

Working Paper

ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT AND SOCIOECONOMIC INTEGRATION OF REFUGEE WOMEN IN PAKISTAN

Said Farooq Shah
Muhammad Iqbal



**Socio-economic Integration and Economic Empowerment of Afghan Refugee Women: A Case
Study of refugee women living in Peshawar**

Dr. Said Farooq Shah and Dr. Muhammad Iqbal

Population Research Center, Department of Statistics, UoP, Peshawar

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Table of Contents

Abstract	3
1. Introduction.....	4
1.1 Background.....	4
1.2 Socioeconomic Integration of Refugee Women.....	4
1.3 Cultural Norms and Gender Dynamics	5
1.4 Role of Local Organizations and Policy Interventions.....	6
2. Significance of the study	7
3. Aim and Objectives	8
4. Methodology	9
4.1 Population Stratification.....	9
4.2 Sampling and Fieldwork.....	9
4.3 Data Analysis.....	9
5. Results and Discussion	10
5.1 Sample Description	10
5.2 Education.....	10
5.2.1 <i>Barriers to Education</i>	10
5.2.2 <i>Statistical Impact of Barriers on Education</i>	12
5.3 Employment.....	14
5.3.1 <i>Employment Opportunities and Policy Initiatives for Refugee Women</i>	15
5.3.2 <i>Challenges and Support Mechanisms for Refugee Women’s Employment</i>	16
6. Conclusion and Recommendation.....	20
6.1 Conclusion	20
6.2 Recommendations.....	20
References.....	22

Abstract

This study examines the socioeconomic integration and economic empowerment of refugee women in Pakistan, with a particular focus on the barriers they face in accessing education and employment opportunities. Using a quantitative approach, the study investigates key challenges affecting refugee women's access to education, drawing on multinomial logistic regression and descriptive statistics. The analysis identifies significant barriers, including cultural, emotional, physical, financial, and gender-based factors that impede educational attainment. Language barriers, in particular, stand out as a critical obstacle, as many refugee women struggle with differing dialects and unfamiliarity with the language of instruction.

In the realm of employment, cross-tabulation and tests of associations reveals that refugee women face discrimination, insufficient vocational training, restrictive cultural norms, and limited access to governmental and non-governmental support. Despite these challenges, entrepreneurship is widely seen as a viable pathway to economic empowerment, especially in sectors such as tailoring, and handicrafts work.

There is a need for comprehensive policy interventions to reduce educational barriers, enhance recruitment policies, expand vocational training, and address gender-based discrimination. Strengthening collaboration between NGOs and government organizations is crucial to bridging gaps in resources and services. Recommendations include promoting awareness of available support mechanisms and fostering data-driven policy approaches to improve the socioeconomic inclusion of refugee women in Pakistan.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Refugee crises are global phenomena that have profound impacts on both displaced populations and host countries. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide has reached unprecedented levels, with women and children constituting a significant portion of these populations. Refugee women, in particular, face multifaceted challenges that hinder their socioeconomic integration in host countries. In Pakistan, which hosts one of the largest Afghan refugee populations globally, refugee women encounter substantial barriers to education, employment, and social services, further exacerbated by cultural norms and gender dynamics.

Several studies have examined the challenges and opportunities associated with the socioeconomic integration of refugee women. Freedman (2016) highlights the importance of education and employment in empowering refugee women and facilitating their integration into host societies. Similarly, Krause (2015) discusses the role of cultural norms and gender dynamics in shaping the experiences of refugee women, emphasizing the need for gender-sensitive policies and programs.

In the context of Pakistan, a report by UNHCR (2019) underscores the significant barriers faced by Afghan refugee women, including limited access to education and employment, as well as the impact of cultural norms on their ability to integrate. The report calls for targeted interventions to address these challenges and to support the empowerment of refugee women.

Another relevant study by Abbasi-Shavazi et al. (2012) found that housing, health, and education facilities, as well as employment opportunities in Iran, encouraged Afghan households to remain, while the perceived absence of these facilities and insecurity in Afghanistan discouraged their return.

1.2 Socioeconomic Integration of Refugee Women

Socioeconomic integration is crucial for ensuring that refugees, especially women, can rebuild their lives and contribute meaningfully to their host communities (UNHCR, 2020a). Integration encompasses access to education, employment opportunities, healthcare, and social services (UNHCR, 2020b). However, refugee women often face compounded barriers, including discrimination, legal restrictions, language barriers, and gender-based violence, which limit their ability to integrate successfully (UNHCR, 2015).

Access to education is a key determinant of socioeconomic integration (UNESCO, 2019). Education not only empowers refugee women by providing them with the skills and knowledge necessary for employment, but it also enhances their ability to navigate and contribute to their host societies (UNHCR, 2016). Despite this, many refugee women in Pakistan face significant obstacles to accessing education, such as physical distance from educational institutions, cultural norms that prioritize domestic roles for women, and financial constraints (Human Rights Watch, 2017).

Employment is another critical area of focus. For refugee women, securing employment is not only a means of economic survival but also a pathway to independence and a sense of belonging in their host country (UNHCR, 2020c). However, employment opportunities for refugee women in Pakistan are often limited to low-paying, informal jobs, with little protection or job security (ILO, 2018). This situation is exacerbated by discrimination in the labor market, lack of access to vocational training, and the prevalence of gender-based violence (IRC, 2020).

1.3 Cultural Norms and Gender Dynamics

Cultural norms and gender dynamics play a significant role in shaping the experiences of refugee women in Pakistan. Traditional gender roles, which often confine women to domestic spheres, can limit their participation in education and employment (Khan et al., 2024). Furthermore, cultural norms may dictate that women should not work outside the home or engage with public institutions, creating additional barriers to socioeconomic integration. This study also highlighted that gender-based violence is a pervasive issue that further marginalizes refugee women. Research indicates that refugee women are at a higher risk of experiencing violence, both within their households and in the broader community (Khan et al., 2024). This violence can take various forms, including physical, emotional, and sexual abuse, and often goes unreported due to fear of stigma or lack of legal recourse (Khan et al., 2024).

1.4 Role of Local Organizations and Policy Interventions

Local organizations, including non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community-based groups, play a crucial role in supporting the integration of refugee women. These organizations provide essential services, such as legal aid, vocational training, and healthcare, and advocate for policy changes that promote the rights of refugee women (UN Women, 2023). However, the effectiveness of these organizations is often limited by resource constraints and the complex political environment in which they operate (UN Women, 2023).

Policy interventions are necessary to address the barriers faced by refugee women and to promote their socioeconomic integration. Effective policies should focus on improving access to education and employment, protecting refugee women from gender-based violence, and challenging harmful cultural norms (UN Women, 2023). Additionally, there is a need for more inclusive policies that recognize the specific needs and rights of refugee women, ensuring that they can participate fully in society (UN Women, 2023).

2. Significance of the study

The significance of this study lies in its contribution to both academic knowledge and practical policy-making. This research addresses a critical gap in the literature by focusing specifically on the unique challenges faced by refugee women in Peshawar, a region that hosts a significant portion of the Afghan refugee population in Pakistan. Unlike broader studies on refugee populations, this research zeroes in on the experiences of women living within local communities, providing insights that are both contextually relevant and urgently needed.

One of the primary contributions of this study is its ability to inform policy and practice. By examining the barriers to education, and employment, the study provides evidence-based recommendations that can guide policy interventions aimed at improving the socioeconomic conditions of refugee women. The findings highlight the importance of gender-sensitive approaches and the need for targeted policies that address the specific challenges faced by these women. Moreover, the study underscores the role of the government and NGOs in supporting refugee women.

In addition, this study draws a sufficient sample from the refugee women living within local communities in Peshawar, ensuring that the findings are both representative and relevant to the specific context. Given that there is no specially designed study available in the literature focusing on the refugee women in Peshawar, this research fills a significant void and provides a foundation for future studies in this area. The insights gained from this study are not only valuable for understanding the experiences of refugee women in Peshawar but also for informing broader efforts to support refugee populations in similar contexts.

3. Aim and Objectives

The aim is to examine the barriers and opportunities for the socioeconomic integration of refugee women in Pakistan, with a particular focus on education, employment, and the role of cultural norms and gender dynamics. The objectives are:

- Assess access to education and employment opportunities for refugee women
- Understand the influence of cultural norms and gender dynamics on refugee women's economic empowerment
- Analyze the effectiveness of government and non-governmental organizations in supporting refugee women
- Develop policy recommendations to improve the integration and empowerment of refugee women in Pakistan.

4. Methodology

4.1 Population Stratification

The population was stratified into two main groups: local communities and refugees. The refugee stratum was further divided into those living with local communities and those residing in refugee villages. This stratification aimed to capture the diverse experiences of refugee women in different living environments.

4.2 Sampling and Fieldwork

A non-probability sample of 50 refugee women living with local communities was selected. A team of seven trained enumerators conducted face-to-face interviews using structured questionnaires.

4.3 Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using various statistical tools in R Studio. Key analyses included Chi-square tests, multinomial logistic regression, and binary logistic regression, focusing on understanding the impact of different barriers on education, and employment.

5. Results and Discussion

5.1 Sample Description

The sample for this study consists of a diverse group of refugee women residing in Peshawar with the local communities. The majority of the participants are Pashtun (39), followed by a smaller representation of Parsiban/Dari speakers (6), Tajik (3), and Hindko speakers (2). The sample spans a wide age range, with the largest age group being 35-44 years (16 participants), followed by 25-34 years (15 participants). Other age groups include 18-24 years (6 participants), 45-54 years (8 participants), under 18 years (4 participants), and 55 and above (1 participant).

Marital status also varies among the respondents, with 24 women being married, 18 single, 4 engaged but not married, 3 divorced, and 1 widowed. Employment status highlights a significant challenge, as a majority of the women are unemployed (27), while only 9 are employed. Additionally, the sample includes 8 students, 2 shopkeepers, 2 construction workers/home makers, and 2 participants categorized as 'Other.' None of the respondents are retired.

Income distribution shows that a considerable portion of the participants fall within the low-income bracket (18), followed by those in the middle-income category (17). A smaller number of women are below the poverty line (4) or in the high-income group (4). This demographic data provides a comprehensive overview of the challenges faced by refugee women in terms of employment and income, which are critical factors influencing their integration and access to resources in Pakistan.

5.2 Education

5.2.1 Barriers to Education

Table 1 provides the frequency and percentages of education-related barriers faced by refugee women in Peshawar. This reveals a complex array of challenges that significantly impact their access to educational opportunities. These barriers, as identified in the table, reflect the multifaceted nature of the obstacles that refugee women encounter in their pursuit of education.

The most prevalent barrier is the Language Barrier, which was reported by 30 respondents, accounting for 29.70% of the total sample. Language proficiency is a critical factor in accessing education, particularly in a host country where the language of instruction may differ from the refugees' native languages. This barrier not only hinders academic performance but also affects the ability to integrate socially and access other services. Although most of the sampled women are Pashtun, the language of instruction in academic institutions in Peshawar is either Urdu or English. Moreover, the Pashto dialects spoken by the migrant women differ from those of the local Pashto-speaking population that is hosting the refugees.

Financial Barriers represent another significant challenge, with 22 participants (21.78%) citing it as an impediment to education. The economic constraints faced by refugee families often mean that education becomes a lower priority compared to basic survival needs. The costs associated with

schooling, such as tuition fees, books, and transportation, can be prohibitive, leading to high dropout rates or preventing enrollment altogether.

Cultural Barriers, identified by 20 respondents (19.80%), highlight the influence of traditional norms and values that may discourage or restrict women's participation in education. In some cases, these barriers are rooted in patriarchal systems where the education of women is not prioritized or is deemed unnecessary. This cultural resistance to women's education can be particularly strong in conservative communities, further limiting educational access.

Emotional Barriers were reported by 7 respondents (6.93%). These barriers can include psychological stress, trauma from displacement, and the emotional toll of adjusting to a new environment. Emotional challenges can lead to a lack of motivation, anxiety, and depression, all of which can severely impact a woman's ability to engage in educational activities.

Physical Barriers and Security/Safety Barriers, each cited by 5 respondents (4.95%), underscore the difficulties related to the physical accessibility of educational institutions and concerns about personal safety. For refugee women, accessing schools or universities may involve long and potentially dangerous commutes, especially in areas where public transport is inadequate or where there are concerns about harassment or violence.

Social Barriers, identified by 4 participants (3.96%), reflect the social stigma and discrimination that refugee women might face within educational settings. These barriers can include negative attitudes from peers or educators, which can discourage continued participation in education.

Gender Barriers and Other Barriers, each reported by 3 respondents (2.97%), highlight issues related to gender discrimination and other unspecified challenges that were significant enough to impede access to education. Gender barriers often intersect with other forms of discrimination, further compounding the difficulties faced by refugee women.

Finally, Religious Barriers, identified by 2 respondents (1.98%), point to the role of religious beliefs or practices that may conflict with educational participation. In some cases, religious restrictions may dictate that women should not attend school beyond a certain age or may require separate educational facilities, which might not be available.

Overall, the frequency and diversity of these barriers indicate that addressing educational access for refugee women requires a comprehensive approach that takes into account the linguistic, financial, cultural, emotional, and physical challenges they face. Targeted interventions that provide language support, financial assistance, cultural sensitization programs, and safe, accessible educational environments are essential to overcoming these barriers and ensuring that refugee women can fully participate in educational opportunities in Pakistan.

Table 1: Frequencies and Percentages of Education-Related Barriers.

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Any Other Barrier	3	2.970297

Barrier	Frequency	Percentage
Cultural Barrier	20	19.801980
Emotional Barrier	7	6.930693
Financial Barrier1	22	21.782178
Gender Barrier	3	2.970297
Language Barrier	30	29.702970
Physical Barrier	5	4.950495
Religious Barrier	2	1.980198
Security Safety Barrier	5	4.950495
Social Barrier	4	3.960396

5.2.2 Statistical Impact of Barriers on Education

To evaluate the impact of various barriers on the educational attainment of refugee women, a multinomial logistic regression analysis was conducted. The model, Table 2, assessed the likelihood of being in three different education levels-Primary, Secondary, and Higher-compared to a base category of "No formal education." The barriers examined included physical, emotional, gender, security/safety, social, and religious barriers. The resulting estimates and p-values (shown in parentheses) provided insights into the significance of these barriers in determining the educational outcomes of refugee women.

Impact on Primary Education:

Physical Barrier: The regression analysis indicates a highly significant negative impact of physical barriers on the likelihood of attaining primary education. With an estimate of -31.78 (p-value < 0.001), it is evident that physical barriers greatly reduce the chances of being in primary education compared to having no formal education.

Security/Safety Barrier: Similar to the physical barrier, the security/safety barrier also shows a significant negative effect with an estimate of -31.81 (p-value < 0.001). This suggests that concerns about security and safety critically hinder access to primary education.

Social Barrier: The social barrier is another significant factor, with an estimate of -28.81 (p-value < 0.001), indicating that social constraints heavily restrict refugee women from pursuing primary education.

Religious Barrier: Interestingly, the religious barrier has a positive estimate of 13.51 (p-value < 0.001), which suggests that, in some contexts, religious considerations might actually increase the likelihood of attending primary education compared to not having any formal education at all.

Impact on Secondary Education:

Social Barrier: The analysis shows that social barriers continue to be a significant negative factor for secondary education, with an estimate of -26.60 (p-value < 0.001). This indicates that social obstacles remain a persistent issue as refugee women progress in their education.

Religious Barrier: The religious barrier also presents a negative estimate of -8.49 (p-value < 0.001) for secondary education, which contrasts with its positive influence on primary education. This shift might reflect differing roles of religion in early versus later stages of education.

Impact on Higher Education

Physical Barrier: In higher education, physical barriers again demonstrate a highly significant negative impact, with an estimate of -30.52 (p-value < 0.001). This emphasizes the continued and severe hindrance physical barriers pose throughout the educational journey.

Gender Barrier: Gender barriers, which were less significant in primary and secondary education, become highly significant in higher education, with an estimate of -27.90 (p-value < 0.001). This underscores the increased impact of gender-related obstacles as refugee women attempt to achieve higher levels of education.

Religious Barrier: The religious barrier shows a positive estimate of 13.73 (p-value < 0.001) for higher education, similar to its effect on primary education. This finding may reflect the complex role of religion in motivating or enabling access to education at advanced levels, possibly due to religious institutions offering educational opportunities that may not be available elsewhere.

Table 2: Multinomial Logistic Regression Results for testing the statistical significance of barriers on educations.

	Primary	Secondary	Higher
(Intercept)	1.61 (0.04)	0.69 (0.42)	1.39 (0.08)
Physical Barrier	-31.78 (0.00)	-1.10 (0.38)	-30.52 (0.00)
Emotional Barrier	-1.61 (0.20)	-0.69 (0.60)	-2.08 (0.15)
Gender Barrier	-1.61 (0.32)	-0.69 (0.68)	-27.90 (0.00)
Security and Safety Barrier	-31.81 (0.00)	-1.79 (0.21)	-2.48 (0.08)
Social Barrier	-28.81 (0.00)	-26.60 (0.00)	-0.29 (0.84)

	Primary	Secondary	Higher
Religious Barrier	13.51	-8.49	13.73
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)

5.3 Employment

As evident from the literature employment opportunities for refugee women are a crucial aspect of their economic empowerment and integration into host communities. The analysis provided by the survey reveals both the availability of various employment types and the associated factors.

From the data, it is evident that 70% of the respondents believe that employment opportunities are readily available to refugee women. This optimistic perspective is reinforced by the variety of jobs identified as accessible. However, when the available type of employment opportunities were asked then these were not from the formal sector. The bar plot, Figure 2, highlights the most common types of employment:

- **Tailoring Work (16.5%):** This is the most accessible type of employment for refugee women, likely due to the minimal formal education required and the high demand for tailoring services within both refugee and local communities.
- **Domestic Work (15.4%):** Domestic roles, including cleaning, cooking, and childcare, are also highly accessible. These jobs are often easier to obtain, as they do not require advanced skills or language proficiency, making them a vital source of income for many refugee women.
- **NGO Work (13.2%):** NGOs play a significant role in employing refugee women, particularly in community outreach and social services. These positions may offer more stability and better wages than informal jobs, making them an attractive option for those who can access such roles.
- **Teaching and Tutoring (12.1%):** This indicates that some refugee women have the necessary educational background or skills to engage in teaching, which could provide more sustainable employment opportunities compared to lower-skilled jobs.
- **Handicrafts Work (12.1%):** Handicrafts allow women to use traditional skills for income generation. This type of employment often involves small-scale production and sales, which can be particularly important in communities where formal employment opportunities are scarce.

Other notable employment opportunities include food service (7.7%), retail sales (5.5%), agricultural labor and healthcare work (both 4.4%), and informal sector jobs (3.3%). Construction work (1.1%) and other types of work (1.1%) are the least reported, reflecting potential challenges related to physical demands or gender norms that limit participation in these fields.

Employment Opportunities Readily Available for Refugee Women

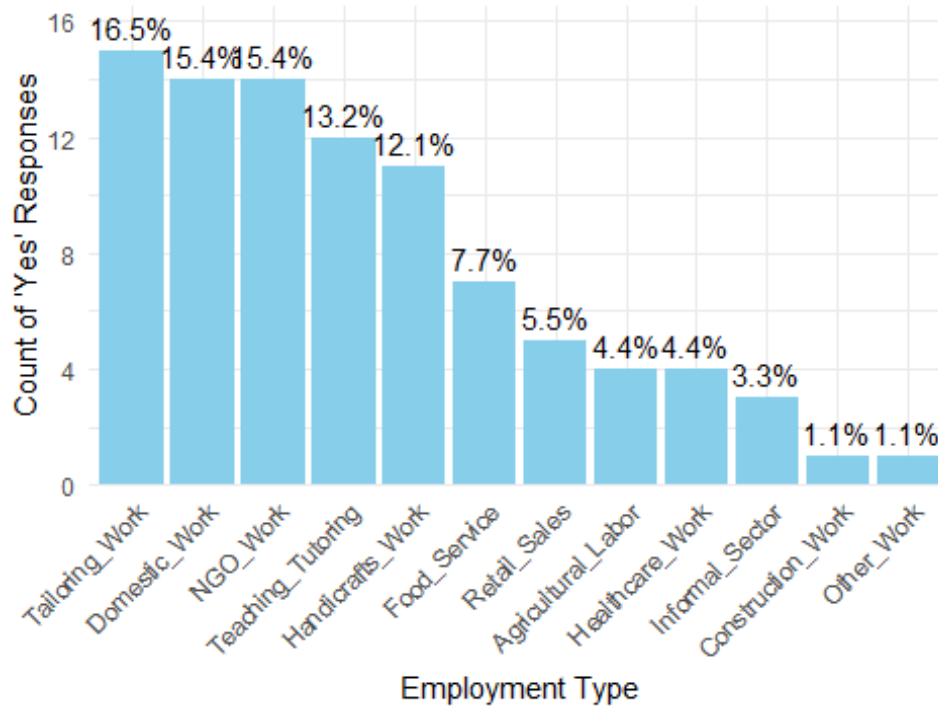


Figure 2: Employment opportunities readily available to the refugee women in Peshawar

5.3.1 Employment Opportunities and Policy Initiatives for Refugee Women

The cross tabulation between Employment Types and Recruitment Policies shows mixed opinions on the necessity of recruitment policies for refugee women. In domestic work, respondents were evenly split on whether policies are needed. In contrast, tailoring and garment work saw 66.7% disagreement with recruitment policies, implying that opportunities in this sector may not require additional intervention. However, there was unanimous support (100%) for policies to encourage recruitment in NGO work, indicating its importance for refugee women's employment.

While the cross tabulation between Employment Types and Entrepreneurship was strongly supported across several sectors. Respondents unanimously agreed (100%) on the importance of entrepreneurship initiatives in domestic work, tailoring, and handicrafts, emphasizing these sectors as key avenues for self-employment. In NGO work, while 88.9% supported entrepreneurship initiatives, a minority (11.1%) indicated that additional efforts might be needed to foster entrepreneurial opportunities in this sector.

When it comes to the Need for Policy Changes we found significant support for policy changes across the sectors. In domestic work, 75% of respondents believed that policy reforms are necessary to enhance economic empowerment. Similarly, 88.9% in the NGO sector expressed the need for policy changes to support refugee women's roles in NGOs, suggesting gaps in the current regulatory framework.

A majority of respondents agreed that NGOs are effectively addressing the employment needs of refugee women in domestic work, tailoring, and handicrafts, with agreement levels ranging from 75% to 100%. However, in NGO work, 11.1% expressed doubts about NGOs' effectiveness, indicating potential areas for improvement in supporting refugee women's employment.

5.3.2 Challenges and Support Mechanisms for Refugee Women's Employment

The employment landscape for refugee women in Pakistan reveals a complex interplay of challenges and support mechanisms, as depicted in the table below, Table 3. Various questions were posed to understand how government organizations, NGOs, and societal norms affect refugee women's employment experiences. Chi-square tests indicate significant associations between employment status and key challenges faced by refugee women. Specifically, discrimination (P-value = 0.037), vocational training received (P-value = 0.019), and instances of gender-based violence (P-value = 0.031) were found to be significantly linked to whether refugee women are employed, unemployed, or engaged in other forms of work. Below is a detailed discussion of the key findings based on employment status categories.

Government Support and Access to Social Services

The extent to which government organizations provide adequate support to refugee women's access to social services varies by employment status. Employed respondents indicated moderate support at 57.1%, while those unemployed reported a higher level of satisfaction at 75%. This discrepancy might suggest that unemployed women rely more heavily on government services due to their lack of income. Meanwhile, categories like shopkeepers, students, and construction workers/home makers report evenly split satisfaction (50%), hinting at potential gaps in government outreach to these groups.

Effectiveness of NGOs in Workforce Integration

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are seen as more effective than government agencies in helping refugee women integrate into the workforce. Among unemployed women, 80% recognized NGO efforts as effective, followed by employed women at 57.1%. Notably, 100% of shopkeepers considered NGOs to be playing a critical role in their workforce integration. This demonstrates the critical role NGOs play, particularly in non-formal employment sectors such as shopkeeping, where refugees might lack the formal qualifications often required in other industries.

Availability of Information on Support Services

The availability of information about government support services was another critical area of analysis. Unemployed women had the highest awareness at 71.4%, likely because they actively seek these services to improve their employability. In contrast, only 42.9% of employed women reported

receiving sufficient information, reflecting a possible lack of communication channels for those already integrated into the workforce. Shopkeepers and students showed significant gaps in information, with none reporting that they had received adequate resources, which could hinder their access to further opportunities.

NGOs Addressing Refugee Women's Needs

When asked if NGOs address the unique challenges faced by refugee women, the responses were largely positive across employment types. Both employed and unemployed women reported high satisfaction, with 77.8% and 78.6%, respectively, affirming that NGOs were addressing their needs. However, lower percentages were observed among shopkeepers (50%) and construction workers/home makers (62.5%). This suggests that while NGOs are effective in some sectors, their outreach might not be as robust in informal or sector-specific employment categories, where additional, targeted interventions might be necessary.

Discrimination in Seeking Employment

Discrimination remains a significant barrier to employment for refugee women, with marked differences based on employment status. A vast majority (85.7%) of employed women reported encountering discrimination, a figure that significantly drops to 26.9% among the unemployed. This indicates that once refugee women are in the workforce, they are more likely to face discriminatory practices compared to those still seeking employment. Shopkeepers and students also noted high levels of discrimination at 50% and 71.4%, respectively. These findings underscore the need for stronger policies and practices to combat workplace discrimination, especially for women engaged in non-formal and student sectors.

Influence of Cultural Norms

Cultural norms were identified as a significant factor influencing the employability of refugee women. Among employed women, 50% reported that cultural norms limited their employment opportunities, reflecting the broader societal challenges these women face. Interestingly, the unemployed category reported the least influence of cultural norms, with only 9% citing it as a barrier. This may suggest that once women gain employment, cultural restrictions become more apparent. Construction workers/home makers felt the greatest impact of cultural norms, with 87.5% reporting restrictions, highlighting the intersection between gender roles and employment in more traditional or labor-intensive sectors.

Vocational Training and Skill Development

Vocational training and skills development are crucial for improving employability, yet access to these opportunities appears uneven. Employed women showed moderate satisfaction, with 57.1% stating they had received adequate support. This was notably lower among the unemployed, where only 22.2% reported receiving vocational training. This disparity underscores the need for enhanced skill development programs aimed at improving employability, particularly for those not currently engaged in the workforce. Conversely, shopkeepers and construction workers/home makers

reported higher satisfaction, with 100% and 87.5%, respectively, indicating that these sectors might have more targeted vocational training programs available to them.

Table 3: Perceptions of Government, NGO Support, and Employment Challenges for Refugee Women in Pakistan across different Employment Statuses

Question Asked	Employment Status				
	Employed	Unemployed	Shopkeeper	Student	Construction worker/Home Maker
Do government organizations adequately support refugee women's access to social services in Pakistan?	57.1%	75.0%	50.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Are non-governmental organizations (NGOs) effective in assisting refugee women's integration into the workforce?	57.1%	80.0%	100.0%	62.5%	50.0%
Have you received sufficient information about available support services and resources from governmental organizations in Pakistan?	42.9%	71.4%	100.0%	100.0%	50.0%
Do you believe that NGOs adequately address the unique needs and challenges faced by refugee women in Pakistan?	77.8%	78.6%	50.0%	62.5%	100.0%
Have you encountered discrimination while seeking employment in Pakistan?	85.7%	26.9%	50.0%	71.4%	0.0%
Do cultural norms restrict refugee women from certain job sectors in Pakistan?	50.0%	51.9%	50.0%	87.5%	50.0%

Have you received adequate vocational training or skill development support to enhance your employability in Pakistan?	57.1%	22.2%	0.0%	87.5%	50.0%
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6. Conclusion and Recommendation

6.1 Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive examination of the barriers and opportunities for the socioeconomic integration and economic empowerment of refugee women in Pakistan. Through both quantitative analysis and cross-tabulations of employment-related factors, several key challenges have been identified, including discrimination, limited access to support services, cultural norms, and a lack of effective policy interventions. While NGOs and government organizations play crucial roles in providing support, gaps in the availability of vocational training, entrepreneurial initiatives, and awareness of resources persist.

Despite these challenges, the study also highlights sectors where refugee women have potential for integration, such as domestic work, tailoring, and NGO employment. A notable finding is the broad support for entrepreneurship, which offers a promising avenue for economic empowerment, particularly in sectors like tailoring and handicrafts. Moreover, perceptions of gender norms and workplace harassment continue to act as silent barriers that hinder full integration into the workforce.

6.2 Recommendations

- *Policy Enhancement:*

Government organizations must strengthen policies aimed at recruiting refugee women, especially in sectors like domestic work, NGO roles, and tailoring. Given the split opinions on current recruitment policies, targeted interventions are needed to ensure equitable access to these sectors.

- *Entrepreneurship Support:*

Initiatives encouraging refugee women to engage in entrepreneurial activities should be expanded. The strong support for entrepreneurship in sectors like handicrafts and domestic work should be met with microfinancing opportunities, business training, and market access strategies.

- *Vocational Training:*

More comprehensive vocational training programs tailored to refugee women's needs must be developed. These programs should address skills for emerging sectors, beyond the traditional roles of domestic and garment work, to ensure sustainable employment opportunities.

- *Gender Sensitivity and Workplace Harassment:*

Programs aimed at reducing workplace discrimination and addressing gender norms should be prioritized. Workshops, awareness campaigns, and legal frameworks must be enhanced to create gender-sensitive environments that encourage refugee women's participation in various sectors.

- *NGO and Government Collaboration:*

NGOs should collaborate more closely with government bodies to address gaps in services, especially in providing vocational training and resources to refugee women. An integrated approach can better target areas where refugee women face the most challenges, including employment, education, and social services access.

- *Data-Driven Policies:*

Future policy-making should be informed by data and continuous feedback mechanisms from refugee women themselves. This can ensure that their voices and unique challenges are reflected in the policies aimed at improving their socioeconomic integration.

- *Awareness and Access to Resources:*

It is essential to raise awareness about available services and resources, particularly for unemployed refugee women. Government agencies and NGOs should improve communication and outreach efforts, ensuring that women are well-informed about vocational training, social services, and employment opportunities.

In conclusion, while the current systems provide some degree of support, significant improvements are needed to foster the economic empowerment of refugee women. A combined effort from the government, NGOs, and local communities will be essential to addressing the barriers and facilitating their full integration into the workforce.

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