Analysis of Public's Opinion Towards Refugees and Curfew Periods During COVID 19 Pandemic - A Survey

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Refugees are people who displace or migrate from place to place due to political violence and war. They lack their basic needs and do not have proper accessibilities to general routine things. Mainly because of their constant migration, they get exhausted physically and develop mental illness due to inadequate facilities in their future. They can survive at normal periods, but their situation gets worse during curfew periods because of no food, no shelter, and no employment. The main aim of this topic is to collect the opinions of the general population under the age group of 18-60 about refugees and their hardships during curfew periods. **Materials and Methods:** The survey was conducted among 150 people of the general population through an online survey. The questionnaire formed contained basic, awareness creating and statistical contents about the topic and related information. Data collected and analyzed using SPSS software, Inferential statistics were done using a Chi-square test, and a P-value of <0.05 was found to be statistically significant.

Results: 93.6% knew about refugees, rest 6.4% had no idea, but 33.3% of them thought that they were people working for the government, rest 64.7% replied that they were people who were forced to flee from their origin countries. 81.4% of the population thought that they don't have proper access to their necessities and the rest 14.8% thought they do. 91.7% agreed that they will suffer during curfew periods and the rest 8.3% of them disagreed.

Conclusion: Nearly all have understood their situation during curfews, and more than 90% of the population was willing to help, further awareness needs to be spread to take actions as soon as possible.

Key Words: Refugees, Immigrants, Crisis, Hardships, Public opinion, Curfew periods

INTRODUCTION

Refugees are people who are forced to flee because of war, violence, or persecution given without prior information from their origin country. Insecurity, human trafficking, separation from families, and sexual exploitation are few extreme hardships faced by children and adolescent refugees^{1,2}. As they are forced from country to country, once they reach their hosting center, they become exhausted, these sums up with no proper food, no medications available for their population, and develop physical instability and mental illness³. More than 200 million international migrants are present globally⁴. Migrants are different from refugees, as they are willing to move from their origin country to another coun-

try to make a better living. Due to day-to-day consequences, there are extreme impairing changes to their health and social life⁵. And because of media and political influence, they are framed as minorities.

Public opinion towards refugees is perceived in a way where the media molds it to be. Studies show that the influence of the media on refugees has been criticized because of their portrayal of their crisis^{6,7}. During the normal period, a shelter may or may not be provided, the same applies to all other facilities which should be monitored by the government because they have to ensure and secure their citizens. But during curfew periods, especially during this pandemic caused due to COVID-19 has and will make their situations worse. No food which leads physical fitness⁸ of children, adolescents,

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and adults at stakes which is affected by a significant factor-BMI⁹ and no shelter, living their lives in roadsides lacking hygiene, and developing various disorders¹⁰ are common difficulties faced by them both during normal and curfew periods. Support is needed by them, it is the right of the people to raise their voice against any injustice act. They are often discriminated against based on their race, color, religion, nationality, political opinion, and membership. They are considered a threat and are not given the right to speak for themselves¹¹⁻¹³.

Chouliaraki and Zaborowski suggest that refugees are framed as dangerous and vulnerable outsiders by the press¹⁴, and they are represented on social media as conventional standard threats¹⁵ as cowards or terrorists¹⁶. But there may be global consultations for them, the most pressing issue¹⁷. Some previous works in favor of them include the safety of refugees decided by 5 European countries¹⁸, tweets on social media to make people aware of refugees and their situation¹⁵, de-ethnicization them for their welfare¹², one government defeating other in this case¹⁹ plunged them to sadness. And news about 3 events in 1976, 1987, and 1995 was a high potential matter of the way the institutions frame racism²⁰. There are still religious and human activities that work in favor of the immigrants and refugees²¹.

Previously we have studied awareness on various topics like acupuncture²², prevention of kernicterus and neonatal jaundice management²³, metabolic syndrome NAFLD²⁴, endemic goiter²⁵, thyroid function²⁶, the role of obesity in infertility²⁷ and this experience led us to work on the current topic. This topic aims to know the importance of how people are treated and completely their right to have a voice. We should join hands to save lives and create a better future for them. And their time during curfew worsened due to inadequate facilities, taking actions to avoid unnecessary death. We should be aware of and understand their conditions during extreme situations like natural calamities. The present study aims to assess and create awareness and educate the public about refugees' lifestyle and outrage their injustice for further help.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study took place in Chennai, Tamil Nadu which included 150 respondents under the age group of 18 to 60 of the prior and was approved by the Institutional Review Board, Saveetha Dental College. A convenience sampling method was used. A detailed questionnaire with 20 questions which was based on refugees, the reason for fleeing, awareness, socioeconomic status, statistical data, and personal opinion were included.

1. Do you know who refugees are?
2. If No, who do you think they are?

3. Why do you think they are forced out of their country?
4. Do they have proper access to all of their necessities?
5. Do you know that the WHO reported executing "Draft global action plan, 2019-2023" to promote the health of the refugees and migrants?
6. Are immigrants and refugees the same?
7. Do you know that immigrants are people who choose to move from their origin country?
8. Do you think the government is biased on taking decisions for refugees?
9. Do you know that a record of 70.8 million people has been forced to flee their homes?
10. Do you know that 37,000 people are forced to flee per day because of conflict and persecution?
11. Do you think these people will suffer during curfew periods?
12. Do you know that New Jersey the US has provided a temporary medical license to all including refugee doctors to fight against coronavirus?
13. If you get a chance to help them, will you?
14. Do you know that this led to a global crisis at the end of 2018?
15. Do you know that UNHCR- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has employed 16,803 people worldwide?
16. Do you know that 92,400 refugees resettled?
17. Do you know that refugees' children are five times more likely to be out of school than their non-refugee peers?
18. Do you know that Turkey has the world's largest refugee population?
19. Do you think their life can be changed?
20. Was this survey useful to create awareness about refugees and their crisis?

The statistical data was created and circulated through google forms (https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSdV5yVXkKYsbJhWHmfG9vhZ6Y7cwIhe6G2G-iip7X-axr4EcKw/viewform?usp=sf_link) and the questionnaire validity checking was done by consulting experts and data entered in Google forms, Google sheets, analyzed, tabulated, interpreted, and compared. The data was collected and then analyzed and interpreted during software analysis. Pie charts and bar graphs are used for the representation of the data collected. The dependent variables of this study are knowledge, opinion and independent variables are gender, caste, occupation, height, weight.

Statistical Analysis

Data collected and its analysis were done using SPSS software and Chi-square test was used for various correlations. A p-value of < 0.05 was considered to be statistically significant.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A total of 150 study participants from the general public were included in the study. The population consisted of 53.3% female and 46.7% male population. 93.6% of the population knew who refugees were, 6.4% did not know (Figure 1). We studied the association between the age of the respondents with the awareness about the term refugees, and the p-value obtained was 0.109 which is >0.05 (Figure 2) as it suggests the statistics are not significant. The 18-28 age groups of the population are more aware (Figure 2). But even though they were aware of the term, the real meaning of refugees was only known by 64.7%, rest 33.3% think they are people who work for the government (Figure 3).

The respondents were also asked about what might be the reason for the refugees to flee from their countries, 85% feared prosecution, conflict, generalized violence was the reason and the rest 15% of the population think they simply don't like to reside in their country of origin (Figure 4). We have studied the association between the age of the respondents with the knowledge of the respondents on the real meaning of refugees, and P-value obtained was 0.001 which is <0.05 (Figure 5) suggesting the statistical significance which represents the association between the age of the respondents with the knowledge of the respondents on the real meaning of refugees and 18-28 age group of the population being most aware (Figure 5).

81.4% replied that they don't have proper access to their routine necessities, rest 14.8% think they have all the necessities (Figure 6). We studied the association between the age of the respondents with the awareness of access of refugees towards daily necessities, and the p-value obtained was 0.603 (Figure 7) >0.05 as it suggests the statistics are not significant and the 18-28 age group of the population were more aware (Figure 7).

23.1% replied Yes and 76.9% replied No for "are immigrants and refugees the same?", the majority of them are aware of the difference between them (Figure 8). We have studied the association between the age of the respondents and the knowledge of the difference between refugees and immigrants among the respondents, and the p-value obtained was 0.074 which is >0.05 (Figure 9) as it suggests the statistics are not significant. And the age group of 18-28 was more aware of the differences (Figure 9). 87.8% of the population agreed that migrants are people who choose to move from their origin country and the rest 12.2% disagree (Figure 10). 25.9% of the population thinks the government is acting biased on taking decisions for refugees, 66.6% say Maybe, rest 3.7% say No (Figure 11).

91.7% of the population think that refugees will suffer during the curfew period especially during extreme natural calamities like floods, drought, and rest 8.3% think they will

not suffer (Figure 12). We studied the association between the age of the respondents with the awareness of refugees' condition during curfew periods, and P-value obtained was 0.001 which is <0.05 (Figure 13) suggesting the statistical significance which represents the association between the age of the respondents with the awareness on refugees' condition during curfew periods and the 18-28 age group of the population being most aware (Figure 13).

But 92.5% are willing to help them if they get a chance and the rest 3.7% are not willing (Figure 14). 51.8% think this will cause a global crisis rest 44.4% don't think so (Figure 15). 76.5% of the population think the survey was useful to create & know about refugees, 19.1% says somewhat & 4.4% says no. This study mainly focuses on people's opinions about refugees, do they deserve what they are going through, and their situation during curfew and difficulty periods. The results about their opinions are mentioned in the results, further statistical data will be mentioned below: WHO reported executing "draft global action" to promote the health of refugees and migrants, 52.9% replied yes to the statement and 17.1% replied no they were not aware.

In total, over 70.8 million people have been forced to flee from their homes, ²⁸ 66.2% of the population were not aware and 33.8% were aware of this happening. Nearly 60.3 % are not aware that 37,000 people were forced to flee every day because of conflict and precaution ²⁹. 60.3% were not aware 39.7% of the population was aware that New Jersey US has provided a temporary medical license to all including refugee doctors to fight against COVID-19.

UNHCR – United Nations higher commissioner for refugees has employed 16,803 people worldwide, only 30.9% of the population was aware of this and the rest 69.1% are not aware. Turkey has the world's largest refugee population over 3.1 million in 2017 ³⁰, 52.9% were aware of the happenings and 47.1% were not aware 61.8% of the population think that their lifestyle can be changed, 33.8% think maybe, and rest 4.4% think no 61.8% agree that refugees' children are 5 times more likely to be out of school than normal residents, and rest 38.2% disagree to the statement.

A huge mass of people displaced from one country or placed to another because of political violence government rule, similar findings say so ³¹, civil war, subsequent conflict in their origin and host countries. The displacing of refugees may cause conflicts with the hosting country from the origin countries causing country conflict ³². But studies say ³³ the majority of the refugees successfully adapt to trauma and stress, as strong desires help people to move and adapt to their lifestyle ³⁴.

The first and the foremost problem being the substandard housing problems ³⁵, psychiatric problems faced by adolescent refugees in south-east Asian ^{36,37}, nerve breakdown, and

panic attack. Cultural distancing and emotional problems faced, cultural problems³⁸ because of distancing of culture between their origin country and the country of settlement³⁹, them being the marginalized population, brings contextual stress from cross-culture⁴⁰, a psychological stress-related problem faced by young refugees⁴¹. Older aged refugees are often prone to myocardial infarction⁴² and musculoskeletal disorders⁴³ and young and adolescent refugees are diagnosed with mental illness and PTSD⁴⁴. These people deserve better than what they have been going through.

They are being ill-treated, most of them don't have proper homes because they don't have access to housing, and healthcare facilities. And eventually develop stress disorders [psychologically referred to as pressure and strain⁴⁵ and due to other external factors, they lose their physical and mental stability. Because of chronic stress, the circadian rhythm which is the body's natural clock patterns gets influenced, and it in turn changes the sleep timing affecting the immune, endocrine, and metabolic systems⁴⁶. Sleep activities⁴⁷ which promote emotional well-being and brain functioning⁴⁸, but if influenced it will develop serious sleeping disorders like obstructive sleep apnea (OSA)⁴⁹. Their condition likewise during curfew periods,⁵⁰ without proper access to the general society and environment makes them mentally ill.

Often older refugees are suffering from hypertension⁵¹, diabetes⁵², asthma⁵³ [persistent airway obstruction⁵⁴, and obstructive airway diseases⁵⁵ these people are more prone to such diseases due to mental stress, no health facilities, and proper food.

Solutions for these problems should be provided to gain emotional support to have a better future. The educational needs are never attained by them^{56,57}. Unemployment is one of the main causative factors for their hardship inroads. If any societal development was needed, the government could at least think about the positive impact on the job offering opportunities being provided, refugees' role, and their entrepreneurship⁵⁸. The citizens of Cuba often shared their unemployment due to their socioeconomic status⁵⁹.

It is a forever not ending topic, being a hallmark; the refugee population will always have its effects on the global crisis because of its increasing numbers⁵⁹ mainly reported due to government failure and changes in the climatic conditions. An important reason for climate global problems was the displacement of huge masses of people from masses of land⁶⁰. Global government issues due to political boundaries⁶¹. In the case of an infectious disease spreading like the coronavirus disease in 2019 and 2020 could take its place in refugee camps⁶².

Few studies investigate the factors supporting the future of the adolescents and achieving their goals provided by the resettled refugee families, they were documented to have op-

posing pressures⁶³. Often refugees face problems and significant difficulties in gaining security from the social service providers and activists⁶⁴. Further studies explain a global perspective of trauma and torture mainly based on their ethnicity and gender, women were also equally tortured when compared to men⁶⁵, who had no formal government. But studies also show employed refugees had reduced negatives. Their resonance is simply on their job performance and attitude rather than being discriminated against⁶⁶. But refugees are often mistaken as terrorists according to a European state⁶⁷. Seeing them would cause fear among normal people mistaking the refugees as terrorists.

So, we shouldn't stick to our minds, refugees daily suffer so much, so it's time to show some humanity which will give a voice for them and make people aware of refugees more, and break the misconception we have and bring out a better future for their children and them.

LIMITATIONS

- The knowledge varies from person to person.
- The Public's opinions were quite mixed.
- The study population was less. Furthermore, studies needed to prove statistically their worsening conditions.
- People who polled have different mentalities when it comes to helping refugees, not more preferring to help. This shows their less humanity towards others' well-being.

FUTURE SCOPE

Further future studies are needed to gather more information that is needed to create more awareness among ourselves, it can take place through public platforms, social media, television to join hands and save their lives.

CONCLUSION

In this study basic information about refugees, their status during curfew periods is explained, and daily significant difficulties. 91.7% of the population is aware of the hardships and extremities faced by refugees and 92.6% of the people are willing to help.

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Figure 1: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses to the awareness on term refugees. X axis represents responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 93.6% (blue) of the population were aware about who refugees were, 6.4% were not aware (green).

Figure 4: This bar depicts the percentage distribution of the knowledge on the main reason for fleeing refugees. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 85% of them (red) were aware that fear and violence, conflict or prosecution was the reason for refugees fleeing and 11.1% (purple) were not aware.

Figure 2: The bar graph depicts the awareness about the refugees among study participants across different age groups. X axis represents the age group and Y axis represents the number of responses. The blue bar represents yes and the green bar represents no. The age group of 18-28 yrs were more aware about the refugees than other age groups. Pearson chi square test was done and it was not significant statistically (p value is 0.109).

Figure 5: The bar graph depicts the knowledge on the real meaning of refugees among study participants across different age groups. X-axis represents the age group and Y-axis represents the number of responses. The beige bar represents who were aware and the green bar represents who were not aware. The age group of 18-28 yrs were more aware than other age groups. Pearson chi square test was done, the association was found to be statistically significant (p value 0.00).

Figure 3: This bar depicts the percentage distribution of the knowledge about the meaning of refugees. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 64.7% of the respondents were aware (purple bar) that refugees are people who are forced from their country, whereas 33.3% felt refugees are people who work for the government.

Figure 6: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses to the awareness of the respondents to refugees accessibility to their basic daily necessities. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 81.4% of the respondents (green) were aware and 14.8% (blue) were not aware.

Figure 7: The bar graph depicts the awareness of refugees' access to daily necessities among study participants. X-axis represents the age group and Y-axis represents the number of responses. The blue bar represents who were aware and the green bar represents who were not aware. The age group of 18-28 yrs were more aware than other age groups. Pearson chi square test was done and it was not significant statistically (p value is 0.603).

Figure 8: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses to the knowledge of the respondents about the difference between refugees and immigrants. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 76.9% of the respondents were aware (green bar) and the rest 23.1% were not aware (blue bar).

Figure 9: The bar graph depicts the knowledge of difference between refugees and immigrants among study participants. X-axis represents the age group and Y-axis represents the number of responses. The blue bar represents who were aware and the green bar represents who were not aware. The age group of 18-28 yrs were more aware about the differences than other age groups. Pearson chi square test was done and it was not statistically significant (P value is 0.074).

Figure 10: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses to the knowledge of the respondents about migrants. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 87.8% (blue) of the respondents were aware that migrants are people who choose to move from their origin country and 12.1% (green) were not aware.

Figure 11: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses to the knowledge of the respondents about governments decisions on refugees. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 66.6% (orange) of them answered "may be" the government was against refugees, 25.9% of them answered "yes" (blue) and 3.7% of them answered "no" (green).

Figure 12: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses on the awareness of respondents on refugee conditions during curfew period. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. Nearly more than 90% (blue) of the respondents thought they will suffer during curfew periods and extreme situations and 8.3% (green) were not aware.

Figure 13: The bar graph depicts the awareness on refugee suffering during curfew periods among study participants. X-axis represents the age group and Y-axis represents the number of responses. The blue bar represents yes and the green bar represents no. The age group of 18-28 yrs were more aware about the refugees suffering during curfew periods than other age groups. Pearson chi square test was done and it was highly significant statistically (p value - 0.00).

Figure 15: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses on the awareness about the increase in refugee population causing global crisis. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. 51.8% (blue) were aware and the rest 44.4% (green) were not aware about the global crisis.

Figure 14: The bar graph depicts the percentage distribution of responses on the opinion of the respondents to help refugees. X axis represents the responses, Y axis represents percentage of responses. Almost 93% (blue) of the respondents have replied that they will help the refugees and 3.7% (green) replied no.