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Research Article

Life Between Two Worlds: Social Experiences of Forced Migrants in Host Communities and Native Lands

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Abstract

Forced migration has emerged as one of the most pressing social and humanitarian challenges in the contemporary world. Millions of people are displaced each year due to armed conflict, political instability, terrorism, environmental disasters, and insecurity. Such displacement often affects migrants' social mobility, resulting in downward mobility through the loss of property, livelihood, and social status, while also creating opportunities for upward mobility through access to new social and economic resources. This study examines the social experiences of forced migrants within host communities, their emotional, social, and cultural attachment to their native land, and the impact of forced migration on their social mobility. A quantitative research design was employed, and primary data were collected from 250 respondents through stratified random sampling. The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), while cross-tabulation (contingency table) analysis through Chi-square tests was applied to assess the relationship between forced migration, social mobility, and other key variables. The study was conducted in District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan, a historically significant region that experienced large-scale internal displacement following military operations and security instability in 2007. The findings reveal that forced migration extends beyond economic survival and significantly influences social acceptance, discrimination, access to opportunities, and emotional attachment to the homeland. The study further highlights that forced migrants continuously negotiate between adapting to host communities and maintaining strong social and cultural ties with their native areas. These findings support the central theme of the study, "Life Between Two Worlds," and emphasize the multidimensional social realities of forced migration in conflict-affected regions.

Keywords

Forced Migration, Social Mobility, Host Community Integration, Emotional Attachment, Internal Displacement, Social Acceptance, Return Intention

1. Introduction

Forced migration has emerged as one of the most significant social and humanitarian concerns of the contemporary world. Millions of individuals and families migrate each year due to armed conflict, political instability, terrorism, environmental disasters, and insecurity. Unlike voluntary migration, forced migration occurs under conditions where people have little or no choice but to leave their homes to ensure their safety and survival. This movement not only changes geographical location but also deeply influences the social, cultural, psychological, and economic lives of forced migrants.

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Forced migrants often find themselves living between two worlds: maintaining emotional and cultural attachment to their native lands while simultaneously adapting to the social realities of host communities [5, 16].

The experience of forced migration is not limited to physical displacement. It also transforms social relationships, family structures, economic opportunities, cultural identity, and community participation. Forced migrants often leave behind homes, land, businesses, education, and established social networks. In host communities, they are required to rebuild their daily lives under new social and economic conditions, often with limited resources and uncertain prospects. This creates a complex situation in which migrants must negotiate belonging in a new environment while continuing to remain connected to their place of origin. Their experiences are shaped by both acceptance and rejection, adaptation and resistance, continuity and change [3, 9].

In many cases, forced migrants face difficulties in accessing employment, education, healthcare, housing, and other essential services in host communities. Economic insecurity may reduce their standard of living and weaken their previous social status. At the same time, migration can also open new pathways for survival and social mobility. Some displaced individuals develop new skills, adopt different occupations, expand social networks, and establish businesses that improve their livelihoods. Therefore, forced migration may result in both downward mobility due to loss of property and social standing, and upward mobility through access to new opportunities. These mixed outcomes demonstrate that displacement is not a single event but an ongoing social process that influences migrants' identities and life chances over time [6, 7].

The social experiences of forced migrants are particularly shaped by their position between host communities and native lands. Host communities represent the immediate environment where migrants seek shelter, security, employment, and social acceptance. Native lands continue to hold emotional, cultural, and symbolic importance because they represent memories, identity, family history, and belonging. Many forced migrants experience tension between adaptation in host communities and attachment to their homeland. While some gradually integrate into the host society, others continue to feel socially and emotionally disconnected due to uncertainty about return, loss of cultural familiarity, or exclusion from local social networks. This duality creates a condition of "living between two worlds," where migrants constantly balance old identities with new social realities [4].

In the context of Pakistan, forced migration has become a major social issue due to military operations, armed conflict, insecurity, and natural disasters in several regions. Large populations have experienced internal displacement and resettlement in different host communities. These displacement patterns have had significant social consequences for migrants and receiving communities alike. Families have experienced changes in economic resources, education access, social participation, and cultural practices. While policy responses often focus on humanitarian assistance and immediate relief, the broader social experiences of displaced communities, especially their adjustment in host communities and their continued connection with native lands, have received comparatively less sociological attention [10, 11].

This study, titled "Life Between Two Worlds: Social Experiences of Forced Migrants in Host Communities and Native Lands," aims to explore how forced migration shapes the social lives of displaced populations across both settings. The study focuses on migrants' lived experiences, including social interaction, economic adjustment, access to opportunities, social mobility, cultural continuity, and feelings of belonging. It examines how migrants adapt within host communities while maintaining relationships and identities connected to their native lands. By analysing these interconnected experiences, the study seeks to understand the broader social consequences of forced displacement.

The significance of this study lies in its sociological contribution to understanding forced migration beyond immediate displacement. Rather than viewing migration only as movement from one place to another, the study highlights displacement as a social process involving adaptation, negotiation, identity reconstruction, and changing life chances. It provides insight into how forced migrants rebuild their lives under difficult circumstances while navigating social expectations in both host communities and native environments. The findings may also contribute to policy and development planning by offering evidence relevant to rehabilitation, social protection, integration strategies, and community support programs for displaced populations [17].

Overall, forced migration creates profound social transformations that extend beyond relocation. It influences social mobility, family relations, economic survival, cultural traditions, and community belonging. Migrants often experience uncertainty, loss, and exclusion, but they may also develop resilience and discover new opportunities. Their lives reflect a continuous negotiation between past and present, homeland and host society, loss and rebuilding. Understanding these experiences is essential for addressing the long-term social consequences of forced displacement.

1.1. Research Question

1) What are the Social Experiences of Forced Migrants in Host Communities?
2) How do forced migrants maintain emotional, social, and cultural attachment to their native lands?
3) How does forced migration affect migrants' social mobility?

1.2. Objectives of the Study

1) To explore the social experiences of forced migrants in

host communities.
2) To examine migrants' emotional, cultural, and social attachment to their native lands.
3) To analyse the effect of forced migration on migrants' social mobility.

2. Literature Review

Forced migration has emerged as one of the most pressing humanitarian and sociological concerns worldwide, affecting millions of individuals and communities across different social and political contexts. It generally refers to the involuntary movement of people from their homes due to armed conflict, political violence, persecution, natural disasters, or insecurity. Unlike voluntary migration, forced migration often occurs suddenly and under threatening conditions, leaving individuals with limited resources and little time to prepare for relocation. As a result, displaced populations frequently face profound disruptions in their social, cultural, and economic lives [6].

From a sociological perspective, forced migration is not only a matter of physical relocation but also a complex process of social transformation. The movement from native communities to unfamiliar host environments often alters social relationships, identity, cultural practices, and patterns of livelihood. Scholars have argued that displacement reshapes family structures, weakens traditional community networks, and requires migrants to negotiate between preserving their cultural identity and adapting to new social realities [3, 8]. These transformations are particularly significant in societies where social life is strongly connected with kinship systems, language, customs, and local traditions.

Globally, previous research has documented that forced migration often produces multiple social consequences, including changes in cultural norms, educational opportunities, gender roles, psychological well-being, and community participation. Although displacement frequently creates economic hardship, emotional distress, and social exclusion, it may also expose migrants to new institutions, urban environments, and alternative livelihood opportunities that contribute to adaptation and social change. Therefore, the experience of forced migration is often characterized by both vulnerability and resilience, reflecting a dynamic process of adjustment and transformation [16].

In Pakistan, forced migration has remained a major social issue, particularly in the context of militancy and military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and the former Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA). Between 2007 and 2015, large-scale internal displacement occurred in areas including Swat, Bajaur, Mohmand, and South Waziristan. Among these, the displacement in District Swat represented one of the most significant internal migration crises in the country. Thousands of families were compelled to leave their homes and relocate to host communities such as Mardan, Peshawar, Charsadda, and Nowshera. This displacement not only disrupted livelihoods and settlement patterns but also produced noticeable socio-cultural and psychological changes among displaced households [12].

The Swat displacement experience is particularly important for sociological inquiry because migrants were required to manage life across two social worlds: their native communities shaped by long-standing traditions and kinship ties, and host communities characterized by new social norms, institutional systems, and urban interaction. This transition created significant changes in dress patterns, marriage practices, language use, gender roles, education, and awareness. While many families experienced hardship and uncertainty during displacement, others were exposed to new opportunities and broader social experiences. The nature of these experiences varied according to host-community acceptance, access to services, duration of displacement, and post-return rehabilitation.

Given this background, the present literature review examines major dimensions of forced migration among internally displaced persons from Swat, including dress and cultural appearance, marriage patterns, language change, parda system and gender roles, education, psychological well-being, and awareness. Reviewing these themes helps establish the sociological context of the study and provides a foundation for understanding how forced migrants experience life between host communities and their native lands.

2.1. Effects of Forced Migration on Migrant Communities

Forced migration is a global social phenomenon that occurs when individuals or communities are compelled to leave their homes because of armed conflict, terrorism, natural disasters, persecution, or insecurity. In Pakistan, one of the major examples of forced migration was the internal displacement of people from Swat, Bajaur, Mohmand, South Waziristan, and other areas due to military operations and militancy between 2007 and 2015. The displacement of the Swat population especially created significant socio-cultural, economic, and psychological changes among migrants living in host communities such as Mardan, Peshawar, Charsadda, Nowshera, and other districts [12].

Researchers argue that forced migration affects not only shelter and livelihood but also reshapes identity, traditions, language, family structure, and community relationships [6]. The migrants often face the challenge of adjusting to a new social environment while trying to preserve their native culture.

2.1.1. Dress and Cultural Appearance

Dress is one of the visible markers of cultural identity. Studies on internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Pakistan found that migrants from Swat gradually adopted urban clothing styles after living in host communities. Traditional dresses re-

mained common among elders, while youth became more influenced by host-community fashions. Women in particular adapted dress patterns according to mobility needs, local customs, and affordability [17].

Upon return to Swat, many families continued some of the new clothing habits learned during displacement, contributing to cultural change in native communities.

2.1.2. Marriage Patterns

Forced migration also affects marriage customs and kinship systems. Economic hardship during displacement often delays marriages because families lose income and property. Some families also arrange marriages earlier due to security concerns or to strengthen kinship support systems. In conservative Pashtun communities, marriage within biradari or tribe remained strong, but exposure to urban settings slightly increased acceptance of education-based spouse selection among younger generations [13].

2.1.3. Language Change

Language plays a central role in adaptation. Swat migrants mainly spoke Pashto, but displacement into mixed urban areas increased interaction in Urdu and sometimes English. Children enrolled in host-community schools often became more fluent in Urdu than their parents. This multilingual exposure improved communication skills but also created concerns regarding weakening native dialects [2].

After returning, migrants brought back stronger Urdu usage, especially among school-going children and youth.

2.1.4. Parda System and Gender Roles

The parda system and women's mobility were also influenced by forced migration. In host communities, women often had greater movement because they needed access to relief camps, hospitals, markets, and aid offices. Some women became more involved in education and income-generating activities. However, some families tightened parda practices due to insecurity and fear of harassment in unfamiliar places [14].

Thus, displacement created both conservative resistance and progressive social change depending on household attitudes.

2.1.5. Education

Education was heavily disrupted during displacement. Many children lost months or years of schooling due to camp conditions, poverty, lack of documents, and overcrowded schools. However, some host districts provided improved educational access compared with remote conflict areas. Studies found that displaced families increasingly recognized the importance of education after observing better school systems in settled districts [15].

After returning to Swat, many families showed stronger motivation to educate sons and daughters.

2.1.6. Psychological Effects

Forced migration causes severe psychological stress. Exposure to violence, sudden displacement, loss of home, uncertain future, and dependency on aid often led to anxiety, depression, fear, and trauma. Women, children, and elderly persons were particularly vulnerable. Research on Swat IDPs reported sleep disorders, insecurity, emotional distress, and identity loss among many families [1].

At the same time, social support networks, religion, and community solidarity helped many migrants develop resilience.

2.1.7. Awareness and Social Consciousness

Displacement also increased awareness among migrants. Contact with NGOs, government institutions, schools, hospitals, and urban systems exposed families to new ideas regarding hygiene, girls' education, civic rights, health care, and livelihood opportunities. Many returnees brought improved awareness about sanitation, modern education, and public services back to their native communities [9].

2.2. Conclusion

Forced migration among Swat IDPs was not only a humanitarian crisis but also a transformative social process. It altered dress patterns, marriage customs, language use, gender norms, educational aspirations, mental health, and awareness levels. While displacement caused hardship and trauma, it also exposed migrants to new opportunities and broader perspectives. The long-term impact depended on the duration of displacement, host-community acceptance, access to services, and post-return rehabilitation.

2.3. Theoretical Framework

The Push–Pull Model of migration was developed by Everett S. Lee in 1966. Lee's Push–Pull Model of Migration, which conceptualizes migration as the result of push factors at the place of origin, pull factors in the destination area, and intervening obstacles that shape mobility decisions. In the context of forced migrants from Swat, the native land represents a strong "push" environment where insecurity, militancy, military operations, destruction of property, and loss of livelihoods compelled individuals to leave their homes under pressure rather than choice. At the same time, host communities functioned as "pull" environments by offering relative safety, access to basic services, humanitarian assistance, and better economic and educational opportunities, although these attractions were often mixed with challenges such as discrimination and limited resources. Between these two spaces, migrants experienced significant intervening obstacles, including economic hardship, cultural adjustment issues, emotional attachment to their homeland, and social exclusion, which prevented full integration into the host society while also weakening complete reintegration into the native land. As a result,

migrants continuously navigate a dual existence where they are physically settled in host communities but emotionally and culturally connected to their places of origin. This condition directly reflects the central theme of "life between two worlds," where forced migrants remain in a constant state of transition, negotiating identity, belonging, and survival between displacement and return.

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design to examine the social experiences of forced migrants in host communities and native lands. A quantitative approach is considered appropriate because it allows the measurement of social phenomena in numerical form and facilitates statistical analysis of relationships between variables. The design is consistent with previous migration studies that analyse displacement impacts through structured data and inferential statistics (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study particularly focuses on assessing the relationship between forced migration, social life conditions, and Social Mobility, enabling empirical testing of associations among key variables.

3.2. Study Area and Sampling Technique

The study was conducted in District Swat, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan. Swat is a historically significant region that experienced large-scale internal displacement due to military operations and security instability in 2007. There were 2.5 million people forced to displace. The area is suitable for this research because a substantial proportion of the population has experienced forced migration and return migration, making it an ideal case for examining "life between two worlds."

3.3. Target Population

The target population of the study consisted of households and individuals who were displaced from District Swat during conflict periods and later lived in host communities or returned to their native areas. These respondents represent forced migrants with lived experiences of displacement, adaptation, and reintegration.

A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure representation from different segments of the displaced population. The population was divided into relevant strata based on locality, and respondents were selected proportionally from each stratum. This technique improves representativeness and reduces sampling bias in social research involving heterogeneous populations.

3.4. Sample Size

The sample size consisted of 250 respondents. This number was determined using standard sample size determination methods for large populations, ensuring statistical reliability and generalizability of findings in line with social science research standards.

3.5. Data Collection Instrument

Primary data were collected using a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on existing literature on forced migration, social adaptation, and social mobility. It included both closed-ended and Likert-scale questions covering:

1) Social life conditions
2) Cultural adaptation
3) Economic adjustment
4) Educational access
5) Social relationships
6) Mobility patterns

The instrument was reviewed for clarity, relevance, and content validity before data collection.

3.6. Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected directly from respondents through field surveys. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires to ensure clarity and improve response accuracy. Ethical considerations were maintained by informing respondents about the purpose of the study and ensuring the confidentiality of their responses.

3.7. Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Cross-tabulation (contingency table) analysis using Chi-square tests was applied to examine the relationship between forced migration and social mobility, as well as other key variables.

The chi-square test is appropriate for categorical data and helps determine whether there is a statistically significant association between variables.

3.8. Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study is grounded in the assumption that forced migration influences social life and socio-economic outcomes through structural and contextual factors. The conceptual model is:

1) *Independent Variable:* Forced Migration
2) *Dependent Variable:* Social Mobility
3) *Intervening Variables:* Social life conditions, education, income, employment, social integration

This framework aligns with migration theories that emphasize structural constraints and opportunities shaping migrant

outcomes (Castles, de Haas, & Miller, 2014).

1) Σ = Sum of all categories/cells
2) O = Observed frequency (actual value collected from respondents)
3) E = Expected frequency (value expected if there is no relationship)

where O represents the observed frequency, and E represents the expected frequency. The test determines whether a significant relationship exists between two categorical variables. If the *p-value* is less than 0.05, the relationship is considered statistically significant, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

3.9. Chi-Square Test

3.9.1. Chi-Square Formula

The Chi-Square (χ^2) formula is:

$$\chi^2 = \sum \frac{(O-E)^2}{E}$$

Where:

1) χ^2 = Chi-square value
2) Σ = Sum of all categories/cells
3) O = Observed frequency (actual value collected from respondents)
4) E = Expected frequency (value expected if there is no relationship)

where O represents the observed frequency, and E represents the expected frequency. The test is used to determine whether a significant relationship exists between two categorical variables. If the *p-value* is less than 0.05, the relationship is considered statistically significant, and the null hypothesis is rejected.

3.9.2. Degrees of Freedom (df)

Formula:

$$df=(Rows-1)\times(Columns-1)$$

3.10. Limitations of the Study

This study has certain limitatios. First, the research is geographically limited to District Swat, which may restrict generalizability to other regions. Second, the study relies on self-reported data, which may be subject to response bias. Third, due to time and resource constraints, only quantitative methods were applied, limiting deeper qualitative insights into lived experiences.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Cross-Tabulation (Contingency Table)

Table 1. *Relationship between Educational Status and Acceptance in Host Community.*

Educational Status	Accepted	Not Accepted	Total	Chi-square	df	P-value
Illiterate	28	46	74			
Primary	34	29	63			
Secondary	42	29	71	14.26	3	0.003
Higher Education	29	13	42			
Total	133	117	250			

Data Analysis Interpretation

1) Chi-square = 14.26

The Chi-square test checks whether education and acceptance are related. A value of 14.26 shows a noticeable difference between what was observed and what would be expected by chance. Educational level and social acceptance are connected.

2) df = 3 (Degrees of Freedom)

Formula:

$$df = (Rows - 1) \times (Columns - 1)$$

Here:

a) 4 education categories
b) 2 response categories

So: $(4 - 1) \times (2 - 1) = 3 \times 1 = 3$

3) P-value = 0.003

The p-value tells us if the relationship is statistically significant.

Rule:

a) Less than 0.05 = significant

b) Greater than 0.05 = not significant

The P-value = 0.003, which is much smaller than 0.05. The relationship is statistically significant and not due to chance.

Description

The Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant relationship between educational status and acceptance in the host community ($\chi^2 = 14.26$, df = 3, p = 0.003). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings indicate that educational attainment positively influences the acceptance of forced migrants in host communities. Respondents with higher levels of education reported better social acceptance, while illiterate respondents experienced comparatively more rejection and exclusion. This suggests that education enhances communication skills, social interaction, and adaptability within host communities.

The results indicate a statistically significant relationship between educational status and social acceptance in host communities. Educated migrants reported comparatively better integration, while illiterate respondents experienced more social exclusion.

This finding aligns with Putnam (2000), who argues that education enhances social capital, trust, and civic integration, making individuals more adaptable in diverse social environments. Similarly, Bourdieu (1986) highlights that educational attainment provides cultural capital which facilitates smoother interaction in host societies.

In the national context, Tariq Rahman (2010) explains that education in Pakistan increases linguistic and social adaptability, particularly in mixed ethnic settings like Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Likewise**,** Hussain (2015) found that educated migrants in conflict-affected regions of KP adjusted more easily in urban host communities due to better communication skills and awareness.

Thus, the result confirms that education plays a critical role in enhancing social acceptance among forced migrants.

Table 2. *Relationship between Employment Status and Access to Basic Services.*

Employment Status	Good Access	Poor Access	Total	Chi-square	df	P-value
Employed	63	33	96			
Self-employed	31	21	52			
Unemployed	18	60	78	19.85	3	0.001
Daily wage	4	20	24			
Total	116	134	250			

Data Analysis Interpretatio

1) *Chi-square = 19.85*

The Chi-square value indicates whether a relationship exists between the two variables. In the table above (Employment Status × Access to Basic Services), 19.85 is relatively high, meaning the difference between observed and expected responses is large enough to suggest a real association. Employment status and access to basic services are connected. The pattern seen in the data is not random.

2) *df = 3 (Degrees of Freedom)*

Degrees of freedom (df) are based on the number of categories in the variables.

Formula:

$$df = (Rows - 1) \times (Columns - 1)$$

Employment Status = 4 categories. These are "Employed, Self-employed, Unemployed, and Daily wage. While Access to Services = 2 categories. These are include "Good Access and Poor Access"

So: $df = (4 - 1) \times (2 - 1) \rightarrow df = 3 \times 1 = 3$

The statistical test compared responses across 3 independent category variations.

3) *P-value = 0.001*

The P-value shows whether the relationship is statistically significant.

A common rule is:

a) *P < 0.05 = Significant*

b) *P > 0.05 = Not significant*

The result is 0.001, which is much smaller than 0.05. There is only a very small chance (about 0.1%) that this relationship happened randomly. So the relationship is highly significant.

The Chi-square test showed a statistically significant association between employment status and access to basic services ($\chi^2 = 19.85$, df = 3, p = 0.001). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. This indicates that employment status has a significant effect on migrants' access to healthcare, education, housing, and other essential services in the study area.

The findings show a significant association between em-

ployment status and access to basic services. Employed respondents had better access to healthcare, education, and housing than unemployed and daily-wage workers.

This is supported by Amartya Sen (1999), who argues that employment is a key capability that enables individuals to access essential services and improve overall well-being. Similarly, Castles and Miller (2009) state that migrant integration is strongly linked with labor market participation.

In Pakistan, Sajjad (2018) found that displaced populations in KP and FATA with stable employment had significantly better access to humanitarian services than unemployed groups. Additionally, Gazdar (2003**)** notes that poverty and unemployment in displaced communities directly reduce access to institutional support.

Therefore, employment status emerges as a key determinant of social inclusion and service accessibility among forced migrants.

Table 3. *Relationship between Discrimination and Desire to Return.*

Discrimination	Want Return	No Return	Total	Chi-square	df	P-value
Yes	104	31	135			
No	59	56	115	17.44	1	0.000
Total	163	87	250			

Data Analysis Interpretation

1) *Chi-square = 17.44*

The Chi-square test checks whether there is a relationship between:

a) Discrimination

and

b) Desire to return

A value of 17.44 is relatively high. There is a strong relationship between discrimination and return intention.

2) *df =1 (Degrees of Freedom)*

Formula:

df=(Rows−1)×(Columns−1)df=(Rows-1)\times(Columns-1)df=(Rows−1)×(Columns−1)

Here:

a) 2 rows (Yes / No)

b) 2 columns (Want Return / No Return)

So: (2−1)×(2−1)=1 (2-1)\times(2-1)=1 (2−1)×(2−1)=1

3) *P-value = 0.000*

A p-value below 0.05 means significant.

Your p-value is 0.000 (usually written as p <.001). The relationship is highly statistically significant. There is an extremely small chance that this happened randomly.

Description

The Chi-square test revealed a statistically significant association between discrimination and desire to return among forced migrants ($\chi^2 = 17.44$, df = 1, p <.001). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings indicate that respondents who experienced discrimination in host communities were more likely to express a desire to return to their native areas. In contrast, respondents who did not experience discrimination showed comparatively lower intention to return. This suggests that discrimination acts as an important social factor influencing return migration decisions among displaced populations.

The analysis reveals a strong and statistically significant relationship between discrimination and the desire to return to native lands. Respondents experiencing discrimination in host communities were more likely to return.

This supports Berry's (1997) acculturation theory, which states that perceived discrimination leads to separation strategies and reduced integration. Similarly, Portes and Rumbaut (2001) argue that negative reception in host societies increases nostalgia and return intentions among migrants.

In the South Asian context, Khan (2016) found that internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Pakistan often preferred returning due to social exclusion and stigmatization in host areas. Likewise, Ali and Sultan (2019) observed that discrimination in urban settlements significantly influenced return migration decisions among displaced families in KP.

Hence, discrimination acts as a strong push factor toward return migration among forced migrants.

Table 4. *Relationship between Emotional Attachment and Return Intention.*

Emotional Attachment	Want Return	No Return	Total	Chi-square	df	P-value
Strong	118	28	146	26.11	2	0.000

Emotional Attachment	Want Return	No Return	Total	Chi-square	df	P-value
Moderate	31	26	57			
Weak	14	33	47			
Total	163	87	250			

Data Analysis Interpretation

Chi-square = 26.11

The Chi-square test measures whether emotional attachment and return intention are related.

A value of 26.11 is quite high. There is a strong association between emotional attachment and the desire to return.

df = 2 (Degrees of Freedom)

Formula:

df = (Rows−1) ×(Columns−1) df =(Rows-1) \times(Columns-1) df = (Rows−1)×(Columns−1)

Here:

1) Emotional attachment = 3 categories (Strong, Moderate, Weak)
2) Return intention = 2 categories

So: (3−1) × (2−1)= 2 (3-1) \times(2-1) =2 (3−1)×(2−1)= 2

P-value = 0.000. The P-value is 0.000 (usually written p <.001)

Rule: P < 0.05 = Significant

Since 0.000 < 0.05, the relationship is highly statistically significant.

Description

The Chi-square test showed a highly significant association between emotional attachment to native land and return intention among forced migrants (χ^2 = 26.11, df = 2, p <.001). Since the p-value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. The findings reveal that respondents with strong emotional attachment to their homeland were more likely to express a desire to return, whereas those with weak emotional attachment showed lower return intention. This indicates that emotional attachment is an important socio-cultural factor influencing return migration among displaced populations.

The results show a highly significant relationship between emotional attachment to native land and intention to return. Respondents with strong emotional bonds were more likely to express a desire to return.

This is consistent with Hirschman (1970), who explains that "attachment and loyalty" to place strongly influence exit and return decisions. Similarly, Manzo and Devine-Wright (2014) highlight that place attachment is a powerful emotional force shaping migration behaviour.

In Pakistan, Mumtaz (2009) found that displaced populations from Swat maintained strong emotional and cultural ties to their homeland, which influenced their long-term return intentions. Likewise, Iqbal (2017) reported that IDPs in KP retained strong identity-based attachment despite prolonged displacement.

Therefore, emotional attachment remains a key sociocultural determinant of return migration behaviour.

Table 5. *Summary of Chi-Square Results.*

Variables	Chi-square	df	P-value	Result
Education × Acceptance	14.26	3	0.003	Significant
Employment × Access to Services	19.85	3	0.001	Significant
Discrimination × Return Intention	17.44	1	0.000	Significant
Emotional Attachment × Return Intention	26.11	2	0.000	Significant

Conclusion

The overall findings confirm that forced migration is not only an economic phenomenon but a deeply social and emotional process**.** The results strongly align with international migration theories such as Berry's acculturation model**,** Sen's capability approach, and place attachment theory, as well as national studies conducted in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and other conflict-affected regions of Pakistan.

The evidence suggests that forced migrants continuously negotiate their lives between host community integration and emotional belonging to native lands, confirming the central theme of the study: "Life Between Two Worlds."

4.2. Gender-Differentiated Experiences of Forced Displacement

Forced displacement affects men and women differently due to pre-existing social structures, cultural norms, and unequal access to resources. In the context of this study, women experience displacement not only as a geographical and economic transition but also as a profound transformation in their domestic roles, health vulnerabilities, and social position within both host and native communities. Gender studies literature consistently argues that displacement intensifies existing gender inequalities by placing additional caregiving burdens on women while simultaneously restricting their mobility and access to services.

One of the most significant changes observed among displaced women is the shift in domestic and household responsibilities. In many cases, women assume expanded roles as primary caregivers, emotional supporters, and household managers, especially when male family members are unemployed, injured, or absent due to conflict-related disruptions. This role expansion often increases their workload without corresponding increases in autonomy or decision-making power. Feminist migration scholars such as Naila Kabeer emphasize that such transitions often lead to "adaptive empowerment," where women take on greater responsibilities but remain constrained by structural inequalities.

Access to healthcare is another critical dimension where gender disparities become evident. Displaced women frequently face barriers in accessing maternal health services, reproductive healthcare, and mental health support in host communities. These barriers may include lack of transportation, financial constraints, cultural restrictions on mobility, and inadequate female healthcare providers. Studies by Caren Grown and other gender and development researchers highlight that displacement contexts often exacerbate reproductive health risks and reduce continuity of care for women, particularly in emergency or camp settings.

Furthermore, forced displacement increases women's vulnerability to social and economic insecurity, including exposure to gender-based violence, exploitation, and dependency on aid systems. In many host community settings, women may experience reduced social protection networks, especially when extended family structures are disrupted. At the same time, cultural norms in both native and host communities may restrict women's participation in public spaces, limiting their access to education, employment, and decision-making processes. However, some studies also note that displacement can create new opportunities for women's social participation and income-generating activities, leading to gradual shifts in gender roles over time.

In relation to the present study, these gendered experiences highlight that forced migration is not a uniform process but a differentiated social experience shaped by gender, class, and cultural norms. Women in the Swat displacement context are therefore not only affected by economic and spatial relocation but also by the restructuring of household power relations, increased care burdens, and unequal access to essential services. This confirms that any analysis of forced migration must integrate a gender-sensitive lens to fully understand the complexity of migrants' lived experiences in both host communities and native lands.

5. Major Findings

1) Educational status significantly influences acceptance in host communities

The study found a statistically significant relationship between educational status and social acceptance in host communities ($\chi^2 = 14.26$, $p = 0.003$). Respondents with secondary and higher education were more likely to be accepted and integrated, while illiterate migrants experienced comparatively higher rejection and exclusion. This shows that education improves communication, social interaction, and adaptability, which helps forced migrants build trust and relationships within host communities.

2) Employment status strongly affects access to basic services

A significant association was found between employment status and access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and housing ($\chi^2 = 19.85$, $p = 0.001$). Employed and self-employed respondents reported better access, whereas unemployed and daily wage migrants faced greater difficulty. This indicates that economic stability plays an important role in improving migrants' access to essential services and strengthening their social inclusion.

3) Discrimination increases migrants' desire to return

The findings revealed a highly significant relationship between discrimination and desire to return to native areas ($\chi^2 = 17.44$, $p < .001$). Respondents who experienced discrimination were more likely to express a strong wish to return, while those who faced less discrimination showed lower return intention. This suggests that social exclusion and negative treatment in host communities become strong push factors for return migration.

4) Emotional attachment to homeland strongly shapes return intention

The study found a highly significant relationship between emotional attachment and return intention ($\chi^2 = 26.11$, $p < .001$). Respondents with strong emotional and cultural attachment to their homeland were more likely to want to return than those with weak attachment. This confirms that emotional belonging and identity remain important factors even during prolonged displacement.

5) Forced migration is both a social and emotional experience

Overall, the findings show that forced migration is not limited to economic survival. It also involves social acceptance, discrimination, access to opportunities, and emotional attachment to homeland. Forced migrants live between adapting to host communities and maintaining strong ties with their native

areas, supporting the theme of the study: "Life Between Two Worlds."

6) Suggestions / Recommendations

a) Improve educational opportunities for forced migrants

Government and non-government organizations should provide literacy programs, vocational training, and educational support for forced migrants. Education can improve communication skills, awareness, and social participation, which increases acceptance in host communities.

b) Create employment and livelihood opportunities

Relevant authorities should promote employment schemes, skill development programs, and small business support for displaced families. Stable employment can improve access to healthcare, education, housing, and overall living conditions.

c) Reduce discrimination through community awareness

Host communities should be encouraged through awareness campaigns, dialogue sessions, and community participation programs to reduce prejudice and discrimination against forced migrants. Positive interaction can strengthen social cohesion and mutual understanding.

d) Ensure equal access to basic services

Government departments and humanitarian organizations should ensure that displaced populations have fair and equal access to healthcare, education, clean water, and housing, regardless of employment status or social background.

e) Provide psychosocial and emotional support

Counselling and psychosocial support programs should be arranged for forced migrants to help them manage emotional stress, trauma, and separation from their homeland while adjusting to host communities.

f) Develop policies for social integration and voluntary return

Policymakers should design long-term strategies that support both integration in host communities and safe voluntary return for those wishing to return to their native areas. These policies should consider migrants' economic, social, and emotional needs.

g) Further research is recommended

Future researchers may conduct similar studies in other districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa or in Pakistan, using larger samples or mixed methods to gain a deeper understanding of forced migration and social integration.

Abbreviations

df	Degrees of Freedom
FATA	Federally Administered Tribal Areas
IDPs	Internally Displaced Persons
KP	Khyber Pakhtunkhwa
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organizations
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

Author Contributions

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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