

## Sociological Investigation of Cultural-Social Influence of Afghanistan Immigrant Families from Iran (Case study of Tehran city)

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**Purpose:** The immigrants in the destination communities always face many challenges in cultural and social fields and they must coordinate and adapt themselves to cultural and social influences. Therefore, the current research was conducted with the aim of sociological investigating of cultural-social influence of Afghanistan immigrant families from Iran.

**Methodology:** In a qualitative, applied and cross-sectional research, 16 parents and children of Afghanistan immigrant families referring to the one of Tehran's helper clinics were examined in terms of cultural-social influence. The research tool was included semi-structured interviews with parents and children of Afghanistan immigrant families. For data analysis was used thematic analysis method according to grounded theory.

**Findings:** The findings of the sociological investigating of cultural-social influence of Afghanistan immigrant families from Iran showed that 20 concepts in 7 categories of insecurity in Afghanistan (with 3 concepts of life insecurity, economic insecurity and financial insecurity), better living conditions in Iran (with 4 concepts better health, food preparation and food hygiene, better environmental conditions of people and better moral feedback in the society), better economic conditions in Iran (with 2 concepts of providing social life basic facilities and more economic situations), problems of social life in Iran (with 3 concept of racial mentality of Iranians in dealing with Afghans, financial and economic discrimination against Afghans and humiliation of native culture of Afghans), preservation of Afghan traditions and cultural values in Iran (with 2 concepts of holding traditional ceremonies of Afghans and connection of young Afghans with traditional ceremonies of Afghans), problems of educating Afghans in Iran (with 2 concepts of structural problems against the education of Afghans and negative cultural and racial attitudes from some Iranians) and accepting the values and norms of Iranian society (with 4 concepts of accepting and carrying out common traditions, understanding and accepting some aspects of culture daily social life of Iranians, participation in friendly gatherings of Iranians and family relationship and marriage with Iranians) were identified. The analyzes according to the grounded theory showed that in the causal conditions of the social structures of the acceptance of immigrants there are four categories of social trust, institutionalization of the principles of social education, development of structures that support the acceptance of immigrants and creation of equal conditions for the social life of immigrants, in the central phenomenon of security, health and better living conditions in Iran three are three category of lack of security in Afghanistan, better living conditions in Iran and better economic conditions in Iran, in the basic conditions of infrastructure there are two categories of financial resources and human resources, in the interfering conditions of social life challenges of Afghan immigrants there are one category of individual-social life problems in Iran, in the proposal solutions for the acceptance and participation of immigrants in Iranian society there are two categories of solving structural problems in the social presence of Afghans and cultural education of Iranians for better acceptance of Afghan immigrants and in the consequences of the life outcomes of immigrants in Iran there are three categories of perceived results and cultural-social acceptance, functional results and preservation of Afghan traditions and cultural values in Iran.

**Conclusion:** The sociological investigating of cultural-social influence of Afghanistan immigrant families from Iran can reveal different angles of cultural-social influence and cultural-social specialists and planners can use them to improve the current situation.

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## 1. Introduction

Migration has become a global issue today and has attracted the attention of many scientific fields. In recent decades, many studies have been conducted on migration, and journals have introduced migration as their main area of activity (Tan & Allen, 2021). Migration means moving from one place to another for a long period. In other words, migration is a form of spatial or geographic mobility of the population between two geographical units. Therefore, migration is a conscious behavior that is motivated by various reasons, including finding a job, continuing education, social and economic welfare, or escaping from war, insecurity, prejudice, and discrimination (Vyas et al., 2022).

Afghanistan has always been a center of conflict and struggle between countries such as England, Iran, India, and the Soviet Union. It is a country with an 850-kilometer common border, parts of which belonged to modern-day Iran and are still a cultural and geographical heritage of Greater Khorasan. In 1857, at the instigation and pressure of England, this land was separated from Iran, and in 1919, with the courage of its young king, Amanullah Khan, it officially gained independence, but it has always been a field for various political powers to maneuver. These political instability conditions have caused Afghans to migrate to neighboring countries such as Iran, Pakistan, and Tajikistan (Sajadpour & Jamali, 2017). Afghan migration has been one of the largest movements in the modern world in the last three decades, and more than 96% of it has been towards Iran and Pakistan. Afghan migration to Iran has always been a strategy for their economic and cultural goals, to find seasonal work or pilgrimage, and it has a long history since 1979 (Akhlaqi et al., 2016). Iran is one of the important centers of migration and asylum from Afghanistan, and according to the latest official statistics from the 2016 census, 1,584,000 Afghans reside in Iran (Askari Nodoshen, Rohani, and Gergichian, 2020).

Today, the phenomenon of migration has become a multidimensional and complex concept. On the one hand, it affects social, cultural, economic, managerial, identity, and other imbalances, and on the other hand, it intensifies these inequalities. Also, cultural and social perspectives on the phenomenon of migration have led to different analyses of this issue (Tofangchi et al. Sefidi, 2021). Migration, with the influence of migrants from various aspects, especially cultural and social aspects, has significant effects on the appearance and daily life of individuals in the new environment, which takes shape in the form of economic, cultural, and social changes and developments (Muwanga, Mwiru, and Watundu, 2023). Therefore, the phenomenon of migration is a cultural and social phenomenon that the world has faced with in the past and has gone through a great evolutionary and developmental process in the literature of the past (Zhang et al., 2021). The cultural-social position refers to a group's value for a social role. That is, when an individual's social role is compared with other roles, the degree and importance of that role in that comparison becomes clear, and based on the degree of importance, the credibility of that position and situation is determined (Naderi & Ahmadi, 2021). The process of cultural-social change can be distinguished in various ways; cultural change means changing the values and beliefs processed in the human mind so that they affect society as a whole, and social change means accepting new institutional values that spread through the culture of a society. These changes and developments result from the will of social actors guided by emotional and rational approaches in interaction with each other and the environment. In fact, cultural-social change and development occur due to changes and developments in people's preferences, priorities, and values (Javaheri, 2021).

Under difficult conditions such as humiliation, insult, and the threat of forced expulsion or leaving the country, immigrants are more prepared and encouraged to engage in misconduct. From the perspective of sociologists and psychologists, unemployment is one of the important roots of violence and deviance in a society. The root of crime and delinquency does not belong to any race, gender, color, language, culture, or civilization of a nation, but poverty, humiliation, hunger, deprivation, discrimination, and insult are the roots of crime and delinquency (Bhugra & Jones, 2001). The type of profession of most Afghan immigrants in the Iranian job market is wage labor. Their income is much lower than that of self-employed individuals in the job market, and there is a relationship between the income of immigrants and their profession. From

the perspective of immigrants, their migration to Iran has been an opportunity to use more than just opportunities to earn money, gain technical skills in the job market, and gain educational and literacy opportunities (Isazadeh et al., 2020). Sociological knowledge refers to general principles that have been made possible by understanding modern conditions, and based on that, it is possible to analyze a peculiar social situation. This is not unique to modern conditions. Because people in every period are forced to understand themselves and the conditions in which they live (Etemadi Fard, 2014).

The most notable theories in the social sciences about minority groups and immigrants are described below. Intercultural theory: This theory is based on Husserl's phenomenological approach (1996), Kramarae's muted group theory (1981), and Smith's standpoint theory (1987), and its turning point is the three complex areas of culture, communication, and power, and in its broadest form, it refers to communication between the subordinate and dominant groups. The fundamental assumption in intercultural theory is that members of the same cultural group are first marginalized in social structures. Secondly, they use some communication styles in all their social interactions against the dominant structure, and their goal in these interactions is manifested in three different situations (Gadkanest Translated by Bashir, 2016).

Interactive acculturation theory: This theory was introduced by Bourhis and colleagues, and provides a comprehensive and useful framework. This model emphasizes the role of host society's acculturation expectations and the direction of immigrants' acculturation. According to this model, host society members may apply five acculturation strategies to immigrants, including integration, separation, assimilation, exclusion, and individualism. Integration is an adaptable strategy in which citizens of the host society believe that immigrants deserve to preserve their cultural heritage and simultaneously adopt aspects of the national culture of the larger society. Those who support this strategy believe that society is gradually moving towards multiculturalism. Supporters of the separation strategy believe that the cultures of immigrants bring the greatest benefit to the larger society from the main path of society. Those who support the assimilation strategy tend to have immigrants put their inherited culture aside to benefit the larger society's culture. The exclusivist view believes that migration and immigrants are dangerous for the national community and that the country must impose closed-door policies on immigrants. Finally, the individualistic strategy, in which supporters believe that there is no right way to manage identity-related issues, and from their point of view, individuals must have the power to choose any strategy that they find useful (Van Oudenhoven, Colleen and Anne-Marie, 2006).

Trust Theory: Jansen proposed this theory, which examines trust at the individual and interpersonal levels, as well as between groups. According to this theory, trust is essential for the growth and expansion of relationships, and the first critical issue that most relationships face is a person's ability to trust. To establish a connection, an individual must create a space filled with trust that reduces their own and others' fears of rejection and expulsion and enhances hope for acceptance, support, and validation. Trust is a personal characteristic and aspect of relationships that constantly changes, and everything individuals do either increases or decreases the level of trust in relationships. In creating and maintaining trust in bilateral relationships, the actions of both parties are of great importance (Zatomka Translated by Ghaffari, 2016).

Trust and Cooperation Theory: Zatomka proposed this theory, which considers trust and cooperation as fundamental assumptions in dealing with global changes and also mentions the risks associated with trust. Trust appears in human actions, which are characterized by their orientation towards the future, and the less control we have over future actions, the more we need trust. Trusting means betting on an uncertain future and the uncontrollable actions of others, which always involves risk. Trust is present in different layers of relationships, starting from the most tangible relationships among family members and continuing to more abstract relationships such as trust in social order, the efficiency of the system, and so on (Zatomka Translated by Ghaffari, 2016).

Identity Theory: Giddens proposed this theory, which considers identity as the soul of society and focuses on explaining security. Political, social, cultural, and technological changes are rapidly occurring globally. Therefore, security from this perspective is a kind of process of producing and maintaining mutual

connections and links within each social unit and between social units, which can be used in a social system to protect and guard the lives of social groups and ensure their access to benefits and secrets or opportunities (Van Oudenhoven, Colleen and Anne-Marie, 2006).

In the following, the most important research related to the cultural and social influence of migration and immigrant families is described.

Tofangchi Mahyari et al. (2021) conducted a study entitled "An Analytical Analysis of the Migration Status of Provinces in Iran with Emphasis on Social and Cultural Factors" and concluded that these factors included three elements: collective and individual development characteristics (with components of collective facilities and services, different levels of development, family and literacy, and educational facilities), income, welfare, and social security (with components of social security and welfare and income attainment), and diversity of urban and ethnic facilities (with components of access to better facilities and services, ethnic and linguistic diversity, and urbanization and population growth).

Hakimzadeh, Talaei, and Javanak (2013) examined the impact of educational, social, and cultural factors on the tendency to migrate and concluded that cultural and social alienation and age had a significant positive correlation, while satisfaction with the educational system had a significant negative correlation with the variable of migration tendency. No significant relationship was observed between the social-university adaptation variable and the level of migration tendency.

Jafarinia and Bazrafshan (2012) conducted a study on the role of cultural factors in satisfaction with migration and concluded that there was a significant relationship between migrants' satisfaction and variables such as cultural receptivity at the destination, religious tendencies, the existence of social networks at the destination, length of stay, educational facilities, health facilities, distance between origin and destination, and people's behavior at the destination.

The conceptual framework of this article combines various theories and, in addition, considering the differences and changes in values in the areas of tradition, culture, trust, justice, and practical skills between Afghan immigrants and Iranian residents, it can be said that the existence of such differences, as well as the contextual conditions, strategies, and consequences that have led to the formation of cultural and social conflicts among immigrants and negative attitudes among Iranian residents towards Afghan immigrants. Immigrants in destination communities face numerous cultural and social challenges and must coordinate and adapt to cultural and social influences. Therefore, this research aims to examine the socio-cultural susceptibility of Afghan immigrant families from Iran.

## 2. Methodology

This qualitative, applied, and cross-sectional study was conducted on immigrant Afghan families visiting one of the welfare clinics in Tehran. A total of 16 cases were selected as samples using purposive sampling method and were examined in terms of cultural-social susceptibility. In the purposive sampling method, samples are selected based on criteria such as willingness to participate in the study, acceptance of interview recordings, awareness of the cultural-social situation of Afghanistan and Iran, etc.

The research tool was a semi-structured interview with Afghan immigrant parents and children. The interview consisted of five questions, and each interview with parents and children separately took 40 to 60 minutes. The interviews were conducted individually, and the interview audio was recorded for re-examination and to avoid accidental loss of information. At the end of each interview, the important and key points were recorded and noted for the interviewees to confirm and verify their accuracy. The validity of the interviews was confirmed using the triangulation method, and their reliability was obtained using the coefficient of agreement between two coders of 0.73.

In order to conduct this study, theoretical background on the sociological examination of cultural-social susceptibility of immigrant Afghan families was studied, and with the help of experts, questions were designed for interviews with experts. In the next step, samples were identified and selected. The samples were justified and explained in terms of ethical considerations, importance, and necessity of the research.

After their agreement to participate in the study and acceptance of interview recordings, necessary coordination was made for the time and place of the interviews. The interviews were conducted individually, and in addition to recording important and key points, the interviews were also recorded. After each interview with the samples, the accuracy of the recorded information was confirmed, and they were appreciated and thanked for participating in the study. Also, the data were analyzed using the thematic analysis method based on the grounded theory.

### 3. Findings

In this section, the analysis of the interviews was presented, and the results of the thematic analysis were reported to examine the sociological aspects of cultural-social susceptibility of Afghan immigrant families from Iran. For this purpose, the interviews were summarized and coded, and the concepts were classified, and the categories that have a high conceptual power and can gather many concepts around them were formed. The results of the thematic analysis reported in Table 1 to examine the sociological aspects of cultural-social susceptibility of Afghan immigrant families from Iran showed that 20 concepts in 7 categories were identified, including insecurity in Afghanistan (with 3 concepts of physical insecurity, economic insecurity, and financial insecurity), better living conditions in Iran (with 4 concepts of better health, better food and hygiene, better environmental conditions, and better ethical feedback in society), better economic conditions in Iran (with 2 concepts of providing basic social living facilities and more economic opportunities), social life problems in Iran (with 3 concepts of racial attitudes of Iranians towards Afghans, financial and economic discrimination against Afghans, and belittling the culture of native Afghans), preservation of Afghan cultural values and traditions in Iran (with 2 concepts of holding Afghan traditional ceremonies and the relationship of Afghan youth with Afghan traditional ceremonies), educational problems of Afghans in Iran (with 2 concepts of structural problems in Afghan education and negative cultural and racial attitudes by some Iranians towards Afghans), and acceptance of Iranian social norms and values (with 4 concepts of accepting and performing common traditions, understanding and accepting some aspects of Iranian daily social culture, participating in friendly gatherings with Iranians, and family relationships and marriage with Iranians).

**Table 1.** Thematic analysis results for the sociological investigation of cultural-social influence on Afghan immigrant families from Iran

| Category                                                 | Concept                                                    | Interviewee's code             |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Insecurity in Afghanistan                                | Loss of life security                                      | 1 '3 '6 '11 '12 '13 '15 and 16 |
|                                                          | Economic insecurity                                        | 3 '5 '14 '15 and 16            |
|                                                          | Financial insecurity                                       | 1 '8 '9 '10 and 12             |
| Better living conditions in Iran                         | Better health                                              | 3 and 5                        |
|                                                          | Food preparation and food hygiene                          | 1 and 8                        |
|                                                          | Better environmental conditions for individuals            | 2 '3 '6 and 8                  |
|                                                          | Better ethical feedback in society                         | 5 '6 '7 and 9                  |
| Better economic conditions in Iran                       | Providing basic social living facilities                   | 6 '9 '13 '15 and 17            |
|                                                          | More economic opportunities                                | 1 '5 '7 '8 and 9               |
| Social life problems in Iran                             | Iranians' attitudes towards Afghans                        | 1 '3 and 5                     |
|                                                          | Financial and economic discrimination against Afghans      | 2 '4 '6 '13 '15 and 16         |
|                                                          | Disrespect for Afghan indigenous culture                   | 1 and 5                        |
| Preservation of Afghan cultural values and norms in Iran | Holding traditional Afghan ceremonies                      | 3 '6 and 9                     |
|                                                          | Afghan youth's connection to traditional Afghan ceremonies | 1 '8 '9 and 10                 |
| Education problems for Afghans in Iran                   | Structural problems in Afghan education                    | 2 and 3                        |
|                                                          | Negative cultural and racial attitudes from some           | 4 '6 and 7                     |

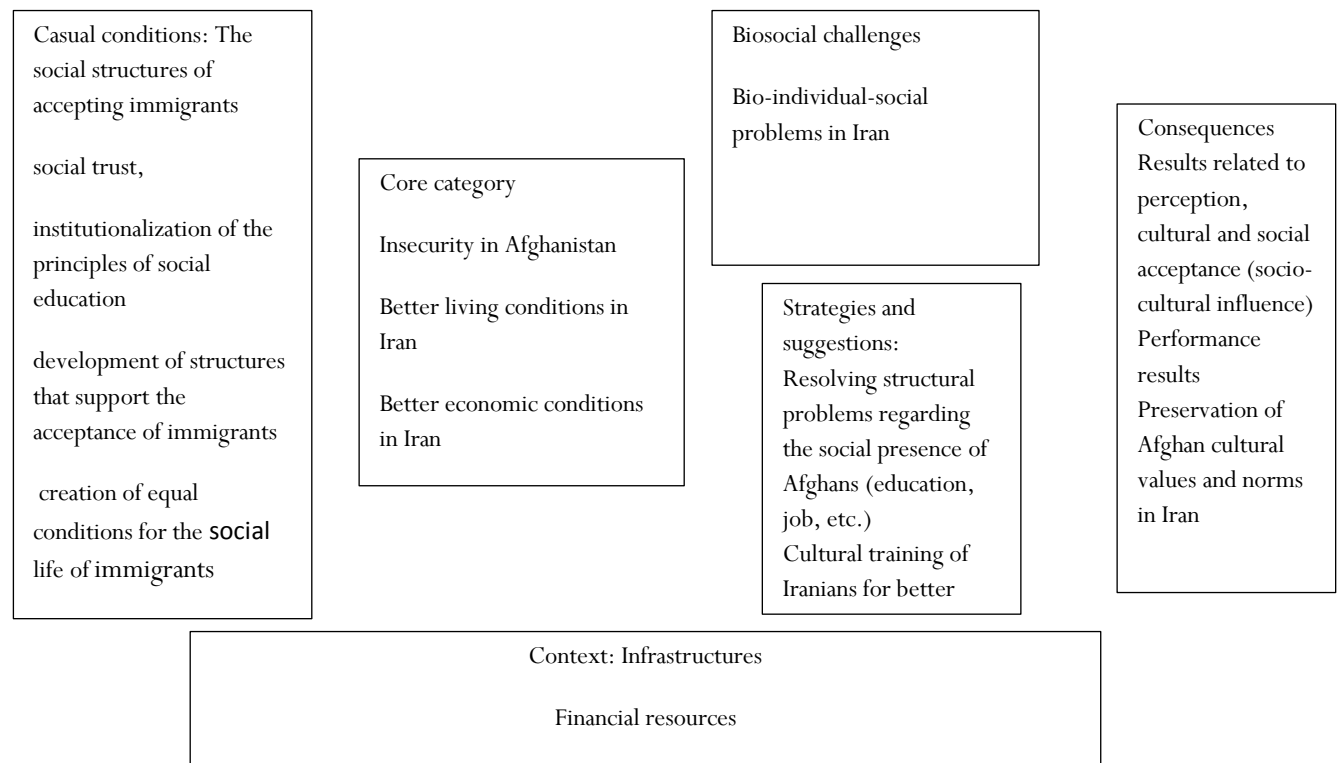
|                                                  | Iranians                                                               |             |
|--------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------|
| Acceptance of Iranian society's values and norms | Acceptance and performance of common traditions                        | 1, 3 and 10 |
|                                                  | Understanding and acceptance of some aspects of Iranian social culture | 2 and 3     |
|                                                  | Participation in Iranian friendly gatherings                           | 2, 3 and 6  |
|                                                  | Family relationships and marriage with Iranians                        | 10 and 15   |

The results of the common themes reported in Table 2 for examining the socio-cultural susceptibility of Afghan immigrant families from Iran showed that 7 concepts in 4 themes of security and better living conditions in Iran (with 3 concepts of insecurity in Afghanistan, better living conditions in Iran, and better economic conditions in Iran), individual-social life problems in Iran (with 2 concepts of social life problems in Iran and educational problems of Afghans in Iran), cultural-social acceptance or influence (with 1 concept of acceptance of Iranian society's values and norms), and maintaining Afghan identity while being influenced by Iranian culture-social (with 1 concept of preserving Afghan customs and cultural values in Iran) were identified.

**Table 2.** Results of common themes for the sociological investigation of cultural-social influence on Afghan immigrant families from Iran

| Theme                                                                             | Category                                                 |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------|
| Security and Health for Better Living Conditions in Iran                          | Insecurity in Afghanistan                                |
|                                                                                   | Better living conditions in Iran                         |
|                                                                                   | Better economic conditions in Iran                       |
| Individual and Social Life Challenges in Iran                                     | Social life problems in Iran                             |
|                                                                                   | Education problems for Afghans in Iran                   |
| Cultural and Social Acceptance or Influence                                       | Acceptance of Iranian society's values and norms         |
| Preserving Afghan Identity while being influenced by Iranian culture and society. | Preservation of Afghan cultural values and norms in Iran |

The results of the analysis based on the grounded theory reported in Figure 1 for examining the socio-cultural susceptibility of Afghan immigrant families from Iran showed that in the causal conditions of social structures accepting immigrants, four concepts of social trust, institutionalization of social upbringing principles, development of structures supporting immigrant acceptance, and creating equal conditions for immigrants' social life, in the central phenomenon of security, health, and better living conditions in Iran, three concepts of insecurity in Afghanistan, better living conditions in Iran, and better economic conditions in Iran, in the background conditions of infrastructure, two concepts of financial resources and human resources, in the intervening conditions of challenges of Afghan immigrant social life in Iran, one concept of individual-social life problems in Iran, in the proposed solutions for accepting and participating immigrants in Iranian society, two concepts of solving structural problems in the presence of Afghans and cultural education of Iranians for better acceptance of Afghan immigrants, and in the consequences of the results of immigrants' life in Iran, three concepts of interpretive results and cultural-social acceptance, performance results and preservation of Afghan cultural traditions and values in Iran were identified.



**Figure 1.** The results of the analysis according to the grounded theory for the sociological investigation of the social-cultural influence on Afghan immigrant families from Iran

#### 4. Discussion

This research was conducted to examine the socio-cultural susceptibility of Afghan immigrant families from Iran. The findings of the study showed that 20 concepts in 7 themes of insecurity in Afghanistan (with 3 concepts of physical insecurity, economic insecurity, and financial insecurity), better living conditions in Iran (with 4 concepts of better health, preparation and hygiene of food, better environmental conditions for individuals, and better ethical feedback in society), better economic conditions in Iran (with 2 concepts of providing basic social living facilities and more economic opportunities), individual-social life problems in Iran (with 3 concepts of racial attitudes of Iranians towards Afghans, financial and economic discrimination against Afghans, and belittling the culture of native Afghans), preserving traditions and cultural values of Afghans in Iran (with 2 concepts of holding traditional Afghan ceremonies and the relationship of young Afghans with traditional Afghan ceremonies), educational problems of Afghans in Iran (with 2 concepts of structural problems in Afghan education and negative cultural and racial attitudes by some Iranians towards Afghans), and acceptance of Iranian society's values and norms (with 4 concepts of accepting and performing common traditions, understanding and accepting some aspects of Iranian social culture, participating in friendly gatherings with Iranians, and family relationships and marriage with Iranians) were identified. These findings were consistent with the findings of Tofangchi Mahyari et al (2021), Hakimzadeh et al (2013), and Jafarinia and Bazrafshan (2012) studies.

The causal conditions of social structures accepting immigrants consist of four categories: social trust, institutionalization of social upbringing principles, development of structures supporting immigrant acceptance, and creating equal conditions for immigrant social life. These causal conditions lead to the phenomenon of acceptance and development, and social structures accepting immigrants play a fundamental role in better and deeper social acceptance of Afghan immigrants. The phenomenon of security, health, and better living conditions in Iran has three categories: insecurity in Afghanistan, better

living conditions in Iran, and better economic conditions in Iran. Based on interviews with Afghan individuals, security, health, and better living conditions were identified as the main basis and pillar of the research. In other words, after collecting and analyzing data in the first stage and examining the presented characteristics, this category was selected as the central issue and indicated the overall satisfaction of Afghan immigrants with their life in Iran compared to their conditions in Afghanistan. The background conditions consist of two categories: financial resources and human resources. Background conditions refer to specific conditions that affect actions and interactions, and these conditions are a set of concepts, variables, or background categories, with financial and human resources being the most important. Intervention conditions for the social life challenges of Afghan immigrants have one category: individual-social life problems in Iran. Intervention conditions are factors that affect the acceptance of Afghan immigrants in Iranian society and can act as a challenge and obstacle. Proposed solutions for accepting and involving immigrants in Iranian society consist of two categories: addressing structural problems in the social presence of Afghans and cultural education of Iranians for better acceptance of Afghan immigrants. Proposed solutions refer to targeted behaviors, activities, and interactions that are adopted in response to the central issue and under the influence of intervention conditions, and these issues are referred to as strategies. The consequences of the results of the lives of immigrants in Iran have three categories: interpretive results and cultural-social acceptance, performance results, and preservation of Afghan cultural traditions and values in Iran. Some categories indicate the results and consequences that are created as a result of adopting strategies. The result of the actions and interactions created and influenced by the causal conditions, are the core category and dominant context.

In general, the effective factors on migration and cultural-social influence can be divided into two categories: push and pull factors, such as political, social, economic, cultural, and natural factors. Although many immigrants returned to Afghanistan from neighboring countries, the workforce of these immigrants, due to economic and social insecurity, resumed periodic or chain migration after living in Afghanistan for a while, and most poor families sought to send one of their workers to Iran to provide for their livelihoods. Such migrations of young people and the workforce have increased the migration rate in Afghanistan because even those who have never migrated during their lifetime are encouraged and motivated to migrate. Today, migration has become a type of travel among young people and the workforce in Afghanistan. The general conclusion of the research is that Afghan immigrant families have been able to adapt themselves to Iranian society in terms of social-cultural compatibility, job and career capabilities, and social trust and justice, and overall, they have received positive feedback, while maintaining a positive relationship with their language and accent and adherence to Afghan native traditions.

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