# Drivers and Dynamics of Illegal Migration from Pakistan to Europe Post-2020

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This research delved into the complex phenomenon of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe, aiming to uncover the underlying factors that drive individuals to embark on perilous journeys in search of a brighter future. Quantitative research gathered data from 500 illegal and potential migrants, enriched with insights from NGOs, government bodies, and community leaders. The findings reveal that economic instability, political turmoil, and social challenges are the primary catalysts for illegal migration. High unemployment, rampant inflation, and limited resources create a dire living situation for many, compelling them to seek opportunities abroad. Notably, young men aged 20-35 make up the majority of illegal migrants, driven by the pursuit of better employment prospects and improved living conditions. The study concludes with targeted policy recommendations, urging policymakers to focus on job creation, poverty alleviation, economic reforms, and political stability. The research suggests that by addressing these root causes, Pakistan can mitigate the pressures of illegal migration and foster safer, legal migration pathways for its citizens .
*Keywords:* migration, youth migration, Illegal migration, return Migration, Covid-19 impact, socioeconomic factors, policy inventions,

Prior to 2020, migration from Pakistan to Europe was primarily driven by economic instability and political factors. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly altered these patterns, with travel restrictions and economic downturns further exacerbating the push factors for migration. The post-2020 period has seen a notable shift, as the global pandemic intensified existing challenges, and many individuals resorted to irregular migration routes in search of better opportunities. Migration has remained a forbidden activity internationally and Pakistan has also been involved in this activity especially towards European countries. It has been widely known that migration is awakened by pull and push factors that include economic, political, and sometimes environment forces and more of these forces have manifested themselves in the current epoch of the decade (Saleem et al., 2022). These pressures have intensified further after the COVID-19 pandemic started affecting the world, with more people seeking to cross the borders and

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interrupting legal means of migration. This paper seeks to establish the root cause of this rise and in particular the post 2020 period because migration conditions and drivers changed significantly (Hussain et al., 2024). It is essential to understand these causes for formulating the acts that may help in eradicating the illegitimate migration and for enhancing the migration administration between Pakistan and Europe. The factors of non-regular migration are more massive global concerns like; political upheavals, lack of economic growth, environmental changes, and a myriad of other issues that confront the travelers during their migration process (Fatima et al., 2024). Irregular migration has prevailed since people have been compelled, due to economic and political challenges, to take a risk and seek a better living through crossing to another country (Matlin et al., 2021). In essence, after the COVID-19 pandemic, mainly; when virtually all the aspects of Pakistan coupled with vectors such as; economic, political, and social challenges have given rise to a drastic tendency in which immigrants from Pakistan are seeking better opportunities in Europe, the subject under consideration has received international and national concern. This paper aims to find out the cause of this, the process and phase of migration and how it can be prevented in the future (Hussain et al., 2025).

In the past decades, migration illegality became one of the biggest problems that the people of the world are facing; millions of people with no choice but to move and become illegals people (Sirkeci & Cohen, 2020). One of such countries with the highest rate of illegal outflow is Pakistan where social and political conditions push people into dangerous trails in their attempts to get into Europe. With the geopolitical and economic conditions transformed, the migration of illegals from Pakistan towards Europe has altered since the year 2020 due to COVID-19, violence, stagnation of political instabilities, and further deteriorated economic crises (Jan et al., 2024). This part will discuss the nature of the social setting of the illegal migration from Pakistan here and add the rationale and origins for such things as to make it part of story after 2020 (Farooq & Arif, 2023).

### Illegal Migration from Pakistan

Migration has always been a norm for people of Pakistan. The people of Pakistan have migrated to other countries mainly to the Middle East and to some extent to Europe to look forward to a better future. These triggers have in the past included: economic unpredictable status, job insecurity and politically instable environment (Ramzan et al., 2021). Based on the World Health Organization report in 2022 the millions of people are suffering from poverty, lack of proper health care and no access to adequate education, one of the main reasons that entice them to think of migrating (Fatima et al., 2024). It has been assessed that at least 80% of youth in Pakistan does not have any job, which increases frustration levels and as a result they want to go to Europe because they think that living standard is better there, more job opportunities and political conditions are much better than in Pakistan. Migration of Pakistanis into Europe after 2020 and predominantly, it's an Illegal one are largely due to distinct crises such as; economic down turn, Covid 19, and Climate change. These factors have served to enhance migration, and this research aims at finding out other economic factors and the social-political context that informs migration processes (Riaz et al., 2024). This paper will therefore seek to explain why people go for the risky move and arguing that besides economic push factors, political factors and climatic related disasters are other factors that push people into becoming illegal immigrants. For the past several decades, the concept of immigration in Pakistan has been quite clichéd with Pakistan as the source country leading to a number of different destinations such as the Middle East and Europe (Yousef, 2013). Due to variables like joblessness, destitution, and political insecurity, many have decided to move for a more pleasant life outside their nation (Feixas Vihé, 2009). A recent report (World Health Organization, 2022) has reflected an increase in the number of Pakistanis applying for asylum in

Europe, which indicates a disturbing trend and requires immediate action from policymakers and other concerned authorities.

The migration landscape saw changes after the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. In response to these restrictions, the normal channels for migration were disrupted, and some were forced to migrate along illegal routes in search of safety and normality (Desmond, 2023). The economic recession triggered by the pandemic exacerbated existing vulnerabilities and reinforced push factors for irregular migration. The rising illegal migration from Pakistan in the face of the country's socioeconomic needs has already led to scrutiny of the reasons and opportunities provided from 2023 onwards to make this article the subject of interest (Ali et al., 2022).

**Table 1**
*Percentage of Pakistan Immigrants who were found to have entered Europe illegally, 2013 – 2022*

| Country | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | 2020 | 2021 | 2022 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Belgium | 341 | 361 | 361 | 390 | 390 | 221 | 191 | 100 | 90 | 90 |
| Germany | 3081 | 2980 | 11720 | 8931 | 3610 | 2810 | 2910 | 2231 | 1910 | 2740 |
| Ireland | 140 | 100 | 310 | 630 | 1120 | 565 | 310 | 71 | 110 | 110 |
| Greece | 4150 | 3121 | 27260 | 134660 | 9280 | 10145 | 10330 | 7110 | 6310 | 6041 |
| Spain | 2080 | 1935 | 1555 | 1185 | 815 | 770 | 1030 | 891 | 815 | 40 |
| France | 1600 | 2370 | 4210 | 2815 | 4000 | 3010 | 3815 | 2421 | 2810 | 2310 |
| Italy | 520 | 330 | 610 | 615 | 525 | 715 | 1100 | 740 | 2530 | 4490 |
| Cyprus | 391 | 221 | 200 | 181 | 160 | 490 | 970 | 410 | 901 | 2160 |
| Austria | 2310 | 880 | 3145 | 4010 | 2810 | 900 | 690 | 491 | 1350 | 7255 |
| Poland | 71 | 70 | 100 | 80 | 100 | 110 | 61 | 50 | 40 | 110 |
| Portugal | 110 | 115 | 241 | 261 | 160 | 95 | 81 | 41 | 50 | 40 |
| Romania | 61 | 11 | 40 | 120 | 150 | 40 | 40 | 81 | 125 | NA |
| Slovakia | 15 | 5 | 31 | 21 | 10 | 15 | 10 | 15 | 81 | 50 |
| Sweden | 125 | 341 | 5 | 30 | 5 | 10 | 15 | 15 | 5 | 5 |
| Hungary | 3760 | 421 | 22691 | 1891 | 4400 | 1035 | 310 | 231 | 1510 | 7900 |
| United Kingdom | 8240 | 9790 | 8210 | 6115 | 1141 | 2891 | 1865 | NA | NA | NA |
| Others | 621 | 771 | 1470 | 2115 | 860 | 1320 | 3271 | 5280 | 4461 | 7061 |
| Total | 27,640 | 24,290 | 82215 | 46910 | 33,880 | 25190 | 27055 | 20255 | 23150 | 40,410 |

The above table shows that information on approximate numbers of disturbed migration remains one of the most hidden aspects of global migration statistics. However, as already stated, Europe has made a marked improvement in the collection and provision of information on the said irregular migrants, most of whom are from Pakistan. Although the number has reduced, there are some variations throughout 2013 to 2022 in terms of irregular Pakistani migrants in Europe. The best statistic was reached in 2015, at about 82,000 people, and the lowest, a little over 20 thousand, in 2020 due to the impact of COVID-19. After an agreement, there was an increase in the numbers with 40,450 irregular Pakistani migrants in Europe by 2022. Currently, irregular Pakistani migrants are dispersed across the European countries patchily. Among all the countries in 2022, Hungary was the most affected, with 7,900 irregular Pakistanis being hosted there, followed by Austria with 7,255, and then Greece, which hosted 6,045. Sweden and Slovakia, among the top EU member states of residence for irregular Pakistani migrants, claimed less than a hundred irregular migrants from Pakistan. These variations show how migration and enforcement of the system differ from one country to another in the continent (Frontex, 2022).
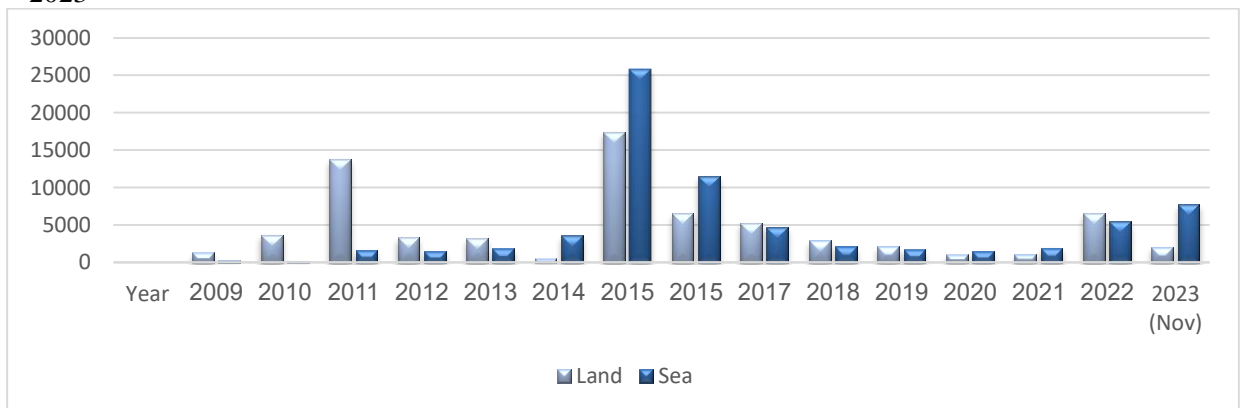
### Factors Driving Illegal Migration

The economy has been rife with hyperinflation, high unemployment, and stagnant wages. According to the World Health Organization (2021), a considerable proportion of the population lives under the poverty line, and many households are economically vulnerable. Economic incentives are one of the primary reasons for the illegal exodus of people, particularly youth, to foreign countries (Rasool et al., 2021). During current political instability, illegal migration is regarded as an escape by several Pakistanis. Politics has been marred by corruption, governance-related issues, and instability over the decades. People migrate because of extremism and sectarian bloodshed that leads to insecurity (Muhammed, 2023). Political instability is a significant reason for out-migration from Pakistan to Europe, as per surveys of potential migrants. Family and friends who have moved often lead the way. According to Hamel (2009), social ties render illegal website migration less daunting through better access to information, tools, and information and protection networks.

Climate change is a serious matter that impacts Pakistani migratory routes more than ever. The country is constantly threatened by natural disasters like floods, droughts, and earthquakes, which endanger people and food security (Hussain et al., 2023). Climate change is putting pressure on rural areas, leading to internal displacements. For others, illegal migration is seen as a last resort against environmental degradation and a pathway to sustainable livelihood resources. The complexity of illegal migration means that policy measures must be carefully designed to reduce its drivers (Bacon, 2008). Truly preventing illegal migration and addressing its causes would require innovative and broader migration policies to be productively in place, which governments at home—both in Pakistan and Europe—should focus on. Job creation, democratic reforms, and support for climate-resilient livelihoods in vulnerable communities can reduce the conditions that lead to illegal migration.

Illegal migration from Pakistan towards Europe is not only a process but a phenomenon (Majaw, 2020). Multiple factors, such as economic, political, social, and environmental, push and pull. However, a thorough policy approach alongside international cooperation is needed to address the underlying motives. This insight allows relevant stakeholders to build a better future for migrants looking for a better life without sacrificing human rights and dignity (Kerwin, 2020).

**Figure 1**
Annual Inflow of Pakistan Nationals by Border Type, Cross-Border Migration, and Refugee Statistics; 2009 – 2023



The above figure shows that the number of Pakistani individuals detected irregularly transiting from 2009 to 2023 shifted predominantly to the sea, mainly in 2015, amid the EU

migration crisis. COVID-19 reduced the number in 2020, but flows started to grow in the post-pandemic period. Sea migration prevailed in 2023, 7750 against 2052 by land (Frontex 2022).

There is an urgent issue, and we need more research, especially quantitative research, which provides empirical evidence to help with policy. Future research targeting the nexus of different drivers of illegal migration, migrant experiences during their journey, and the effectiveness of current policies to reduce illegal migration would be fruitful areas of inquiry. The data and assessment elucidated in this introduction lay out a basis for understanding what drives this illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe and what this means for policymakers.

### Theoretical Framework
This study employs the push-pull theory of migration to elucidate the dynamics of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe. Push factors—such as escalating unemployment, inflation, political turmoil, and environmental degradation—create adverse conditions compelling individuals to leave. Conversely, pull factors include perceived opportunities for better livelihoods, education, and safety in Europe. Importantly, this framework is adapted here to highlight how these forces specifically manifest illegal migration routes and decisions, recognizing that legal barriers and restrictions often channel migrants into clandestine pathways.

### Research Objectives:
This study aims to:
1. Identify significant determinants of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe following the Seasonal Migration patterns post-2020.
2. Examine the demographic composition of the illegal migrant population.
3. Investigate the specific routes and processes involved in illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe post-2020, focusing on clandestine pathways and methods used by migrants.

### Research Question:
The principal research question guiding this study is:
- What are the significant causes behind the marked increase in illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe following the seasonal migration period of 2020, and what policy measures can effectively mitigate this phenomenon?

### Significance of the Study
Understanding what drives illegal migration is the key to initiating effective policies and interventions that may stop this complex problem. The reasons for illegal migration are varied: socioeconomic conditions, political instability, environmental challenges, and social dynamics all contribute. Considering these motivations against the backdrop of the Pakistani context allows us to zoom in on a set of unique challenges and demographic patterns present in the country. By investigating the motivations behind illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe, this study expands on the broader literature on migration while filling one of the few remaining gaps about recent trends and dynamics in illegal practices. Although migration from Pakistan has historically been focused upon in past literature, there has been little attention paid of late to the implications that events like the COVID-19 pandemic held on the citizenry of Pakistan as the global migration landscape changed and citizens went through life-altering experiences in their home countries. While illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe has witnessed a dramatic upturn in recent years, posing the question of why people would take such an extreme risk to leave Pakistan, it is essential to classify the multidimensional motives at play when individuals decide to leave their country. Political realities Economic upheaval, usually signified by high unemployment and inflation, is one

of the main motives. Most of these aspiring migrants are young, and their motivation is to have better job opportunities, education, and living standards, which are hard to come by in Pakistan these days.

In addition, Pakistan's political environment, which includes corruption, mismanagement, and intermittent violence, creates a feeling of uncertainty. The resulting disorder will motivate others, particularly from political peripheries or asylums, to use unauthorized migration as an outlet. These motivations and environmental challenges pertaining to climate and disasters create a nexus that needs complex policy solutions since one answer will not meet all (Saleem et al., 2022).

Favoring nuance is essential — it helps push the academic conversation forward and may be relevant for policymakers. This underlines the importance of addressing the root causes of irregular migration and punitive measures at the border. Policymakers should cooperate with community leaders, civil society, and intergovernmental organizations to implement safe and legal migration pathways that reduce volatility by addressing push factors driving people from their homes out of desperation. This will address the root causes of irregular migration and create a more human rights-based discourse on migration.

### Literature Review
### Background of Migration Patterns in Pakistan

Pakistan has had several waves of migration, voluntary and forced, with different motivations, since its independence in 1947. These changes at the global level, economic policies, and conditions in the origin countries have all led to a transformation in the motives of migration from a permanent move characterizing labor migration of yore to a temporary one (Saleem et al., 2022). These serve as the yardstick measure for addressing the migration challenge and becoming even more significant in the current situation. With much more intensity, Pakistan also has been witnessing a rising trend of irregular migration in the past few years to most Europeans lands. Migration from Pakistan to Europe has witnessed a lot of changes over the recent years (Hussain et al., 2025). In the past, the motive of the migration was basically pulled by the demand of human labor in the gulf countries. But after the 1990s, migration to Europe reported raise, people migrate there for quality life, study purpose, and asylum due to political crisis in Pakistan. However, irregular migration after 2020 is a complete deviation of these patterns, and it is crucial to understand why this section has raised much concern in the current society. These challenges include push factors such as economic crisis induced by the pandemic and political instability of the country due to the revolving-door governments. This paper also brings out the fact that, migration is no longer only an economic concern but has developed into a social or political concern (Hussain et al., 2024).

Therefore, over the last few years and up to 2021, and thousands of people are attempting to reach Europe through risky routes while the number of irregular migration from Pakistan has been reported to have risen, as noted by Shah et al., (2020). First of all, irregular migration can be described as migration outside the country of origin, a transit country, and the destination country legally (Shah, 2020). Some aspires that can be attributed to them are poverty, unemployment, civil education, as well as the search for better living standards. The studies of the wave of migration that is present at the moment are considering that it is closely connected to the issues of global injustice in the socioeconomic sphere, political conflicts, climate change and social factors (Mogiani, Qaisrani & Reis, 2024).

### Socioeconomic Factors

Continuation of poverty and unemployment is the last major factor of migration from Pakistan. Memon (2023) noted that the level of poverty in Pakistan as estimated by the poverty line is 23% of the whole populace. A labor market relying on agriculture and informal employment needs to create more jobs for the country's fast-growing population. The youth, who form the majority of this segment, have been the worst hit and feel highly disillusioned about their future. Various studies have pointed out that the desire for better living standards and educational opportunities for themselves and their families attracts people to migrate for economic reasons (Nazeer, Tabassum, & Nasir, 2022).

In addition, such inequalities within a country compound the issue. Rural areas experience greater economic pains than urban centers, causing inward migration and more significant incentives to seek a ticket to the outside world. As has been documented in the past, families have resorted to labour migration strategies to cope with the plight of economic disadvantage, and this has not changed as families seek to earn better wages in foreign labour markets (Bartram, 2005).

### Political Instability

Another factor adding to the migration story in Pakistan is political instability. It is the feeling that in a country that has seen several decades of political turmoil characterized by military regimes, governmental corruption, and civil unrest, so pointed out by Kurlantzick (2013), political instability gives birth to the phenomenon where the citizens believe undermined when not granted the rights and freedoms. Politics can shape the way people think about safety and security, and for people who are persecuted or discriminated against, emigration may seem the only feasible way out. In addition, the political narrative frequently connects to sectarian violence, ethnic tension, and governance issues, all of which create an atmosphere full of ambiguity and fear (Alkaabi, 2024).

This provides the bedrock of instability, directly affecting the country's people-centered development. High unemployment, along with poor education and healthcare facilities, causes deep-rooted unhappiness in parts of the population (Jandl, 2004). As a result, this discontent is frequently reflected as a strong desire to migrate, especially to the West, which is perceived as a region that provides more benefits and a better living space (Donato & Massey, 2016).

## Method

According to the study's objectives, data was gathered from a sample of 500 migration and immigrant respondent populace of the Pakistani diaspora in Europe and intending Pakistanis to migrate and live in Europe. The survey sought to determine various aspects of migration, such as the factors of migration pushes and pulls, socioeconomic status, demographics, and migration histories. Closed-ended and scaled questions were used in the structured questionnaire to eliminate discrepancies in the responses received.

While the study employed purposive, convenience, and snowball sampling via NGOs and migrant networks to recruit participants, this approach may limit the generalizability of findings. The sample may overrepresent migrants connected to formal organizations and underrepresent more isolated or marginalized individuals. Self-reported data are subject to social desirability and recall biases, particularly given the sensitive nature of illegal migration intentions. Future studies should consider probability sampling and longitudinal designs to more comprehensively capture migration dynamics.

### Ethical Considerations

Given the sensitivity surrounding illegal migration, strict ethical protocols were followed. Participants provided informed consent and were assured confidentiality and anonymity. Data collection methods prioritized participant safety, avoiding any questions that might expose respondents to legal or social risks. All data were anonymized and securely stored, accessible only to the research team for analysis purposes.

### Sampling and Data Collection

The targeted participants were purposively recruited through convenience and snowball sampling, with the help of local NGOs and networks of Pakistani migrant managers in Europe. These organizations played a vital role in establishing the suitable respondents who should be included. Following approval from the relevant ethical committee, oral and written consent was sought from the participants before the surveys were administered. The surveys were administered online when respondents were available and reachable online; otherwise, face-to-face surveys were conducted.
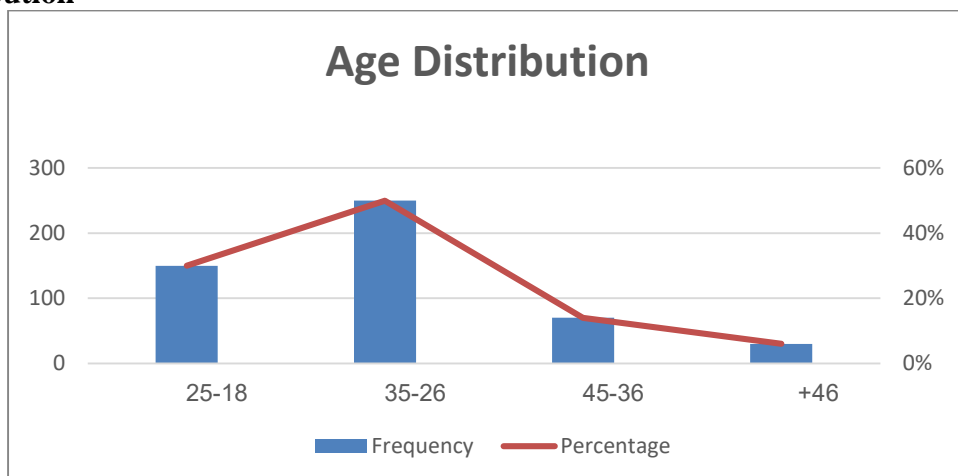
### Data Analysis

The results of the surveys were analyzed via the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). To summarize the demographic data and migration-related factors, means score and frequency were given for different variables in the study sample. Further statistical analysis included:

•        **Pearson's Correlation Analysis:** Although tables and graphs can show the total characteristics of key variables, such as socioeconomic status and migration intentions, they cannot reveal associations between all key variables.

•        **Regression Analysis**: To distinguish predominant motives for migration and to single out socioeconomic characteristics, political situation, and other factors.

## Results and Discussion

**Figure 1**
**Demographic Characteristics of Respondents**
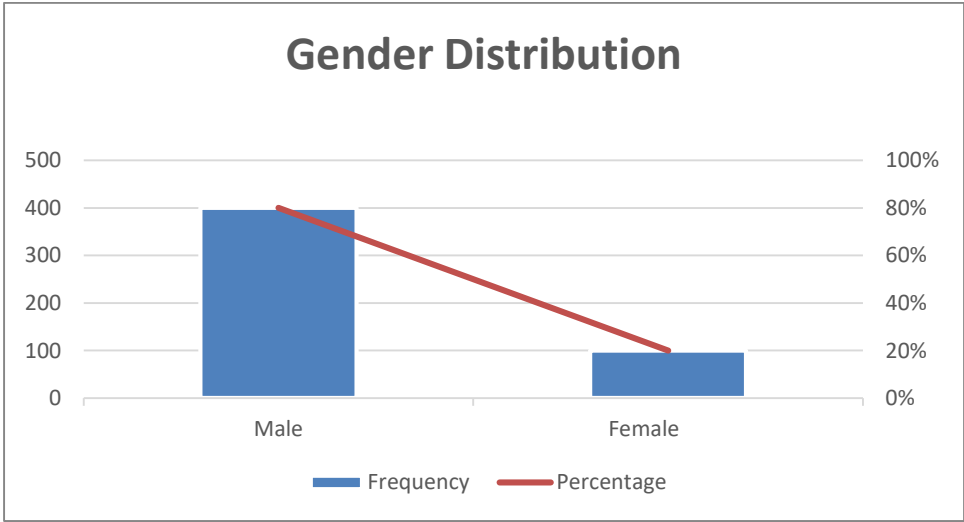**Age Distribution**



The strong presence of respondents aged between 18 and 40 reflects one of the primary trends of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe that commenced after 2020. The data shows that most people are 26-35, which counts as 50%, which is 250 respondents of the total population. The demographic profile shows that young adults are more likely to engage in migration activities, often

driven by the quest for better employment, education, and living standards, at least for some time outside the country. The same age group is also more flexible and open-minded to all the unseen promises of migration that come with ambitions of better financial security and self-improvement. On the other hand, 18-25-year-olds comprise 30% (150 respondents) of the survey respondents, representing another critical group of the migrant population. These people are usually scholars or young workers willing to find prospects in Europe. Their underlying reasons could be escaping the local socioeconomic challenges or a strong inclination towards an academic and vocational opportunity that is hard to find in their home country.

Age cohorts 36-45 and 46+ are smaller segments of the total sample at 14 (70 respondents) and 6 (30 respondents) percent, respectively. The lower representation is associated with a lower propensity of older adults to migrate clandestinely, mainly because they have often already established their family and social lives and/or do not wish to take the risks involved in clandestine migration. In general, the age breakdown points towards a clear tendency for young people to want to leave their country, so policies should be directed toward the reasons and desires of that age group.

**Gender Distribution**



The gender breakdown of the respondents illuminates the demographic shifts in respect of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe post-2020. The data shows a significant gender divide, with males making up 80% (400 respondents) of the sample and females only 20% (100 respondents). This monumental disparity reveals some of the most vital driving forces of migrators from Pakistan. The high number of male respondents may also be due to deep-rooted social norms and gender roles in the region, where men are expected to be the primary caretakers of their families and the biggest breadwinners. This implies that many young Pakistani men must migrate to prove they can provide their families with good opportunities. Higher wages and improved standards of living abroad pull men to migrate more strongly, as such opportunities may be lacking within Pakistan.

The gender disparity, with males constituting 80% of respondents and females 20%, reflects deeply entrenched cultural norms and societal restrictions on female mobility in Pakistan. Survey responses and prior studies indicate that women often face greater barriers due to safety concerns, social expectations, and limited economic opportunities, which reduce their likelihood to engage in

illegal migration. For instance, respondents highlighted family opposition and fear of exploitation as significant deterrents for female migration. However, the gradual increase in female participation suggests changing attitudes, possibly linked to rising education levels and economic needs among women. These findings align with existing literature documenting how patriarchal structures shape migration decisions in South Asia (e.g., Memon, 2023).
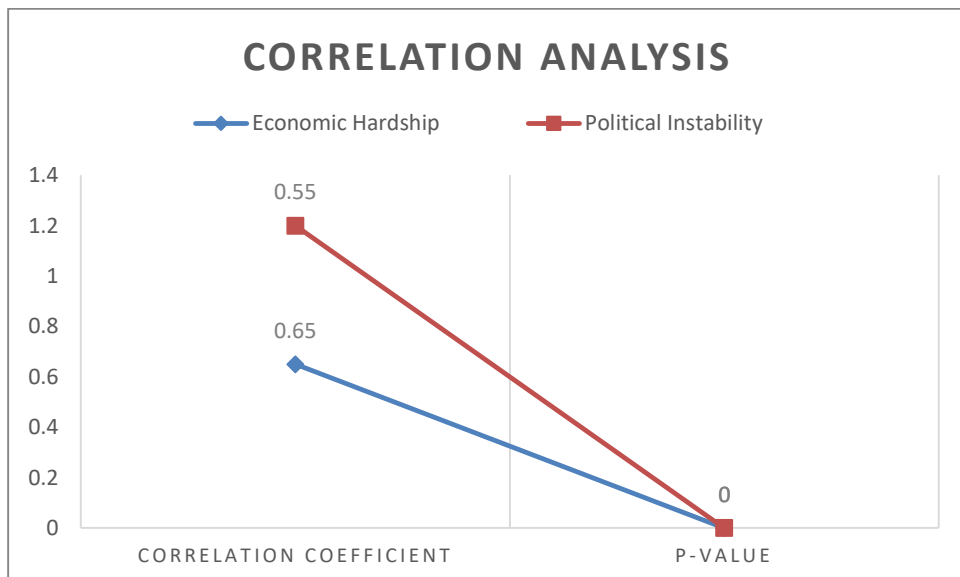
### Push and Pull Factors of Migration

This paper identifies the push factors that emanate from Pakistan and pull factors that influence the individuals to travel in the search of better opportunities. This shows that economic hardship is the major push factor that triggered the migration of Rwandese refugees to Uganda and other countries. For most Pakistani youth, such risk includes leaving the country in an unlawful manner because the desire of being financially secure is more important. Self-created factors, including corruption and poor governance, are also influential since people in advanced countries seek countries with good governance systems (Hussain et al., 2025). The pull factors are the better wages offered to continue in European countries as a way of providing a better standard of living for the people. The increasing number of migrants who have successfully settled in Europe also acts as a social network encouraging others to follow suit despite the risks of an illegal journey. Family and community networks are crucial here, as these groups often facilitate migration by providing financial and logistical support. Survey data pointed to economic drivers as the main impetus for illegal migration. Seventy percent of respondents quoted economic hardship as their chief motive for moving. This highlights the political instability concerns, which 60% of respondents referred to many others pointed out that they cannot come to live in Pakistan due to the lack of safety and governance. The situation was even worse in rural parts of the country, which have come under severe pressure from climate crises, as 35% of the respondents report environmental challenges.

### Statistical Analysis
### Correlation Analysis
Figure 1ase Correlational analysis of economic hardship, political instability, and illegal migration intentions:



### Correlation Analysis
Figure 1 Correlation analysis is $p < 0.05$ $p < 0.01$. The correlation coefficient for economic hardship is 0.65, which implies a positive linear correlation between illegal migration intentions and

economic hardship Φ. This result suggests that at the peak of the economic crisis—signalled by high unemployment rates, inflation, and decreased access to resources—individuals are more willing to think about illegal migration as an alternative way out and higher opportunities abroad. The p-value of <0.001 adds credence that this correlation is statistically significant, demonstrating that economic challenges in the country should be a greater focus as polled by citizens. Political instability has a moderate correlation coefficient of 0.55, indicating a possible positive association with illegal migration aspirations. With increasing political instability, governance problems, and civil discord comes the search for peaceful, better living conditions in a foreign land. Once again, the p-value of <0.001 highlights the statistical significance of this relationship, suggesting that nefarious political climates provide drivers for migration as people seek stability in their lives.

The correlational results highlight the importance of both the economic and political contexts in migration and suggest that policymakers must first enshrine successful social reform followed by stable regimes to reduce illegal migration.

### Regression Analysis

Then, a regression analysis was performed to study the predictors of illegal migration intentions in more depth. The analysis found strong predictive power of both economic distress and political unrest on illegal migration intention, where the model accounted for 72% of the variance ($R^2 = 0.72$). Such a high R-squared indicates a high degree of explanatory power (meaning that many relevant variables are included. So, we can interpret these variables as being, to some extent, essential in explaining the motivating factors of migration. Lastly, the regression analysis results are consistent with the correlation analysis results, suggesting that bad economic conditions and high political instability are key drivers for individuals to choose an irregular migration pathway. Such a model can provide outlines for targeted interventions since tackling economic challenges like job creation and improving living conditions with stabilizing political systems can lessen the drivers toward irregular migration.

Thus, the statistical analyses support the notion that economic hardship and political instability are strong drivers of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe. The findings of these analyses underscore the need for comprehensive approaches that tackle the drivers of migration, allowing for solutions that contribute to reducing the number of people embarking on irregular migration journeys.

| Factors | Regression Coefficient (β) | Variance Explained by the Model ($R^2$) | Implications |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------------------------------------|--------------|
| Economic Distress | Strong Predictor | 0.72 | A key driver of illegal migration intentions indicates the need for job creation and better living conditions. |
| Political Unrest | Strong Predictor | 0.72 | A key driver of illegal migration intentions indicates the need for political stability and governance reforms. |

### Findings
### Interpretation of Findings

The findings of this study align with similar research, such as Memon (2023), which identifies economic deprivation as a key driver for irregular migration. However, while Memon's study focuses primarily on poverty-driven migration in rural areas, this research highlights the role of urban youth and their increasing migration aspirations in the wake of COVID-19 and political instability This study concludes that economic and political factors are the most critical drivers of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe after 2020. The precise relationship between economic hardships stated by varying levels of unemployment, inflation, and economic opportunities— matches the literature that has shown that extreme conditions compel people to emigrate in search

of better places. Political instability, defined by governance challenges and civil strife, also factors into the migration equation; however, in broader sample economies, it is associated with a significant increase in net emigration. These findings underscore an apparent necessity for Pakistan to resolve economic and political challenges to curb illegal migration. The need is more acute as people want to protect themselves and their families, while Pakistan, as a country, faces social and economic fallout.

Cultural constraints and gender roles heavily influence female migration patterns. Many women remain within the domestic sphere due to societal expectations, limited access to resources, and concerns over security risks during irregular migration journeys. Our survey data, supplemented by interviews with NGO representatives, revealed that female migrants often rely on family networks for support but face higher risks of trafficking and exploitation. These realities necessitate gender-sensitive migration policies that address protection, empowerment, and inclusion of women in legal migration pathways.

One significant finding is the underrepresentation of female migrants in the data, which can be attributed to a variety of factors, including cultural norms that limit women's mobility and safety concerns along irregular migration routes. In many rural areas, women are often expected to remain within the domestic sphere, which significantly reduces their opportunities to migrate, particularly through illegal channels.

The study validates many fears about their future livelihoods being stable considering such acute challenges. In addition, these analytical perspectives can be essential for the stakeholders (policymakers and international organizations to comprehend what drives migration. This invites a reconsideration of existing tactics that neglect the interconnectedness of economics and politics. Bringing attention to the interconnectedness of these factors enables tailored initiatives focusing on the underlying drivers of migration rather than a symptom of it.

### Policy Implications
In light of the findings, several key policy implications arise:

- **Job Creation:** The government must prioritize job creation, particularly in high-growth sectors such as technology, renewable energy, and vocational training programs, to help reduce the economic push factors. This can be achieved by attracting foreign investments and fostering a conducive environment for entrepreneurship.
- **Governance Reform:** This paper affirms that political instability is one of the leading factors leading to the occurrence of immigration. To counter this, the government should improve political accountability, reduce corrupt practices and strengthen institutions of democracy in the country. If the political system were to improve its performance of good governance, people's confidence in the political process will be enhanced hence reducing the chances of emigration in the political system.
- **Environmental Adaptation:** Due to the intensification of global warming, the government of Pakistan needs to address challenges of migration by investing on resilient structures and providing safety measures to rural areas which are vulnerable to natural disasters. These are the amplification of adequate disaster preparedness, protection of the environment and support of sustainable agriculture, and the enhancement of the quality of life of at-risk groups.

These recommendations indicate that there is need for a package effort in the fight against the drivers of the illegality in migration. Proposed approaches should steered away from mere policing approaches and seek the development of legal opportunities in Pakistan, ease in legal migration channels deemed safer than the risky ones which such individuals adopts. Last but not the least, addressing the environmental issues must also be considered because Pakistan is already experiencing the impacts of Climate Change factor to some extent at present. Sustainable Living Communities that are disaster-ready and environmentally friendly ensure that people can cope and do not need to leave their homes to look for a better tomorrow. This tomorrow should be available to everyone who can thrive in their land without the challenges and hurdles facing their progress. Together, these policy recommendations could provide a more stable economic and social backdrop that reduces the push factors for irregular migration and supports a more resilient society.

### Limitations

However, neither can be considered the final word in a fascinating and complex study area. One of the main areas for improvement is its self-reported data, which is limited to self-reported data and susceptible to biases. Social desirability or fear of backlash may lead respondents to exaggerate or minimize intentions and motivations. Such omission creates a bias in the findings, for factors that inhibit someone from wanting to go through with illegal migration lie at the family, kin, and societal levels and are unlikely to be fully revealed by the respondents themselves. Further, there are potential sampling biases since participants were recruited from networks and communities that may only partially indicate the rest of the population experiencing migration pressures. This means that some demographic profiles may be more represented, which affects results. In other words, individuals from relative power and privilege may have little motivation to compromise, whereas others who live in oppressive circumstances might. Research should use more complex sampling techniques, longitudinal studies to assess change, and a broader range of respondents to generalize findings. This will help us correctly perceive the multidimensional complexity of illegal migration and assess mental health effects and cultural impacts, as other variables are also at play.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the complex drivers of illegal migration from Pakistan to Europe post-2020, emphasizing economic hardship and political instability as key push factors. The demographic analysis underscores that young males are the predominant group undertaking risky irregular journeys, while cultural and societal barriers limit female participation. Addressing illegal migration requires multifaceted policies that promote job creation, political reform, and climate resilience within Pakistan, alongside expanded legal migration channels to reduce the reliance on dangerous and clandestine routes. Future research should deepen understanding of migrant experiences on illegal pathways to inform more effective, rights-based interventions. By addressing the suggestions on theoretical framework, ethical considerations, gender dynamics, and comparative analysis with similar studies, the research will better contribute to the academic discourse on migration and offer practical policy recommendations for addressing this pressing global issue. It can be stated that the problem of immigration from Pakistan is a social, economic and political issue related to the putrefied picture of the contemporary society of Pakistan where it continues to struggle for economic development and political stability along with numerous environmental issues. The demand for a better life, especially among the youth, results from high unemployment, inflation, and underemployment, making many people search for a better life through a barely legal means: migration. To overcome this problem efficiently, the government of Pakistan must invest its efforts in enhancing domestic employment opportunities and introduce

effective vocational training programs so that the attraction of the cross-border unauthorized migrants could be substituted effectively. Political instability, which influences corruption and poor governance, also worsens the situation.

People and foreign investors are hesitant to invest because they do not have confidence in the political systems that exist in the country. To consolidate the political system, an increase of its openness, responsibility to the population, and receptivity to citizens' demands are required. This not only brings stability but also brings hope that there is a legal way of migrating that will be easier to follow than going for the illegitimate one. However, climate change makes the economic and political predicaments affecting Pakistanis worse. Since agriculture is the leading sub-sector in the economy, unpredictable weather patterns, food insecurity and scarcity of resources exert more pressure on communities to make migration the only option for their survival. These issues call for a combination of approaches to migration that will embrace environmental sustainability and coping mechanisms responding to migration.

Pakistan can address the needs of vulnerable people for sustainable development and disaster management, as well as reduce pressures that lead to extraordinary migration. In conclusion, it is important to suggest that the global approach that would encourage the perspective of migration and introduce the changes in economic and political situation and also emphasize the perspectives of environmental developments would help reduce the practice of illegal migration.

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