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Empowering Afghan Refugee Youth through Market-Oriented Hospitality Trades: Pathways to Sustainable Employment and Repatriation Integration in Pakistan and Afghanistan

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Abstract

This is a big challenge for Afghanistan and Pakistan as millions of refugee people are suffering from a very difficult life due to displacement, limited educational facilities for children and no proper employment opportunities. However, market-oriented training in disciplines such as hotel and tourism industries, plumbing, electrical installation, or carpentry for Afghan refugee youth not only deal with the current problem but also open up opportunities for a sustainable solution for youth refugee integration into the Pakistani society and for successful repatriation in productive areas in Afghanistan. In this regard, by using qualitative research methodology, the possibility of skill development programmes which can help address the increase in demand or qualified workforce in both Foreign as well as home countries is studied access to education, and lack of viable livelihood opportunities. Based on the hospitality and skilled trades areas of this study due to the excellent employability rates the lack of training for Afghan refugee youth in the future is recommended. The study offers essential information to the governments, NGOs, and local companies to understand the strategies to respond to Afghan youth's employability, career, and socio-economic reintegration needs for productive work. The purpose of this study is to develop and execute a market-led professional training program for Afghan refugees male and female with the Pakistan and Afghanistan desired skilled trade areas in the hospitality industry.

Keywords: Hospitality, Refugees, Market-oriented, Repatriation, Vocational training, Enterprises

Background and Introduction

Pakistan has shown the culture of being a host nation and neutral by hosting Afghan refugees for the last few decades (Hussain, 2020). Nevertheless, the Afghan refugees enjoy a relatively friendly setting in Pakistan due to the cultural and linguistic similarities; nevertheless, subtle and significant issues of legal recognition and entitlements that contribute to the refugee's non-assimilation into the Pakistani society include (Salih, 2019). Lack of secure legal status in addition to gross limitation in access to fundamental rights in practice means



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that refugees are limited from integrating in the economic and social life of the host country. The shortage of employment is one of the main difficulties with which Afghan refugees in Pakistan have to deal. This task stems from a complexity that is informed by their refugee status, poor legal documents, and poor literacy level. Despite these challenges, the Afghan refugees are very resilient people who have skills that can be of immense benefit to their host countries as one would expect them to do everything to a better life. As a result, there has been increased engagement in self-employment by refugees in KP by forming new ventures of small and micro-enterprises or providing services in the service sector meaning that the refugees have shown high levels of enterprise and a want for economic autonomy (UNHCR, 2020). Thus, this research seeks to enhance the technical-vocational training of refugees with specific focus to training interventions so as to enhance their employment and social-economic status.

Problem Statement

The resettlement of Afghan refugees within Pakistan has rendered many refugees with no prospect for gainful employment for youths especially education attainment, vocational training, and economic capital. Hospitality industries of both Pakistan and Afghanistan need skilled human capital and there is a jacking market demand for vocational skills among the youth and the youth are willing to work in the hospitality industry but there are no market oriented vocal programs drawn to compete and develop these human capital for sustainable jobs. It is appropriate to examine how vocational education in hospitality trades such as, hotel management, culinary arts and tourism could facilitate employment opportunities for Afghan young refugees to improve integration in the host countries economies and be incentivised to go back to Afghanistan. This study established the feasibility and effectiveness of such programs and opportunities for skills development for successful economical independent reintegration to enhance the best market-responsive training programs.

Methodology of the Study

The research method used in the study was descriptive. Such cooperation made it possible to design the assessment in reference to the existing data and information, which increased the reliability of conclusions.

This research helped to make sure that the conclusions and recommendations drawn in the course of the assessment effectively reflected not only a body of scientific data but also realities on the ground and possible expectations of Afghan refugees in KP which might otherwise contribute to more effective strategies and measures aimed at the enhancement of overall living conditions of this vulnerable population group in the region.

Research Aims and Objectives

1. To explore the current landscape and challenges faced by Afghan refugee youth in accessing employment opportunities in Pakistan and Afghanistan.
2. To explore the impact of targeted hospitality and skilled trades training programs on the employability and economic stability of Afghan refugee



youth.

3. To identify strategies for enhancing the capacity of male and female Afghan refugees in high-demand hospitality trades to meet market needs in both Pakistan and Afghanistan, in preparation for potential repatriation.

Sampling Method and Sample Size

The study involved 452 participants, both male and female who were selected from urban and rural areas in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Among these 452 respondents, much to the satisfaction, 94% of the respondents belonged to Afghan Refugees which established their existence and active participation in the study. Also, about 6% of the respondents claimed to be Pakistani Nationals so as the results, the dataset was diverse capturing a broad spectrum of the region.

Study aims to engage all the Afghans although the major target population was KP. It is estimated by recent records that presently there are Afghan refugees and Afghan households living in camps, remote and developing areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa including 679,092 Afghan refugees and 90,546 Afghan households. Secondly, respondents having Pakistani nationality were included in the sample size calculation at a 10% proportion.

For this purpose Yamane (1967) (Luanglath & Rewtrakunphaiboon 2013) formula was used. According to (Atinkugn Assefa Belete and Abibual Getachew Nigatu 2023).

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + e}$$

Where N stands for the total population and e for the error precision level. At a confidence level of 95% and a precision level of 5% the necessary/sample size quantified to 386 Afghan Refugees.

Service Providers' Questionnaire

Since the size of service providers within the hospitality sector in Pakistan is innumerable from the point of service provision. This formula is based on simple random sampling for achieving a required level of precision/margin of error and offered as an estimation for required sample size.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \times p \times (1 - p)}{E^2}$$

Where n is sample size, E is margin of error (desired accuracy), Z is the Z score equivalent to the confidence level desired and p is the estimated proportion of the population of interest with regard to the characteristic that is being tested. The amount of the sample obtained is 385 respondents, at a 95% level of confidence and it is evidenced by the fact that the real value lies within $\pm 5\%$ of the measured/surveyed value.



Review of Literature

The hospitality industry is amongst the greatest sources of employment plus the most significant growth contributor on the global market. For utilization and proper integration of Afghan refugees in Pakistan especially in the hospitality business, it becomes crucial to understand the market environment for trade skills, and mapping out possible trades fulfilling requirements. Literature review aims to review the current literature concerning market assessment concerning identification of employable trades; the study is based on Afghan refugees in the hotel industry in Pakistan (Luanglath and Rewtrakunphaiboon 2013). It is stressed that further attention should be paid to findings of more detailed and nuanced study of skills, with reference to the training needs referred to the sphere of hospitality. According to UNHCR reports (2020) technical and vocational education and training (TVET) should be offered with the purpose of improving the skills and employability of the refugees. Research should be conducted in relation to identified trades for skill development programs and a match should be made with training programs offered (UNHCR, 2020).

With regards to the refugees, the researchers identified in the year 2020 about 3 million being from Afghanistan and living in Pakistan. The researchers argue that Pakistan has been hosting the second largest population of refugees in the global society since the 1980s. Of these, roughly 1.5 million of them enjoy the formal citizenship status identified through the PoR card; however, about 900,000 have an Afghan Citizen Card (ACC), and 800,000 remain ultimately undocumented (Faiq et al., 2022). The socio-economy of Afghan refugees in Pakistan and particularly in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province can be seen as a highly; dynamic and constrained environment influenced by prolonged displacement, conflict insecurity and marginal economic opportunities. About 1.4 million Afghan refugees are in Pakistan today, 60% of which is temporarily in KP province and permanent in Peshawar, Haripur, Mardan cities.

These tenacious Afghan refugees have not only depended on relief but have chased employment and income through various struggling means. Professionally, the Afghan refugee population can be categorized into different groups: referred to as those in the labor class 60%, businessmen/traders 20%, the skilled class 5%, and others 15% of the total population. The arrival of new Afghan refugees flooding Pakistan due to a forced displacement caused by long-term drought, economic fragility, domestic warfare among Afghan factions and military operations led by the United States and its allies against Islamic extremism has added a new calamity to the unfolding Afghan disaster and has overwhelmed Pakistan's sparse resources (Khan et al., 2021).

The researchers, Khan et al., (2022) have identified that Afghan refugees introduced approximately 2.5 million heads of livestock and through uncontrolled and non selective grazing population exploited and ruined the limited available grazers further degrading the green areas massively. It also led to a severe deforestation challenge in Chitral, Dir and Hazara division in Pakistan because the refugees had to seek firewood for cooking and heating (Khan et al., 2022).

The economic prospects for Afghan refugees in Pakistan in general and KP in particular can also be hampered by legal barriers, and most refugees have limited

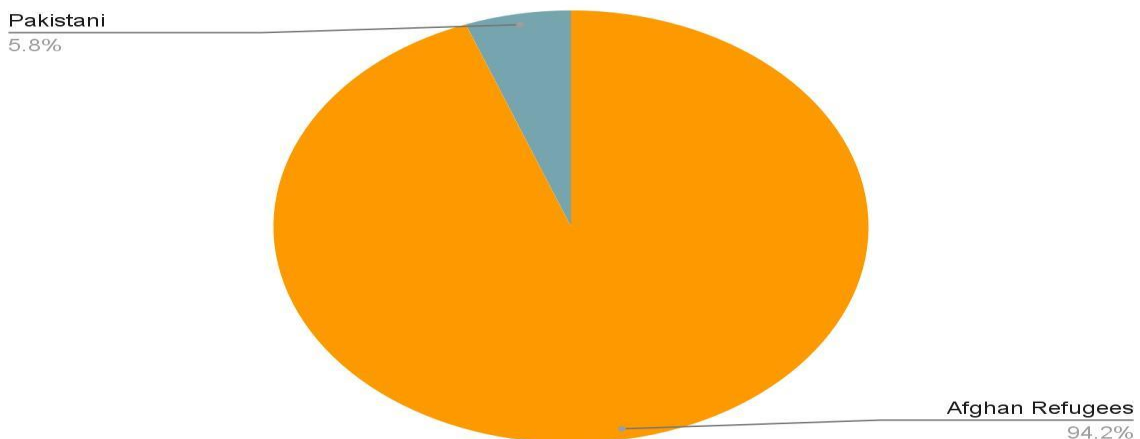


rights to work or to attend school. Being that refugees are not legally recognized and have no proper documents, they end up working informal sector jobs including paid day jobs, own account enterprises or farming where job insecurity and income volatility is high (Koser, 2017). However, Afghan refugees reflect entrepreneurial opportunities in the hospitality industry. Hassan (2020) collected valuable information pointing to successful practices in which refugees create their businesses and contribute to economic development. Afghan refugees have had a special impact on providing accommodation services, especially in those territories where the refugee population is rich.

Overall, increasing the awareness of the skills, entrepreneurial potential and cultural assets of Afghan refugees as potential tourists and as members of multicultural societies residing in host countries can pave the way for more effective and inclusive strategies for sustainable tourism and economic growth for all stakeholders, including residents of refugee hosting countries, as well as for the beneficiaries of the tourists' demand and supply (Koser, 2017; Salih, 2019).

Afghan refugees have many skills they bring from their culture and from their previous experiences. It is possible to identify these skills and build initiatives aimed at the organization of the refugees' participation in entrepreneurial activities. Extended business initiatives that range from business management training, access to capital and business coaching may enhance the refugee's ability in enterprise creation for the hospitality and tourism sector (UNHCR, 2020). It is also proposed to increase the demand for training and capacity-building programs that will align the Afghan refugees with the rapidly growing trend of the tourism industry for employability. Education and training in hospitality management, tour guiding, language proficiency and customer relations can prepare refugees with skills sufficient for different jobs within the tourism industry (Hussain, 2020).

Respondents Type



Data Analysis and Findings

The Interviews conducted with the Officials from Commissionerate Afghan Refugees, Development Practitioners, and Academicians in the field from hospitality and Service Providers and Focus Group discussion with the Afghan refugees had identified the trades that should be encouraged and developed to



improve the standard of living and needful for socio-economic development of Afghan refugees in Pakistan on their repatriation.

Focus Group Discussions

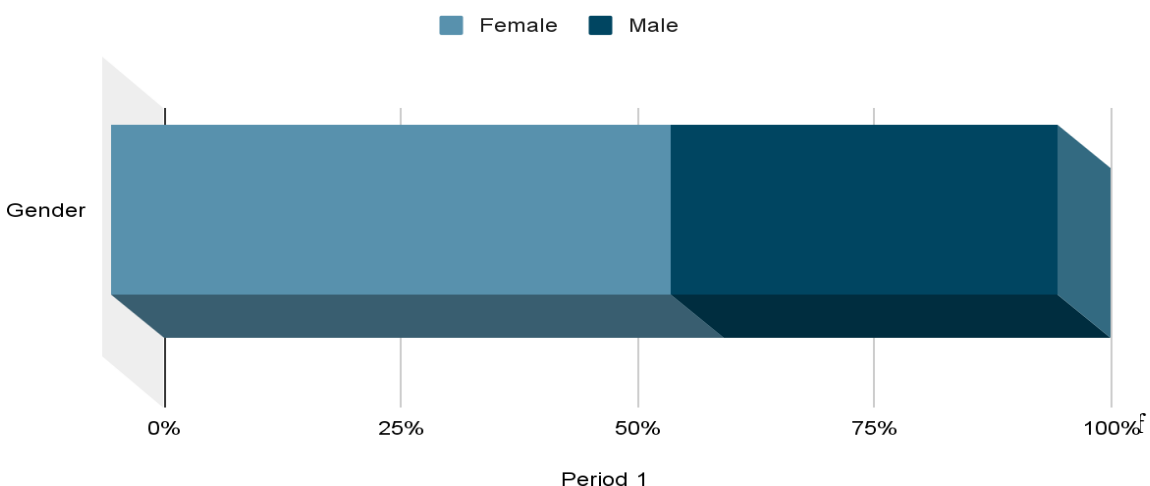
The study was targeted at evaluating the current market needs in the hospitality industry in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and key cities of Pakistan. The purpose of the research is to get an understanding of what existing market trends exist in the hospitality industry. The plan for the FGDs research is as followed;

S.No	Target Group	Gender	Number of FGDs	Regions
1	Afghan Refugees Youth	Men & Women	3	One each in Northern, Central and Southern Region
2	Youth (Pakistani National)	Men & Women	2	Central and Northern Region

Data Analysis and Findings from Refugees

The study aimed at targeting 50% of Afghan Female Refugees. The study presented herein exercise demonstrated that the efforts made towards data collection were over to achieve this fact, where more than half of the 452 participants were female in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa(KP) region. Such statistics actually described a lot of enthusiasm and indication of willingness of women for the project. Without doubt, from the above data it is evident that a good number and perhaps majority of the female population openly expressed interest in the program, they were very participative and equally contributed invaluable opinions during market assessment.

Gender

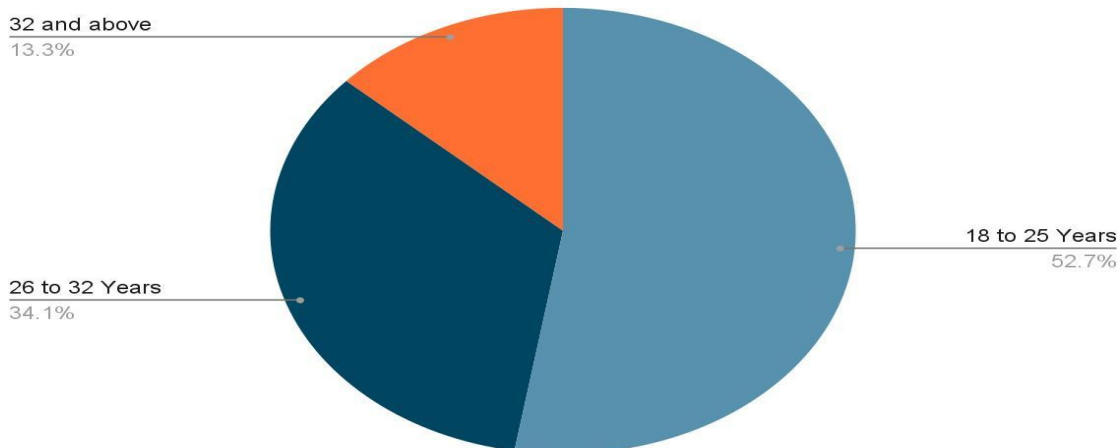




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The age distribution of respondents shows heterogeneity in the study population of the study. At least 53% fell under 18 to 25 years of age, suggesting that youth formed a large part of the respondents in the survey. Just behind this, there was an equally significant 34% who met the following criteria: 26 to 32 years. Further, 13% of candidates produced less than 32 years of age, and 2% of candidates were above 32 years of age, showing that some older persons are also users of social networks. Not only this cross sectional nature of the study substantiates the participation of the samples from all segments of life, but also gives an idea about how different generations think about the given topic. Clearly it implies a balanced sampling that way they get a cross section of a number of possible views; and thereby theoretically give an all round perspective to the topic under research.

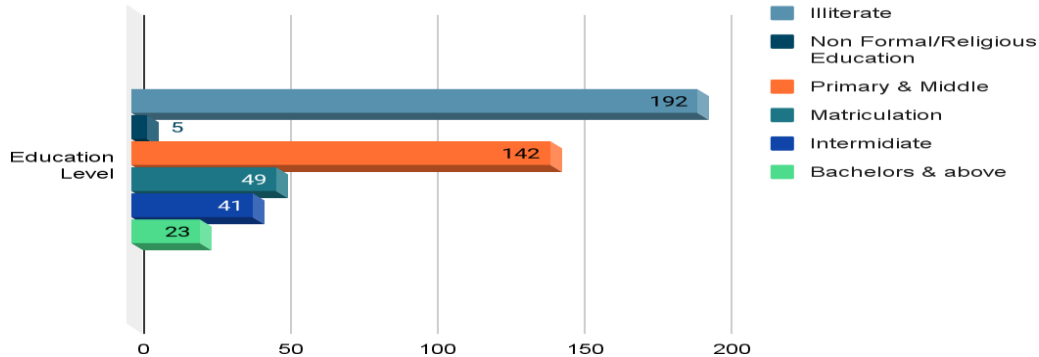
Age



The study of respondents' education profile and experience also indicates the general characteristic that majority of them claimed to be illiterates or with education at the most primary middle standard. The respondents received through a survey test were 452 In terms of literacy levels the larger part of the population was illiterate, and 192 out of the tested total individuals reported being illiterate. Moreover, 142 participants had education levels that were at the primary or middle school standard. More expanded evaluation of the results exposed the fact that 49 percent of the respondents earned their secondary school certificates, while 41 percent had higher secondary school educations. The majority of respondents appear to be employed in these trades meeting the basic criteria therefore indicating a positive platform to undertake strategies and initiatives that seek to establish and create skills training and employment within this industry.

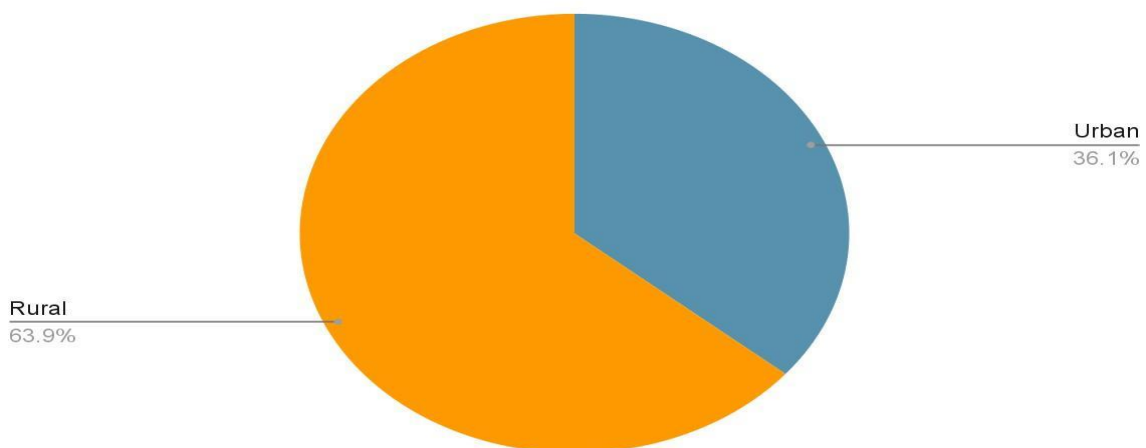


Education



The distribution of respondents from the Afghan refugees based on the place of living is quite comprehensible since 63.9% of them live in rural areas, and 36.1% live in urbanized areas. The high proportions of the samples from rural settings also point to the need to take into account rural factors and possibilities while designing skill development solutions. Majority of the respondents were from urban areas, shows the diversity within the refugee population. From the learned case, concepts from urban places can guide the development of strategies that fit urban employment niches and novelties of the urban hospitality market. This analytic approach makes the interventions targeted to meet the needs in the local market as well as to improve employment chances and develop viable livelihoods for refugees from Afghanistan in the hospitality industry.

Afghan Refugee Community (Rural/Urban)



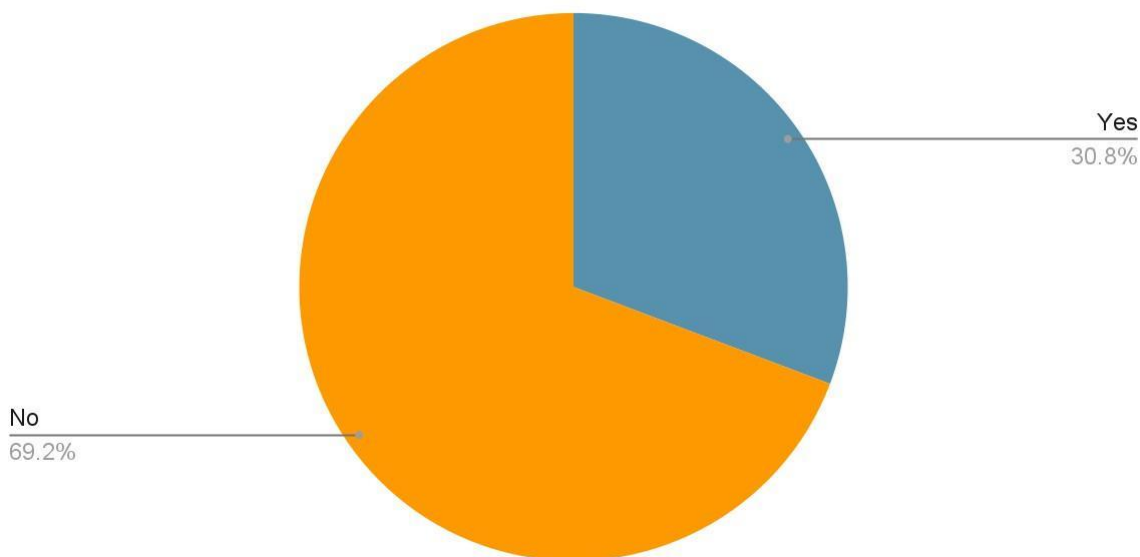
Regarding the availability of gaining access to the Internet among Afghan refugee respondents, 53.3% of the respondents had a positive response to the statement. The fact that the positive response rate is 53.3% suggests that a good number of the Afghan refugees surveyed do have Internet access. But it should be noted that in the survey 46.7% of the respondents stated that they don't have Internet connection. This digital division is critical to call for specific working and trying to work towards this to ensure that Afghan refugees are provided with the right digital support and chances. Other potential approaches include offering the



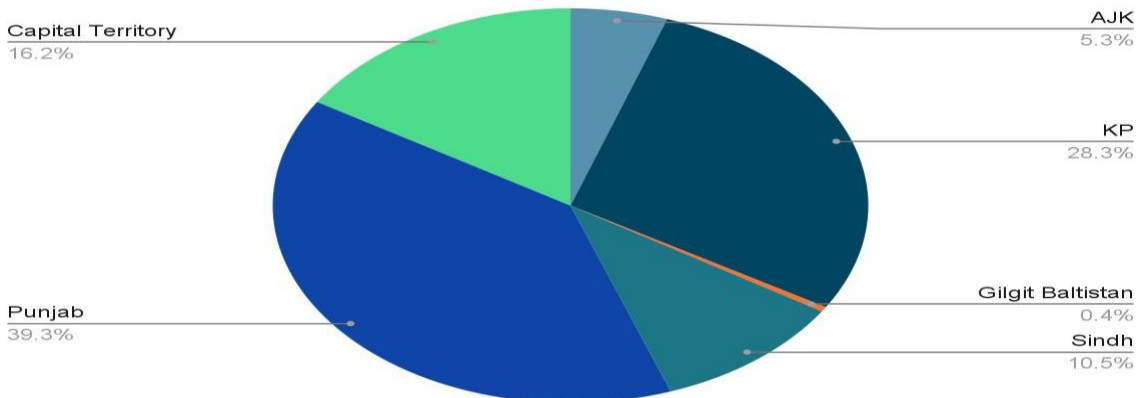
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access to training venues equipped with Internet connection, supporting more digital literacy programs and carrying out cooperation with telecommunications companies for the extension of Internet connection for refugees.

Are you currently producing/providing products in Hospitality Sector?



Location of the Service Providers



The information about linkages with the local market or industry with the respondents, who are Afghan refugees, has information about the level of integration, interaction, and possibilities of Afghan refugees within the business environment of the local market, especially in the hospitality industry.

Having Linkages with Local Market/Industry (Yes): 101 respondents
No Linkages with Local Market/Industry (No): 350 respondents

350 respondents stated that they have no linkages with the local market or industry, point to this deficiency in terms of market relations and integration. Forty-three percent of the 101 the respondents who said they have linkages with the local market or the industry are part of the refugees who are involved or have



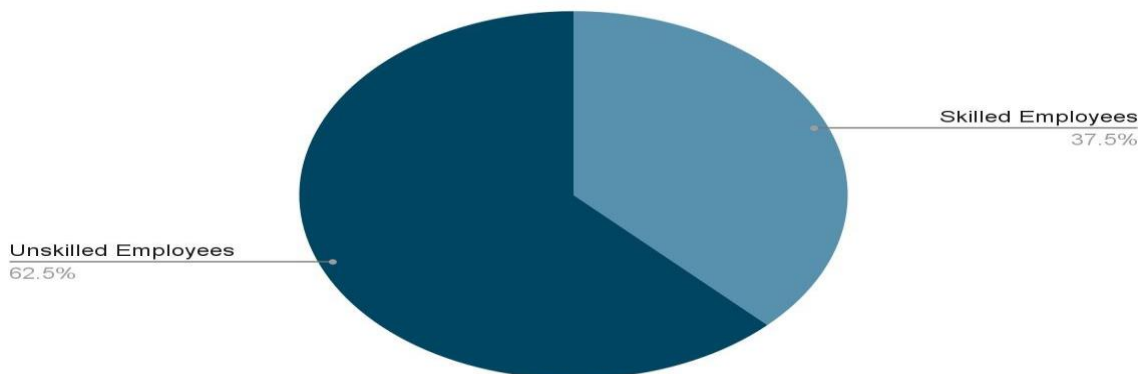
strong ties with businesses or other entities in the hospitality industry. The findings also present efforts to encourage Afghan refugees to establish and develop

connections with the local market and industry. The data collected gives a pattern on the geographical distribution of service providers within the hotel industry across different areas in Pakistan in KP, Sindh, Punjab and Islamabad Capital Territory.

KP: From the districts of Bannu, Chitral Lower, DI Khan, Peshawar, Nowshera, Kohat and Swat, 70 service providers are identified. Sindh: From the urban context of metropolitan Karachi, 26 service providers were contacted. Punjab: Total 97 service providers were contacted for the study across the different districts/locations mostly from Murree & Lahore. From Capital Territory Islamabad, 40 service providers were contacted. Further, there were 13 Service providers interviewed in Azad Jammu & Kashmir and 1 service provider in Gilgit Baltistan.

The geographical distribution of service providers supports that Pakistan's hospitality industry is diverse, in terms of regions as well as the type of providers. Every place has its market features, business prospects, and legal requirements that determine the composition and development of the hospitality industry.

Average number of Skilled and Unskilled Employees in Hospitality Sector?

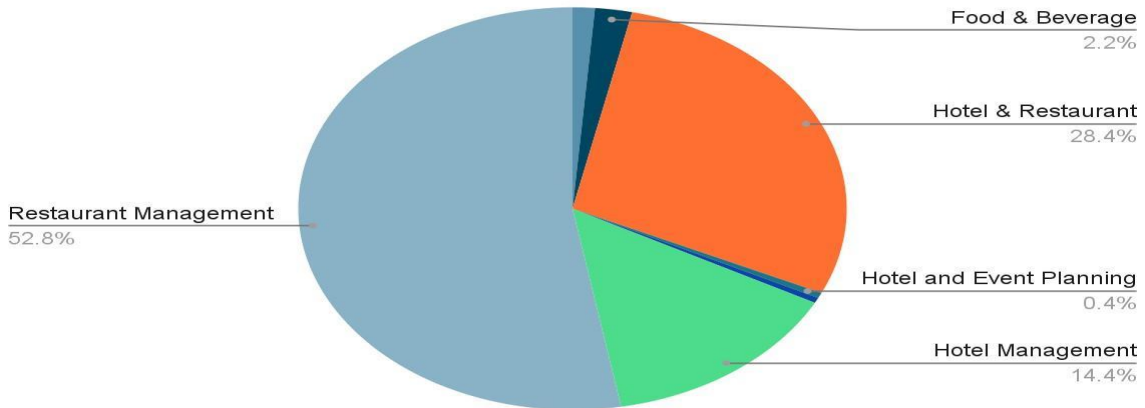


According to statistical information presented for the sector, around 37% of the employees are skilled while 63% are unskilled employees in the hospitality industry. From the data presented in this paper, it is evident that on average within the hospitality sector they have 15 Skilled Employees and 25 Unskilled Employees within the same establishment. This suggests a reasonable degree of skill and job specificity within the workforce which could be very good for providing quality services and goods. The data implies a somewhat disproportionate representation of entry-level/regular workers in the overall work force which may be needed to do routine or non-skilled work. The results indicate that it is possible when increasing the qualifications of employees and improving the administrative processes to increase production and work productivity.



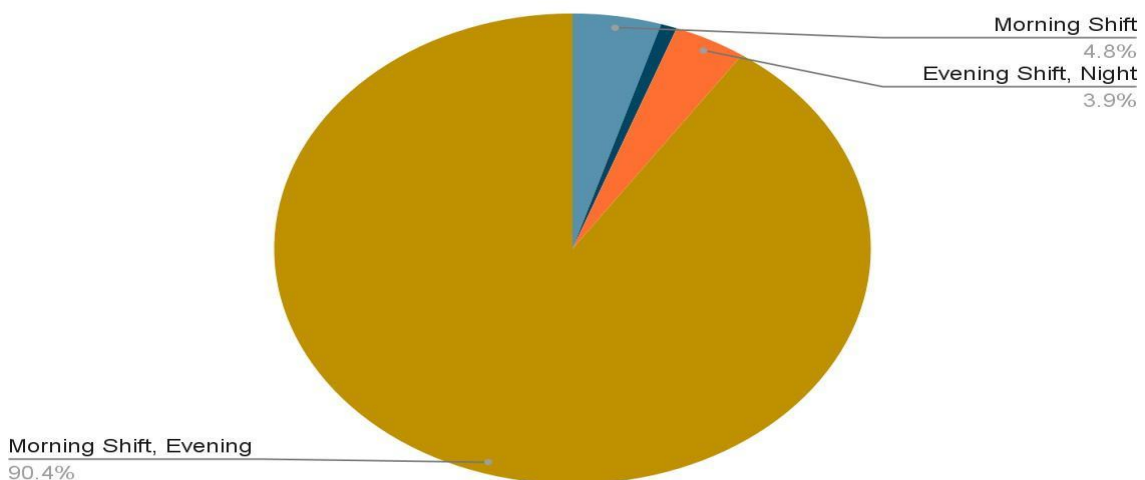
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Major Products/Services your business is offering in the hospitality industry.



The classification of service providers according to their principal products and services in the hospitality segment provides insights to some critical areas of concern in the sector. Beginning with event planning, the sustainability of 03 specialized service providers means a segment of highly appreciated organization and coordination of various events including conference, weddings, corporate events among others. In a follow-up question to the question of whether the enterprises in the hospitality sector have local competitors, 61% of the respondents said that within the hospitality sector, their businesses face competition from local firms. In addition 39% of the respondents responded negatively to the question on local competition in the hospitality industry. It could be deduced that 39% of the respondents are describing themselves in such a way that any such competitor is locked out of the market.

How many working shifts are there at your establishment



Data analysis implies that across the hospitality industry, the majority of the respondents were providing services in the Morning and Evening working shifts



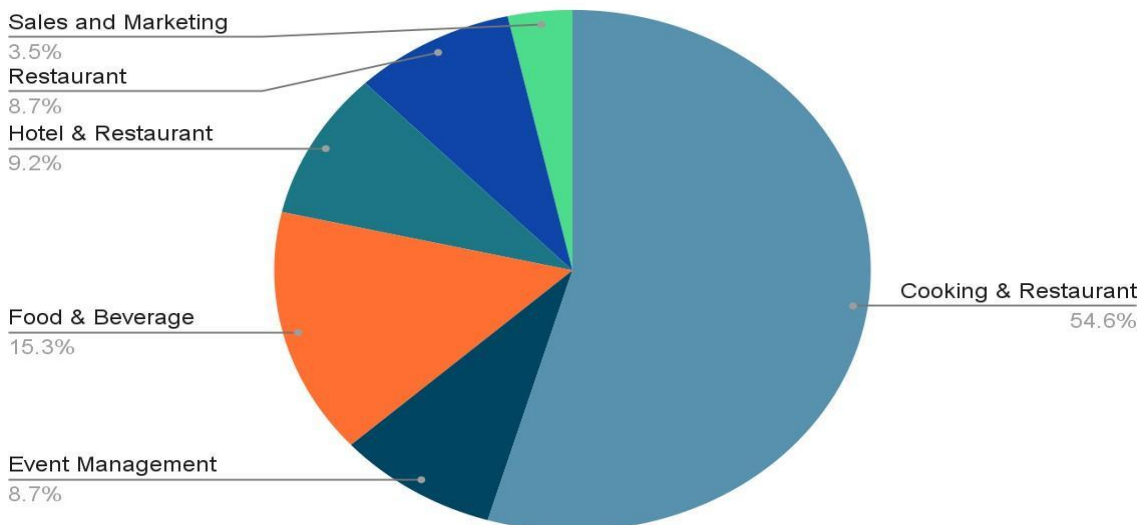
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as about 90% of the respondents selected Morning and Evening working shifts in their establishment. Only 4% of the respondents felt that they only work at evenings and nights while only 5% of the respondents selected that they only work at mornings in their businesses. From this it can be deduced that 90 percent of the respondents who form opinions on the shift chart are engrossed in Dining and Front Desk Management.

The respondents were asked about the number of employees that are in their respective establishments, and they responded that, subject to the following table, 14 employees work in the morning shift, 15 in the evening shift and 9 working in the night shift.

Working Shifts (within Hospitality Sector)	Number of employees currently working
Morning Shift	14
Evening Shift	15
Night Shift	09

What kind of skilled Human Resource do you need/require?



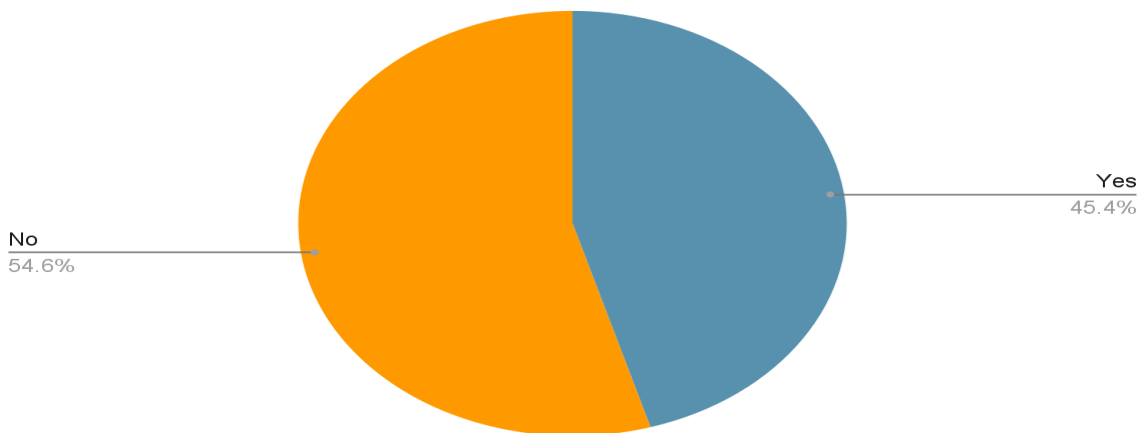
The data shows the specific skilled human resource requirements that are expected by the service providers in the hospitality industry by function. The requirements for qualified and experienced cooks and restaurant managers are high, as 125 service providers searched for qualified cooks, managers, creators and organizers of a restaurant kitchen and full-serving dining to offer tasty meals and an efficiently well-organized kitchen. 35 service providers require skilled human resources in food and beverages food preparation, service, menu development, and quality control to provide excellent food services which meet clients' needs. Furthermore, 21 services ensure the appointment and hiring of managers with specialization in hotel and restaurant management services encompassing management of overall operations, prime services to the clients,



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supervision of employees, and strategic decision making to address overall goals of the hotel restaurants, cafes or any related type of business venture. Likewise, 20 out of the service providers mentioned that they require skilled resources appropriately in restaurant management stating that success and implementation of standard controls and excellent services depends on the professionals effectively managing restaurant operation; customer relations, menu and food services; and directing the financial aspects in restaurants.

In your opinion, is there any emerging trend in the hospitality sector?



The information concerning opinion on emerging trends in the hospitality industry helps to understand the current trends and innovations in viewpoints of industry specialists. Out of 104 respondents, 125 of them disagreed that there are emerging trends in the current industry, which caused a divided opinion on the state of the industry. The findings relating to the major challenges of Afghan refugees in a quest to gain entry to opportunities within the hospitality industry reveal impediments affecting their absorption and economic inclusion. Realization of this goal is however hampered by language barriers where 31 responses noted that they experienced communication and language problems. Relatively low level of language comprehension and use formally and informally compromises communication with co-workers, clients, and superiors, thus jeopardizes work productivity, training, and social inclusion. Nationality-related problems, observing 23 reactions, indicate that there might be prejudices or biased perception of Afghan refugees because of their nationality.

Recommendations

- Promote training and skill development programmes that will contribute to provide Afghan refugees with up to date information on regional trends and industry best practices, as well technical skills, and customer services to ensure livelihood.
- Support a government and corporate culture that provides Afghan refugees legal accommodations towards the availability of opportunities in the hospitality industry. coordinate with authorities and non-government organizations and advocacy groups to make procedures of legal registration



easier and ensure to provide necessary documents and ensure mechanisms of refugee integration and employment.

- Take initiatives to prevent ethno-national and refugee discrimination, with diverse and inclusion programs including reconciliation. Defend human rights and diversity promoting equal opportunities for all; a diverse and inclusive workplace and community which values this characteristic.

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