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Widowed	12	2.6	14	4.5	8	2.9	2	22.2	36	3.4
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Education										
No Education at all	35	7.6	30	9.7	14	5.0	0	0.0	79	7.5
Islamic School	99	21.4	60	19.4	44	15.7	4	44.4	207	19.5
Primary School	113	24.5	93	30.1	112	40.0	2	22.2	320	30.2

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[1] "The sum of the two groups persons seeking work but not immediately available and persons available to work but not seeking is called the potential additional labor force (PAF)."

Lower and Upper Secondary School	140	30.3	79	25.6	69	24.6	3	33.3	291	27.5
University and above	75	16.2	47	15.2	41	14.6	0	0.0	163	15.4
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100
Occupation										
Elementary occupations	187	40.5	103	33.3	111	39.6	1	11.1	402	37.9
Manager	7	1.5	4	1.3	1	0.4	0	0.0	12	1.1
Professional	69	14.9	38	12.3	40	14.3	1	11.1	148	14.0
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	50	10.8	20	6.5	16	5.7	6	66.7	92	8.7
Others	149	32.3	144	46.6	112	40.0	1	11.1	406	38.3
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Status of Employment										
Employed	211	45.7	96	31.1	87	31.1	1	11.1	395	37.3
Self-Employed	156	33.8	97	31.4	98	35.0	1	11.1	352	33.2
Unemployed	23	5.0	16	5.2	26	9.3	0	0.0	65	6.1
Retired	4	0.9	2	0.6	1	0.4	0	0.0	7	0.7
PAF	68	14.7	98	31.7	68	24.3	7	77.8	241	22.7
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Sector or Institution of Employment										
Government Sector	41	19.4	22	22.9	16	18.4	1	100.0	80	20.3
Private Sector	166	78.7	71	74.0	70	80.5	0	0.0	307	77.7
Foreign Institution(s)	4	1.9	3	3.1	1	1.1	0	0.0	8	2.0
Total	211	53.4	96	24.3	87	22	1	0.3	395	100.0

Table 2 indicates other related factors, which are also important as far as the characteristics of the households' heads are concerned. As can be seen from the table, 96.5% of the households do not have any disabled person in their families, while 3.5% represent having at least one disabled person in their family. In terms of households' structure, it is demonstrated that almost half (49%) of the sample size has more females compared to males in their families, while 25% of the households have a male majority. In the rest of the households (26%), the number of males and females are equal. Interestingly, it is shown that in all categories of the households, the number of households with a female majority is greater than the other two groups. Besides, half (50%) of the sample size have more than six members in their families, around 41% have a family size between the range of 4-6 people, and a low percentage of the sample size (9%) have a family size

between range of 1-3 people. There is 19% of the sample size have received assistance from the ex-government and NGOs since March 21, 2020, while 81% receive nothing. Households who received the assistance reported that most of them (81%) received non-cash assistance rather than cash assistance (5%); around 14% of them received both types of assistance due to COVID-19.

Non-cash assistance includes food and non-food goods such as clothes, coal, and wood. So, 70.7% of the assistance recipients received food while only 0.5% received non-food, and the rest (28.9%) received both types of assistance. In terms of Zakat, 2 out of 1060 households received Islamic assistance; however, Afghanistan is an Islamic country. Thus, the government should have a special look at these Islamic elements, which significantly affects poverty reduction in a country. Finally, around 11% of the households took a loan to provide for basic needs while 81% of them did not take a loan for daily needs.

Table 2. Other Important Characteristics of the Households

Variables	No Remittance		Internal Remittance		International Remittance		Both		Total	
	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%
Disability										
Yes	13	2.8	13	4.2	11	3.9	0	0.0	37	3.5
No	449	97.2	296	95.8	269	96.1	9	100.0	1023	96.5
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
HH Formation										
Male Majority	97	21.0	101	32.7	68	24.3	3	33.3	269	25.4
Female Majority	227	49.1	155	50.2	131	46.8	2	22.2	515	48.6
Female = Male	138	29.9	53	17.2	81	28.9	4	44.4	276	26.0
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Household size										
1-3 people	22	4.8	34	11.0	37	13.2	0	0.0	93	8.8
4-6 people	178	38.5	130	42.1	120	42.9	3	33.3	431	40.7
above 6	262	56.7	145	46.9	123	43.9	6	66.7	536	50.6
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Received Assist. Because of Covid-19										
Yes	44	9.5	70	22.7	84	30.0	6	66.7	204	19.2
No	418	90.5	239	77.3	196	70.0	3	33.3	856	80.8
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0

Type of Assistances										
Cash	0	0.0	8	11.4	3	3.6	0	0.0	11	5.4
Non-Cash	41	93.2	49	70.0	69	82.1	6	100.0	165	80.9
Both	3	6.8	13	18.6	12	14.3	0	0.0	28	13.7
Total	44	21.6	70	34.3	84	41.2	6	2.9	204	100.0
Type of non-cash assistance(s)										
Food	35	79.5	50	71.4	58	69.0	1	16.7	144	70.6
Non-food	1	2.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	0.5
Both	8	18.2	18	25.7	28	33.3	5	83.3	59	28.9
Total	44	21.6	70	34.3	84	41.2	6	2.9	204	100
Received Zakat										
Yes	1	0.2	1	0.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	0.2
No	461	99.8	308	99.7	280	100.0	9	100.0	1058	99.8
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0
Taking loan for basic needs										
Yes	38	8.2	41	13.3	35	12.5	0	0.0	114	10.8
No	424	91.8	268	86.7	245	87.5	9	100.0	946	89.2
Total	462	43.6	309	29.2	280	26.4	9	0.8	1060	100.0

Figure 3 displays that, from the total sample size of 1060 households, 48.8% and 43.6% of the households received no remittances, and the rest of the sample size, 51.2% and 56.4% received remittances during 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively. Particularly, it shows that out of 51.2% of the sample size who receive remittances during 2019/20, 26.3% receive internal remittances, 24.2% receive international remittances, and only 0.8% receive both types of remittances. In contrast, during 2020/21, out of 56.4% of the total sample size, 29.2% receive internal remittances, 26.4% receive external remittances, and only 0.8% receive both types of remittances. As shown in the figure, generally, internal remittances receiver households are more than international remittances receiver households in both periods due to high cost of international migration compared to internal migration. Furthermore, the figure illustrates that more households received benefits from their migrants during the pandemic compared to pre-pandemic. It means that one of the reasons that Afghan households received remittances was economic shock.
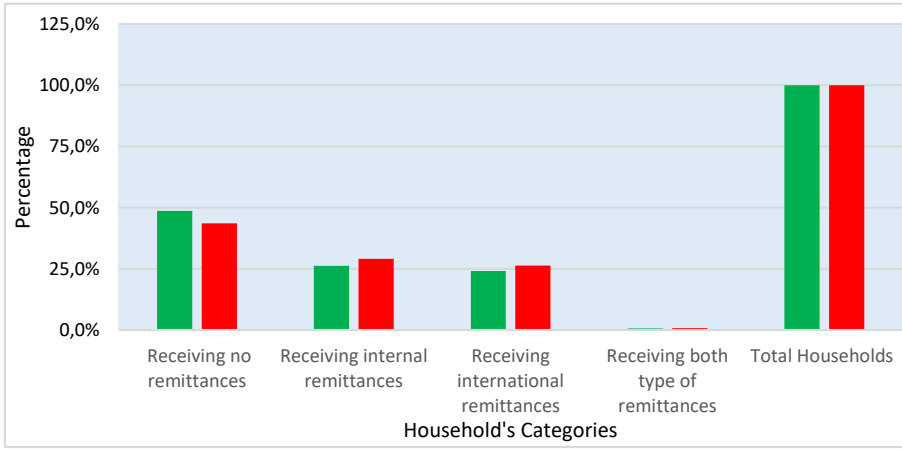
Figure 3. The Structure of the Sample Size

Table 3 indicates that from 279 and 309 internal remittances receiver households during 2019/20 and 2020/21, respectively, only 3.2% of the households received internal remittances from their relative(s)[2] or friend(s) in both periods and the rest of the 96.8% and 97.1% receive remittances from their own family member(s) who migrated within the country, Afghanistan, during 2019/20 and 2020/21 respectively. In addition, out of 256 and 280 households who received international remittances during 2019/20 and 2020/21, respectively, only 0.4% of them received international remittances from their relative(s) or friend(s) and the rest of them (99.6%) receive the remittances from their family members who migrated overseas in both periods. No households receive both types of remittances from their relative(s) or friend(s). It should be mentioned that since the number of households who receive both types of remittances is few, we considered them in both groups, those who receive internal and external remittances, in our later analysis.

Table 3. Number of Households Receive Remittances in Both Periods (2019/20,2020/21)

Type of Remittances	internal Remittance		International Remittance		Both	
Periods	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21	2019/20	2020/21
Received remittance from own migrant(s)	96.8%	97.1%	99.6%	99.6%	100%	100%
Received remittances from relative(s)/friend(s)	3.2%	2.9%	0.4%	0.4%	0%	0%
No. of total households	279	309	256	280	8	9

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2   Not household member such as uncle, aunt, cousin and so on.

Table 4 illustrates that almost all internal and external remittances recipients (96.5%) and (98.6%) respectively receive cash remittances, while 2.5% and 1.4% receive both cash and non-cash, and only 1% of the internal remittances recipients receive non-cash such as food, cloth, medicine, phone or computer. It also indicates that the majority of internal (97.5%) and external (85.5%) remittances recipients allocate more than half of their remittances to basic needs (food, non-food, shelter, healthcare, and education). In comparison, only 1.3% of internal and 9.7% of external remittances recipients allocate less than half and 1.3% and 4.8% respectively allocate half. In addition, internal and external remittance recipients have reported that remittances have a significant role in reducing their financial difficulties. About 80% and 12.3% of internal and 67.5% and 17.6% of external remittance recipients selected extremely and very important options when asked about the effect of remittances on financial difficulty, respectively.

Table 4. Other Important Factors

Variables	Internal Remittances		International Remittances		Total	
	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%
Type of Remittance						
Cash	307	96.5	285	98.6	592	97.5
Non-cash	3	1.0	0	0.0	3	0.5
Both	8	2.5	4	1.4	12	2.0
Total	318	52.4	289	47.6	607	100.0
Allocation of Remits. On HH's Basic Needs						
Less than half	4	1.3	28	9.7	32	5.3
Half	4	1.3	14	4.8	18	3.0
More than half	310	97.5	247	85.5	557	91.8
Total	318	52.4	289	47.6	607	100.0
Effect of Remits. on Financial Difficulty of HH						
Not Important	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Somewhat important	1	0.3	4	1.4	5	0.8
Important	24	7.5	39	13.5	63	10.4
very important	39	12.3	51	17.6	90	14.8
extremely important	254	79.9	195	67.5	449	74.0
Total	318	52.4	289	47.6	607	100.0

Table 5. Characteristics of the Emigrants

Demographic Characteristics	Internal Migrant(s)		International Emigrant(s)		Total	
	Obs.	%	Obs.	%	Obs.	%
Relationship with the household head						
Father	18	5.5	19	5.6	37	5.5
Mother	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.1
Husband	53	16.2	25	7.4	78	11.7
Wife	0	0.0	1	0.3	1	0.1
Children	209	63.7	225	66.4	434	65.1
Brother	26	7.9	18	5.3	44	6.6
Sister	22	6.7	50	14.7	72	10.8
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0
Gender						
Male	309	94.2	313	92.3	622	93.3
Female	19	5.8	26	7.7	45	6.7
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0
Age						
14-28	169	51.5	206	60.8	375	56.2
29-39	114	34.8	91	26.8	205	30.7
40-50	27	8.2	33	9.7	60	9.0
Above 50	18	5.5	9	2.7	27	4.0
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0
Marital Status						
Single	165	50.3	184	54.3	349	52.3
Married	162	49.4	155	45.7	317	47.5
Divorced	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Separated	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.1
Widowed	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0
Education						
No Education at all	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.1
Islamic School	8	2.4	10	2.9	18	2.7
Primary School	72	22.0	49	14.5	121	18.1
Lower and Upper Secondary School	171	52.1	235	69.3	406	60.9
University and above	76	23.2	45	13.3	121	18.1
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0

Occupation						
Elementary occupations	178	54.3	142	41.9	320	48.0
Manager	1	0.3	0	0.0	1	0.1
Professional	69	21.0	3	0.9	72	10.8
Plant and machine operators, and assemblers	9	2.7	21	6.2	30	4.5
Others	69	21.0	129	38.1	198	29.7
No answer	2	0.6	44	13.0	46	6.9
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0
Sending Remit.						
Yes	310	94.5	288	85.0	598	89.7
No	18	5.5	51	15.0	69	10.3
Total	328	49.2	339	50.8	667	100.0
Channel Used						
Formal	140	44.0	114	39.4	254	41.8
Informal	157	49.4	175	60.6	332	54.7
No Answer	21	6.6	0	0.0	21	3.5
Total	318	52.4	289	47.6	607	100.0
Reason for the using a formal channel						
Low cost	8	5.7	15	13.2	23	9.1
Safety	61	43.6	26	22.8	87	34.3
Fast transaction	16	11.4	27	23.7	43	16.9
Others	0	0.0	0	0	0	0
Mixed	55	39.3	46	40.4	101	39.8
Total	140	55.1	114	44.9	254	100.0
Reason for using an informal channel						
Low cost	10	6.4	75	42.9	85	25.6
Safety	78	49.7	34	19.4	112	33.7
Fast transaction	0	0	7	4.0	7	2.1
Others	0	0	36	20.6	36	10.8
Mixed	69	43.9	23	13.1	92	27.7
Total	157	47.3	175	52.7	332	100.0

Interestingly, Table 5 represents some characteristics of the members of household(s) who migrated internally or internationally. The table indicates that more than half of internal migrants (64%) and international emigrants (66%) were children of the households' heads (son/daughter), and it is followed by husbands (16%) for internal migrants and sisters (15%) for international emigrants. In terms of gender, a considerable percentage of internal migrants (94%) and international emigrants (92%) were males, while only

about 6% of internal migrants and 8% of international emigrants were females. Data shows that most migrants were in the category of young ages. For example, 86% of the internal migrants were below the age of 39, and about 88% for international emigrants. Half (50.3%) of internal migrants were single, followed by 49.4% married and 0.3% separated, while for international emigrants, the study found that 54.3% of them were single and the rest of them (45.7%) were married. Furthermore, more than half (52%) of the internal migrants have lower or upper secondary school background, and followed by 23% with university education, 22% with primary school, 2.4% Islamic school, and 0.3% with no education at all. In comparison, these percentages are 69%, 13%, 15%, 2.9% and 0% for international emigrants respectively. Therefore, it illustrates that most internal and international migrants decided to migrate at the secondary education level with 52% and 69%, respectively.

The study finds that 54% of internal migrants and 42% of international emigrants are involved in elementary occupations. Importantly, the majority of both internal migrants (94.5%) and international emigrants (85%) are reported to send remittances to their family members left behind, while the rest of them do not send remittances. Moreover, the study found that 49.4% of the households use an informal channel for receiving internal remittance from their migrants, 44% receive financial assistance from a formal channel and 6.6% of them did not give an answer to the question. In contrast, 60.6% and 39.4% of international remittances were transferred through informal and formal channels, respectively. The reasons to choose the channels do not differ for the households who receive internal remittances as the majority of them selected safety with 43.6% and 49.7% as a reason for using formal and informal channels, respectively. In contrast, those households who receive international remittances from formal channels select mixed (low cost, safety, and fast transaction) with 40.4%, fast transaction with 23.7%, safety with 22.8%, and low cost with 13.2% as a reason for using the channel. In addition, those who receive international remittances from an informal channel have chosen the low cost with 42.9% and fast transaction with 4% as a reason for using the channel. Also, 20.6% of them selected other (easy to use, no need for legal documents to transfer money) as a reason. Interestingly, it shows that most households who have international migrant(s) used informal channels because of low cost and other reasons.

As it is shown in Figure 4, households reported that most of their member(s) migrated internally because of unemployment (65.24%), earning higher income (16.16%) and both reasons (13.72%) combined. The findings are highly supported by Ghatak et al. (1996) and Hagen-Zanker (2008). Some migrated internally for education (3.05%) and other reasons like marriage (1.83%). In contrast, more than half (53%) of households with at least one international migrant responded that their members migrated overseas because of war and poverty. The study finds that 17% chose only war/conflict as a reason for migrating their family members overseas and this is supported by previous studies,

including Adhikari (2012) and Cummings et al., (2015). Additionally, 12% migrated for poverty and these findings are supported by scholars, including Lee (1996) and Amara & Jemmali (2018). To earn a higher income (10 %) is the next reason that members of the households moved out of the country. Marriage to a person overseas was the reason stated 4% of members, followed by educational reason state by around 4%.
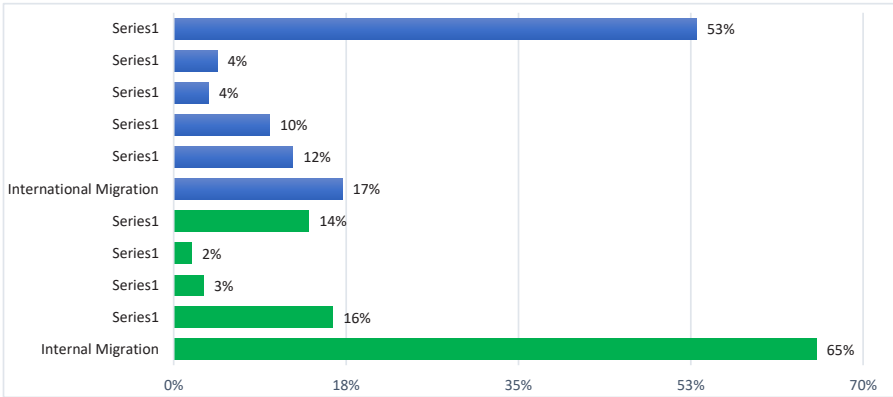

Figure 4. Reasons of Migration

Figure 5 shows the destinations of internal and international migration. It demonstrates that most of the internal migrants (92%) traveled to other provinces for the reasons stated above, while 8% of them migrated to the rural districts of the Balkh province. In contrast, half of the emigrants (50%) chose Asian countries as a destination of migration, while about 43% of them chose European countries, followed by Australia (4.5%), the U.S.A (1.5%), and Canada (1%).
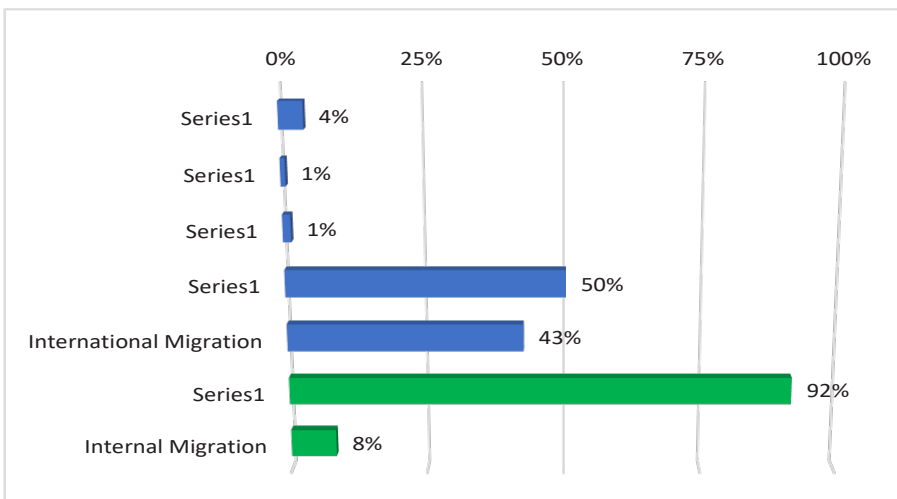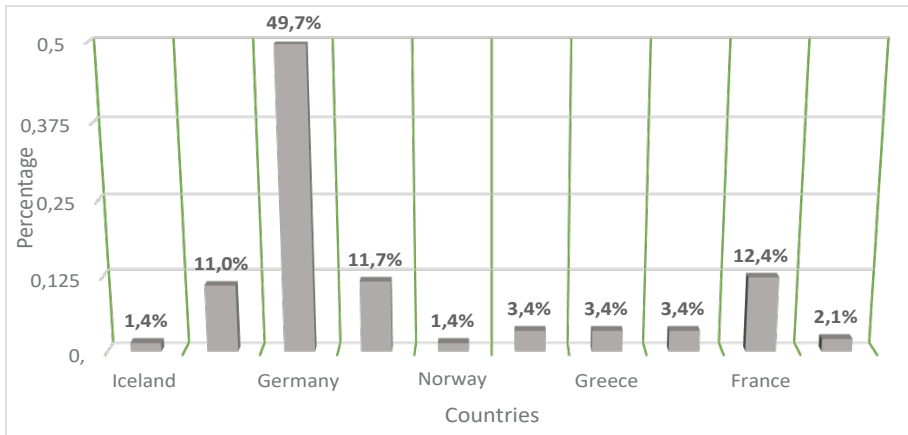

Figure 5. General Destination of Migration

Figure 6. Emigrants' Destination Countries in Europe Continent

Next, Figure 6 displays which European countries host the high number of these emigrants. In other words, it shows which European countries are the most inciting destinations for Afghan migrants. As can be seen in the figure, Germany hosts 50% of the migrants, followed by France (12%), Sweden (12%), and Austria (11%). Meanwhile, 10.2% of the emigrants are in Switzerland, Greece, and England, with an equal percentage, 3.4% for each country. Italy with 2.1%, Norway, and Iceland with 2.8% and 1.4%, are other European counties where the emigrants migrated.

Figure 7 reveals that of the people who migrated to Asian counties, more than half (65%) of them were living in the Islamic Republic of Iran, followed by Turkey (20%) and Dubai (6%). In addition, around 6% of the emigrants were in Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia, with 3% in each country. The rest of the emigrants went to Indonesia, Kuwait and Tajikistan, with 1% for each country.
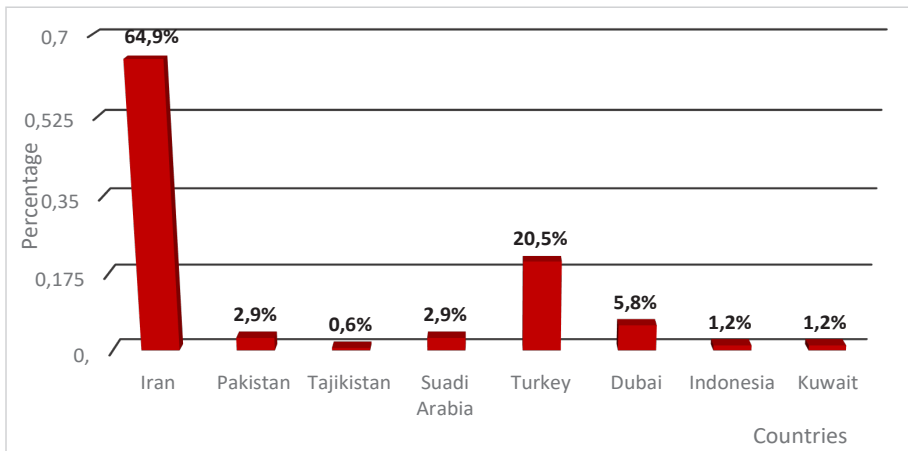

Figure 7. Emigrants' Destination Countries in Asian Continent

Furthermore, Table 6 illustrates information about the cost and source of the costs of overseas migration. According to the table below, the average cost of migrating overseas is calculated at US $3,148 with a minimum range of US $120 and a maximum of US $50,000. It is found that to cover the costs of migration, most households (41%) used three sources (savings, sold properties, and got loan from the bank) to cover the cost of migration, followed by savings (16%), loans from banks (16%) and sold properties (11%). Also, 4% of the households took loans from relative(s), and friend(s) and similarly, 4% of the households reported that the cost of migration was covered by the husband or wife of the emigrant who was living overseas. However, 8% of the households did not provide an answer to the question.

Table 6. Cost and Source of International Migration

Cost of Migration			Source of the cost						
Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Saving (A)	Sold properties (B)	Got loan from Bank(s) (C)	Taken loan form relative(s)/friend(s) (D)	Other (husband or wife)	Mixed (A, B, & C)	No answer
$3,148	$50,000	$120	15.6%	11.5%	15.6%	3.8%	4.4%	40.7%	8.3%

Figure 8 presents some other important information about international migration and emigrants. Based on the figure, a considerable portion (76%) of the migrants entered illegally into the destination countries, while 24% of them migrated legally. Taking this into account; it is reported that 44% of the migrants achieved citizenship in the host country while 36% were staying illegally and 20% were living as legal migrants in the countries. Moreover, 55% of the migrants work legally in the host countries, while it is 39% for illegal workers. About 6% of the households did not respond to the question.
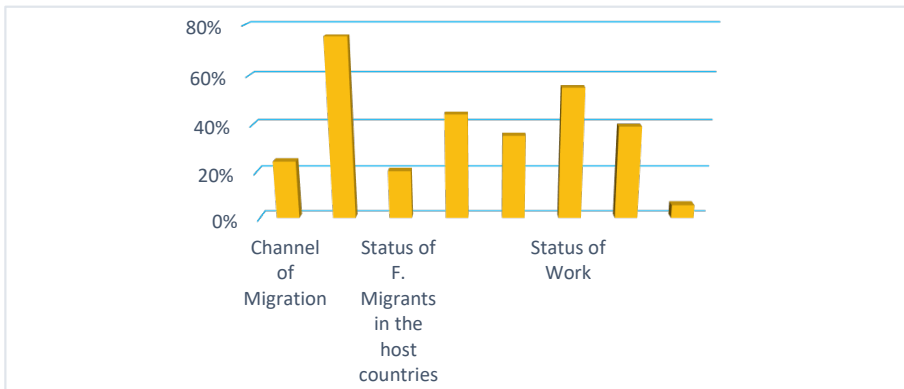

Figure 8. Other Important Factors About International Migration and Emigrants

Conclusion

The findings of this study shed light on the intricate relationship between migration and the socio-political and economic landscape in Afghanistan. It is evident from the historical context that migration has been a recurring phenomenon, often intensifying in response to political or economic upheavals within the country. These patterns are well-supported by existing migration and empirical literature, highlighting the persistent nature of this issue. One striking revelation from this study is the prevalence of migration among the Afghan population. More than half of the sample size reported having at least one internal or external migrant in their families. This underscores the significance of migration as a coping mechanism for Afghan families facing challenging circumstances.

Internal migration appears to be primarily driven by unemployment and income inequality, with unemployment being the dominant factor at 65%. This indicates that economic factors play a substantial role in prompting individuals to seek opportunities within Afghanistan. On the other hand, the decision to migrate abroad is predominantly influenced by the dire combination of war and poverty, accounting for 53% of cases. Such findings emphasize the multifaceted nature of migration determinants within Afghanistan. In terms of destination, it is noteworthy that the majority of Afghan emigrants tend to stay within Asian countries (50.4%) and European countries (42.7%). Iran emerges as a favored destination within Asia, while Germany stands out in Europe. This geographical distribution of Afghan migrants suggests the importance of regional factors in shaping migration patterns.

A concerning revelation is the high percentage (76%) of emigrants who have migrated illegally. This underscores the challenges and risks that Afghan migrants face in pursuit of better opportunities abroad, highlighting the need for improved migration policies and pathways. Furthermore, the study highlights the demographic characteristics of Afghan migrants, with the majority being young males below the age of 39. This demographic profile raises questions about the impact of migration on the Afghan workforce and the potential implications for the country's future development. The study also underscores the vital role that remittances play in supporting families left behind. With 94.5% of internal migrants and 85% of emigrants sending remittances, it is clear that migration serves as an economic lifeline for many Afghan households. The data also suggests that during the COVID-19 pandemic, more households relied on financial support from their migrant family members, emphasizing the vulnerability of Afghan households to external shocks.

In light of these findings, it is imperative that concrete actions are taken by the Afghan government and international organizations to address the complex issues surrounding migration. Collaborative efforts are required to resolve conflicts and promote

peace within Afghanistan. This includes diplomatic negotiations, support for peace agreements, and addressing the root causes of conflicts. Additionally, the study recommends the implementation of policies and programs aimed at reducing poverty and income inequality within Afghanistan. This could involve initiatives such as job creation, vocational training, and social safety nets, which would contribute to economic stability and provide opportunities for vulnerable populations.

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