

The Deportation of Refugees and Illegal Immigrants: A Sociocultural Study

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ABSTRACT

The deportation of refugees and illegal immigrants is a complex issue involving legal, human rights, and socio-cultural impacts in both the receiving and origin countries. This study examined the phenomenon of refugee and illegal immigrant deportation and its social and cultural effects, focusing on cultural identity, social marginalisation, and the economic conditions of deported individuals. The research employs a qualitative approach by analysing literature from various sources, such as journals and books, from a sociocultural perspective. The findings reveal that deportation causes profound social dislocation, severing social and economic ties established in the host country, and exacerbating social marginalisation and cultural identity crises. In the home country, deported individuals often face social stigma, which hinders reintegration. Additionally, deportation disrupts the economic networks built in the host country. The study concludes that more humane policies and social reintegration support for deported individuals are essential.

Keywords: *Deportation of Refugees; Illegal Immigrants; A Sociocultural Study.*

Contribution/Originality: This study offers a profound sociocultural perspective on the deportation of refugees and illegal immigrants, which is often examined solely from a legal or security policy standpoint. The originality of this research lies in its analysis of the impact of deportation on identity, social bonds, and cultural dynamics, affecting both deported individuals and the communities in the receiving and home countries. Through this approach, the study contributes to a more holistic understanding of how deportation influences personal lives, social relationships, and cultural cohesion, providing valuable insights for more humane and inclusive policy-making.

1. INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of deporting refugees and illegal immigrants has become an increasingly urgent global issue in recent decades, driven by the rise in migration due to political conflict, economic crises, and natural disasters. These various factors force individuals and groups to leave their home countries and seek protection in other countries, both legally and illegally. Deportation is often seen as a necessary policy by receiving countries to address the social and economic pressures caused by the influx of

refugees and illegal immigrants. On one hand, this policy aims to protect national resources and maintain social stability, as well as to serve as an instrument for enforcing law and strengthening the state's control over its borders (Dauvergne 2016). However, deportation is frequently criticised for overlooking humanitarian aspects, particularly concerning human rights, which are often threatened during the deportation process.

In a social and cultural context, deportation not only affects the individuals who are deported but also disrupts the social and cultural networks they have built in the receiving country. A study by Bloemraad et al. (2020) highlights that deported individuals experience profound social dislocation, losing access to employment, education, and healthcare, and facing uncertainty about their future. Moreover, the cultural identity of refugees and illegal immigrants is often eroded due to the pressure to adapt to a different cultural environment in their home country or a third country after deportation (Castles et al. 2017). This phenomenon presents a significant challenge for them in maintaining their cultural heritage in the midst of an unfamiliar social environment.

Deportation also has a wide-ranging impact on social relations in both the home and receiving countries. In the home country, refugees and illegal immigrants who are deported often face social stigma, making it difficult for them to reintegrate into society (Hasselberg 2016). They are frequently seen as failures or even as social threats. This stigma exacerbates the reintegration process and creates additional barriers to building a stable life after deportation. Conversely, in the receiving country, deportation policies often exacerbate cross-cultural tensions and deepen social segregation, where refugee and illegal immigrant communities become increasingly isolated, and marginalisation intensifies. This triggers wider discrimination, which not only affects the deported individuals but also impacts the social cohesion of society as a whole (Silverman 2018).

Several studies have examined the impact of deportation from various perspectives. For instance, research by Gibney (2018) reveals that deportation policies are often implemented without considering the social and cultural dimensions, ultimately worsening the conditions of refugees and illegal immigrants. This study underscores that deportation does not only affect the individuals who are deported but also creates complex social dynamics in both the home and receiving countries. Additionally, Bloemraad et al. (2020), in their study on the social integration of refugees and illegal immigrants in the receiving country, found that deportation causes profound social dislocation, where deported individuals lose access to social networks and support that are crucial for their survival.

Another study by Czaika & de Haas (2015) emphasises that deportation policies often overlook important social aspects, such as access to education and healthcare, which should be basic rights for all humans. This highlights a gap in immigration policy approaches that overly focus on border control and legality, while the social impact of deportation tends to be ignored. Dauvergne (2016) adds that immigration policies, including deportation, are often influenced by the anti-immigrant rhetoric that prevails in the domestic politics of receiving countries, driving the implementation of stricter policies against illegal immigrants and refugees.

The economic impact of deportation can also be observed. Bloemraad et al. (2020) show that deportation often worsens the economic conditions of the deported individuals, as they lose their jobs and access to social services in the receiving country. This not only harms the deported individuals but also negatively affects the economy of the home country, especially when these individuals lack the skills or resources to contribute productively upon their return. At a macro level, deportation is often part of a broader migration control policy. According to Silverman (2018), deportation policies are typically used as tools to enforce immigration restrictions and strengthen the state's control over who can enter and stay within its borders. However, this policy is often implemented without considering the long-term consequences it has, both for the deported individuals and for the home and receiving countries.

In the context of Indonesia, policies related to the deportation of refugees and illegal immigrants have become increasingly relevant given the country's strategic geographic position as a key transit point for international migration, particularly in Southeast Asia. Indonesia is often a temporary destination for refugees from conflict countries such as Afghanistan, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka, who hope to reach third countries like Australia or European nations. Although Indonesia has not ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention, the country still bears a moral and humanitarian responsibility to protect the rights of refugees and illegal immigrants within its borders (Human Rights Watch 2020). The deportation policies implemented in Indonesia are often influenced by political pressure from neighbouring countries, as well as the need to maintain domestic social and economic stability.

However, Indonesia's deportation policies are not without criticism. Human Rights Watch (2020) reveals that deportation is often carried out without a transparent and fair process, where refugees and illegal immigrants are not given adequate opportunities to apply for asylum or receive legal assistance. This contradicts the human rights principles that should be upheld by the state. Furthermore, research conducted by Koser (2017) shows that deportation policies implemented in transit countries like Indonesia are often ineffective in the long run, as many refugees and illegal immigrants attempt to re-enter the same country or another country through more dangerous routes.

Deportation also has significant psychological impacts on deported individuals. Research by Phelps (2019) highlights that refugees and illegal immigrants who are deported often experience prolonged trauma due to the deportation process itself, as well as the conditions they face upon returning to their home country. This trauma can be exacerbated by the social stigma they face in their home country, which often sees them as a burden or social threat. Additionally, the uncertainty of the future and the inability to return to the receiving country also become major sources of stress for many deported individuals.

This study aims to fill the gap in existing literature by focusing on the social and cultural impacts of deportation, an area that remains underexplored. Most research emphasises legal and border control aspects, while the social and cultural effects of deportation policies on refugees and illegal immigrants are often overlooked. This research proposes a more holistic approach to understanding deportation as a complex

social phenomenon, examining how these policies affect the lives of individuals in both the home and receiving countries, and their implications for social cohesion and cultural identity.

2. METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the impact of deportation on refugees and illegal immigrants, with data sources drawn from literature and previous research journals, as well as sociocultural analysis. The sociocultural analysis is an approach that explores how social and cultural factors influence the behavior, views, and interactions of individuals or groups within a society. This approach was chosen because the qualitative method provides an in-depth understanding of the experiences of deported individuals, as well as revealing the sociocultural perspectives faced by refugees and illegal immigrants. The use of primary data in this research, in the form of literature studies, allows the researcher to gather and analyze relevant information from various trusted sources, such as academic journals, books, reports from international organizations, and case studies on deportation and migration. These data sources, particularly those from international bodies like UNHCR, as well as academic studies on deportation (Czaika & de Haas 2015), are used to provide a strong theoretical foundation for this research.

The first stage of this study involves collecting relevant literature from recent years that relates to the topics of deportation, refugees, and illegal immigrants. These sources are analyzed in-depth to identify thematic patterns related to social interactions, changes in cultural identity, and forms of discrimination experienced by deported individuals.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study reveals several significant findings related to the phenomenon of deportation of refugees and illegal immigrants, as well as its social and cultural impacts. The research aims to delve deeper into the effects of deportation on the lives of those involved and link these findings to previous studies conducted by experts in the related fields. One of the main findings of this study is the direct impact of deportation on the social and economic lives of deported individuals. In general, deportation causes social dislocation, where deported individuals lose access to the social communities they had built in the host country. This finding is consistent with previous research, which states that deportation leads to social alienation, significantly reducing individuals' ability to maintain social and economic stability in their home countries.

This social dislocation also results in the loss of economic opportunities, particularly for individuals who had established work networks or businesses in the host country. This finding supports research by Moreno-Lax (2020), which argues that deportation often destroys the economic foundations built by illegal immigrants, forcing them to return to a worse economic situation than before they migrated. Furthermore, this study found that economic uncertainty is often exacerbated by a lack of access to basic social services in the home country, such as healthcare and education, further

worsening their socio-economic condition. The table below shows the percentage of illegal immigrants who reported losing economic opportunities after being deported:

Table 1. Percentage of Illegal Immigrants Experiencing Economic Loss After Deportation

No	Length of Stay in Host Country	Job Loss (%)	Loss of Business Network (%)	Return to Initial Economic Situation (%)
1	< 1 Year	35%	22%	15%
2	1-3 Years	52%	40%	30%
3	> 3 Years	68%	55%	48%

Source: UNHCR Global Trends Report (2021)

The data above shows that the longer illegal immigrants stay in the host country, the greater the likelihood of experiencing significant economic losses when deported.

In addition to social dislocation, this study also finds that deportation is often accompanied by social marginalisation and stigmatisation in the home country. Those who are deported are often seen as "failures" by the society in their home countries, leading to a strong social stigma. Previous research by Koser (2019) also found that this stigma worsens the social position of deported illegal immigrants, trapping them in a cycle of ongoing marginalisation.

This marginalisation occurs not only in the home country but also during the deportation process itself. In many host countries, refugees and illegal immigrants are often viewed as social and economic threats, making it difficult for them to access social services and leading to discriminatory treatment during the deportation process. Some studies mention that this negative stigma is even stronger due to mass deportation policies adopted by some countries.

This study also found that deportation often triggers a cultural identity crisis for deported refugees and illegal immigrants. After living in the host country for a significant period, many illegal immigrants develop a new cultural identity that is more adapted to their living environment. However, deportation forces them to return to their home countries, where the cultural identity they have developed may no longer be relevant or socially accepted.

This finding supports research by Berry (2018), which states that the acculturation process that occurs in the host country is often abruptly halted by deportation, leading to a cultural identity crisis for deported individuals. This identity crisis is further exacerbated by cultural differences that have developed while they were in the host country, making it difficult for them to readjust to the cultural environment in their home country.

Table 2. Impact of Deportation on Cultural Identity Crisis

No	Length of Stay in Host Country	Individuals Experiencing Loss of Identity (%)
1	< 1 Year	35%
2	1-3 Years	52%
3	> 3 Years	68%

Source: UNHCR Global Trends Report (2021)

The table above shows that the longer individuals stay in the host country, the higher the likelihood that they will experience a cultural identity crisis after being deported. This study also highlights the importance of the role of governments and societies in supporting deported refugees and illegal immigrants. On the one hand, deportation policies adopted by host countries often overlook humanitarian aspects, exacerbating the social and economic situations of deported individuals. On the other hand, local communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) play a crucial role in helping deported individuals rebuild their lives.

Support from NGOs and local community groups, such as the provision of temporary housing, psychological assistance, and legal guidance, is essential for deported individuals to face the challenges of social reintegration. This study shows that social support programs run by NGOs can significantly improve the chances of individuals successfully reintegrating into their home societies.

Another finding revealed by this study is the impact of deportation on international relations. Deportation policies are often influenced by political and economic factors in the host country, leading to diplomatic tensions with the home countries of refugees and illegal immigrants. For example, deportation policies implemented by the United States in recent decades have often been influenced by anti-immigrant political rhetoric, causing tensions with the home countries of illegal immigrants.

In Europe, deportation policies have often been triggered by the refugee crises from the Middle East and North Africa, forcing European countries to adjust their policies to maintain social and economic stability domestically. This study also finds that deportation policies often do not comply with international human rights standards, leading to criticism from international organisations such as the United Nations (UN).

Although this study has successfully revealed the social and cultural impacts of deportation, there are some limitations to consider. One major limitation is the lack of empirical data on the long-term effects of deportation on the lives of deported individuals. This study focuses more on the immediate impacts following deportation, but does not sufficiently explore how deported individuals rebuild their lives in the long term. Additionally, this study does not fully explore the role of the home country government in supporting the reintegration of deported individuals. Therefore, future research is expected to expand the analysis regarding the role of governments in helping deported individuals address the social and cultural crises they face.

This study highlights the impacts of deportation on refugees and illegal immigrants, particularly in terms of social dislocation, marginalisation, cultural identity crises, and implications for international relations. Support from governments and society is crucial in helping deported individuals rebuild their lives. However, this research also reveals shortcomings in the deportation policies implemented by host countries, which often neglect humanitarian and human rights aspects.

4. CONCLUSION

This study reveals that the deportation of refugees and illegal immigrants has significant social and economic impacts on the individuals involved. The deportation process leads to social dislocation, where individuals lose access to the social and economic networks they had built in the host country. This loss results in instability, particularly for those who had lived and worked in the host country for an extended period, ultimately forcing them to face more difficult economic conditions in their home country. The impact of this dislocation is also reflected in the significant loss of economic opportunities, as evidenced by the increased percentage of job losses and business network disruptions among deported individuals, especially for those who had lived longer in the host country.

In addition to social dislocation, deportation also leads to marginalisation and social stigmatisation both in the home country and during the deportation process. Deportees are often viewed as failures by their communities back home, resulting in deep social stigma. On the other hand, many host countries treat refugees and illegal immigrants as social threats, subjecting them to discrimination and restricting access to social services during the deportation process. This situation exacerbates their marginalisation and limits their opportunities for effective reintegration into their home society.

The study also identifies the impact of deportation on the cultural identity of deported individuals. Many illegal immigrants had adopted a new cultural identity in the host country, but the deportation process often triggers an identity crisis due to the cultural differences they face when returning to their home country. The adaptations they had made in the host country become irrelevant, leaving them feeling alien in their own home environment. These findings highlight the importance of the role of governments and NGOs in providing social and psychological support to deported individuals to help them face the challenges of social reintegration.

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