Feminization of Immigration From Iran Since 1979

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ABSTRACT

At first, I will study immigration patterns of Iranian women after 1979 revolution. This study will attempt to see how these immigration patterns of Iranian women have transformed from 1979. More specifically, this study will concentrate on What are the motives of Iranian women to leave the country? Besides analyzing immigration patterns of Iranian women after 1979, factors like gender inequality, Human development index, unemployment rate, UNHCR statistics will be compared. In order to study how immigration patterns of Iranian women have transformed after 1979 interview will be conducted to see motives of women for immigration. In this study, I don’t have access to informal statistics and the statistics of illegal immigration. And this can be considered as limitations which I faced during my research activity.

Keywords: Feminisation, Feminisation of Migration, Patterns of Immigration

I. FEMINISATION OF IMMIGRATION

The phenomenon of immigration is not a gender neutral process. Women’s immigration is a complex process which is often related to specific gender based oppression (Stancia, 2018). The phenomenon of ‘feminisation of immigration’, is defined and understood in various ways by different people. It requires a comprehensive analysis in the context of the complexity of contemporary patterns of international immigration (Piper, 2008). Overall changes are gradually becoming evident not only with regard to the increased volume of female immigrants, but also with regard to the diversified patterns of their migration, including source and destination countries, and the qualitative nature and experience of their immigration (in terms of working conditions, range of entitlements, skill levels, etc). The roles of women as passive agents of immigration process are changing and women are taking active role in global mobility. Feminisation of immigration is a research branch that does research on how femininity and has converted to the agent of these mobilization activities in the world.

There can be seen in statistics of global institutions like UNHCR, ILO show that there are diversity and upsurge in a number of women who leave their hometown. Moreover, demographic are slowly bringing the immigration of women to the forefront as women become the majority of immigrants worldwide (Siantz, 2013).

Rising numbers female immigrants can be associated with changing politico-economic structures. Moreover, a gender analysis emphasises the significance of broader social factors involved in influencing women’s and their access to resources, facilities and services (Piper, 2008).

Female immigrants comprise slightly more than half of all international migrants in Europe and Northern America. In 2019, the share of females among all international migrants reached 51.4 per cent in Europe and 51.8 per cent in Northern America (UN DESA, 2019).

This quantitative increase of female immigrants, generally labelled under the slogan “feminisation of immigration”, conceals complex and ambivalent dynamics and does not necessarily translate into concrete and clear opportunities for women’s empowerment (Sabates-Wheeler & Kabeer, 2003). Also, Feminisation of these global mobility can be associated with transformation in mobility trends.

According to statistics of ILO 2018, the larger presence of females in the international migrant stock is also reflected in the proportion of female migrant workers in these regions. 39.8 per cent and 25.8 per cent of all female migrant workers worldwide reside in Europe and Northern America respectively while 26.3 per cent and 21.1 per cent of all male migrant workers live in Europe and Northern America respectively.

There is first of all the geographic dimension: UN reports typically make reference to ‘Asia’ by including West Asia, or the Gulf countries. The number of women immigrating from countries like Iran has clearly surpassed that of men.
Two important changes in women’s mobility which are relevant to the discussion here. First, and most evident, is the diversification of immigrant women regarding origin countries in the search for overseas employment. As demands for immigrant women’s labour increased in the region and the sociopolitical situation changed in certain countries, opportunities opened up for women who originate from countries that had not previously been sources of immigrant labour (Piper, 2008).

Since the times of Ernest Ravenstein, the author of women migration law from 19th century, economic motives have been considered to be a particular role in whole migration issue. Moreover, In the view of neoclassical economics, migration is a result of individual thoughts about profit maximization (Doleka & Lewczeuk, 2015). But the case of Iranian women cannot be clarified just by interest maximization. Just one factor cannot be satisfactory for clarification of a phenomenon.

In this study, the case of Iranian who have left Iran after 1979 revolution will be studied. Which factors have affected these mobility process? Did Iranian women leave their country because of unequal distribution of resources or there are more reasons for this mobility?

II. WAVES OF IMMIGRATION FROM IRAN

Over 3.1 million Iranian-born people have emigrated from Iran, out of whom over 2.6 million (83%) have left the country since 1979. Since 1980, nearly 1.0 million Iranians have applied for asylum. About half a million people prior to the 1979 revolution to 3.1 million in 2019, corresponding to 1.3% and 3.8% of the country’s population, respectively. Overall, top destination countries for Iranian migrants include the United States, Canada, Germany, and the United Kingdom. We also estimate that a total of about 700,000 Iranian-born individuals have attended foreign universities. The trend in the number of Iranian-born students enrolled in foreign universities has shown three distinct phases: the number sharply increased in the decade leading to the 1979 revolution, then significantly declined in the two decades ensuing the revolution, and again has been on an upward trend thereafter (Azadi et al., 2020).

After 1979 revolution different mass migration happened. The people who left Iran were educated. The first wave of migration was six months before 1979 revolution and continued one year after revolution and these migration wave continued after the first selected president were removed under political oppression after 1979 revolution. As mentioned highly educated class who were connected with royal family left Iran after 1979.

The second wave of happened after eight years of Iran-Iraq war. After 1989, passport was given and different sections of society from middle class.

The third wave was during presidency of Mohammad Khatemi when riot in university happened, and again waves of university students left Iran and moved toward developed countries. Another human capital movement happened when educated sections of society lost the sense of being secure in the society.

And fourth wave was in 2010 when green movement after presidential election formed. New generation who were born after after 1979 revolution had different expectations and life styles and they weren't satisfied with what was imposed on them. Feminisation of mass from Iran cannot be studied without considering political contexts and discourse.
As there can be seen in the Graph of Stanford, there has been always increase in the ratio of immigrants to the population and there is not that much difference between women and men who resettled in other countries 79% of men and 76% of women resettled in the third countries. It should be declared that I dont have access to who number of women who informally or by illegal ways left the country and by illegal means reside in third countries. But approximately half of the population are women.

Fig. 2. UNHCR statistics on refugee resettlement.

III. PUSH AND PULL FACTORS ON FEMALE IMMIGRATION

This study looks at the different wider array of push and pull factors that female immigration. Iranian women are those individuals that have affected alot by 1979 revolution. After 1979 revolution women’s life transformed at different levels. Women life at Social Level, Legal level, Cultural level, Educational level, Citizenship level transformed. Women’s status at every level has transformed.

Let’s start with legal status of women in front of law. And Citizenship status of women. Iranian women have lost their “Secular” status which they had before the revolution and gained an “Islamic” identity by the new system.

By Islamic revolution every aspect of women life including clothing, freedom of what to wear and how to live is affected by the new system. In Iran’s legal system, Hijab and Obligatory Hijab is part of legal system and it is not selective. All women including women who are not Muslim are obliged to wear Hijab. Even religious minorities are obliged to wear hijab. There is no obligatory clothing for men. According to Islamic Punishment law, Number 638, in Iran women cannot be in public places without hijab. In case that violated imprisonment from ten days to two months or fining from 50000 to 500000 Riyal.

Hijab and Obligatory Hijab is part of legal system and it is not selective. All women including women who are not Muslim are obliged to wear Hijab. Even religious minorities are obliged to wear hijab. Many discriminatory laws can be found in Iran’s 1936 civil code. After the Islamic Republic of Iran came to power in 1979, the authorities rolled back the progress made by legislation enacted in 1976 promoting gender equality, particularly in family law, and returned to these earlier legal provisions while also enforcing a dress code as a prerequisite for appearing in public life (HRW, 2017).

Moreover, After revolution, Family law occupies a special place in sharia law. It regulates aspects such as marriage, divorce, custody, the matrimonial regime, domestic violence. Family law in most of the region declare that the husband is the head of the family, give the husband power over his wife’s right to work and travel. The wife should obey his husband (Milli, 2009). After 1979 revolution, Iranian Civil rule number 1105 declares that women without husband permission cannot leave home. Also according to the passport regulation Number 19 women cannot leave country and reside in another place without husband permission.

Moreover, Iranian women have lost their access to employment opportunities and grand policies of State and governments is toward restriction of women at legal level and employability of women. In Iran women cannot become judges. They cannot become leader because just clergymen can become leader and this is in monopoly of clergy men.

Discrimination and inequality in different aspects and levels are prevalent in Iranian society. Moreover, Iranian women are not satisfied with traditional roles that were imposed on them by traditional norms of
the society and predefined roles of Legal system for these women. Legal system in Iran has imposed
different restriction on women for keeping family construction as stable as possible. But How these legal,
political and social restriction has resulted in?

Iranian society in which is male dominated and patriarch. In all areas these domination of men continues.
Rarely women have natural rights of every free human being in the world.

Beside political factors different social norms and values of Iranian society has transformed after 1979
revolution. The needs and requests of society transformed. From traditional form of family to a core form
of family and more equality seeking form of family.

IV. GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX (GII) IN IRAN

Gender Inequality Index (GII) gender-based inequalities in three dimensions – reproductive health,
empowerment, and economic activity. Reproductive health is measured by maternal mortality and
adolescent birth rates; empowerment is measured by the share of parliamentary seats held by women and
attainment in secondary and higher education by each gender; and economic activity is measured by the
labour market participation rate for women and men. The GII can be interpreted as the loss in human
development due to inequality between female and male achievements in the three GII dimensions.

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<th>TABLE I: GENDER INEQUALITY INDEX</th>
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<td>GII value</td>
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<td>Iran (Islamic Republic of)</td>
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Fig. 3. Female labour force participation in Iran (The Global Economy, 2021).

Iran (Islamic Republic of) has a GII value of 0.492, ranking it 118 out of 162 countries in the 2018 index.
In Iran (Islamic Republic of), 5.9 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, and 67.4 percent of
adult women have reached at least a secondary level of education compared to 72.0 percent of their male
counterparts. For every 100,000 live births, 25.0 women die from pregnancy related causes; and the
adolescent birth rate is 40.6 births per 1,000 women of ages 15-19. Female participation in the labour market
is 16.8 percent compared to 71.2 for men.

Fig. 4. Female unemployment in Iran (The Global Economy, 2020).
The average value of female unemployment for Iran during that period was 18.51 percent with a minimum of 13.41 percent in 1996 and a maximum of 24.45 percent in 1991. The latest value from 2020 is 18.97 percent. For comparison, the world average in 2020 based on 182 countries is 8.49 percent.

V. TRANSFORMATION OF GENDER VALUES AND NORMS AND MIGRATION

Can feminization of migration after 1979 revolution be considered a reaction toward the violation of women rights at different levels and different areas? There have been different movements that requested revision of women rights in legal domain and revision of government policies towards women at broader level. But there was rarely any positive change and reaction by the government to answer the natural and primitive claims and requests of women. Always there was suppression of women. Also, they silenced women by different strategies and styles. But these claims and request are not removed from the minds and heads of the brilliant Iranian women. They have tried different routes. At the educational level, they gained success and they could show that their activities and shouting mouths won't stop even if they face with no hearing ears of government. Iranian women outnumber males in Iran’s 2017 university entrance exam (Tehran Times, 2017).

women's participation in higher education is gradually growing and gender boundaries are being stretched on a daily basis, there is need for fundamental structural changes in social and educational spheres, and widespread implementation of positive discrimination (Rahbari, 2016).

Ladan rahbari summarizes her findings regarding women in higher education as follows; First, gender discrimination is restricting women's choices by systematically excluding them from educational, managerial and administrative positions. Second, in spite of the substantial increase in women's enrolment in tertiary education and the great increase in the number of female graduates in higher degrees of education, due to the existing structural obstacles, a significant change in women's position and role in the academia and higher education has not taken place.

Women who have educated themselves don’t tolerate the traditional roles and positions that were imposed them by patriarch system and minds. And prescribed roles by the patriarch system is rejected by Iranian women

Feminisation of a migration can be considered as a reaction or response toward the patriarchic system that rejects any transformation in Iranian women’s life and has imposed monolithic life style to women after 1979 revolution. In an interview with twenty educated women who have left Iran. They summarized different reasons for their decision in leaving Iran. They can’t tolerate the prescriptive roles for women and as they see no chance for changing and reform in structure which imposes restrictions on them. They prefer to continue their life outside Iranian borders and empower themselves outside Iran.

Women who educated themselves are on the verge of revolution. They gain education and they can't tolerate the prescribed roles and positions that were imposed on them by the patriarchic system. They prefer to continue their life outside Iranian borders and empower themselves outside Iran. But these claims and requests of women in Iran weren't answered.

Just It should be mentioned migration is one of the routes that women move toward. There are other routes and reactions which may result in ethical break down of society if suppression of women continues more.

VI. CONCLUSION

Women’s migration can neither be understood solely from within a political economy approach whereby mobility is the inevitable outcome of an unequal distribution of economic and political power on a worldwide basis. Structural discrimination and absence of positive obligation of government and state towards Iranian women can be one of the factors that has affected increasing volume of migrant women.

Multiple push-and-pull factors result in the immigration of women. These include complex interactions among economic, social, familial, and political factors as well as denial of access to education, employment, and healthcare and the lack of respect for basic human rights. Because in many societies, women are marginalized from such rights, migration to more economically and educationally open societies often can help improve their personal situations and employment opportunities. Lack of positive protection by the government and state. Moreover, lack of legal protection of women at different arenas have caused that Iranian women to immigrate and search protection in other countries. To sum up, pushing factors which motivate women to leave the country overweights the pulling factors that want to keep at Iran.
REFERENCES


