

AFGHAN WOMEN'S MIGRATION: PORTRAIT OF ISTANBUL

Farahnaz Rahmani

MA in Political Sciences and International Relations, Istanbul Aydin University,
Institute of Social Sciences

Published: 23 August 2019

Copyright © Rahmani.

Abstract

The history of Afghanistan witnesses several complicated and conflictual episodic events which challenged living conditions of people and forced them make international movements around the world, particularly to the neighboring countries such as Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan. Among the moving groups, women make a huge part of it and taking this significant fact into consideration, there is a need to pay deeper attention to their vulnerable situations. In addition, it is important to address issues related to the rights of migrant women and their changing roles and relationships.

This article emphasizes the human security approach focusing on reducing damages such as economic and political deprivation, persecution, violence against women, exploitation and the study supports access to better social, legal and political opportunities for migrant and refugee women.

This paper is focused on migration and development, women's emigration from Afghanistan to Turkey, focusing on causes and consequences. Migrations to Pakistan and Iran consists the major part of Afghans women's migration since a huge number of people fled to these neighboring borders for the reason that access to these lines were easier. Turkey is another country hosting a huge population of Afghan women migrants and refugees, but there are few researches conducted studying Afghan women's situation in Turkey.

Key words: Afghanistan, Women's Migration, Women's Empowerment, Turkey.

1. Introduction

This study is important due to the fact that both regular and irregular migration is increasingly becoming a vast phenomenon in today's world politics. Afghans comprise a big proportion of the registered refugees around the world. There are hundreds of thousands of other Afghan migrants, who have not been registered as refugees; this means that apart from Afghans with asylum and refugee statuses, there are irregular migrants, too. Meanwhile, there are big proportions of Afghans traveling as other types of migrants such as economic migrants and student migrants. Since a significant proportion of displaced people are women, comprehensive studies are required to investigate women's situation, specifically, what the challenges/ obstacles, opportunities and needs they face, are. Although there are some studies on the topic, a comprehensive work that could assess Afghan migrant women's status from a broader perspective, is absent.

The purpose of this research is to investigate and study the causes and consequences of the feminization of Afghan migration and to analyze their contributions to the development of communities, as well as to study and analyze migration impacts on women's status including education, health, employment, domestic work, and other social roles in Istanbul.

1.1 Method:

The paper is based on qualitative method and secondary sources analysis. Major part of data are collected through interviews conducted with six Afghan women based in Istanbul. Interview questions cover interviewees' general introduction such as age, marital status, number of siblings, educational degree, place of residence in home town and in Turkey, and occupation. There are also questions covering women's experience of their journey from Afghanistan to Turkey, women's experience of domestic abuse or violence (in case they have), women's income sources, women's labor and domestic work experiences (if they have), and women's contribution to the development of their communities.

1.2 Literature Review:

The topic proposed in this paper has been previously studied by numerous scholars. Martin (2003) provides her work considering concepts such as Migration and Mobility and studies how this movements affects women. Her conceptual paper addresses a number of discussions and questions, one of which is the impact of mobility on women's roles and gender relations.

Seifi (2017) provides data about the feminization of international migration and studies the causes and consequences of women's migration by emphasizing the challenges and solutions; her calculation in this work emphasizes over understanding the causes of immigration and providing solutions to ease the challenges and increase the opportunities. She believes that this could help the process of migration more logically and more safely and this could lead the advancement of better opportunities for immigrants.

Bonifacio (2012) explores the intersections of the two concepts of migration and feminism by answering to the question: does migration empower women? The scholar studies the case in both western and non-western contexts.

Sherif (2006) writes about Afghan women before and during war time and justifies that women were social actors not the passive victims, contrary to media presentations.

A number of other articles assessing the correlation of gender, poverty and migration is also studied in this paper. The major studies are conducted over Asian women's migration because there are very few articles written specifically about Afghan women's migration. Through assessing Asian women, the researcher tries to draw up a correlation and connection between Afghan women and women of other Asian countries throughout some common cultural, religious and social similarities. In order to fill the lack of research gap in academic sphere, this research is considered important.

2. Feminization of Migration

Women's remarkable migration flows have increased concerns about basic policies on the adaptability of women immigrants in the urban and security settings and ensuring women's rights in migration processes (Seifi 2017).

Some scholars define feminization of migration as women's migrations independently from men. In the past women's migrations were dependent and alongside men; while recently women can migrate independently and sometimes with their children (Gouws 2007).

Feminization of migration matters in both qualitative and quantitative aspects; the quantitative aspect would mean women's more than 50% increased participation in migration flows while the qualitative facet would be about women's non-subordinate or independent migrations. Since the nineteenth century, the two diverse phenomena of migration and feminism have been widely linked with the factors such as political, environmental and economic which remains an important subject among the receiving countries in terms of citizenship, national identity, security, welfare and so on (Bailey 2008). Feminization and migration has been significant political agenda in United States, New Zealand, Australia, Western Europe and Canada and later on, it has become a high political agenda in Asia and Africa too (Castles and Miller 1998).

Women migrants comprise a high proportion of migration in recent years; for example the percentage of Asian migrant women working as labors outside their country of origin has reached to 1.5 million. Although women comprise half of the migrant population over 40 years, but only recently serious discussions have been made over the topic by the scholars (Zlontik 2003).

Since women's care work and domestic service has become more significant, women's migration became more important in the global economy. Women workforce has remarkably become demandable from developing countries (basically due to exploitation and vulnerability) to the developed countries for the works and services such as nannies, caregivers, nurses, and etc. Some forms of women's migration has been due to women's trafficking for the purpose of marriages and sex (Amir & Beeks 2006).

Other kinds of women's transitional migrations has been for the purpose of seeking better opportunities such as employment, safety and etc. Women's few or no legal protection in term of employment, puts them under the risk of exploitation, abuse and trafficking in the country of origin, in transit and in destination regions (Maymoon 2017).

A very comprehensive study to widely address correlation between immigration and feminism is lacking in the scholarly researches and popular discussions, and there is a gap in the migration studies in term of gender issues. Feminist organizations haven't been able to fully recognize working or labor women's rights in the host societies (Sotelo 2000). For this reason there have been movements by some migrants in the host societies to ensure their rights. For example Filipino domestic workers in Canada protested for their rights to be insured by feminist organizations (Kelly 2011). Likewise, there

has been form of discriminatory acts against the Muslim women who migrate with hijab in the host countries, particularly western countries (Haddad & Smith 2002).

3. Migration and Women's Empowerment

There are three interrelated dimensions coming together as the tools of exploring the concept of empowerment: agency, resources and achievement. Power is meant as an ability to make choices and disempowerment means to be starved of the ability to make choices; in order to help denied ones obtain the ability to make choices, empowerment comes into being as a process. Agency signifies a process in which a set of choices are made. Resources are the tools that help the agency get exercised and finally achievement is defined as the outcomes of the agency. The three dimensions are comprehensively studied over three major indicators contributing to women's empowerment if they are being practiced effectively and efficiently. These indicators are education, employment and political participation of women (Kabeer 1999).

Empowerment is a concept that connects individual strengths and capabilities, and proactive manners towards social change and social policy (Rappaport 1984).

An academic research defines empowerment of women as a possession in term of having access to and control on the relevant resources and information and access to the choices. Choice matters in three levels. Existence of choice: existence of a range of options among which choices are made by women; Use of choice: women's decision making power; Achievement of choice: having the capability to achieve wanted results (Narazani, Mara, Basic & Stojilovska 2015). Through another literature, empowerment is studied from the important aspect of consciousness which means that women should develop self-consciousness and stay active and struggle for positive change and welfare (Freire 1973). Within this concept, empowerment contains women's self-respect and efforts to challenge the existing power structure thoroughly (Ashfar 1998). To do so, empowerment strategies should be carefully formed in a way to help build on "the power within" for women to promote their capabilities to access and control resources as well as to be able to determine agendas and to have the ability to make decisions (Kabeer 1994).

Another research argues that women's empowerment is not just about the ability of making decision, rather it is about the means that help facilitate empowerment through the process by which women consider and realize themselves as powerful and capable of making decisions (Rowlands 1997).

International migration of women (from traditional society to the industrialized countries) affects women's roles in the household and in the communities. Since they become familiar with new norms, opportunities & rights, modern values through their experiences living abroad, specifically through their employment, they make financial contribution to the household and while return they gain more authority and power (Martin 2004).

Asian migrant women have been able to save 61% of their employment income. They could send about 46% of their income to their families and to the husbands. Women attending work in high paying countries were receiving more respect from the society. Women could gain a considerably high degree of fame, prestige and respect as they went abroad for employment and contributed to their independency (Roy & Arya 2006).

4. Causes and consequences of feminization of migration

Since factors motivating women is different from the factors motivating men, therefore men and women's participation rate is also not equal. Men's migrations is mainly based on economic

motivations while women's migrations are based on social and cultural reasons; this means that women migrate largely in order to escape from the familial and structural restrictions imposed on them and to escape gender discrimination and social control over them (Sadeqi & Wildond 2016 as cited in Seifi 2017). The statistical data shows that there were about 224 million migrants around the world in 2015, in which women made 48% of the population (UNDESA 2016 as cited in Seifi 2017). Refugees make 8% of the whole mentioned number of international migrant population among which women and girls made 47% of this proportion (UNHCR 2016 as cited in Seifi 2017).

Historical data show that women's primary types of migrations were basically due to joining their families. Women used to intensively immigrate to the United States of America to join their husbands. Huge number of female immigrations to Australia, Canada, Europe and New Zealand is for the purpose of family reunification. Based on surveys conducted in India, the data show that 89% of the rural based women and 59% of the urban based women migrate for the marriage purposes; likewise census data conducted in 2001 in Nepal showed that 42% of women's internal migrations are based on marriage reasons. According to UNFPA reports, around 80000 Russian women immigrated to the United States and to the Western Europe (from 1995 to 2005) in order to get married. The rural farm working men in Taiwan, Japan and China are more inclined to marrying with Philippines, Vietnamese and Thai women (Fleury 2016).

Divorced and widow women from Guatemala and Maldives migrate in order to escape social stigma. Srilankan and Philippines women consider migration more acceptable than divorce. Philippines women migrate in order to avoid families' control on them specially when its about forced marriage. 23% of the young Eutopian girls migrate to escape early marriages. States who fail to protect its female population against violence, migration is more likely seen there alongside an increased risk of the human trafficking (Oneil, Fleury & Foresti 2016). Interview based data with the migrant women indicates that women are being treated exploitatively and are paid very few wages in the labour market in Ireland. The women who remain after the migrant husbands could gain more authority (specially in term of financial expenditure) and decision making power in the households. Manifestly migration is not always about positive sides; it could also mean the vice versa form of it. Politicians in media and peoples' discussions among the public would subject migrants to smuggling, stealing, addiction and AIDS vulnerable masses. Likewise, the irregular migrants who are accused to violating laws, they are not being protected by the laws (Porazizi 2012 as cited in Seifi 2017).

5. Afghan Women's Migration

Before assessing Afghan women's migration, the general status of Afghan women is reviewed.

Afghan Women's Status

Afghanistan has witnessed vulnerability of women since the Taliban regime, despite the fact that women's status was much better before the Taliban regime, especially when president Najibullah took the lead in 1986. Although the Soviet invasion era was an era of political instability, for women it was a period of improvements in their social status.

During the different political structures, women's legal rights have also changed simultaneously. Before the Taliban regime, Afghanistan was in an era in which women were given equal rights according to the constitutional law; while during the Taliban rule, women's situation was completely reversed and women were no longer enjoying their rights as human beings. Their rights to receive education, health care and employment were foreclosed. The post-Taliban regime was a new page and

a new age for women in which the situation got better and women's status was promoted as the international community focused their attention on the Afghan women and new steps were taken towards their social welfare.

Brief Historical Overview of Afghan Women's Status

Afghanistan's history is associated with several invading experiences. The Soviet invasion took place in 1979, as a result of which a communist regime came to power. Although the communists were the political opponents but some studies state that they developed positive strategies about women by promoting their rights through democratization as long as they remained in power. Women's rights protection efforts were ranging from the right to education and healthcare to employment and mobility. Women of all ages were provided with free education facilities and they were able to employ and take advantage of the variety of jobs that they chose. For example they could get employed as doctors and nurses; there were female professors at universities and there were female agents in airlines and in private corporations (Goleta 2016). Women held chairs and positions as physicians, clerks, governmental workers and teachers. Women were being respected and they were allowed to travel all around the country and abroad, independently (Ghosh 2003).

DOAW was the first women's group which was formed under the name of, the Democratic Organization of Afghan Women. Although this organization was formed prior to the Soviet era in 1965, but as Soviet came to power, it paid more attention to this organization. The main goals of DOWA was to reduce the illiteracy rate among women and to ban forced marriages, as well as to eliminate bride price during marriage (Ghosh 2003).

The extension of some freedoms for women, caused Afghan men to withdraw their female family members from Afghanistan. These freedoms were: 1) Amendments were made to the Shirbaha law. Shirbaha is the money paid by groom to the bride's family during marriage. Shirbaha was taken as an honor by the bride's family. If this money was not paid to the bride's family, she was not considered as a valued, respectful and honored woman by the society. Within the soviet regime, the amount of Shirbaha was decreased and since, less amount of Shirbaha paid by groom was perceived as paying less value and respect to the father of the daughter, Afghan families opposed this law. 2) Women's compulsory education law: according to this law, women had to attend schools (Sajjadpur & Sosifi 2017).

Later on by the fall of the Afghan communist government in 1992, civil war started in Afghanistan and therefrom, the early forms of women's rights casualty was emerged during the 'Mujahidin' or freedom fighters time and hugely expanded afterwards during the Taliban regime. Several acts of social deprivations were impulse against women; such as women's free mobility was remarkably decreased due to the ongoing conflicts; the day by day increasing battles caused education sector get destroyed, and poverty rate was getting higher and higher since the financial status of people was getting worsened as the incomes were dropping down. The infrastructure was also damaged, and the country became even more insecure and unstable than before. Corruption started to spread out and the rule of law eroded; from the other side sexual violence was widespread by the armed powers; likewise social order got lost over the country. Due to the ongoing social disorder and political instability, the educated proportion of Afghan women who could not bear the situation, they started to flee along with their families to the refugee camps into the neighboring countries particularly to Pakistan and Iran as well as another proportion who held better financial status migrated to the Western countries (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan n.d.).

Afghan Women's Migration during the Soviet Era

Traditional gender roles are predominant in Afghanistan when it comes to its culture. Based on tradition, women are perceived as representing the honor of their families and tribes. In Afghanistan, women are expected to carry on their traditional roles such as taking care of the household, support the husband and take care of the children; they have to meet the needs of their husband and those who deny doing it, they are blamed for dishonoring her family as well as community; women are responsible for sexual and domestic services and they have to keep honoring their relationship as brides (Nawid 2007).

In Afghanistan, traditional practice related to women contain arranged marriages and often polygyny is applied to them by husbands, if affordable. In Afghanistan's strongly traditional and patriarchal society and culture, women usually get married in young ages, they are less educated than men, and they have many children which are preferred to be boys, and are not allowed to work outside home (Lipson & Miller 2009).

Shirbaha law: since the notion of 'honor' of women was prominent in Afghan society, the fear of losing this notion caused Afghan women's migration decisions by their families. In order to protect this notion, families preferred to send their female members abroad, rather than keeping them under communist democracy. The pushing factor towards Afghans migrations was not just "war", but it was also due to the communist laws brought in Afghanistan and addressed two major reforming amendments about women, which were perceived as destroying the notion of honor in Afghan society; this means that communist reformist policies were somewhat disappointing for Afghans. These policies took place in a number of specific legal provisions that were of great concern to Afghan men. Amendments were made to the Shirbaha law. Shirbaha is the money paid by groom to the bride family during marriage. The higher the amount of Shirbaha was, the more respect and credibility the brides' family obtained. According to this amendment, girls' exchange as goods was disrupted; this amendment in Shirbaha, reduced the credibility of the fathers of the brides in the eyes of people because according to this law, brides' fathers were no more paid money due to their daughters' marriage.

Education rights law: according to this law, compulsory literacy for women was severely insisted and women had to go ahead for education. These two cases caused the number of refugees to declare their withdrawal from Afghanistan during the soviet era (Sajjadpur & Sosifi 2017).

Afghan Women's Migration during the Taliban Era

The first emergence of Taliban was in 1994 in Kandahar (a famous province in Afghanistan) and later on they found power in the capital (Kabul) too by 1996. As they emerged, they immediately closed female schools and made the women leave their employment and social positions and stay at home with no social contact. Women had to put on burqa all the times and they were not allowed to leave home without any male accompanier from her family members. Women who did not obey wearing long burqa or hijab, they were sent to the prisons (Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan n.d.). Burqa was something like a tent put overhead and covered the whole body; it was as heavy as it made women's physical movement very weighty. It was not only heavy, but also expensive as all women could not afford to buy a burqa; so for the cost reason, women preferred to use the burqa as a shared commodity with other female households. While some women carried on living their lives under the wartime without their family members or relatives being bombed, many others witnessed watching the painful scenes of their family members such as sons, husbands or other relatives killed or tortured by

the Taliban; another part of them, who could fled with their households to avoid the sad end story of their loved ones by torturing or by imprisonment tragedies (Samuels & Sherif 2008).

Education: While Taliban gained power, they prohibited access to education for women and girls. Around 100 public school were closed and only some women could attend hidden schools in private houses. During this time, Afghan women's illiteracy rate was in third position around the world; around 79.2 percent of women and girls could not read and even the rights over learning Quran was restricted for girls over the age of eight (Roshan 2004).

Employment: During Taliban regime, employment rate fell down to 20% from 60% based on statistics. Educated women who used to hold positions in the past, they were then changed as beggars who either had to beg on the streets or to prostitute in order to feed their children (Roshan 2004).

While few women at the Taliban period were engaged working in the aid agencies and in handicraft and the carpet weaving productions hidden from Taliban; these small businesses were run and lead by the professional women who were educated and could not stay in house without doing anything; so they created working opportunities for women to work in the undergrounds of their houses. This way they could survive and empowered both themselves and other women.

The underground activities were included vocational centers providing English and German language courses as well computer skills courses; courses were also provided trainings in handicrafts, honey-making, bee-keeping and animal husbandry (Povey 2007). Some women were supported to run bakeries by the financial aid of World Food Program (WFP); although Taliban were aware of this issue, they did not revoke.

Marriage: A high number of women were subjected to violence; women were first raped and later killed and their death bodies were put in graveyards. A number of other women were forced to get married with Taliban; some women accepted to get married with Taliban but Taliban's brutality was as high as they were committing group sex with the woman that they marry with and in some cases, the married woman were even sent and sold to the gulf region as the sex workers; some women committed suicide after marriage in order to escape sex work and group rapes. From the other side, women's movement in the streets was prohibited and if women were crossing the road and especially if they were not completely covered, they were beaten hardly by stick and rawhide (Povey 2007).

Although in this dark period, women's movements and mobility was not allowed legally, many women left the country and migrated in order to escape Taliban's harshness (Roshan 2004).

Women fled the war from the borders during the night and could succeed to cross the borders in which Taliban had control and if they were found there, they could be raped or robbed by the insurgents (Samuels & Sherif 2008).

5.1 Afghan Women Migrants and Refugees in Istanbul

Conducting interview based researches about Afghan women population is considered essential, for the reason that after the two neighbor countries, Pakistan and Islamic Republic of Iran, Turkey is the third largest Afghan population receiving country. Turkey is home to nearly 4 million refugees, among which, Afghan constitute the second largest group after Iraq. In Istanbul, one of the biggest refugee receiving zones is Zeytinburu, in which a significant number of Afghan population is noticed while crossing road, specially the 'Bulvar Caddesi' where it is known as the little city of Afghans, since Afghans made increased movements in it and started to develop businesses and working condition and obtained better integration within this society. Of course half of the Afghan population is comprised by women, but even yet, no research is conducted to address Afghan immigrant women's living

conditions and experiences in Istanbul. Therefore, this paper examines the social conditions and adjustment issues of Afghan women based in Istanbul.

5.1.1 Introducing the Interviewees

This research is based on face-to-face interviews from six women who belong to the different provinces of Afghanistan and come from different backgrounds and different legal statuses. Hawaa Ahmadi was an asylum seeker in Istanbul for more than 21 years since she came from Afghanistan. She got a citizenship just during the last two years of her stay in Istanbul. She used to live in Iran, before moving to Turkey. She is divorced and has four children, including two daughters and two sons. She finished secondary school in Iran and graduated from high school in Afghanistan and used to teach Persian language and History in Takhar province, where she used to live all her age when she was living in Afghanistan. The place where she used to live was named Dasht-e-Qalaa, which is in border with Tajikistan, between the two rivers 'Kochka' and 'Amoo'. Therefore she is more familiar with Tajikistan culture and male members of the tribe which she belonged to, some of them were engaged in trade works with Tajikistan. In Istanbul, she lives in Zeytinburnu, Bulvar Caddesi. Since she moved to Turkey, she has only lived in Zeytinburnu. She likes this region because she feels like this is her own community since each and every Afghan related customs such as Eid days and wedding parties are performed here and any Afghan product is available here. She feels the same level of belonging to this place as she felt in Takhar. During all these years, she was never asked that who she was, by the Turkish police. She chose to live in Zeytinburnu because her mother and brother used to live here. This tie of relationships of the Afghan people has been ongoing since a long time ahead and availability of this tie brought many Afghans to Zeytinburnu and therefore this region hosts a huge population of the Afghan people since then. Migrating groups such as Hawaa and her families, were the primary populations coming to this place.

Mursal has the same feeling of belonging to Istanbul, as Hawaa has. She lives her life with more freedoms in Istanbul, rather than Jeddah; because in Jeddah life was kind of routined and scheduled for her as a chart, from which she was not able to get out of, whenever she wanted. She is a 19 years old, a single woman. She studies Natural Sciences at one of the private universities in Istanbul. She was born and grew up in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia and has been to Afghanistan only once when she was two years old. Although she has not lived in Afghanistan for a considerable time, but she has always been listening to Afghanistan news and used to read documentaries to know about it.

Parwin says she could not walk outside after 8:00 pm in Afghanistan, whereas she is free to walk alone outside even at midnight in Istanbul, Ucyuzlu region, where she lives. She is 23 years old, who is an asylum seeker in Istanbul for two years. She was studying Mathematics in Kabul, but she did not continue since her family decided to move to Turkey. She moved with her family members, comprised of her parents, three sisters, and one brother, in 2017 by air travel.

Through hearing the women, this study tries to come up with generalities based on understanding of women's statuses, their traditional roles and conversion of roles from traditional to the new ones in the new societies.

A twenty seven years old migrant woman, who did not wish her name to be mentioned, was interviewed through Skype. She lived in Istanbul for almost an year but then due to personal reasons she moved to a third country recently, and sought refugee status, says that: "There is no doubt that by leaving Afghanistan and living my life as a displaced woman in Turkey and then as a refugee woman in the country where I live now, I feel more empowered and more useful person than being in

Afghanistan. Where for every small stuff I had to fight and open many closed doors. Life for women outside of fear, risk of losing live, limited opportunities, limited rights, away from violence and harassments is always a great opportunity for development. Things that I am able to do outside Afghanistan (in Istanbul and in my current country of residence), I couldn't do it inside my own country easily. For example, I drive without fear of disturbance, I work without fear of getting harassed or abused by my boss. I can live alone in an apartment without fear of judgement and disturbance from people in neighborhood. I go to gym without fear of disturbance and judgements I can focus and stay calm. I have opportunities to reach my dreams and goals in life. I can choose which color and what type of cloths as a woman I should wear; I have choice and I have right for the decisions in my life for myself. I can choose what to wear what to not. I feel peace and freedom, that what every human dreams about. And I am living the dream although I miss a lot my country where I belong to. As a refugee woman, I have my own fights and struggles but it's not at the same level as Afghanistan”.

5.1.2 Migration as a Family Decision

Migration systems theory says that immigration is dominated by family decisions. Many people migrated based on decisions of their families; especially the Afghan women, who are not commonly involved in decision making processes. All of the interviewed women moved to Turkey based on family decisions. Hawaa came with her husband and relatives. Although her husband decided to move to Turkey but soon after they moved, he regretted because he started to notice that his wife is getting freedoms. This is because some Afghan men are not in favor of women's access to freedoms such as freedom of going out of home, freedom of work and education and etc. Although Hawaa helped her family with the costs of immigration to Turkey because she used to teach and she gave her savings to her husband.

In case of Mursal, her family chose Turkey, in order for her to pursue higher education. They preferred Turkey because they liked the common cultural ties Turkey has with Afghanistan. As Mursal continually used to apply for Turkish universities, she was offered acceptance in one of the private universities in Istanbul and she was issued student visa by which she moved to Istanbul. The first time she came to Turkey, it was with her family members in 2018, the second time was again with her family members, however the last time she moved alone.

The 18-years-old poet and novel writer, Aryan, is another participant of this research. She used to work as a social worker with street children in Afghanistan; meanwhile she has worked with a feminist network as an author for a social media page named as ‘Dukhtaran-e-Rabia’, to which migrant women around the world contributed. She moved to Turkey alone in 2017, although her sister was already living in Istanbul. Likewise Parwin, Aryan also could not complete her university in Afghanistan. She had to leave because she realized that her mindset is not relevant and acceptable in the context of Afghanistan. She was not feeling supported by community and due to this, she used to feel depressed. Although she was holding an acceptance letter by one of the Turkish universities, but still she was not being issued her student visa. Once it was rejected, and the second time it took a long time until she was issued with a visa, but it was so late and it was only one day remaining to the mid-term exams. However she travelled and started a challenging chapter of life, due to her long time absence in her courses. She had also experienced short time travels to Iran and Tajikistan for training purposes, before travelling to Turkey. Aryan declares that her parents decided her to travel to Turkey in order to continue higher education. “When my father decided to send me abroad, he was asked to attend an

inquisitorial gathering by religious leaders in the mosque to ask him how could he let her daughter travel abroad, although he watches the Turkish movies and notices that girls can smoke and walk uncovered and are more democratized there”, Aryan added.

This means that although women are rarely involved in decision making, but they make remarkable contribution to the process of implementing decisions. For instance, although in case of Hawaa, migration was decided by her husband’s family, she facilitated the process through her financial contribution. Also in cases of Mursal and Aryan, although their families sent them to Istanbul, the process of facilitating the implementation of decision such as searching for universities, seeking integration information and seeking accommodation processes were done by themselves.

5.1.3 Afghan Women’s Movement Journey to Turkey

Migration from Afghanistan to Turkey is often done through crossing a transitional point in case of Afghan people, normally when it is done irregularly. This normally happens through transitting from Iran. Hawaa used to live in Iran for several years, before marriage. She migrated to Iran after the Soviet occupation and during the government of Najibullah who took the lead from 1986 to 1992. Since Najibullah was being perceived as a communist leader, the freedom fighting groups were opposing him. Due to this opposition, there were civil wars in Afghanistan, due to which people wanted to escape. In this period Najibullah and his brother were tortured by freedom fighters and Afghanistan remained for a new platform of civil wars between leaders, as a result of which masses of people migrated to Iran, including Hawaa and her family. Although they could easily move to Tajikistan which was closer to Takhar province and crossing border was possible with basic transportation tools, but they did not chose to go there since people were not in favor of communist states which was already in power in Afghanistan.

Iran has been another chapter of troubling living conditions for Afghans. They were not being issued residence permit or identity. In case of Hawaa and her family, they got identity after they lost their father. Their father died in a water well in which he used to work for an Iranian. Once he died there, the owner of the well had to advocate for Hawaa’s family to receive an identity. Other Afghans were still not issued with an identity. After receiving identity, Hawaa and her brothers could enroll in schools, which was not possible before. Even after graduation from the 9th grade, they were not being issued with a certificate of completion. For other Afghans, if they could attend schools, they had to pay higher than the normal standard fees. For Hawaa, since she had an identity due to her father’s death, she could attend school for free.

Afghans were not a welcomed population in Iran. They were being called ‘dirty Afghans’ and the rate of freedom has been down. Social rights were not given to Afghans. Hawaa says: “whenever we were standing for waiting lines in front of the bakery to get bread, even if we were coming earlier, we had to stand and wait until Iranians were finished getting bread and at the end, we could go and buy bread which was normally the remaining cold or burned ones.”

Hawaa came to Turkey through human smuggling crossing Pakistan and then Iran and Turkey as the last point of stay. She moved to Pakistan by bus. Then transition to Iran was again by bus; but transition from the border of Iran to Turkey was by walking; the walk that continued for two weeks. The prolongation of the time was because the Iran borders were surrounded by police; so during the day, movements were dangerous; therefore it was done during the nights. The climatae change was another factor endangering peoples’ live during movements. From 100 people, three of them died due to weather, hunger and thirst. Hawaa witnessed three people dying due to sun and lack of water and food,

while crossing over Iran-Turkey border. Hawaa's situation was more vulnerable because she was holding her one year old daughter who had to get breast-fed by her mother. So many Afghans had to try human smuggling because getting a Turkish visa has always been a difficult work for the middle and low class families of Afghan. This category of Afghans had to sell their properties they had in their villages such as land, gardens and household. Hawaa tried the overwhelming experience of crossing borders by walk from Iran to Turkey, twice. The first time she had only one baby of one year old, the second time, she had four children who were all below 10 years old. The second movement again to Turkey was made after they went back home. The movement back to Afghanistan was decided by Hawaa's husband in order to limit the freedoms that she obtained from Turkey. The level of independence she obtained through the new society was annoying to her husband; therefore he decided to take his wife and children back to Takhar. This time, since Hawaa used to live with some independence in Turkey, she was not happy continuing her past traditional old life again; for this reason she started to ask her husband to take her back to Turkey. Since this was not an acceptable demand for him, he divorced her. She came back to Istanbul with her children alone, experiencing the same dangerous borders again because she has still not had a legal document to make regular movements (she got her citizenship during the last two years).

Fatima, who also lives in Zeytinburnu, is 39 years old. She has two children, one son, who works in a restaurant and one daughter, who works in a textile firm. She finished high school in Kabul, Afghanistan. Her father was killed around eight years ago; as a result of which, her husband's tribe members started interventions in her life affairs and were looking to marry Fatima and her daughter by force. Since the people forcing to marry her by force, related to the Taliban groups, she was feeling threatened. This feeling of fear made Fatima and her two children to move to another country as soon as they could. They moved to Iran first, and like Hawaa, they spent days walking the border to reach to Turkey. She used to live in Kirazli when she just came to Istanbul, but since she was depressed there, they moved to Zeytinburnu where she feels more relaxed because she visits Afghan families here and she has made friends.

5.1.4 Afghan Women's Labor/Employment Experiences

Irregular migration is not wanted by states. For this reason, lack of access to social protections, limited rights for working and exploitative labor practices are common about irregular migrants. For the sake of surviving, even irregular migrants have to work. This category usually either go for domestic work or work in uncommon or hidden places.

Since Fatima does not hold a legal document or residence in Turkey, she is an irregular migrant. She lives in the underground of an apartment and works from home. Her work is sewing buttons on sleeves and shoulders of the dresses. She is paid 1 TL for each three buttons she sews on the dresses. She often does beading too. Once she completes her work, she sends it to the textile firm and gets her wage.

Hawaa's living conditions in terms of income was better in Takhar because she used to live with her husband and mother-in-law, who owned a land. The land was used for agricultural products. Her husband was a soldier and Hawaa was a teacher in school. She did not have to spend her money for household, since there were other sources of income to afford. For this reason, she could save her money for herself. But in Istanbul, things have changed a lot for her. She was no more holding any land or property and was not a married woman anymore. She had to raise up her four children alone; so she went to work in a small leather wear making shop, located underground. Since the source of

income from leather wear making was not enough to afford a family, she started to work as a domestic worker in peoples' houses. She used to spend her weekends working for a textile firm and even sometimes during the night, after she was off from her leather making job, she went to work as a cleaner of stairs for apartments. Although life was overwhelming in terms of financial issues, but Hawaa was satisfied because she was no more living under domination and was not under bondage; she was now more independent about her life, than before.

Women who used to work, or those who still work, they feel more satisfied more confident and more independent about themselves. This independence grant them more courage to go ahead and taking more risks for further promotions.

In case of Mursal, back in Saudi Arabia, since affording life was troubling, she could not rely on her father's income; so she started working a part time job. Between 16 – 18 years old, she used to teach Quran, Arabic and Mathematics to the Chinese students. Mursal believed that her income was granting her the feeling of independence, the independence which was perceived as a power to her. This level of independence can get higher if women believe themselves and have the courage to take risk to start something. Mursal's father works with carpet weaving industry in Saudi Arabia, though her mother is engaged with sewing handmade crafts at home and sells her products outside.

5.1.5 Women's Awareness about Social Services

Interview data shows that women have tried to get better interactions and integration with their societies, day by day. The more they were integrated to the society, the more they were informed about their rights in Turkish society.

Mursal is informed of some rights and opportunities through some associations that she was able to know them through her networks with her class fellows. She is satisfied with her accommodation, since she is provided with a public dormitory, although she is a student in a private university. She pays the same as those who study in public universities. Her dorm payment rate is 500 TL per month. Fatima says that if she was holding an international protection document for her stay in Turkey, she could have had 'Kızılay card', through which she could have received 150 TL per month. She also knows about 'Dernek' or associations aiding irregular migrants in terms of food and clothing. She knows about insurance system for those who hold an international protection document.

Parwin is being annoyed about access to hospitals since her asylum document does not contain insurance, due to which she has to pay 80 TL as doctor's fee each time she visits a doctor. Hawaa used to have a similar kind of annoying experience about health sector services in the past she says she wasn't able to access healthcare service in Istanbul the primary years when she just came to Turkey.

"It was more difficult to access social services than today, she says. Since she was not holding an identity, a passport or a residence permit, she could not go to hospitals. Although gradually things got better by the passage of time for her. She says that she gradually got to know more about refugees' rights, since she got further integration with society, she found out that there are services even to the irregular migrants. There are associations helping migrants without identity. There is 'Misafir Oğrenci Dernegi' which helps those irregular students who don't hold an identity. She also found out that there is another medical center named as 'Bizim Alam', located in Vatan Caddesi in Fatih, which helps provide medical care to the irregular migrants in case they hold an Afghan identity at least. This service is applicable to the nationals of other countries too. Hawaa continued living in Zeytinburnu without a legal document for several years. Whenever she was trying to apply for citizenship, her application for citizenship was not signed by her husband for confirmation. Even after separation, he

was not signing her divorce documents; finally in order to receive citizenship, and for the sake of children, Hawaa's mother had no other option but to give bribe to the court and get her divorce papers.

5.1.6 Afghan Women's Perceptions of Discrimination

Discrimination is commonly experienced by refugees in receiving societies. This was rarely mentioned by the interviewees; although there are a few cases of perceptions of discrimination. Hawaa has not yet experienced discrimination in her own case, but she did experience it in case of her daughter when she wanted to obtain scholarship for high school and then for university; but since she did not have a citizenship, she was not provided with such an opportunity. She had to pay university and dormitory fee and she was not legally allowed to apply for international scholarship opportunities. She still isn't entitled to this right since she still does not have a citizenship. Parwin reports her own discriminative case when she was looking for a job, she found out that there's an organization which provides job opportunities with an insurance, for asylum seekers and refugees. She was introduced to a transportation company in which she was told that she will be appointed as an administrator; however, when she joined, she was told to work as an office and toilette cleaner and serve tea. She was told that in order to become entitled for a job with insurance, she has to do these jobs. Due to this reason she left the job. Almost similar case happened to Aryan in a workplace, where she went to seek a job. It was a restaurant; Aryan went there with her friend, who was not covered by veil, although Aryan used to put on a veil which is a custom in Afghanistan. Aryan was rejected for the way of her coverage, however her friend was offered a job.

5.1.7 Afghan Women and Development

Women comprise half of the migrant and refugee populations. Their education and initiatives could make remarkable contribution to the development of the host societies. Not only this, but diasporic women could contribute to financial stability of families back home, too.

Hawaa believes that women should not perceive themselves as a marginalized population of the society. Even if they are asylum seekers or refugees, they should not perceive themselves as a weaker part of community. Women should stop their needing status from men and seek dominance over men through their own efforts and hard work. Likewise, Parwin believes that women with vision and missions are the managers who are able to set goals, plan life and start implementation. These women are those, whom she believes that their existence is an asset to the societies and Afghan women have this potential to be the managers of their life and leader of societies.

Mursal believes that creating networks among Afghan women could help facilitate women's speedy gain of information about opportunities and this could help them use those opportunities relevant to their skills, talents and abilities. She witnessed that women of other nations such as Yemeni women have groups like this, unlike Afghan women. Mursal noticed that there are very few women studying natural science faculty, although she believes that women are needed to pursue education in this field because they are needed to conduct researches about Afghanistan natural resources and mines that are kept underground for centuries, or are being extracted by the west. Mursal insists on women's more education, more networking and more interaction in order to break the long lasting useless taboos.

Findings

The data provided by interviewees in Istanbul shows that migrant women live with different living conditions. This research shows that webs of migration is complex for Afghan women and are widely based on ethnic, social, historical and family networks.

Some of the interviewed women declared that they had living experience in Iran and Pakistan, too. Based on their statements, Afghan women in Iran and Pakistan had comparatively less access to resources, rights and opportunities such as education, employment and citizenship rights, comparing to Turkey.

In terms of accommodation, Afghan women are usually based in Zeytinburnu part of Istanbul due to existence of ties of relationships from the past. Afghans in Zeytinburnu are normally living with poor living conditions, unemployment, and overloading refugee population.

Interview data shows that women's efforts were remarkable in terms of facilitating integration process into the new societies. Afghan women have tried to get better interactions and integration with their societies, day by day. The more they were integrated to the society, the more they were informed about their rights in Turkish society.

Integration process is facilitated by women's higher participation in social affairs. This means that creating networks among Afghan women could help facilitate women's gain of information, speedily, about opportunities and this could help them use those opportunities relevant to their skills, talents and abilities. Women's more education, more networking and more interaction is significant in order to break the long lasting traditional taboos.

Afghan women's migration contributed to their independence. The wages women earn from their work is considered important in increasing women's level of self-confidence and their involvement in decision making process. Confidence and power gives women the courage to choose their preferred options and achieve their desired results out of it.

Conclusion

Feminization of migration streams means that women play a progressively important role in migration process, both qualitatively and quantitatively. The feminization debate means recognizing the increased participation, independence and agency of women in migration flows (Rinus, Berger & Kraal, 2006).

Afghan women's migration and refugee movements has happened due to several conditions such as wars, security instability, poverty, prosecution, household strategies, wage differentials, patriarchy, family decisions, education, employment and etc.

Since Pakistan and Iran are located in the neighborhood of Afghanistan, once the major conflicts were raised in Afghanistan first by the Soviet Union and then by the Taliban, huge migration flows were made to these two countries. Afghan people have chosen to get settled in Turkey due to its cultural and religious ties with Afghanistan and due to the historical friendship relations both sides have had since 1921 by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk and King Amanullah Khan. Recently, some of the young women have chosen to get settled in Turkey for the reason that Turkey has played a role in term of promoting women's military knowledge and military professionalism in Afghanistan, through military education/training programs provided by the Turkish Armed Forces to the Afghan female soldiers.

Women migrants and refugees have been partially successful in escaping traditional patriarchal structures and through earning wages, they could gain some independence at home. Through this, they could create division of labor inside their houses and could avoid sex segregations in public and social spheres.

References

- [1]ARYA, S. & ROY, A. (2006). 'Poverty, Gender and Migration (Women and Migration in Asia)', *Journal of Social and Economic Development*, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 50-236.
- [2]Ashfar, H. (1998). 'Women & Empowerment: Illustration for the Third World', *Journal of International Development*, vol. 12, issue. 5, pp. 761-762.
- [3]Bailey, R. (2008). *Immigration and Migration, Global Issues*,
<<https://blogs.imf.org/2015/11/11/migration-a-global-issue-in-need-of-a-global-solution/>>
- [4]Beeks, K. & Amir, D. (2006). *Trafficking and the Global Sex Industry*, Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- [5]Bonifacio, G. (2012). *Feminism and migration: Cross-cultural engagements*, Springer Dordrecht Heidelberg London New York.
- [6]Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, (n.d), *Afghan Women*, <https://www.cw4wafghan.ca/>
- [7]Castles, S. and Miller, M. J. (1998). *The Age of Migration: International Population Movements in the Modern World*, London: Macmillan Press LTD.
- [8]Fleury, A. (2016). 'Understanding Women & Migration: A Literature Review', KNOMAD working paper 8, pp. 2-27.
- [9]Freire, P. (1973). *Education for Critical Consciousness*, New York: Seabury Press.
- [10]Ghosh, H.A. (2003). 'A History of Women in Afghanistan: Lessons Learnt for the Future or Yesterdays and Tomorrow: Women in Afghanistan', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, vol. 4, no. 3, pp. 1-14.
- [11]Goleta, Y.J. (2016). *Women in Afghanistan: Past, Present & Future*, Aljazeera,
<https://jgu.edu.in/sites/default/files/women-in-afghanistan-3_4.pdf>
- [12]Gouws, A. (2007). *The Feminization of Migration*, Research Gate.
- [13]Haddad, Y.Y. Jane I. & Smith, J.I. (2000). *Muslim Minorities in the West: Visible and Invisible*. Walnut Creek, Calif.: Altamira Press.
- [14]Kabeer, N. (1994). *Reversed Realities: Gender Hierarchies in Development Thought*, Verso.
- [15]Kabeer, N. (1999). 'Resources, Agency, Achievements: Reflections on the Measurement of Women's Empowerment', *Journal of Development and Change*, vol. 30, no. 3, pp. 435-464.
- [16]Kelly, P. (2011). 'Migration, agrarian transition, and rural change in Southeast Asia: Introduction', *Critical Asian Studies*, vol. 43, issue. 4, pp. 479-506.
- [17]Lipson, J. & Miller, S. (2009). 'Changing roles of Afghan refugee women in the United States', *Health Care for Women International*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 171-180.
- [18]Martin, S.F. (2003). 'Women and Migration', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, vol. 6, issue. 3, pp. 302-304.

- [19]Martin, S.F. (2004). *Women and Migration*, United Nations.
- [20]Maymoon, P.L. (2017). *The Feminization of Migration: Why are Women Moving More?* Cornell Policy Review, <http://www.cornellpolicyreview.com/the-feminization-of-migration-why-are-women-moving-more/>
- [21]Narazani, E. Mara, I. Basic, S. & Stojilovska, A. (2015). *Migration and Women Empowerment in the Western Balkan countries*, LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- [22]Nawid, S. (2007). *Afghan Women under Marxism* In *from Patriarchy to Empowerment: Women's Participation, Movements, and Rights in the Middle East, North Africa, and South Asia*, edited by Valentine M. Moghadam, Syracuse University Press, New York.
- [23]O'Neil, T. Anjali Fleury, A. & Foresti, M. (2016). 'Women on the move: migration, gender equality and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development', ODI Newsletter, pp. 4-6, <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/10731.pdf>
- [24]Povey, E.R. (2007). *Afghan Women-Identity & Invasion*, Zed Books Ltd, London.
- [25]Rappaport, J. (1984). 'Studies in empowerment: Introduction to the issues', *Prevention in Human Services Journal*, vol. 3, issue. 2-3, pp. 1-7.
- [26]Rinus, P. Berger, M. & Kraal, K. (2006). *The Dynamics of International Migration and*
- [27]*Settlement in Europe: A State of the Art*, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- [28]Roshan, B. (2004). 'The More Things Change, the More They Stay the Same: The Plight of Afghan Women Two Years after the Overthrow of the Taliban', *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law & Justice*, vol. 19, no. 1, pp 272-282.
- [29]Rowlands, J. (1997). *Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras*, Oxfam.
- [30]Sajjadpur, F. & Sosifi, I.J. (2017). 'Afghan refugee women and the challenges on their return',
- [31]*Iranian Journal of Anthropology Research*, vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 12-20.
- [32]Samuels, G.M. & Sherif, F.R. (2008). 'Identity, Oppression, and Power', *Affilia: Journal of Women and Social Work*, vol. 23, no. 1, pp. 50.
- [33]Seifi, A. (2017). 'The Causes and the Consequences of the Feminization of International Migration in the Light of Human Security with an Emphasis on International Law: Challenges and Solutions', *Women's Studies (Biannual Journal)*, Article. 4, Vol. 8, Issue. 19, pp. 85-120.
- [34]Sherif, R.F. (2006). 'Afghan Women in Exile and Repatriation: Passive victims or social actors?' *Affilia Journal of Women and Social Work*, vol. 21, pp. 206-218.
- [35]Sotelo, P.H. (2000). 'Feminism and Migration', *The ANNALS of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, vol. 57, issue. 1, pp. 107-120.
- [36]Zlotnik, H. (2003). *The Global Dimensions of Female Migration*, Migration Information Source, MPI, Washington, D.C.