

# ***Perceptions of Pakistani and German University Learners about the Impact of Refugees on their Societies***

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## **ABSTRACT**

*The study explores the impact of refugees on German and Pakistani society through the lens of university students. Multi-method, i.e., qualitative survey and naturalistic observation are used as a research approach. Through multi-stage sampling, 30 postgraduate students were selected from the Humboldt University of Berlin, and the University of Karachi. Data is gathered from semi-structured interviews parallel with observation and analyzed using thematic analysis appended with discussion. Overall, perceptions of the German and Pakistani participants towards the impact of refugee influx on their societies are constructive, yet ambivalent. Viewpoints of Pakistani participants about refugees are historically, morally and culturally driven, whereas the perspectives of German participants are historically and politically determined. Pakistani participants seek affiliation and consider accepting refugees as their cultural obligation, and a test of character, whereas for the German participants, accommodating*

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*refugees is on historical and humanitarian grounds. Challenges at both sides are largely associated with sociocultural, political and security elements. Limited administrative support and failure of state functionaries have surged refugee crises. Security issues have further elevated ominous thoughts among participants. Lack of cultural acceptance, lack of integration and divergent thinking have created multiple anomalies, particularly among German participants. Violence and intolerance are politically and culturally oriented in Germany, whereas it is propelled by politics in Pakistan.*

### **Introduction**

Of late, the world has been witnessing myriad global challenges including, but not limited to, a fractured economy, war against terror, overpopulation, and discrimination. One of the most pressing humanitarian issues that has gravely affected the lives of millions is the massive displacement of people. The 1951 Refugee Convention defines a refugee as “someone who is unable or unwilling to return to his-her country of origin owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion.”<sup>1</sup>

Stone underlines that people seek refuge largely due to war, human rights violations, political instability, security concerns, or oppression. In our viewpoint, refugees are compelled to leave their home country either due to disasters, turbulences, or emergency circumstances. They are either unable to return to their homeland fearing consistent oppression or might go back after the situation is normalized.<sup>2</sup>

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1 The United Nations General Assembly, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," UNHCR, 1951, Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>.

2 Dan Stone, "Refugees Then and Now: Memory, History and Politics in the Long Twentieth Century: An Introduction," *Patterns of Prejudice* 52, no. 2-3 (2018): 101-106, doi:10.1080/0031322x.2018.1433004

Syria, Afghanistan, and South Sudan remain the main countries from where the refugee comes, whereas Germany, Uganda, Pakistan, and Turkey are the top refugee-hosting countries in the world. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)<sup>3</sup> estimates that around 79.5 million people were displaced at the end of 2019, out of which around 26 million were hosted by other countries. The report of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA)<sup>4</sup> has forecasted an influx of refugees shortly. Concerning the problem, the following questions arise: Are countries prepared to host refugees? What about the policy intercessions? Above all, what are the attitudes of the host people towards refugees?

The history of refugees is convoluted. It is believed that it emerged after the First World War due to the revolution in Russia, and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Cabanes called, "In parallel with the development of transnational humanitarian practices, the post-war transition period saw a new kind of humanitarian narrative emerge. The expression of empathy for war victims led progressively to a new discourse on the rights of these victims."<sup>5</sup> During the Second World War, millions of people were forcibly displaced, whereas many fled their home countries due to the fear of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Gatrell argues that 'refugee history cannot just be about refugees'. He refers to the negligence of historians to include narratives of unsung refugees.<sup>6</sup>

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3 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, "Figures at a Glance," (UNHCR, 2020). Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

4 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Global Humanitarian Overview 2020," 2020, Available at: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO-2020\\_v9.1.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/GHO-2020_v9.1.pdf)  
*United Nations*

5 Bruno Cabanes, *The Great War and the Origins of Humanitarianism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

6 Peter Gatrell, "Refugees—What's Wrong With History?," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017): 170-89, doi:10.1093/jrs/few013

After the First World War, a good number of institutions emerged to work for humanitarian assistance. For example, the League of Nations offered emergency relief and international protection to the refugees. The Convention of 1933 relating to the International Status of Refugees played a significant role in their legal protection.<sup>7</sup> After the establishment of the United Nations Organization (UNO), and then the International Refugee Organization (IRO) in 1947, the refugee problems were further prioritized. Later, the UNHCR recognized the rights of refugees through the United Nations Refugee Convention<sup>8</sup> and the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees, 1967.<sup>9</sup> It was only after the Second World War, the word refugee surfaced in the UN 1951 Refugee Convention.

Refugees have been encountering unprecedented challenges including lack of provision of basic facilities such as education and healthcare, lack of legal protection, social isolation, ethnic extremism, and issues related to resettlement. Children are at risk of emotional and psychological trauma due to unanticipated displacement.<sup>10</sup> Whereas, young people face issues related to racism, exploitation, and violence.<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, women experience gender-based violence, unemployment, and all forms of discrimination.<sup>12</sup> Many issues are masked by the

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7 League of Nations, "Convention Relating to the International Status of Refugees- Treaty Series Vol. CLIX No. 3663," (League of Nations, 1933), Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/Docid/3Dd8cf374.html>

8 UNHCR, "The Refugee Convention, 1951," (UNHCR, 1951), Available at: <https://www.refworld.org/pdfid/53e1dd114.pdf>

9 UNHCR, "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees," (UNHCR, 1967). Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/3b66c2aa10>

10 Ellia Khan, "Mental Health Challenges and Interventions for Refugee Children," July 23, 2019, Available at <https://www.apa.org/international/global-insights/refugee-children-challenges>

11 Norwegian Refugee Council, "10 Challenges of Refugee Youth," (Norwegian Refugee Council, 2020), Available at: <https://www.nrc.no/news/2018/august/10-challenges-of-refugee-youth/>

12 Elizabeth Rose Donnelly and Viknes Muthiah, "Protecting Women and Girls in Refugee Camps- States' Obligations under International Law," (The

international reports, and yet to come to the surface including child abuse, rape, and slavery.

In recent times, countries including Syria, Afghanistan, Myanmar, South Sudan, and Somalia have witnessed massive refugee crises due to humanitarian violence. Amnesty International underlines, "Approximately 1.4 million refugees, who are at particular risk of violence and are for other reasons especially vulnerable, urgently need to be permanently resettled."<sup>13</sup> Lischer further highlights, "Many [refugees] continue to experience security threats in their new locations."<sup>14</sup> At the same time, the host countries have been struggling to meet the needs of their citizens as well as of the displaced people. Lischer elaborates, "Refugee crises may exacerbate existing political, ethnic, or religious tensions within the host state or between the host and sending states. Refugee demographics can create an unstable ethnic balance that encourages a previously oppressed minority to confront the government."<sup>15</sup>

Opponents perceive refugees' influx as a threat to the security of the host countries,<sup>16</sup> however, Antunez is of the view that they struggle political and socioeconomic hardships, which

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London School of Economics and Political Science, 2020). Available at: <https://www.lse.ac.uk/women-peace-security/assets/documents/2019/LSE-WPS-refugees-camp.pdf>

- 13 Amnesty, "Global Facts and Figures About Refugees," (Amnesty International, 2020), Available at: <https://www.amnesty.org/en/what-we-do/refugees-asylum-seekers-and-migrants/global-refugee-crisis-statistics-and-facts/>
- 14 Sarah Kenyon Lischer, "The Global Refugee Crisis: Regional Destabilization & Humanitarian Protection," *Daedalus* 146, no. 4 (2017): 85-97, doi:10.1162/daed\_a\_00461
- 15 Lischer, "The Global Refugee Crisis".
- 16 Reinhard Lohrmann, "Migrants, Refugees and Insecurity. Current Threats to Peace?," *International Migration*, 38, no. 4 (2000): 3-22, doi:10.1111/1468-2435.00118. See also, Gil Loescher, "Blaming the Victim: Refugees and Global Security," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 58, no. 6 (2002): 46-53, doi:10.2968/058006011 and Gil Loescher and James Milner, "Security Implications of Protracted Refugee Situations," in *Protracted Refugee Situation: Domestic and International Security Implications*, 1st ed., (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005).

equally make them vulnerable to radicalization and ideological clashes.<sup>17</sup> Overall, on one hand, organizations are supporting refugees, while on the other; the state of refugees portrays vulnerabilities, sensitivities, and disinterestedness.

Some of the previous studies have gathered the perceptions and attitudes of people towards refugees. Findings of a recent study showed that people hold diverse and seemingly contradictory attitudes towards refugees due to the inherent values and transient influences.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, findings of one of the cross-disciplinary review studies highlighted complex attitudes of the public towards refugees and migrants that are rooted in national and local contexts.<sup>19</sup> Ipsos<sup>20</sup> gathered global survey data from 26 countries, and underlined that a good number of people support refugees on humanitarian grounds, like war and persecutions; however, the majority remain suspicious of their genuineness and are skeptical about their integration into the new cultural environment. Results of a cross-national study conducted in 15 European countries reported neutral and stable perceptions. However, one-tenth rejected migrants that arrived from the poorer countries. Findings also revealed that the majority of participants from the UK, Ireland, and Portugal had more positive, whereas Estonian, Hungarian, Czech Republic, and

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17 Juan Carlos Antunez, "Refugees and Terrorism: The Real Threat," *Seguridad Internacional*. Es, 2019. Available at: <http://www.seguridadinternacional.es/?q=es/content/refugees-and-terrorism-real-threat>

18 Helen Dempster, Amy Leach and Karen Hargrave, "Public Attitudes Towards Immigration and Immigrants - What People Think, Why, and How to Influence them," *Working Paper 588*, (ODI, 2020). Available at: [https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/202009\\_odi\\_public\\_attitudes\\_towards\\_immigration\\_wp\\_final\\_0.pdf](https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/202009_odi_public_attitudes_towards_immigration_wp_final_0.pdf)

19 Helen Dempster and Karen Hargrave, "Understanding Public Attitudes towards Refugees and Migrants," (ODI, 2017), Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/11600.pdf>

20 Ipsos, "Global Attitudes towards Refugees," (Ipsos, 2019). Available at: <https://www.ipsos.com/sites/default/files/ct/news/documents/2019-06/World-Refugee-Day-2019-Ipsos.pdf>

Lithuanian had negative attitudes towards refugees,<sup>21</sup> albeit, actual reasons for these trends are not yet traced and chronicled. Laciak&Frelak underlined that the discourse of negative narratives about refugees in Poland has raised a skeptical attitude towards them. It resulted in a strong sense of alienation and fear among refugees from the local people.<sup>22</sup> Another study revealed the negative attitude of the Hungarian population towards refugees. A large group of participants perceived the Muslim refugees in particular as realistic and a symbolic threat.<sup>23</sup> Contrarily, Debraelet *al.* found the welcoming attitude of Flemish young people and adults towards immigrants and refugees.<sup>24</sup> Likewise, the attitude of young Canadians towards refugees remains positive as compared to the seniors.<sup>25</sup>

Bullard studied the attitudes of college students towards refugees in the United States. Participants were more tolerant of Jewish refugees, and female refugees, fleeing

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- 21 Vera Messing and Bence Ságvári, "Still Divided But More Open- Mapping European Attitudes Towards Migration Before And After The Migration Crisis," (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2019). Available at: <https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/?action=media.download&uuid=42E2EC1E-F1FA-AEAA-2EB5F33752962623>
- 22 Beata Laciak and Justyna SegesFrelak, "The Wages of Fear- Attitudes Towards Refugees and Migrant In Poland," (Foundation Institute of Public Affairs, 2018), Available at: [https://www.britishcouncil.pl/sites/default/files/attitudes\\_towards\\_migrants\\_p1.pdf](https://www.britishcouncil.pl/sites/default/files/attitudes_towards_migrants_p1.pdf)
- 23 Bori Simonovits, "The Public Perception of the Migration Crisis from the Hungarian Point of View: Evidence From the Field," in *Geographies of Asylum In Europe And The Role of European Localities* (Springer, 2019), 155-76, Available at: [https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-25666-1\\_8](https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-030-25666-1_8)
- 24 MarliesDebraelet *al.*, "Media Use, Fear of Terrorism, And Attitudes Towards Immigrants and Refugees: Young People and Adults Compared," *International Communication Gazette*, 2019, doi:10.1177/1748048519869476.
- 25 "Canadian Public Opinion about Immigration and Refugees," *Environics Institute for Survey Research*, 2019, Available at: [https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/focus-canada-spring-2019/environics-institute---focus-canada-spring-2019-survey-on-immigration-and-refugees---final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=8dd2597f\\_2](https://www.environicsinstitute.org/docs/default-source/project-documents/focus-canada-spring-2019/environics-institute---focus-canada-spring-2019-survey-on-immigration-and-refugees---final-report.pdf?sfvrsn=8dd2597f_2).

forced marriage and genital mutilation.<sup>26</sup> In another study, Aktas, *et al.* explored attitudes of Turkish university students towards Syrian refugees.<sup>27</sup> Although findings discovered the negative attitude of some male participants, others had a positive attitude towards refugees due to religious doctrine and patriotic perspectives. Also, Soriano and Cala unveiled positive attitudes and sensitivity of future European teachers (Spanish and French) towards refugees.<sup>28</sup>

Overall, previous studies have projected a growing trend of negative attitudes of citizens of the various host countries towards refugees mainly due to a sense of fear, the discourse of negative description, and uncertainty towards successful integration. Contrarily, a few other studies have highlighted the positive attitude of young people towards refugees. From an academic perspective, the preceded studies highlighted different factors that have shaped positive attitudes of academia towards refugees including cultural tolerance, pluralism, diversity, humanity, and intellectual openness. However, all studies had methodological and sampling limitations. Further, the studies were situated in different contexts. Therefore, findings cannot be generalized.

### **About the Sites**

Germany is one of the diverse and multicultural countries, having strong ties with global communities. It has been one of the strongest supporters, and the major recipients of refugees across Europe. According to one of the reports, "As of 1 October 2018, some 1,587 million refugees have

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26 Sarah M. Bullard, "Attitudes toward Refugees Entering the United States of America," (Honors Thesis, The University of Southern Mississippi, 2015).

27 VezirAktas, YelizKindapTepe and Roland S. Persson, "Investigating Turkish University Students' Attitudes Towards Refugees In a Time of Civil War in Neighboring Syria," *Current Psychology*(2018), doi:10.1007/s12144-018-9971-y

28 Encarnación Soriano and Verónica C. Cala, "What Attitudes Toward Refugees Do Future European Teachers Have? A Comparative Analysis Between France and Spain," *Sustainability*11, no. 11 (2019): 3066, doi:10.3390/su11113066



applied for asylum in Germany since 2015. Most of them have fled from Syria, Iraq, Afghanistan, Eritrea, and the Western-Balkans.”<sup>29</sup> In our perspective, the main elements that have encouraged refugees to enter Germany include economic integration, social inclusion, and policy interventions. One of the studies endorsed the preceded claim and highlighted financial stability, labor shortage, stable human rights condition, long-established network with relatives and acquaintances living in Germany, and admission prospects as factors that have reinforced refugees to shift to Germany.<sup>30</sup>

Pakistan has been helpful to refugees since independence. It has hosted refugees from Afghanistan during the Soviet-Afghan War in the late 1970s. According to the recent statistics, there are around 1.5 million registered Afghan refugees in Pakistan, with a majority of them living in the province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.<sup>31</sup> Although a good number of them have returned to their homeland under the voluntary repatriation programme, yet many still not ready to go back.

Studies on the perceptions of Pakistani and German people towards refugees are not well documented. One of the recent reports highlighted, “Most Germans do not have strong positive or negative views about refugees and other migrants, with 59 percent concerned about the negative externalities of immigration but also open to its potential economic benefits and supportive of the moral obligation to

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29 Germany, Land of Immigration Report from the Commission, “Report From the Commission- Perspectives for a Forward-Looking and Sustainable Refugee and Immigration Policy,” (Heinrich Böll Foundation, 2018). Available: [https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/epaper\\_\\_germany\\_land\\_of\\_\\_immigration\\_1.pdf](https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/epaper__germany_land_of__immigration_1.pdf)

30 Jochen Oltmer, “Germany and Global Refugees: A History of the Present- Cesifo DICE Report 4/2016,” 2016, <https://www.cesifo.org/DocDL/dice-report-2016-4-oltmer-december.pdf>

31 The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, “Figures at a Glance,” (UNHCR, 2020), Available at: <https://www.unhcr.org/figures-at-a-glance.html>

protect refugees.”<sup>32</sup> There is a growing perception of the threat associated with refugee arrival. One of the findings of the German social survey revealed, "Refugees are perceived less positively than European Union immigrants and the origin of this negative perception mainly lies in increased feelings of threat."<sup>33</sup> Another survey underlined that although many Germans are in favour of acknowledging refugees in Germany, a good number of them still associate their influx with more risks. They are of the view that refugees should be sent back home, once their reason for living no longer pertains.<sup>34</sup>

In recent years, the attitude of the Pakistani population towards Afghan refugees has witnessed frictions.<sup>35</sup> One of the reports underlined, "As a result of growing insecurity, the perception of residents about Afghan refugees is becoming worse day by day blaming them for militant attacks."<sup>36</sup> Researchers are of the view that insights from university students can give a glimpse of young people's attitudes towards refugees that can stimulate policymakers and organizations to bridge the gaps through contextual interventions.

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32 Irina Mosel *et al.*, "Public Narratives and Attitudes Towards Refugees and Other Migrants Germany Country Profile," (Overseas Development Institute, 2019). Available at: <https://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/resource-documents/12970.pdf>

33 Nadine Meidert and Carolin Rapp, "Public Attitudes towards Refugees in Germany: What Drives Attitudes Towards Refugees in Comparison With Immigrant Workers From European Union Countries?," *Journal Of Refugee Studies* 32, no. 1 (2019): 209, doi:10.1093/jrs/fez046

34 Jürgen Gerhards, Silke Hans and Jürgen Schupp, "German Public Opinion on Admitting Refugees," *DIW Economic Bulletin* 6, no. 21 (2016): 243-249. Available: [https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw\\_01.c.534664.de/diw\\_econ\\_bull\\_2016-21-1.pdf](https://www.diw.de/documents/publikationen/73/diw_01.c.534664.de/diw_econ_bull_2016-21-1.pdf)

35 European Asylum Support Office, "Pakistan Situation of Afghan Refugees," (European Asylum Support Office, 2020). Available at: <https://easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/easo-coi-report-pakistan-situation-afghan-refugees.pdf>

36 Hina Tabassum, "The Fate of Afghan Refugees in Pakistan," 2014, Available: [http://www.aprrn.info/1/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2014/08/Par\\_on\\_Afghan\\_Refugees\\_in\\_Pakistan\\_Hina.pdf](http://www.aprrn.info/1/wordpress/wpcontent/uploads/2014/08/Par_on_Afghan_Refugees_in_Pakistan_Hina.pdf)

## **Research Design**

Multi-method i.e., qualitative survey and naturalistic observation are used as a research approach. We chose two universities — one from Karachi and another from Berlin under set criteria, i.e., oldest universities and high enrolment ratio. Using the snowball-sampling technique, 30 postgraduate students were chosen from the Humboldt University of Berlin and the University of Karachi. From Karachi, seven participants were males, while eight were females. Comparing that with the participants in Berlin, nine females and four were males, while two preferred not to disclose gender identity. This research study did not focus on analyzing the perceptions based on gender, rather represents equitable gender participation.

Data is gathered from semi-structured interviews parallel with observations in a public setting to gain reliable insights (for a month). Interview questions were validated through construct validity. The interview questionnaire was piloted with some potential participants beforehand, while the trustworthiness was established through the expert's opinion. There were a few limitations like privacy issues. There was a possibility that the German participants might feel hesitant to express their views due to the language barrier. To bridge the gap, an open-ended questionnaire in the German Language was provided. Data is analyzed using thematic analysis via inductive approach, appended with discussion.

## **Data Analysis**

We collected data from the participants during June and July 2019. Thirty potential participants from the Humboldt University of Berlin and the University of Karachi were located through referral. These participants signed an informed consent form, that was framed with the support of British Educational Research Association's (BERA) Ethical Guidelines. All 15 Pakistani participants participated in the interview. Each interview lasted for 30 minutes. However, five German participants opted for an open-ended

questionnaire (with similar questions) because of language obstacles. Initially, interviews were transcribed and responses were translated from the open-ended questionnaire. To establish validity and credibility, participants checked the transcripts.

### **Humanitarian Assistance through the Lens of Policies and Cultural Obligations**

We asked participants if accepting refugees is a test of their character as a nation? A good number of German participants disagreed. They highlighted that although their country has supported refugees resettlement as a humanitarian aid under basic law, yet purpose was not to seek affiliation. One of the participants expressed, "The rights of refugees are recognized in Germany. We have supported them to avoid persecutions in their homeland, but we do not want to prove anything to the world."

Another participant seconded, "We, the youth understand that refugees entry is helpful for our labor market, but I don't think it is a test of character, because it is not an experiment. People flee from war or torture, and we should not forget."

Most of the participants articulated that their integration is beneficial for German society. However, three participants exhibited a few reservations. From the data, we comprehended that participants neither sought affiliation nor wanted to show the world how humanitarian they were, rather, most of them supported the decision of their country with a few exceptions.

Historically, refugees are protected under Article 16a of the Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>37</sup> It grants asylum to victims of political persecution. During the 1950s, around 69 million people lived in Germany. Two-thirds of

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37 Herbert Bruckerm, Philipp Jaschke and Yuliya Kosyakova, "Integration Refugees and Asylum Seekers into the German Economy and Society- Empirical Evidence and Policy Objectives," (Migration Policy Institute, 2019).

Available: [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/TCM\\_2019\\_Germany-FINAL.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/TCM_2019_Germany-FINAL.pdf)

them had personally experienced forced displacement and witnessed persecution during and after the Second World War.<sup>38</sup> With the amalgamation of the preceded data and the views expressed by the participants, we understand that the country considers supporting refugees as a historical and humanitarian obligation.

Contrarily, most of the Pakistani participants stated that humanitarian assistance was deeply rooted in their cultural values, and that, it was a test of their character as a nation to support refugees. They wanted to show solidarity with refugees to build a positive image of Pakistan. One of the participants expressed, "Our culture strongly supports refugees. We as a nation accept every Muslim brother and sister with open arms. We are being taught to give more preference to others over ourselves. It is a test, and if we pass, we shall get a reward in the life hereafter."

Another participant shared similar viewpoints, "Pakistan believes in pluralism, diversity, and inclusivity. Refugees are our brothers and sisters. We are ready to sacrifice our lives for their well-being. There is no harm to show our cultural traits to the world. It will open up more opportunities for both." Two participants stated that Pakistan's global image is being fabricated by some opponents that can be overturned by sharing our values with the world. One of them believed, "We are not the followers of radical ideologies rather supporters of humanity. We have always opened up our doors for Muslim refugees. Our good moral practices and acceptance can build our positive image." At one end, Pakistani participants seek affiliation and consider accepting refugees as their cultural obligations, a test of their character, and an opportunity to portray a positive image to the world, whereas German participants support refugees on historical and humanitarian grounds.

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38 Ludger Pries, *Refugees, Civil Society and the State: European Experiences and Global Challenges* (Northampton: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2018).

## Challenges

In recent years, German society has faced refugee crises. One of the biggest challenges for refugees is their social integration into German society.<sup>39</sup> Recent report featured that although refugees have filled some labour market gaps that have resulted in Germany's economic growth, financial burden and lack of social and cultural integration among refugees has spurred multiple challenges.<sup>40</sup> Whereas, some of the key challenges faced by refugees in Pakistan include lack of facilities for education, healthcare, and repatriation.<sup>41</sup> When asked participants if refugees create problems in their society, the following three challenges were noticed:

### Administrative Challenges

Mostly, German participants expressed that refugees do not create complications; rather organizational and administrative problems such as lack of preparedness of the authorities to accommodate refugees is the key obstacle. One of the participants shared, "There are organizational problems here, which are not caused by the refugees personally, but because German authorities are not prepared. In general, refugees are not creating problems, but the view is different." Bock<sup>42</sup> and Ayoub<sup>43</sup> seconded.

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39 Sabrina Juran and P. Niclas Broer, "A Profile of Germany's Refugee Populations," *Population and Development Review* 43, no. 1 (2017), 149-157, doi:10.1111/padr.12042. See also, OECD, "Finding Their Way- Labour Market Integration of Refugees in Germany," (OECD, 2017). Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/els/mig/Finding-their-Way-Germany.pdf>

40 Nora Jasmin Ragab and Lina Antara, "Political Participation of Refugees- The Case of Afghan and Syrian Refugees in Germany," *International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance*, (2018). Available at: <https://www.idea.int/sites/default/files/publications/political-participation-of-refugees-the-case-of-afghan-and-syrian-refugees-in-germany.pdf>

41 European Asylum Support Office, "Pakistan Situation of Afghan Refugees," (European Asylum Support Office, 2020). Available at: <https://easo.europa.eu/sites/default/files/publications/easo-coi-report-pakistan-situation-afghan-refugees.pdf>

42 Jan-Jonathan Bock, "State Failure, Polarisation, and Minority Engagement in Germany's Refugee Crisis," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and*

Failure of state institutions, gaps in public administration, social polarization, chaos, and lack of planning among the federal government and national, regional, and local authorities, and the absence of concrete policy interventions are the major challenges that have surged refugees' crises. Comparing these issues with participants' viewpoints, we comprehend that most of the refugees are experiencing difficulties in Germany from the administrative side.

Some participants highlighted that the presence of refugees in Germany has cracked a few local problems. One of the participants opined, "It is true that most of the refugees are not creating problems for us. Rather, they are supporting us in many ways. For example, German society is getting older and needs people to fill in the labor market. These refugees are working to fit in our socio-economic system."

Pakistani participants expressed similar views. They think that refugees are not causing distress for their country's people. They are socio-culturally integrated into society. However, problems mainly arise because of a lack of concrete interventions by the government to support refugees. Contrarily to this, three participants lamented that the arrival of refugees has affected the local economy and raised unemployment issues for the locals. Participant expressed, "Refugees are hardworking, but the government has failed to create employment opportunities for locals and refugees. Due to their bustling presence, we fear a rise in unemployment." Another participant stated that the failure of state functionaries has surged the refugees' crisis. He said, "The main challenges are from the government side. It has failed to provide quality education, healthcare facilities, and nationality to the refugees. Refugees seek opportunities to accommodate themselves into our society. They only

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*Society* 31, no. 1 (2018): 375–396. Available at: <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10767-018-9288-8>

- 43 Maysa Abbas Ayoub, "Understanding Germany's Response to the 2015 Refugee Crisis," *Review of Economics and Political Science* (2019), <https://doi.org/10.1108/REPS-03-2019-0024>

participate in violent activities when their rights are compromised.”

Pakistan has been facing administrative challenges for decades due to political instability, poor economic condition, and inconsistent policies for refugees. Reports on the National Consultations on Afghan Refugees in Pakistan underline, “The absence of a comprehensive legal and administrative policy governing the issue of refugees is detrimental to Pakistan on many fronts, from security and broader management to the regulation of labor and migration.”<sup>44</sup> Overall, the administrative challenges have caused major glitches for refugees at both sides. In Germany, refugees have supported the labor market, on the contrary, they have contracted employment opportunities for the citizens of Pakistan.

### **Cultural Resistance**

One of the major challenges identified by the German participants includes cultural resistance. A few participants shared that limited cultural exposure and lack of openness have caused multifaceted problems, both for the people of the host country and for the refugees. One of the participants disclosed, “The biggest problem lies in understanding our culture. Young refugees sometimes show resistance to sociocultural integration. Many young people are engaged in mono-cultural practices. A few of them disrespect multicultural practices. It hurts our sentiments...”

Another participant shared, “We are friendly with refugees, but a few refugees expect us to change our social and cultural practices, and that is impossible.” One other participant expressed a similar viewpoint, “We respect other cultures and expect the same from them. If they have taken refuge in Germany, they should respect and follow the rules and adjust to our culture.” These viewpoints highlight the

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44 Cursor of Development and Education Pakistan, “Report- National Consultations on Afghan Refugees in Pakistan,” (CODE, 2017). Available at: [www.codepak.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NCAR-Report-Final.pdf](http://www.codepak.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/NCAR-Report-Final.pdf)



strong affiliation of German participants towards personal and national than relational identities.

Under the Immigration Act of 2005, the German government offers integration classes to refugees for their smooth cultural transition such as learning the German language. However, the views expressed by the participants highlight gaps between ideas and realities. Germany is quite an open society with equal treatment of gender, race, religion, sexual orientation etc. However, it is very different from countries, where the refugees come from. Therefore, the lack of cultural acceptance from either side could be the reason for resistance. A few participants expressed that a lack of cultural adaptability by the refugees could have raised multifarious challenges. One of the participants highlighted, "Lack of cultural integration and identity crises among refugees as well as the unsupportive attitude of some people of the host countries have emerged two facet resistances, and have surged refugee crises."

Another participant acknowledged the strong association of young people to their national and cultural identity, whereas divergence from others cultural identities. One of the participants elaborated, "If a German is criminal, for example, it seems normal, but if a refugee is, people here see it as being ungrateful. Problems can be caused when people from other cultures stick to their point of view." One of the reports underlined a lack of shared socio-cultural identity as the reason that has elevated issues among refugees and the host countries.<sup>45</sup>

The amalgamation of the previous literature, views expressed by the participants, and our personal experiences depict that although resettlement and the provision of basic facilities remain the most prioritized agenda of global

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45 Herbert Bruckerm, Philipp Jaschke and Yuliya Kosyakova, "Integrating Refugees and Asylum Seekers into the German Economy and Society: Empirical Evidence and Policy Objectives," (Migration Policy Institute, 2019). Available at: <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/integrating-refugees-asylum-seekers-germany>

supporting communities; the challenges that have been confronted by refugees and hosts reflect on the pressing need of shaping the positive attitude of host people and refugees towards multiculturalism.

Engler underlined that there is a prevalence of ambivalent social attitudes towards refugees. On one hand, people consider their inclusion as positive, while on the other, there are civic movements against refugees. However, participants shared that the involvement of a few political groups has created clashes between locals and the refugees in Germany.<sup>46</sup> Pakistani participants do not reflect cultural integration as a challenge. Afghan refugees share common cultural traits with Pakistan, yet social integration remains a test due to lurking factors including political schemas and lack of policy interventions. It is interesting to underline that almost all the refugees in Pakistan share similar socio-cultural ties with Pakistan. Therefore, it is stimulating to investigate, if they are willing to accept refugees belonging to the other cultural background. Exploring this area can open up avenues for future research.

Overall, German youth are open to different cultures and have no major reservations towards refugees, however, participants consider a lack of cultural integration of refugees and divergence of host people from other cultures as the major challenges that have created multiple problems in their country.

### **Violence and Intolerance**

Participants highlighted the upsurge of violence and intolerance at both sites. Most of the German participants are of the view that violence is linked to a lack of social and cultural integration of refugees into German society. One of the participants expressed, "Many young refugees in Germany have already suffered from violent crimes and

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46 Marcus Engler, "Germany in the Refugee Crisis – Background, Reactions and Challenges," (Heinrich Boll Stiftung, 2016). Available at: <https://pl.boell.org/en/2016/04/22/germany-refugee-crisis-background-reactions-and-challenges>

abuses in their countries. When they take refuge in Germany, their interaction with a liberal culture often results in a clash between local and global ideologies." Another participant elaborated that when the refugees, particularly those belonging to the Muslim culture, look at others' cultural identity and social practices; they get a cultural shock. Many of them have gradually integrated themselves into German society; however, it still is a challenging task for many to accept multicultural practices. It sometimes stimulates them to participate in violent crimes and radicalized activities to upsurge cultural clashes. One of the participants shared, "Young refugees should have an openness towards German culture. If any of our social or cultural practices are not in line with their practices, for example marrying a same-sex person, they should respect rather than criticize us."

Empirical findings of one of the reports highlighted that the second generation is more integrative to German culture, "...differences seem to diminish when we consider the second generation. This indicates greater adaptation to German norms and habits and thus better cultural, socio-economic, and political integration of second-generation immigrants in Germany."<sup>47</sup> However, this claim is partly conflicting with the ideas expressed by the participants.

One of the news featured that violence in Germany is not only instigated by refugees but also by the host people.<sup>48</sup> Most of the participants pointed out that in recent times, attacks have been made on refugee camps by some politically motivated groups to create a clash between locals and refugees. One of the participants confessed, "Some refugees are the victim of violence in Germany, but this violence is not erupted by young educated German. The

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47 Amelie F. Constant, Olga Nottmeyer and Klaus F. Zimmermann, "Cultural Integration in Germany," *Discussion Paper* no. 4675 (IZA, 2009):1. Available at: <http://www.ftp.iza.org/dp4675.pdf>

48 "Germany: Over 600 Attacks on Refugees in First Half of 2019," (DW, 2019). Available: <https://www.dw.com/en/germany-over-600-attacks-on-refugees-in-first-half-of-2019/a-50296504>

violent attacks that took place in the refugee camps in past were politically motivated. Refugees think that we, the local people committed these attacks to expel refugees. In return, for confusion, young refugees reiterate the same to create terror.”

Recently, Pakistan has witnessed the participation of refugees in extreme violent crimes and terrorist activities. The report highlighted, “Pakistani leaders are concerned about signs of growing friction between the refugees and Pakistani and law and order problems involving Afghans... The increasing numbers of aerial bombings and sabotage attacks have been blamed on the presence of the refugees.”<sup>49</sup> All the participants agreed that violence has swelled in Pakistan because of Afghan refugees. Cultural, rather than political clashes have inclined many young refugees to join the militants. One of the participants said, “Many refugees lack social amalgamation because they lack basic rights in Pakistan. They are longing for opportunities, but their participation in educational, economic, and political activities is thin due to weak political interventions. In consequence, they fight for their rights through violent acts and criminal activities.”

Another participant expressed, “When refugees compare their state with the condition of the locals, they feel discriminated. Similarly, when they strive to progress, but policies hinder supporting them, it results in resentment. However, they should realize that their participation in violent crimes is for self-interest, and that has created gaps between locals and refugees.” From previous studies, participants’ viewpoints, and our personal experiences, we settle that violence and intolerance are politically and culturally driven among refugees in Germany, whereas it is politically persuaded in Pakistan. Overall, problems that have

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49 Directorate of Intelligence CIA, “Pakistan: Coping with Afghan Refugees,” (undated), 3. Available: <https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/CIA-RDP88T00096R000600770001-2.pdf>

emerged because of refugees' influx are of sociocultural and political nature.

We also carried out personal observations within the university premises for two months and had an opportunity to have informal discussions with a few people. Most of them excluded the idea that refugees are triggering complications in their countries. A good number of Pakistani people have witnessed economic problems followed by law and order issues, whereas most of the German people have seen cultural integration problems trailed by law and order situations, as the main difficulties that have emerged due to the influx of refugees. Pakistani people are in support of giving citizenship to the children born as a refugee, however, Germans are of the view that it should still be an act of one's own volition combined with support from the government. Fears of violence, intolerance, radicalization and rising unemployment are accounted as long-term consequences of massive refugee intake by Pakistan and Germany.

### **Conclusion**

The continuum of challenges remains unending for refugees and the host countries. These challenges are intertwined by the situational circumstances, and the resistances at both ends i.e., refugees and people of the host country. However, the nature of confrontations varies and is situated in context. Pakistani participants have a strong affiliation with their culture, whereas, German participants have more inclination towards personal and national identities. These have played a significant role in shaping their perceptions about refugees.

Refugees in Pakistan and Germany are prone to violence, intolerance, and radicalization largely due to previous exposure to war and violence. Therefore, to lessen the risk of radicalization, the host countries should allow refugees to get settled and provide them with the space for social integration. At the same time, refugees need to understand the socio-economic and cultural elements of the migrant country, embrace multiculturalism, and play an effective role in supporting the migrant country in all possible ways. The current global refugee crisis has put global societies to the litmus test

of tolerance, pluralism, and diversity. The same applies to the refugees towards the host people.

Lack of wider acceptance from the host people and interactions could be one of the barriers to their integration. Interventions to support refugees towards assimilation and integration into different cultures, and intervention to shape the positive attitude of people of the host countries towards accepting refugees remains a pertinent task. In the absence of policy interventions and the positive attitude of Pakistani and German people towards refugees, the preceded prediction is ominous for humanity. The attitudinal climate that has been confronted by refugees and host people should be addressed.