

An Analysis of Adjustment Challenges of Academia Returns Migrants: An Evidence from South Asia

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ABSTRACT

The principal objectives of this research were to analyze their reintegration challenges and to dig out the way to use their social and human capital for getting benefit from the international political economy. Qualitative data were obtained from sixteen highly qualified return migrants in the universities of Faisalabad. Purposive and snowball sampling techniques were adopted to reach the respondents and in-depth interviews with them were conducted with the help of an interview guide. Thematic analysis was applied on the bases of case studies. The return migrants were facing multiple challenges at the institutional, political, and economic levels. They were less paid as they can get better salaries internationally. There is no channel to utilize their human and social capital appropriately that can be beneficial for enhancing the role of the country in the global political economy. The difficulties in the diffusion of new ideas, mismanagement at the professional level, cultural shock, lack of proper infrastructure, and political interference in academic institutions remained challengeable for them. The country should better utilize the capital of the highly qualified return migrants to uplift the political economy of the country.

Key Words: **International Political Economy, Return Migrants, Adjustment Challenges, Human Capital & Social Capital.**

Introduction

The movement of people, either across an international boundary or within a state, away from their regular place of residence is called migration. Migration could take any form whatsoever, including circular migration, climate migration, relocation, economic migration, facilitated migration, family migration, forced migration, human mobility, internal migration, international migration, irregular migration, labor migration, migrant migration, mixed migration, secure, orderly

and routine migration, resettlement, and return migration (IOM, 2019, pp. 137). As notified by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights of Migrants: "A return can be one step in the migration cycle in the context of well-governed migration policies, but the process is not necessarily the end" (United Nations, 2018, p. 12). The sustainable return was defined by Koser and Kuschminder (2015, p.8) as follows: "The person has re-joined the economic, social and cultural processes in his or her country of origin and feels secure and safe when they return". This concept is the same as that suggested by Cassarino (2014b). In the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), there is no efficient system of dissemination of information about readjustment/reintegration programs, investment, and job choices. To be successful, this information should be given in countries of destination via embassies before return. In a Cambodia return migrant survey, respondents listed the need for information on awareness of how to run a business, investment opportunities, work information on available positions, and skills training related to local employment opportunities (Hatsukano, 2019). The return migrants are often unaware of the political economy policies of the home country. Although social protection coverage in a few countries has made some progress, migrant workers remain among the least covered in the ASEAN region.

This was shown in a survey of 1,808 migrant workers in Cambodia, the Democratic People's Republic of Lao, Myanmar, and Vietnam, which found that only 28% of migrant workers were covered by public or private benefits programs, such as social security, workers' compensation or health insurance, upon return from Malaysia and Thailand as their destination countries (Harkins et al., 2017). It is the dire need of the time to develop economic and political policies for the return migrants so that we can get benefited from their human and social capital which can help in uplifting the role of the country in global political economy. The European University's Return and Development Platform (conducts analytical and empirical research on return and adjustment/reintegration in various regions) defines readjustment/reintegration: the mechanism involved in the socio-cultural, economic, and political life of the country of origin of the returning migrants (Cassarino, 2014b, p. 184).

International Organization of Migration (IOM) programs "Assisted Voluntary Return and Reintegration (AVRR)" are characterized by those who decide to return to their home country with administrative, logistical, or financial support to migrants who do not want to stay in a host country or transit country, as well as those who decide to return to their home country through Readjustment/reintegration assistance (IOM, 2019, pp. 10-11). A significant part of the AVRR programs endorse returns from Europe (Newland and Salant, 2018). There have been questions about the voluntary existence of these services (Webber, 2011; United Nations, 2013). "The Regional Guidelines for the Return and Readjustment/ reintegration of the Jobs Permit System of the Republic of Korea highlight "legislation, compliance orders or regulations acknowledging return migration of employees and establishing a distribution management system

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with corresponding programs and services through an agency, office or secretariat" as an important condition in countries of origin (ILO, 2015a, p. 3).

King (1978) concluded that there was a poor statistical context to the overlooked return migration phenomenon, and there was a lack of knowledge on spatial trends of return movements, political and economic prospects for returning migrants to establish their home areas, and social reintegration issues. Debart (1986) discussed the two main options available to governments. Option one required a definite strategy of reintegration to be instituted. Public assistance could be given to facilitate reintegration. Option two called for the implementation of reintegration into other economic and social services. As a consideration in overall policy planning, returned foreign workers must be included.

Pekin (1986) suggested the home nations must look for ways to benefit from the expertise and experience provided by returning migrant workers. As teachers and coaches, young professional returnees must be hired. Centers for vocational training must be built and maintained. Course certificates earned overseas must be recognized in the country of origin. Gill (2005) noted that the return mobility, however, was important for fostering sustainable growth in an expanding Europe because 'the returned researcher's networks were the conduit for other flows of students and researchers as well as new research and finance. Nonetheless, it had been recognized that mobile researchers will theoretically become 'locked out of their home country or 'locked into the host country after a while abroad.

Barrett & Mosca (2013) clarified several studies indicate that returning migrants can face serious problems with re-adjustment. The lack of social alienation and loneliness is seen as a significant factor in a successful standard of living (Sinclair et al., 1990). There had also been a strong positive correlation between social engagement and physical, cognitive, and psychological health outcomes in many international studies, particularly for older people (Sirven and Debrand 2008; Seeman et al., 2010). Similarly, a wide range of mental and physical health effects, such as depression, nursing home admission, and mortality, was predicted by isolation (Grenade and Boldy 2008; Hawkey & Cacioppo 2010; O'Lunaigh and Lawlor 2008).

Keeping in view the overlook of the problem in the literature, it is found that the phenomena of return migrants are not studied well while the researchers remained silent on the issues of highly qualified return migrants' issues especially in developing countries like Pakistan as they can significantly contribute in the political and economic policies of the country in the light of their wider experiences abroad. The principal objectives of this research were to analyze their reintegration challenges and to dig out the way to use their social and human capital for getting benefit from the international political economy; and to formulate recommendations for Pakistani authorities on how to best tailor reintegration services to returning migrants in Pakistan according to their needs as to guarantee a sustainable return. Additionally how can the country utilize their

capital for forming political and economic policies of the country as well as to consume their socio-human capital for getting benefit from the international political economy.

Research methodology

Qualitative research methods were chosen because ethical methods are very critical in seeking the significance that individuals offer to their experiences (Merriam, 1998). The highly qualified return migrants in the public Universities of Faisalabad were the population of the study. A sample of 16 respondents was approached with the help of purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The researcher used the snowball sampling technique to find more respondents as it was unique research in its nature and was hard to find the respondents by using only the purposive sampling technique. It involved using personal contacts to build up a sample of the group to be studied. An interview guide was used for data collection and in-depth interviews were made with the respondents. Data was collected in the months of November 2020 to January 2021. A smartphone was used for recording conversations and, except for a couple, almost all conversations were entirely recorded. All participants preferred to have the interviews at their workplaces where they felt more relaxed in their atmosphere and thus encouraged them to talk more freely and openly on the research subject. The case studies were written at the individual level and thematic analysis was applied at the group level. Semantic content analysis was used to produce a list of occurrences of themes. In semantic content analysis occurrences and meaning inherent in the text, are reported (Onwuegbuzie et al., 2009).

Results and analysis

The emerging themes that were obtained from the data is discussed below. The themes are reported with explanations from the original data. The two key themes/codes that emerged from the data are discussed in the table 1 below:

Table 1: Major themes, sub-themes, and examples that how respondents describe these themes

No.	Themes	Sub-themes	Words respondents used to describe
1.	Institutional reintegration challenges	Joblessness Cultural Shock Mismanagement Lack of social capital (Professional level) lack of labs and research facilities Unfair treatment	HEI's remained unsuccessful to offer jobs to returnees Things get surprisingly changed Unplanned infrastructure & mismanagement Those who stay here get strong links at the professional level

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		Difficulty in diffusing new ideas	as compared to those who migrate abroad and return back Non-availability of well-equipped labs and research environment The employees are not treated equally or on merit basis It is not easy to diffuse new ideas that we learnt abroad. People discourage this and follow a rigid traditional way to work
2.	Economic Challenges	Surety Bond Under paid employment at home country Better paid job opportunity at the destination country High inflation rate	Signed surety bond was a reason to return and challenge to stay in Pakistan Had a job at a home country which is underpaid in the context of international offers and economy They can get better paid internationally with their qualification. Their salaries are less in Pakistan Due to high inflation rate, it is difficult to survive in current salary. The change in salary is often minimal.
3	Political Challenges	Political interference in academic institutions Lack of information and policies for return migrants No proper channel to address the challenges of returnees	People are treated unfairly here there exists political interference in academic institutions No policies for returnees and no statistics available They are not aware of any platform where their challenges and issues can be addressed. It is not in the preference of government political and economic policies

4	Societal challenges	Cultural Shock	Cultural shock in socio-cultural matters
		Criticism	Irrelevant criticism and interference of people in life
		Lack of social capital (Personal level)	Living abroad brought changes in the social relationships and linkages at home country
		Lack of humanity	People don't try to genuinely help each other
		Purposelessness	People spent hours on purposeless talks

Source: Author's own survey (2020-2021)

Theme 1 Institutional reintegration challenges

After returning, the people also face the issues at their home countries that were the major concern of our research. The respondents who lived in well-managed and organized societies for few years and adopted the good habits from the culture of the destination country face problems in their reintegration into the home country even in their institutions and working environment. Upon his/her return to the home country, he/she got a reverse culture shock because the culture of Pakistani society needs a lot of improvements. The institutions are not giving the space to the new ideas of the highly qualified return migrants. In Pakistan, there is no system to manage those who return home especially for those who return after higher education. Those who had a job before migration can get back to their jobs upon their return but those who studied abroad on a self-based; they face a lot of issues in finding jobs. They even remain jobless after getting higher education because there is no system to help them to reintegrate. There is no system to even keep the records of return migrants. Due to the mismanagement in institutions, the returnees who got jobs face a lot of difficulties at the professional level. "When I was abroad I knew that my issues can be resolved even with a single email but here in Pakistan, I have to visit several offices again and again for my right demand. The staff did not bother to help me in solving my genuine problems. This is the common behavior in Pakistani institutions to create hurdles rather than to facilitate their employees in their work. They did not welcome new ideas of work" (Case study 1).

The returnees were also facing issues in their social capital upon their return because there exists a gap between the returnee and the institution in which he/she was working. They felt a lack of social capital in comparison to those who were there all the time but those who live abroad could hardly make references especially political and influential links at home country that can help them in the time of need. They believed that their colleagues are ahead of them for those years which they spent abroad because during that period they build strong relations at the

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departmental level, institutional level; and political level. “I believe if a person graduates from Pakistan then it is possible that he may have some political interference or strong political or social references to get a job here in Pakistan in comparison to that person who studied abroad and had weak social ties in the home country” (Case Study 15).

The respondents stated that there is a lack of infrastructure including sufficient experiment laboratories, independent offices, multimedia, printer, photocopier, and several others that the researcher can operate without hesitation and facilitate him/her in their work. Even if there are labs then they are not fully equipped and most of the time students have to buy expensive lab equipment and chemicals by their own. “Reintegration is not a big problem but the actual problem is the frustration regarding the lack of research facilities as you cannot utilize and transfer what you learned abroad for the betterment of your students” (Case Study 2). There is a challenge that our respondents discussed are that “In our society, people are often treated differently or I may say unfairly based on their socio-economic status, while at abroad everyone is treated fairly without any discrimination. Abroad, everybody had to follow the queue for everything and be treated fairly while in Pakistan people are treated unfairly” (Case Study 1, 2).

Theme 2: Economic challenges

A surety bond was signed between the respondents and the government. It was like a contract between both stakeholders that the person going abroad for higher studies on scholarship would have to get back to home country and serve for a specific period (mostly five years) at a government institution. Those who got the scholarship from the foreign organization and went abroad on study leave already had a job at home country. So, they did also sign the surety bond that they would be back and continue their job. One of the respondents got back to the home country as he got a good and timely job offer so he availed that opportunity and came back. One of the respondents was working on a contract basis and he left his job to study abroad but after completion of his higher studies, he got a permanent job offer which leads him to get back at home country. Many of the countries don't offer their citizenship to the migrated people who belong to any other country. But mutually, they stated that they can earn better in abroad with their degrees rather than the salary they are getting in Pakistan.

One of the respondent said that “I came back as I got a timely job offer from Pakistan and as it was hard to get a permanent job abroad but here, I am getting less paid even than my scholarship amount” (Case Study 16). Another respondent added that “My PhD supervisor was offering me a much better package over there while here I am not even earning the half of this package. I got several offers from other countries but I couldn't join as I signed a surety bond with my university. The thing that bothers me more is that my university did not utilize my human and social capital what I earned abroad.” (Case

Study 1). Another return migrant from Germany stated that “The increasing inflation rate is not allowing me to survive in my current salary in Pakistan while in Germany, I can make savings from my scholarship amount and the situation was much better. Our country has no clear political and economic policies as well as educational policies. We are sending thousands of people to abroad for foreign degrees but after they came back successfully, we don't bother to use their skills that they learned abroad even higher education commission remained unsuccessful to offer them the jobs according to their status”.

Theme 3: Political challenges

The highly qualified return migrants faced political interference in their academic institutions as it exists in academic institutions of Pakistan. The politicians influence at the time of admission and job vacancies at government institutions. Politician also interferes in the provision of grades to students. They have strong references in academic institutions because of their position and authority so they misuse their power by interfering in academic institutions. “I believe if a person graduates from Pakistan then it is possible that he may have some political interference or strong references to get a job here in Pakistan” (Case Study 15). One of the respondents said that “The returns face political interference in academic institutions as it exists in academic institutions of Pakistan. The politicians sell the admission seats and jobs at government institutions. Politician also interferes in the provision of grades to students. They have strong references in academic institutions because of their position and authority so they misuse their power by interfering in academic institutions. “I believe if a person graduates from Pakistan then it is possible that he may have some political interference or strong references to get a job here in Pakistan” (Case Study 15). Another highly qualified return migrant explained that “The main task of the politicians is to make the policies with the help of educationist, economist and other experts, not to influence the decisions of institutions. We need strong policies and implementation for upgrading our economy and this is not possible without the help of politicians” (Case study 1 & 5).

Theme 4: Societal challenges

The culture of Pakistan is much different from the cultures of other countries. It is harder for Pakistani people to get adjusted to any other culture, because of the social system, family system, and social norms. Most of the countries have different family systems, they don't live together, there is less intimacy among the families but in Pakistan, there exists a strong bonding and intimacy among the families. “I realized that the culture of China is different from Pakistan, here in Pakistan we live together with our parents and children but there they ask their children to live in a separate home when they get mature” (Case Study 4). One of the respondent said that “when I came back, I observed that the Pakistani society is the victim of purposelessness. People can stand with friends for hours and never

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realize the price of their time. Not only the government, but the society is also the reason of being underdeveloped” (Case Study 7). Many of our respondents stated that the people criticize each other with no productive outcome. Even they felt themselves misfit in the culture of Pakistan. There is lack of humanity in our country even though we are Muslims. One person said that “nobody bothers to help a person on the road side accident rather they make a crowd and things become difficult to operate for the concerned personals also. I called it inhuman behavior. People don’t care about the rights of pedestrian” (Case Study, 1 & 16). They also feel that even in their personal life, there is a lack of social capital because there was a gap in their stay in Pakistan.

Discussion

All the themes discussed above collectively shows challenges that are being faced by the returnees at home country after spending their time abroad and adopting the foreign culture. Respondents reported that in Pakistan there is no system to keep the record of those who went abroad for higher studies or any purpose and not about who return or stayed abroad after the completion of their degrees. The government is not paying attention to reverse brain drain into brain gain. Most of the highly qualified people return home only because of some specific reasons like a surety bond, permanent job at home country and due to their families. If they compare the facilities and salary packages between the home country and the country of the destination, they may never wish to get back home as there are no special services or treatment for them at their home country and their services are not properly utilized in their institutions. The country invested a huge amount in their human capital formation but the utilization of return remained challengeable as the administration is not interested to utilize their services and capabilities after their return. Their ideas are not appreciated and they face problems to introduce new things in their institutions. Our institutions are following rigid and conservative system which is not accepting new ideas. As Arif (1998) indicated in his studies that among returning migrants, unemployment rates were much higher than among non-migrants which is totally the concern of our country’s policy makers and economists. Similarly, Dumon (1986) explained that the returnee was most often seen by the receiving country as similar to the migrant who left years ago; issues of socio-cultural reintegration were not understood and no action is taken in that direction. The economic condition and job situation of the homeland might not be sufficiently good to implement social services for returnees. Political infrastructure is not very supportive and fair in this matter. As in our case, most of the respondents had already job at their home country and they returned to their jobs. Returnees might have difficulty finding new friends and help from the group. After availing all the research facilities abroad when a person comes back to his/her home country, he misses those research facilities and the research

environment, cultural, political and economic policies of the developed countries. The return migrants face inequality, lack of discipline, lack of properly enforced laws, and lack of justice, low social capital, and political involvement in educational institutions.

Conclusion

At the end of the research, we concluded that the adjustment challenges of highly qualified return migrants are raising day by day as none of the government institutes is paying attention to analyze the challenges and providing facilities to overcome those challenges. The government is not bothering to utilize their skills properly even after the government paid the investment cost by themselves. There are no policies to entertain the migrants who get back after completing their higher studies. They face a lot of challenges in their everyday life at personal, institutional, economic and political level. They face mismanagement, lower standards of living, an unorganized society, unfair treatment, political interference in academic institutions, lack of health and medical facilities, poor research environment, no availability of international standard teachers, books, and the teaching system. They get all these facilities abroad which they can't avail at home country. A surety bond, terms and conditions, permanent jobs, family, and the social system of Pakistan were the only reasons for the migrants to return.

Recommendations

On the basis of research, the researchers recommend that the efforts should be made to direct return migration when employment is available. Higher Education Commission should make agreements and allow recognition of studies and accreditation of international degrees and diplomas which is the major concern and challenge of academia return in our study. The country-to-country social security conventions should be expanded to include the transfer of benefits and acknowledgment of years of work. The assistance should be given to countries in carrying out longitudinal studies on problems of readjustment/ reintegration and steps to fix them. There must be more opportunities and facilities for returns to get back to their home country willingly, not only for the surety bond or terms and conditions of the scholarship. The human capital they formed abroad should be utilized properly rather than focusing on traditional system; their new ideas should be welcomed and support them in their ideas than can be helpful for the academia. To eliminate these adjustment challenges faced by return migrants the government should launch a special program that would deal only with academia returns and utilize their skills, knowledge, and potential for the growth and political economy of the country. The government should also provide them better or equal research and living facilities than abroad that would work as a pull factor to reverse the process of brain gain. Better salary packages should offer to them and get benefited from their international exposure of different country. Their human and

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social capital can help the country to get benefited from the global political economy. The government and higher education commission should not forget the return motive behind the investment in highly qualified return migrants.

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