

SOCIAL NETWORK AND IRREGULAR MIGRATION: INSIGHTS FROM PAKISTANI
DEPORTEES

By

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ABSTRACT

Irregular migration to Europe remains a common pursuit among inhabitants of developing countries. For many irregular migrants, the decision to migrate is deeply rooted in their “migration dream”, an idealized vision of economic advancement, better livelihood, and upward social mobility. Irregular migration from Pakistan to Europe has become a common phenomenon, especially among young men and women from economically disadvantaged regions, shaped by complex socio-economic and cultural dynamics. This study argues that irregular migration from Pakistan to Europe is not merely an individual choice but a socially reinforced pathway, shaped by collective expectations and decision-making. This thesis delves into social networks' dynamic and complex role in facilitating irregular migration from Pakistan, focusing on how these networks operate across origin, transit, and destination countries. It further explores how the structural and relational dimensions of social networks change for irregular migrants and their effect on their migration trajectories. To achieve this, 11 Pakistani deportees, who attempted to migrate irregularly to Europe but were unsuccessful, shared their narratives and personal stories. These narratives were recorded through personal interviews, in which they were asked about their “migration dream”, how they accessed and utilized social networks, and how their migration trajectories evolved in response to shifts in their network size, strength, and density. The findings revealed that each deportee’s migration journey was distinct, shaped by critical events, chance encounters, and individual agency.

Keywords: Irregular Migration, Social Networks, Deportees, Migration Trajectories

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