

What Makes an Immigrant Prisoners Satisfied? The Case of Afghans in Turkey

Göçmen Mahkumların Yaşam Memnuniyeti: Türkiye'deki Afganların Durumu

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to evaluate the life satisfaction of immigrant prisoners placed in a prison in eastern Turkey by focusing on economic and non-economic factors. A questionnaire was applied to 90 male prisoners in this prison. The dependent variable is a standard life satisfaction question, ranging from 0 (not at all satisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). The data used in the study were analyzed with the ordinary least squares (OLS) regression analysis method. Findings show that household income satisfaction positively affects inmates' happiness. A statistically significant difference was found between the mean happiness before and after migration. There has been a significant decrease in the happiness of individuals who have been imprisoned after migration. Factors such as satisfaction with the length of stay in Turkey and being informed about legal rights have positive effects on life satisfaction. As the level of education increases, the happiness of individuals decreases.

Keywords: Afghan immigrant, income, legal rights, life satisfaction, prisoners

ÖZ

Bu makale, Türkiye'nin doğusunda bir cezaevine yerleştirilen göçmen hükümlülerin yaşam doyumlarını ekonomik ve ekonomik olmayan faktörlere odaklanarak değerlendirmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Anket cezaevinde bulunan 90 erkek mahpusa anket uygulanmıştır. Bağımlı değişken, 0 (hiç memnun değilim) ile 10 (tamamen memnunum) arasında değişen standart bir yaşam memnuniyeti sorusudur. Çalışmada kullanılan veriler OLS regresyon analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Bulgular, hanehalkı gelir memnuniyetinin mahkumların mutluluğunu olumlu yönde etkilediğini göstermektedir. Göç öncesi ve sonrası ortalama mutluluk arasında istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur. Göç sonrası hapsedilen bireylerin mutluluklarında önemli bir azalma olmuştur. Türkiye'de kalış süresinden memnuniyet, yasal haklar konusunda bilgi sahibi olmak gibi faktörlerin yaşam doyumu üzerinde olumlu etkileri bulunmaktadır. Eğitim düzeyi yükseldikçe bireylerin mutluluğu azalmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Mahkumlar, gelir, yaşam memnuniyeti, Afgan göçmenler

Introduction

Going from one place to another has become much easier and faster than before, thanks to significant progress in communication and transportation technologies. The fundamental purpose of people migrating from one place to another is to increase their quality of life. For this purpose, millions of people migrate every year through legal and illegal means. This migration for the sake of a happier life brings about numerous economic, social, and cultural changes in the origin country and in the country of destination. The question as to whether these people in time lead to fundamental transformations in the country into which they migrate as well as the one they migrate from has attracted the attention of researchers of happiness economics. Mostly starting in the fields of sociology and psychology, happiness studies started to appeal to different disciplines, and researchers started to focus on migration after 2005 as well (Hendriks, 2015). The fundamental research questions in this area include the conditions under which these people are motivated by the drive to lead better lives to become happy and the degree to which they become happy, which countries they tend to migrate to, whether migrating to richer countries brings more happiness, whether increased income after migration is sufficient enough to increase happiness, and how happiness levels of the people left behind and those in the

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origin country are affected (Gül, 2020). Studies that look into immigrants' happiness show that people who migrate to richer countries are happier (Bartram, 2013; Nikolova & Graham, 2015; n.d.). There are also studies that contract those who conclude that migrating to richer countries brings more happiness. For example, in an experimental study, the happiness of individuals who, as a result of a raffle, were awarded to migrate to New Zealand were analyzed, and these immigrants had almost the same happiness level as those who stayed behind despite having their income increased by a couple fold (Stillman et al., 2015). There are also studies that focus on the happiness difference between the immigrants, the people in the country of destination, and those in the origin country. Some studies report that immigrants are less happy than the people in the country of destination (Safi 2010; Baltatescu 2005; Ullman & Tatar 2001, while some other studies report the opposite (Gül 2017). Some of the studies in this area relate to the reference groups or different ethnic groups in the same country with whom the immigrants compare themselves. The identity of the reference group with whom the immigrants compare themselves has an impact on their life satisfaction. For example, in a study by Gökdemir and Dumludağ (2012) on immigrants of Turkish and Moroccan origin living in the Netherlands, Turkish immigrants were reported to be less happy than Moroccans despite having higher income and lower unemployment levels, and the study showed that they did not place much importance on absolute income and had a tendency to compare their income and social status with the Dutch people. While some studies focus on the impact of domestic migration on happiness (Melzer, 2011; Nowok et al., 2013), some others look into the relationship between the intention to migrate and the individual happiness (Chindarkar, 2014; Lovo, 2014).

There are a number of studies focusing on the quality of life of people in prisons from various perspectives (Combalbert et al., 2019; Crewe et al., 2011; Liebling & Arnold, 2004; Mooney et al., 2002). These people who are devoid of their freedom tend to be unhappy compared to the people outside (Boothby & Durham, 1999; Diamond et al., 2001). Zamble (1992) was one of the first researchers to study life satisfaction in prisons. This study showed that the inmates experience negative emotions such as anxiety and depression in the early years of their imprisonment, and that these emotions mitigate in time. However, the participants in the study stated that the general quality of life was negative, which did not change in time. As a result of imprisonment, people experience deprivation, and the emotional traumas caused by the imprisonment lead to feelings of self-depreciation, anxiety, depression, high demoralization, and shame (Massoglia, 2008; Porter & Novisky, 2017; Pishkin & Thorne, 1973; Schnittker et al., 2012). Furthermore, the biggest challenges faced after imprisonment were listed as being separated from family members and friends, restriction of freedom, conflicts with other inmates, and conditions of the prison cells (Adams, 1992).

There are studies in the literature concerning how people adapt to life in prison and what affects this adaptation (Clemmer, 1940; Irwin & Cressey, 1962; Zamble & Porporino, 2013). Some studies indicate that despite negative conditions in prison, individuals are inclined to adapt to these conditions. For example, it was shown that the time spent in prison can have an impact on adaptation (Clemmer, 1940, 1950; Lutze, 2001) and that inmates who have spent a long time in prison tend to have increased participation in work and other activities in prison and sever their connection with people outside (Cobden & Stewart, 1984).

There are currently no studies in the literature on immigrant inmates. Studies on immigrants in terms of happiness usually focus on social, psychological, economic, and cultural changes experienced by immigrants during or after immigrating (Borjas, 1989; Gökdemir & Dumludağ, 2012; Melzer & Muffels, 2012; Veenhoven, 1991). Studies also focus on the relationships between immigrants from countries with different levels of development and the natives in the country they immigrated into as well as the relationships between immigrants and stayers or between generations of immigrants (Bartram, 2011; Melzer n.d.; Safi, 2010; Stillman et al., 2015). This study stands out as the first one in both literatures.

In light of the literature discussed above, in this study, economic and non-economic variables such as household income level, household income satisfaction, language proficiency, and the length of stay, which affect the life satisfaction of immigrants in prison, who are generally a disadvantaged group in the society, were examined. As far as we know, this study will be the first study with this sample group both in the field of migration and happiness.

Sample and Methodology

In this paper, OLS model was employed to evaluate the role of several economic and non-economic factors such as absolute income, education, information about legal rights and the length of stay in prison with the aim of explaining happiness levels of immigrant inmates in the East of Turkey. The data to be analyzed to answer the research questions were gathered as part of a survey about life satisfaction and economic/non-economic factors in the city of Agri in 2018. The city of Agri is situated in the Eastern border of Turkey and is the first destination especially for people who enter the country on foot or by means of human traffickers. This study does not differentiate the immigrant inmates as regular or irregular immigrants. The survey was conducted only in the men's prison as there were no female immigrant inmates. Each of the 90 immigrants in the prison voluntarily agreed to take part in our survey. The questionnaire used in the study was provided both in Turkish and in Persian translation and was conducted face to face accompanied by a psychologist who speaks in their native language for immigrants who do not speak Turkish. Necessary permissions (Ministry of Interior Presidency of Migration Management and Ministry of Justice) were obtained from all relevant ministries for the study. Ethics committee approval was received for this study from Atatürk University Presidency of Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee (Date: 15.11.2017, Number: 88656144-000-E.1700322271). The data used in this were supported by Atatürk University Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit. As many of the important questions asked in the study were left unanswered by the inmates, only the questions that have been given full responses have been included in the analysis. This is one of the most important constraints of the study. The survey includes immigrant inmates who are 18 years or older. About 87.5% of the inmates who have participated in the study were incarcerated due to offenses such as charges connected to selling drugs, while the remaining 12.5% were incarcerated with murder, human trafficking, sex crimes, and forgery. Afghan immigrants constituted 55.20% of the inmates (Figure 1).

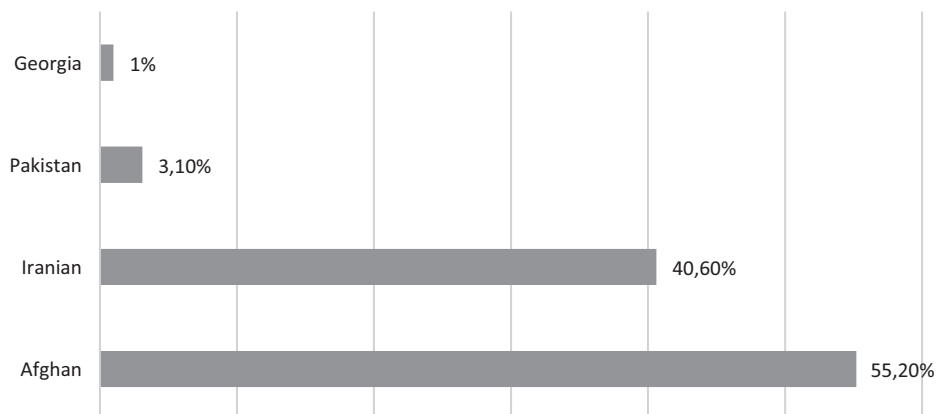


Figure 1.
Nationalities of Immigrant Inmates.

Many scales are used to measure life satisfaction. These scales are accepted worldwide and have high reliability and validity. There are many life satisfaction questions. Life satisfaction was measured by using a standard question: All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole nowadays? This variable is measured with an 11-point Likert scale ranging from 0 (extremely dissatisfied) to 10 (extremely satisfied). Marital status, education level, age, language proficiency, vocational education in prison, information about legal rights, household income, household income satisfaction, the length of stay in prison, and the length of stay in Turkey are the independent variables included in the study. The collected data were processed in the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 21.0 statistical package (IBM Corp.; Armonk, NY, USA). The data that was subject to analysis have been tested for normal distribution, and it has been determined that there is no multicollinearity by examining the variance inflation factor (VIF) values.

The level of education was asked in six categories as illiterate, primary school, middle school, high school, higher education/bachelor's degree, and master's degree. Marital status was asked in 4 categories as married/living together, widowed, separated/divorced and single, after which was coded as married = 1, single = 0. Language proficiency was asked in three categories as I can't speak it at all, I can speak it a little, I can speak it, and then since there was no one who didn't speak the language at all, it was coded as I can speak it = 1, I speak it a little = 0.

Life satisfaction was analyzed based on the individual responses to this question: all things considered, how satisfied are you with your life as a whole these days? Respondents were asked to check where they were on an ordinal scale ranging from 1 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). In a basic form, the formula of the hypothesis used for life satisfaction in the cross-section model is as follows:

$$S_i = \alpha_0 + X_i\beta_i + Z_i\gamma_i + .. + \epsilon_i$$

S_i represents dependent variable, which is life satisfaction. X_i represents economic factors included in the independent variables. Z_i represents the group of non-economic variables included in the independent variables.

Findings

It will be useful to provide some statistical information before presenting the results of the model. Tables 1 and 2 show the descriptive statistics in terms of economic and non-economics factors.

H0: There is no difference between the mean happiness before and after migration.

H1: There is a difference between the mean of happiness before and after migration.

While the average of happiness before migration is 2.03 ± 2.43 in the research group, the average of happiness after migration was 5.82 ± 3.08 . A statistically significant difference is found between the mean happiness before and after migration ($p < .01$). Therefore, the *H0* hypothesis is rejected. Hypothesis tests allow us to determine if there is a significant difference between groups, but they do not provide information about the effect and magnitude of this difference. Therefore, the value that allows us to see the effect of this difference is the effect size value. The eta-squared value shows us the explanatory power of the independent variable on the dependent variable (Cevahir, 2020; Pallant, 2017). The effect size of this detected difference is Eta squared (η^2) = 0.52, indicating that 52% of the total variance is explained by the factor. It is seen that the effect size of this difference is 0.72 (large effect).

Table 1.
Comparison of Averages of Happiness Levels Before and After Migration

Life Satisfaction	n	Mean	Standard Deviation	t	P
After immigration	90	2.03	2.43	-9.918	.000
Before immigration	90	5.82	3.08		

Table 2.
Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Mean (Satisfaction)	Standard Deviation
Marital status		
Married	1.361	0.297
Single	2.767	0.402
Education level		
Illiterate	2.125	0.364
Primary school	1.956	0.442
Secondary school	1.894	0.611
Age		
Young age	2.380	0.352
Lower mid-age	1.606	0.426
Upper mid-age	1.500	0.763
Language proficiency		
I can speak it a little	2.105	0.639
I can speak it	2.014	0.280
Vocational education in prison		
Yes	1.863	0.293
No	2.500	0.521
Information about legal rights		
I am not informed at all	1.969	0.313
I am somewhat informed	1.951	0.483
I am informed	3.200	1.019
Household income satisfaction		
I am not satisfied at all	1.081	0.252
I am not satisfied	3.083	0.583
I am a little satisfied	2.83	0.584
I am satisfied	4.100	1.129
Household Income		
200 \$ or lower	1.754	0.296
201–400 \$	1.875	0.718
401–600 \$	2.500	0.724
601\$ or higher	3.111	1.006
Length of stay in prison		
2 years or less	1.857	0.314
2.1–4 years	2.440	0.526
4.1 or more	2.000	0.833
Length of stay in Turkey		
3 years or less	1.740	0.137
3.1–6 years	5.157	0.157
6.1–9 years	7.600	0.244

In line with the literature, life satisfaction immigrant inmates is lower compared to the individuals living outside of prison (Diamond et al., 2001). Research into happiness shows that immigrants are generally unhappier than the natives (Baltatescu, 2005). According to World Happiness Report in the year 2018 when the study was carried out, happiness mean of people of Turkey was 5.483 while those of foreign birth in Turkey was 5.488. Results of the study indicate that immigrants in prison are unhappier than both natives and other immigrants in Turkey. Literature shows that immigrants are happier than stayers (Erlinghagen, 2011). The happiness mean of the inmates' origin countries in accordance with the same 2018 data for Afghanistan, Iran, Georgia, and Pakistan were respectively 3.63, 4.70, 4.34, and 5.47. When compared with happiness mean in the origin country for the immigrants outside of prison in Turkey, they are shown to be happier than people in their origin country while inmates in prisons in Turkey are unhappier than the people in their origin country. This negative difference in happiness levels can be explained via the negative mood and conditions resulting from having their freedom restricted.

In the literature, married people are generally found to be happier than single people (Myers, 1999; Oswald, 1997); whereas our results demonstrate that single inmates are much more satisfied than married inmates. It is known in the literature that better education is positively correlated with happiness; however, if higher levels of education are accompanied by higher levels of aspiration, it can have a negative impact on happiness (Nikolaev, 2016; Ruiu & Ruiu, 2019; Stack & Eshleman, 1998). When compared to the literature, our results indicated the opposite. In the prison, there is a vocational education to develop inmates' occupational skills (Carruthers & Jepsen, 2020). Increased aspiration that is a result of increased level of education can reduce individuals' happiness. Inmates receiving occupational skills training are observed to be more unhappy.

We asked every respondent to report their total household income. On average, inmates with high household income are more satisfied than those with low household income. The most satisfied inmates are those whose household income is 601\$ and more. Being satisfied with their household income was one of the factors which increased inmates' satisfaction level. Generally, there is a U-shaped

relationship between age and happiness (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2008; Clark, 2003). In our sample, younger inmates were found to be more satisfied than older inmates. Language proficiency facilitates adaptation and has a positive impact on happiness as it enables immigrants to create their own social circles, to establish better relationships, and to improve their socio-economic status as well as their mental and physical health (Brunner, 1997; Mahroum, 2001; Schultz et al., 2008). In our study, there were no inmates that did not speak at all the language in the country of destination. There is no statistically significant difference between inmates with high language proficiency and those with low language proficiency. There are several studies that show that as opposed to the traditional theory which puts forward that the longer the duration of stay for the immigrants, the happier they will become, longer duration of stay in the country of destination might actually indicate lower levels of happiness (Hendriks & Bartram, 2019; Obućina, 2013). It is believed that with longer durations spent in the country of destination, individuals get used to these conditions and compare themselves less with their origin country, raising their reference points and aspiration levels, resembling more to the native people (Hendriks et al., 2018). When asked about their duration of stay in the country and in prison, the immigrant inmates indicated that their life satisfaction increased as they stayed longer in prison and in the country. While longer stays in prison do not lead to a significant increase in happiness, staying longer in the country leads to a significant increase in happiness levels. Questions about whether they are informed with regards to their legal rights in the country of destination revealed that those who are informed about their legal rights are happier.

In Table 3, regression analyses were used to analyze life satisfaction of inmates by taking into account sets of co-variables such as age, marital status, education level, vocational education in prison, household income, household income satisfaction, length of stay in Turkey, length of stay in prison, and information about legal rights and language proficiency.

Household income satisfaction was shown to be positively and significantly correlated with life satisfaction. Since the majority of the people living in prison do not have the possibility to earn an income (except for the rare occasions of taking part in income generating activities inside the prison, for which participation is voluntary, and those who have a business outside run by others), they require their family's support. Furthermore, it is believed that knowing their family is financially stable will have a positive impact on the psychology of these individuals. It can be said not having to worry about the welfare of their family outside and having an opportunity to benefit from this financial income will increase the inmates' happiness. On the other hand, there is a statistically significant negative relationship between life satisfaction and education. The higher their level of education is, the unhappier they are. Education is believed to increase happiness in two ways: first, through the positive impact as a result of self-confidence and self-evaluation, and second, through the social status, better income, opportunity to find better jobs more easily, and health brought by education (Cuñado & de Gracia, 2012). Lack of access to the positive contributions of education reached in these two ways may be why inmates with better education are unhappier. The literature points to a negative correlation between the duration of stay in the country of destination for the immigrants and their happiness (Obućina, 2013). Contrary to the expectations, in our study, the length of stay in the country of destination is positively correlated with reported satisfaction with life. Immigrant inmates' happiness increase with higher duration of stay in the country and its co-efficient is quite significant. Immigrants, who are informed about their legal rights, are more satisfied than others. Being informed about one's legal rights is something that facilitates the individual's adaptation in a foreign country. If the individual is in prison, being informed about their legal rights turn out to be a more critical factor that can make their life easier.

In this paper, we investigated the role of economic and non-economic variables to explain the life satisfaction levels of immigrant inmates serving in a prison in the East of Turkey. Generally, life satisfaction of immigrant inmates is lower than the average life satisfaction of people in Turkey and that of people in their country of origin (n.d.). Descriptive statistics show that male inmates' life satisfaction decreases with age. Contrary to the general literature, married inmates were shown to be more dissatisfied. The study also showed that increases in the level of education of the inmates have a negative impact on their life satisfaction. Individuals with a high level of education generally do not achieve (or reach late) the social and economic standards before their migration in the countries they migrate to. Working in jobs that are not equivalent to the level of education has a reducing effect on life satisfaction. Therefore, convicted immigrants with a higher education level can raise their expectations in the country of destination and in addition to these disadvantages, they may be more unhappy with the disadvantages of being in prison. Many researchers agree that household income increases life

Table 3.
Regression Results

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction	Estimations Results
	B/SE
Married	-0.631 / (0.445)
Education	-0.350*/(0.201)
Age	-0.120 / (0.324)
Ln Household Income	0.452 / (0.274)
Household income satisfaction	0.743***/(0.286)
Language proficiency	0.306/(0.474)
Vocational education in prison	0.118/(0.474)
Length of stay in prison	0.119/(0.283)
Length of stay in Turkey	2.710***/(0.430)
Information about legal rights	0.694**/(0.356)
Observations*	90
Adjusted R-squared	0.480

***p < .01; **p < .05; *p < .10.

The bold values show that variables of significant.

satisfaction. Income plays a crucial role in influencing various factors that enhance quality of life, including improved health, access to education, better housing conditions, and the ability to fulfill individual aspirations (Blanchflower & Oswald, 2004; Kahneman & Deaton, 2010). Similarly, household income satisfaction has a positive impact on life satisfaction. This can be caused by the financial capability provided that is necessary for inmates' life in prison or the feeling of comfort due to knowing that inmates' families are financially stable. Contrary to the general opinion that puts forward that longer stays affect the adaptation process positively, there are happiness studies in the literature that show as the duration of stay increases, happiness declines or remains the same (Hendriks & Bartram, 2019). In the current study, it is shown that for inmate immigrants, life satisfaction increases with longer durations of stay in the country of destination as opposed to the happiness literature. For someone in prison, being informed about their legal rights also seems to positively impact life satisfaction. In accordance with these conditions and results discussed, life satisfaction determinants of immigrant inmates provide a basis for new studies on immigrants.

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