

# Investigating the role of Afghan migrants on the health of Shiraz city in 2018

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose of the study:** As a geographical and social phenomenon, the presence of foreign migrants in Iran's cities has healthy, economic and security impacts in various dimensions. The purpose of this research was to identify different effects and impacts of the presence of Afghan migrants on the Shiraz province and to provide appropriate solutions to encounter with this phenomenon. In this regard, the current research was conducted to investigate the role of Afghan migrants on the health of Shiraz in 2018. **Methodology:** This was a qualitative study conducted with the aim of identifying the role of Afghan migrants on the health of Shiraz. The research population and sample consisted of 12 experts who were selected through purposeful sampling. The data collection instrument included a questionnaire with open-ended questions about the research objectives. Data were analyzed through interviews and classification of the themes. **Results:** The results of the analysis of the interviews showed that a total of 5 main related themes were identified. These themes included physical and nutritional impacts, social and health impacts, cultural and health impacts, economic and job health impacts, and political-security impacts. **Discussion and Conclusion:** The presence of Afghan migrants can have many negative impacts on the security of Shiraz city in various dimensions. Thus, planning to control the acceptance of more population in this city and to control the population of the migrant population of the city is one of the priorities of urban planning in the Shiraz city in terms of health, security and social aspects.

**Keywords:** Afghan migrants, health, security, Shiraz

## Introduction

There is a mutual and complex relationship between health and various factors, such as migration, ethnical-racial differences, household income, and health care [1]. Various studies have indicated that the risk of infection and mortality is higher in infants and children of migrant families. In addition, migrant people are living in poor conditions compared to indigenous residents and have less access to health services [2]. For example, studies have indicated that access to insurance among Afghan migrants is much lower than that of indigenous residents, and this difference is significant [3]. Afghans in Iran are referred to as migrants and asylum seekers who have migrated to Iran following insecurity, prolonged wars and unemployment in

Afghanistan. Based on the statistics released by the **Ministry of Refugees and Repatriations of Afghanistan** in 2017, 839912 Afghan migrants in Iran have a Refugee Card, 30000 of them have Long-Term Documents, 450000 of them have Short-Term Passports, and 734622 of them are living in Iran without having any documents and certificates.

Most of Afghans migrated to Iran during the Iran-Iraq war and Afghan civil wars [4]. In the census released by Iran's Statistics Center in 2016, it has been revealed that Afghan migrants are living mostly in the provinces of Tehran, Khorasan Razavi, Esfahan and Kerman. In this statistics, 6% difference is seen in the gender ratio of migrants. It emphasizes that most of these people are households, while single people working outside the city might not be included in this census [5, 6]. Based on this census, about 109247 Afghans are living in Fars province, and according to the law, the Afghan citizens residence is prohibited in the cities of Firoozabad, Farashband, Darab, Arsanjan, Fasa, Mehr, Rostam, Khenj and Neyriz in the Fars province [6]. Various studies have indicated that the health indicators' status such as the mortality of children under one year old or the number of malnourished people in this province is good compared to that of other provinces [7]. Various studies have

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shown that health impacts vary in groups classified by race and ethnicity [2] and there is a large difference in the rate of health indicators, including the birth rate of premature and low birth weight infants and mortality among various race and ethnicity groups [8]. Limited number of studies has been carried out to evaluate the effect of this factor, especially migration on the health of the immigrant region. Hence, the present study has used a qualitative study to investigate the views of relevant experts regarding the effect of Afghan migrants on the health of Fars province as one of the provinces welcome by many Afghan migrants.

## Methodology

The present study was a qualitative study. Using semi-structured interviews, it identified the urban health indicators and investigated the status of Shiraz city, and the role of migration and Afghan migrants in the health status of Shiraz. The data required in this study were collected from various relevant organizations and institutions, including university professors in the area of health, the governorate, the municipality, experts in the area of demography and migration as well as ordinary people selected among migrants and residents of Shiraz using open-ended questions. The purposeful sampling was used in this study. Due to the qualitative nature of the study, it was not possible to determine the sample size accurately and more data might be needed. In this type of sampling, those samples were selected that contained the most information on the topic [9]. Twelve people were interviewed using purposeful sampling with personal consent.

The research information and consent form were given to the participants in person or by telephone and e-mail before the interview. They were asked to be interviewed personally if they had the consent. The interviews were performed individually and with the consent of participants. Their interviews were recorded and implemented word-by-word. Then, they were analyzed using Framework Approach Analysis method. A researcher-made interview guide was used to collect the data. It was developed based on the research objectives and with the help of the supervisors and advisors and expert people. Its validity was also measured. For this purpose, 3 to 4 interviews were performed with the developed instrument and the interviews were evaluated in terms of the consistency of the extracted data with the objectives of the study. In the case of non-consistency, redundant and unrelated questions were excluded and the interview guide was redesigned, and if they were consistent with the objectives, the instrument was used in the main study.

In order to validate the study, the principles such as credibility, transferability, confirmability were considered. To evaluate the reliability of the study, the principle of reliability, the degree of retrieval and repeatability of data by other researchers was considered. The interviews were analyzed using qualitative content analysis method. Qualitative content analysis is a specialized method in the processing of scientific data, used to

determine the presence of certain words and concepts in the text to summarize, describe and interpret the data. To analyze the data derived from the interviews at this stage, the "framework analysis" method was used. It included five stages of "identifying", "identifying a thematic framework", "indexing", "charting" and "mapping and interpreting".

During framework analysis stages, after identifying the scope and diversity of the materials, key themes were identified and a thematic framework was developed. Then, all the transcriptions derived from individual interviews were reviewed based on the resulting thematic framework. During the identifying stage, a form containing information about individuals and a summary of the content of each interview was developed. To develop the initial thematic guide form, a discussion was conducted in a meeting, which was held between the members of the research team, and then, the initial thematic framework was developed and each of the interviews was reviewed. The researcher indexed each interview individually and extracted a list of these codes along with their relationship with the thematic framework, and at least one code was given to each of the parts containing information related to interviews. The, the codes were reviewed by conducting a meeting with supervisors and advisors and, if necessary, they were modified. This process was repeated several times for each interview. In addition to the conducted analysis during the study and after each interview, to finalize the codes assigned to the interviews, the content of all interviews were analyzed deeply after completing the interviews. In the next step of summarizing the contents of each of the general concepts and their subsets, they were charted to compare the views of the interviewees on each of the components of the thematic model and to determine the relationship between the components of the model and its subsets. Wherever necessary, interviews were referred and the necessary content was added to them for better understanding of what people have stated.

## Results

Qualitative interview was conducted on 12 experts using purposeful sampling method. In this study, 76% of the experts had a management experience over 20 years. Moreover, 91% of the experts were male and the rest were female and 82% of experts had an age over 40 years.

**Table 1: frequency and percentage of distribution of the experts in terms of demographic variables**

Variable	type	f	%
Employment history	11-15 years	1	8
	16-20 years	2	16
	21-30 years	9	76
gender	male	11	91
	female	1	9
age	31-40	2	18
	41-50	5	41
	51-60	5	41

The results of the analysis of interviews showed that a total of 5 main related themes were identified from the experts' point of view. These themes included physical and nutritional impacts, social and health impacts, cultural and health impacts, economic and health impacts, as well as political-security impacts (Table 2).

**Table 2: Themes and sub-themes derived from the analysis of the interviews**

row	Main components	Main classes
1	physical and nutritional impacts	Growth and learning disorder Malnutrition iron deficiency
2	social and health impacts	Increased number of authorized and unauthorized presence of Afghan migrants in Shiraz Change in demographic composition of city Theft of people's property Violent crimes such as murder and conflict People dissatisfaction with the presence of Afghan students in public schools The marriage of Afghan migrants with Iranian women leading to birth of unidentified children and their abandonment An increase in transmission of contagious diseases and compromising the health of community Preparing and distributing drugs Lack of observing the health issues and popular discontent Marginalization phenomenon Mental health disorders
3	cultural and health impacts	Ethical corruption and sexual deviations of Afghan migrants Cultural differences, changing work culture in the province and country extremist religious thoughts related to Taliban and Salafists Iranian women marriage to Afghans and creating an identity crisis in women Cultural and value conflicts
4	economic and health impacts	Occupation of jobs opportunities due to cheapness of Afghan workers Increasing health and medical costs of the province Increasing the rate of unemployment The presence of Afghan migrants in unauthorized jobs such as bakeries, fruit sale shops The negative impact on the economy of businesses and the labor market The use of healthcare services by Afghans and the imposition of costs on the economy of the province and country
5	political-security impacts	Afghan migrants' knowledge with infrastructure and energy resources and a threat to the security of the province and the country Smuggling and unauthorized entry of Afghan migrants from the borders and then entering to Shiraz and neighboring provinces and challenging the territorial integrity of the country. Creation of security problems in the province and country Forging identification documents Afghans' knowledge of officials' homes

Paying bribes for forging identification documents, obtaining citizenship and obtaining permanent and temporary permits in Iran

Human trafficking and armed robbery

## 1- Physical and nutritional impacts

### 1-1- Growth and learning disorders

The migrant's malnutrition affected the defensive strength and learning of Afghans' children <sup>[2]</sup>.

### 1-2- Malnutrition

Nutrition status of Afghans' children was inappropriate.

War and immigration have led to a poor health and nutritional status of migrants <sup>[3]</sup>.

### 1-3- Iron deficiency

Iron deficiency anemia was high among Afghan migrants <sup>[1]</sup>.

## 2- Social and health impacts

### 2-1- Increasing the presence of authorized and unauthorized Afghan migrants in Shiraz

with the migration of Afghans, the city population and environmental pollution and health problems have increased <sup>[5]</sup>.

### 2-2- Change in demographic composition of the city

Lack of desirable urban facilities due to the presence of Afghans and the increase in population increased the stress <sup>[6]</sup>.

Afghan migrants could affect the indigenous people given their physical and mental health.

### 2-3- Theft of people's properties

The presence of Afghan migrants led to social insecurity, such as theft and smuggling of drugs <sup>[2]</sup>.

### 2-4- Violent crimes such as murder and conflict

Unauthorized access to transportation means (motorcycle, automobile) compromised the individual and social health <sup>[9]</sup>.

### 2-5- People's discontent due to the presence of Afghan students in public schools

The discomfort and discontent of the Shiraz people increased the presence of Afghan students in public schools <sup>[6]</sup>.

### 2-6- Marriage of Afghan migrants with Iranian women leading to the birth of unidentified children and their abandonment

Illegal marriages of Afghan migrants with Iranian women and the birth of unidentified children and their abandonment have increased in Shiraz <sup>[8]</sup>.

### 2-7- Increased transmission of contagious diseases and compromising community health

In livestock breeding units, the presence of Afghans has led to the transmission of intestinal and parasitic diseases due to the lack of observing the health <sup>[8]</sup>.

Tuberculosis was very low before the arrival of Afghans in Shiraz. In 1983, the number of tuberculosis patients was 3 in the province, but due to the high migration of Afghans to the province, the prevalence of tuberculosis increased every year in the province <sup>[6]</sup>.

### 2-8- Preparation and distribution of drugs

With the presence of Afghans in Shiraz, Afghan migrants' involvement in transportation and distribution of drugs has increased [3].

### **2-9- Lack of observing the health issues and people's discontent**

High accommodation of Afghan population in low-area and non-healthy homes compromised the health of the population and the community [1].

Low level of knowledge of Afghan migrants in the health sector reduced the health of the community [5].

### **2-10- Creating a marginalization phenomenon**

Afghans' camp in the city margin has created health and security problems for the people of Shiraz [2].

The marginalization and lack of desirable urban facilities have led to psychological and health problems for migrants [5].

### **2-11- Mental health disorders**

Afghan migrants have had lower social support (M).

Due to the low level of social support in Afghan migrants, they had a lower mental health [2].

## **3- Cultural and health impacts**

### **3-1- Ethical corruption and sexual deviations of Afghan migrants**

With the presence of Afghans, illegal marriages and the transmission of the contagious diseases in Shiraz city have increased [2].

### **3-2- Cultural differences, changes in work culture in the province and country**

The Afghans' invasion to values and culture of Shiraz city has made citizens of Shiraz angry [4].

### **3-3- Extremist religious thoughts related to Taliban and Salafist**

Extremist religious thoughts related to Taliban and Salafist in Afghan migrants have increased the people's concerns [9].

### **3-4- Iranian women's marriages to Afghans and creation of identity crisis in these women**

A law on the marriage of Iranian women to foreign men was passed by the Islamic Consultative Assembly in 2006, based on compassionate feeling. This law encouraged many foreign men to marry with an Iranian woman to resolve their problem [6].

### **3-5- Cultural and value differences**

The value and cultural differences led to cultural disturbances and psychological pressures [3].

The cultural differences among the migrants and indigenous peoples of Shiraz led to psychological disorders and cultural distress [5].

A different value system between Afghanistan and Iran led to the high prevalence of psychiatric disorders [8].

## **4- Economic job health impacts**

### **4-1- Occupation of job opportunities due to the cheapness of Afghan workers**

The low wage of the Afghan workers compared to Iranian workers has led to the occupation of job opportunities [3].

### **4-2- Increasing healthcare and medical costs of the province**

Many migrants had bad job status.

The lack of appropriate and sanitary bathroom in the camp of Afghans and the low level of individual and public health of Afghan migrants have led to increased healthcare costs in Shiraz [2].

### **4-3- Increasing the rate of unemployment**

The presence of Afghans in many jobs has occupied many of the job opportunities [2].

### **4-4- The presence of Afghans in unauthorized jobs, such as bakeries, fruit sale shops and others**

Given the high prevalence of parasitic diseases in Afghans and the consumption of these unwashed and non-disinfected fruits by some people in the community such as workers and carriers of fruit and fruit shoppers caused related problems [8].

### **4-5- Negative effect on the economy of the business and labor market**

Afghan migrants had a negative impact on the economy (jobs, labor market, etc.) in the province and the country [4].

Afghan migrants have penetrated into labor market and earned high income [2].

### **4-6- Afghans' use of healthcare services and imposing costs on the economy of the province and country**

The use of healthcare services by Afghans has imposed much cost on the economy of Shiraz [5].

## **5- Political-Security impacts**

### **5-1- Afghan migrants' knowledge regarding infrastructure and energy resources and a threat to security of the province and country**

Afghan migrants' knowledge on the infrastructure and energy resources could be a threat for our security [9].

The Afghans' knowledge on infrastructure, sensitive buildings, neighborhoods, and others can threaten the security seriously [4].

### **5-2- Smuggling and unauthorized entry of Afghan migrants from the borders to Shiraz and neighboring provinces and challenging the territorial integrity of Iran**

Due to illegal entry of some migrants, the main goal of national security, territorial integrity, was violated [6].

### **5-3- Creating security problems in the province and the country**

Significant numbers of prisoners in Shiraz were attributed to the migrants [5].

High cultural differences and social conflicts led to a threat to the health and the security [3].

### **5-4- Forging Identification documents**

Espionage, forging the documents and violence are among the effects of the presence of Afghan migrants [1].

### **5-5- Afghan migrants' knowledge on homes of the officials**

As most of Afghans are more involved in construction works, they have also good knowledge on the infrastructure of the

officials, which can be a threat to the security and health of the officials of Iran <sup>[2]</sup>.

#### **5-6- Paying bribes for forging the documents, obtaining citizenship and permanent and temporary permits in Iran**

As the citizenship laws have not changed for many years, many of Afghans have misused them.

#### **5-7- Human trafficking and armed robbery**

Owing to presence of Afghans in Shiraz, smuggling of weapons has increased in Shiraz, leading to armed robbery, which can compromise the health and security of the people <sup>[5]</sup>.

Human trafficking by Afghans at the city level was a major concern for the health of the city <sup>[6]</sup>.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

Impacts of the presence of Afghan migrants on economic security

Economic security means having access to resources, capital and consumption markets to maintain acceptable levels of welfare and economic power. Economic threats are in contrast to economic security and can have foreign, domestic, regional and international dimensions. Any kind of them can endanger the infrastructure of the country's economy and weaken the country's welfare and economic power. Migrants cause restrictions for the host country. They have usually economic status lower than the majority of the population, so they impose much cost with regard to housing, education, health, transportation, and communication facilities on the host country <sup>[10]</sup>. For example, when wages are reduced in some jobs, indigenous workers do not show tendency for these jobs, but more migrants are attracted by them. Thus, migrant workers are generally hired by employers who have difficulty in attracting the indigenous workers. Hence, activities that are mainly carried out by migrant workers are increasingly becoming vacant of indigenous workers <sup>[11]</sup>.

### **The Afghan migration impacts on political security**

Political security reflects the institutional stability and systems of the governments and ideologies, which legitimize them. In addition, migration is a form of geographical movement of the population occurring between two geographical units. This movement should lead to a change in the residence place of the person from origin or residence before his migration to the destination or new residence place. Afghans have migrated to Iran, Pakistan, and other countries in three periods: the Soviet invasion to Afghanistan in 1979, civil wars, and the rise of the Taliban regime. It means that there is significant time coincidence between the crisis in Afghanistan and the ever-increasing volume of migration. Thus, migrants have experienced a type of political crisis at any period and they have played a role in the expansion of the crisis. One of the issues discussed with regard to this group of migrants is the issue of their adaptation to the culture of Iranian community. Given low

academic and job skills of these migrants, they have not been able to adapt to Iranian culture and community. The problems caused by these legal and illegal migrants, the management and control of their presence and issues such as the host country's attitudes towards them have caused a political anxiety in Afghanistan's relations with other neighbors, including Iran <sup>[12]</sup>.

### **The Afghans' migration impacts on social and psychological safety**

Social security is related to the capability to maintain traditional models of language, culture, religion, identity, and national custom with acceptable conditions of transformation and development. The concept of social security was first introduced in a technical sense by thinkers such as Barry Buzan, Oliver, and Lemiter in 1993 under the title of "Copenhagen School". The incentive to introduce this term was threatening waves threatened the identities of the groups. The high presence of Afghans in Shiraz province has the potential of creating changes in the demographic composition of Shiraz. In addition, it provides the conditions for many social insecurities such as theft, spread of corruption, drug trafficking, and others. Moreover, many of their cultural and educational failures would have long-term effects on cultural functions. The migrants' invasion to cultural values and norms of the community makes the citizens of the country angry and provokes their mutual reaction. The severe cultural collision and social conflicts caused by this issue is a threat to national security which can affect the political relations between Iran and Afghanistan.

Various studies have been conducted with regard to social security, which we refer to some of them below. In a study entitled "The Impact of Afghans' presence in Khorasan Razavi Province on Social Issues," Seraj concluded that the Afghan migrants in this province would claim social identity of the Afghan group in future. A consensus is required among the decision-making communities to take appropriate strategy on the Afghans. In an article entitled "Urban inequalities and social security in Tehran", it was reported that urban inequalities are a threat to Tehran's security. High level of poverty in southern parts of Tehran was one of the most important sources of social and national threats <sup>[13]</sup>.

### **Afghans' migration impacts on cultural security**

Cultural security means that people and community are culturally protected against any form of invasion and threat. In other words, it is a state giving the sense to religion, thoughts, ethics, customs, beliefs and values, and cultural heritage and literary works. Therefore, one of the main indicators studied in the cultural dimensions of the presence of Afghans is their impact on the cultural sector. Given what was stated above and with regard to the adaptation of this migration theory to the realities governing the issue of Afghan migrations in Iran, it should be noted that the weakening of identity as the main element of cultural security is one of the threatening impacts of this phenomenon, which has the potential to be a security issue in the future.

In this regard, the marriage of Afghans' men with Iranian women and the lack of formal and legal registration of such marriages, the birth of thousands of wandering and unidentified children in Iranian community, the lack of clear legal status of this group of women, the issue of the withdrawal of Afghans from Iran and the uncertain status of their Iranian spouses and many other social and legal problems are the impacts of these migrants. In the course of time, the national identity as one components of superiorities of cultural security, has been focused since the children born with such marriages have no national identity documents and they are abandoned in the community<sup>[14]</sup>. This research provides solutions for planners to organize migrants and prevent the stresses resulting from migration and marginalization and its impacts. Governments can play a vital role in maintaining the mental health of migrant populations.

When they use a mental health policy, they have a positive impact on the mental health of migrant populations. In this regard, they can develop framework which includes a set of values and principles for clearly conceptualization and coordinating the mental health activities and reducing any type of mental disorders. Given the importance of health information in everyday life and as there is a positive relationship between empowerment of individuals and access to information, policy making and planning on health education of migrants and obtaining information are felt for them in this area. As population of other countries in the Islamic Republic of Iran has grown in recent years and due to their deprivation and vulnerability in many areas, paying attention to educational programs, especially their health education and treatment, is being felt more than ever. Social participation and cooperation among NGOs are undeniable in improving the quality of migrants' information. Supporting and strengthening of strengths such as budget allocation and funding, supporting health and education centers, using specialized staff and constructing health information centers in related centers, strengthening technological infrastructure and elimination of barriers such as language, cultural, social differences are the basic steps for enhancing public health which, consequently, improves the level of public health of foreign migrants in Iran.

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