



Beyond The Border: Unveiling The Motives and Impact of Illegal Immigration in Algeria – A Psychosocial Field Study -

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Abstract ;

The current study addresses a major issue in regards to the factors contributing to illegal immigration among young individuals Via “Death Boats”. This phenomenon has garnered considerable attention from both media and researchers due to its profound societal implications. We conducted a field study involving a sample of (10) individuals who attempted illegal immigration to the Italian shores. Data collection was facilitated through structured interviews, employing a descriptive approach. Our findings delineate multiple underlying factors contributing to the emergence of this phenomenon among Algerian youth, encompassing economic, social, political, and most prominently, psychological Factors.

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1. **Introduction**

In our contemporary historical era, Notable for its multiplicity of phenomena, several emergent issues pose significant threats to humans and humanitarian entity. These challenges include environmental degradation and pollution, drug dealing and trafficking, terrorism, and the escalating phenomenon of illegal immigration, which has assumed increasingly pervasive and complex dimensions since the late nineties to the present day, manifesting in novel forms previously unseen.

The issue of illegal immigration also constitutes the most dangerous social issue that continues to disturb the international community and is a very sensitive problem, mainly because it affects all segments of the international community. This phenomenon is no longer limited to young male individuals, but has extended to women and children and families. Illegal immigration is a global phenomenon affecting both developed and developing countries, and this issue occupies a prominent place and plays a role in the dynamic between these nations. This issue is linked to various political, economic, and social factors, with unfavorable political and economic conditions in developing countries driving individuals to migrate to more developed regions.

The Maghreb region in particular and Africa in general, are among the most important regions exporting and receiving refugees due to the wars and internal

instability experienced by the countries of the region. It is considered a major transit area for refugees and immigrants, and this phenomenon of illegal immigration has begun to cause a serious threat to the immigrant's countries of origin, transit (medium) countries, and receiving countries in a way that affects and reflects on the policies of these countries as a result of the loss of human resources in the immigrant's countries of origin through death or immigration, and as a result of the occurrence of instability in political relations between the countries of transit, origin countries, and receiving ones bearing the high security costs, in addition to undermining economic growth and development, and impact on local workflow in both origin and receiving countries (Lagoabe, Seolonyane, 2023).

What draws attention to this problem in our contemporary era is the very large increase in the number of illegal migrants, that threatens the entirety of Africa. The phenomenon of illegal immigration towards the northern side of the Mediterranean has reached record numbers in recent years after affecting many countries, which prompted experts to sound the alarm in order to put an end to these maritime risks that drain societies today.

The Algerian authorities have thwarted, - According to statistics from the Coast Guard Command of the Navy-, more than (3,109) Algerians attempting to migrate by sea to Europe in (2017), including (186) women and (840) minors, in addition to dozens of missing persons who drowned

at sea. It also confirms that more than (5,000) other migrants succeeded in reaching the European coasts, whether Spanish or Italian, starting at the Algerian coast. The same organization had previously announced the thwarting of (1206) illegal immigration attempts in (2016) (Lahzaoui, 2018).

The new report confirms that “the Coast Guard figures do not reflect the extent of this phenomenon,” and indicates that about (17,000) people of different nationalities have infiltrated the European coasts annually, according to Mahmoud Janan, the National Secretary in charge of the community and external relations of the Algerian League for the Defense of Human Rights. He pointed out that “European countries annually deport more than (5,000) Algerian illegal immigrants to their homeland” (Lahzaoui, 2018).

Illegal immigration is one of the emerging global phenomenon present in many developed countries, but immigration to Europe has emerged as a particularly pressing issue in recent years. Algerian youth, like many others, have not been immune to the lure of illegal or clandestine immigration, or what is known as “Lharga” or “burning”. Driven by unfulfilled aspirations in their homeland, these young individuals are willing to risk their lives in the sea, believing their dreams will be realized on the other side. In their pursuit, they board the boats of death, entering a perilous gamble where the outcomes – reaching the European continent of perishing – are equally uncertain.

Despite the recurrence of images and videos of victims washed up on the coasts, they risk both their lives and the lives of their families in boats which can barely carry two or three people, and are crowded with no less than thirty immigrants of different ages, surrendering their fates to the waves of the sea, which will either return them to the land from which they set out, or keep them among the missing, or take them to the dream continent, where as soon as they set foot, they will be registered as illegal refugees and thrown into special centers. The reasons that push these people to take risks and throw themselves into death are many, with one goal: escaping to the dream continent that the media markets with imaginary images, aspiring to a bright future in a country that, in their view, respects people and provides them with a decent life. The statistics that reach us through television channels and daily newspapers make us sound the alarm and put this phenomenon under study and investigation, which made us ask the following question: What underlying factors drive Algerian youth to migrate to European countries via perilous sea routes? What are the psychological and social explanations for this phenomenon, which has become a significant concern within Algerian society?

2. Objectives and Aims

- The current study aims to reveal the reasons that drive Algerian youth to migrate via death boats to European countries.

- Through this study, we also aim to provide a psychosocial explanation for this phenomenon that is troubling Algerian society, with its many negative effects.

3. Relevance and Impact

The importance of the current study lies in its attempts to uncover the underlying causes behind the rise in the recorded rates of illegal immigration. It also arises from its focus on the gravity of illegal immigration via death boats, particularly concerning its profound impact on Algerian society and its youth. The current study addresses the detrimental effects of this phenomenon across multiple dimensions - security, political, economic, psychological and social -, highlighting the insufficiency and ineffectiveness of current measures and policies aimed at curbing it.

4. Terminology and Definitions

4.1 Illegal Immigration

Migration is defined as movement under basic and fundamental conditions that allow individuals and groups to achieve a degree of balance or continue to exist by satisfying various human needs, biological, social, psychological, cultural, political, and others. In short, it is a process of restoring balance to the social and cultural system. (Sunni, 2010, p. 18)

Migration in its simplest meaning means the movement of people, whether individually or in groups, from one place to another in search of the best socially, economically or security-wise. The demographer Alfred Sophie summarizes

this by saying, "Either wealth goes where people are, or people go where wealth is." Since ancient times, people have been migrating from one place to another without restriction or hindrance until the emergence of the European Industrial Revolution and the subsequent development of local and international laws, where passports and entry visas were imposed that limited and reduced the freedom of movement of people and groups. After that, and in light of the economic crisis that European countries and societies have experienced in the past decades, as well as the fear of the deteriorating security conditions in developing countries, there was an attempt to limit and reduce regular immigration to these countries, which helped in the emergence of a parallel immigration called illegal immigration or "Lharga/burning" in the Maghreb concept, which in its meaning means burning all the ties and bonds that connect the individual to his roots and identity, as well as violating all laws and borders in order to Reach Europe. (Dakhala, 2014, p. 125) Illegal immigration is also the entry of people into a country other than their own illegally or irregularly. This phenomenon has several names such as clandestine immigration, illegal or irregular immigration, or "burning," and all of these names mean, in the eyes of domestic and international law, the illegality of this immigration. (Hadoush, p. 203)

Thus, it can be said that Illegal immigration is a harsh journey of suffering that an immigrant decides to take to get to a country illegally and in violation of the law, i.e. from other than

the designated ports of entry and exit and without permission from the competent authorities. In its beginning, illegal immigration was individual, as the immigrant alone decided to enter the territory of another country illegally, and was responsible for his illegal activity.

Most illegal immigrants prefer to migrate by sea due to the lack of control over documents. This is done by boats that are not suitable for sea navigation, which exposes most of them to drowning. These boats are crowded, as they exceed the capacity and size of the vessel, in addition to the weather conditions that are not suitable for sailing, which may cause many illegal immigrants to drown into the sea. Also, sea voyages often lose their intended direction because the driver does not know the direction, so the latter of the illegal immigrants only uses a compass to help him determine the direction. (Hadoush, p. 203)

4.2 Illegal Immigration Types

The characteristics of illegal immigration in Algeria have varied, perhaps the most important of which are:

- Riding clandestinely or secretly on ships docked at the port, by hiding inside containers and engines.
- Clandestine immigration by sneaking through airports on flights.
- Hiding inside cars and among the luggage of family members returning to Europe after spending their summer vacation in Algeria.
- Traveling by forging all the papers that enable the person to immigrate,

by relying on networks specialized in forging passports, residence papers, work contracts and entry visas.

- There are those who obtain a visa and enter Europe legally, but do not respect the duration of the visa and exceed it, and this is what is called "burning the visa".
- The last form, the focus of our study, is riding rubber or wooden boats and immigrating by sea in exchange for a sum of money in complete secrecy.

4.3 Illegal Immigration Factors

There are several factors that drive migrants towards illegal immigration, including economic, psychological, social and political factors, and then immigration comes as one of the solutions for the desperate who are looking for a job opportunity anywhere and at any price, even if it costs them their lives (Shatawi, 2014).

➤ Economic conditions

The spread of unemployment, the insufficiency of the labor market and the limited number of jobs, limited income for individuals, low purchasing power, and the absence of economic development.

➤ Political and security factors

These factors are represented by the failed policies adopted by developing countries, in addition to all forms of corruption which is a phenomenon affecting especially the economic and social aspects of society (Kabani, 2021), which have

become a major reason for young people to flee via death boats.

➤ **Social factor**

Which include poor living conditions, the absence of the value of citizenship, media marketing of the receiving countries, and many other social problems.

➤ **Psychological factors**

There are many psychological reasons that push Algerian youth to emigrate, including: Feeling internal alienation, Feeling frustrated, socially isolated, and Weak family and community affiliation.

➤ **Environnemental Factor**

Touahria in her research paper (2023) suggests a new form of seeking refuge. The phenomenon of environmental refuge is a new emerging cause of migration, in which individuals plan to flee their origin country due to environmental change. Some of these individuals may resort to illegal forms of executing that plan.

➤ **Social Media, a contributing Factor**

Social media platforms serve as a crucial tool for migrants to access information and resources in the receiving countries, and maintains communication with their families, easing their feelings of longing and change (Scherer, Cho, 2017).

Through the current field study, we will reveal some of the factors that pushed Algerian youth to illegally emigrate via death boats towards the European continent.

5. Methodological Framework and Procedural Approach

5.1 Study Method

The descriptive approach was relied upon in the study, which is the most appropriate scientific approach for our study, which aims to determine the reasons for migration via the death boat among Algerian youth, as it aims to record, analyze and interpret the phenomenon after collecting the necessary and sufficient data about the matter and its elements through a set of procedures.

5.2 Study Sample

The study sample consisted of (10) young men who were deliberately selected on the basis that they had experienced illegal immigration by sea and used rubber boats to transfer to the other side of the Mediterranean sea, specifically from Algeria to Italy.

5.3 Data Collection

The study employed an interview form as a method of data collection. It is a form that is consisted of a set of questions directed to individuals during the interview. The interview form was meticulously designed for the purpose of gathering data from individuals interviewed as part of the study (Malham, 2006, p.123).

The interview form included a set of open questions, which were as follows:

- Can you introduce yourself?
- What is your goal of illegal immigration to European countries?
- How did the illegal immigration process go? And how was your experience as a whole?
- What are the reasons that prompted you to immigrate via death boats?

6. Results and Discussion

After retrieving the interview forms distributed to the sample, transcribing their results and analyzing their content, we obtained the following:

6.1 First Question

The sample responses were as follows:

Age: Respondents' age ranged between 20-28 years.

Gender: Male.

Educational level: Intermediate - Secondary and University.

Professional activity: (05) unemployed – (02) university students – (03) liberal/freelance professions.

Residential area: (03) young men from the city of Oum El Bouaghi - (07) young men from the city of Ain Beida.

Marital status: (01) married, (09) single.

Exit and immigration area: Sidi Salem beaches, Oued Boukrat in Annaba, El Battah beach in El Tarf, and El Marsa beach in Skikda heading towards Cecil Island and Sardinia in Italy.

Number of illegal immigration attempts: one to three attempts to each individual.

6.2 Second Question

What is your goal of illegal immigration to European countries?

Most of the sample members agreed on one goal, which was to escape to a country that guarantees their future and fulfills the dreams and ambitions of young people. Sailing into the unknown has become better than staying under the walls, subject to lack of job options, drugs, and other social problems. The risk of death, and difficult living conditions in European centers have become easier than staying in their homeland.

6.3 Third Question

How did the illegal immigration process go? And how was your experience as a whole?

The sample members confirmed that the “burning” process was carried out in a secret manner after an agreement was reached with the mediator (smuggler), they started forming groups of (20) to (25) migrants, buying a wooden or rubber boat, buying the boat's engine, stocking up on gasoline, a GPS device, some food, sleeping equipment, life jackets, and sums of money in European currency, and coordinating with the guide who will transport them and schedule the departure time.

(6) of the sample members set off on the same trip since they know each other and are from the same city (Ain Beida), in a rubber boat out of a total of (22) migrants, who set off from Sidi Salem Beach

heading to Sardinia, Italy, before being returned by the Algerian Coast Guard (18) nautical miles from their departure point, at 2:00 am. The remaining (04) sample members underwent the experiment alone, (02) of them set off on a secret sea voyage to Sardinia from Oued Boukrat beach in Annaba with (18) people in a traditional wooden boat stolen from the fishing port in Annaba heading to Sicily Island in Italy, and they were stopped by the Algerian coast guards due to a defect in the boat.

Only one of the sample members made a secret migration from Battah beach in El Tarf on a rubber boat trip with (15) other people, and succeeded in reaching Sardinia, where they were stopped by the Italian coast guards for (72) hours in detention centers, before being deported back to Algeria. The last individual from the study sample Mr. (F) made his first attempt at illegal immigration to Italy, where he set off with (17) people in a traditional fishing boat from the beach of Marsa in Skikda. After setting off towards the island of Sardinia, and due to bad weather conditions, where a sea storm and high waves caused them to change their destination, Mr. (F) miraculously escaped death with (4) other people after the waves threw them into a Tunisian border city, while the rest of the people were lost at sea. Mr. (F) was imprisoned in Tunisia for a year before being transferred to Algeria.

As for the amounts of money, the prices of illegal trips to Italy using boats ranged from (35,0000) to (50,0000) DZD which amounts to approximately (2350) to (3500) EURO, depending on each member of the sample.

As for the source of the money, the responses of the sample members varied between those who collected the money from practicing their freelance work (construction, painting, etc.) and those who stole the money from different places. The sample members agreed that they had initially experienced the Haraga (illegal immigration) with great enthusiasm and some fear, which later became real terror, especially after they faced an unknown fate at sea in pitch dark. After the migrants were returned to the Algerian naval base, they were presented to the Civil Protection doctor, and hearing reports were prepared against them, in order to present them to the judicial authorities, to consider the charges against them, which are mainly, attempting to illegally immigrate to the Italian islands.

6.4 Fourth Question

With regards to the core question which directly serves the goal of the current study, we have included the answers of the sample members in order to deduce the reasons for their resort to illegal immigration via death boats, which we summarize as follows:

The most important reasons for “burning” to Europe are the failure of social, economic and political policies, mismanagement of financial and human resources and weak development policies, discontent with the existing political system, as one of the illegal immigrants stated “*we want the state to provide us with work*”, and the spread of unemployment among young people “*we hated the “Shumag/unemployment”, there was no service, and only girls get to work*

in this country”, in addition to the impact of the decline in oil prices on the Algerian economy, and the collapse of the value of the local currency with the policy of printing money *“our money does not bring anything and does not build the future”*, unprecedented financial corruption and the monopoly of wealth in the hands of the money and political mafia.

The Internet and its channels have led to a heightened awareness of the living standards of receiving countries and then the desire to benefit from the same advantages, i.e. the media marketing of the West that its countries have become paradise in the sample members” words, *“we go to the countries where people live their lives and have value among their peers”*, in addition to the inability of the national labor market to secure job requests, which makes individuals turn to seeking them abroad, even in difficult circumstances *“whether we study or not, the service is not the same, and if you work, you do not behave well”*, in addition to the failure to solve social problems, represented by the low purchasing power of the citizen *“the world is full of high prices and it is difficult for us to provide for our sustenance”*, and the increasing wave of pessimistic speeches adopted by some parties, which contributed with their speech to the alienation of Algerian youth, and illegal immigration was a natural reaction to the loss of hope and resentment of the lived reality *“there was no place to live, nor money to get married and start a family”*, in addition to the absence of a culture of listening and dialogue with the youth category *“everything is crooked in*

This country, no one has the right to talk or express their opinion”.

We note that young people are filled with an overwhelming psychological feeling that they deserve more than they have, and they look at the future of their countries with excessive pessimism, feeling frustrated by what they are experiencing, which negatively affects their future lives. In addition to the existence of integrated networks that organize illegal immigration which promote and encourage it, and invest a lot in it, counting on the fact that the return from it has become large, and the demand for it does not stop, in addition to the proximity of the Algerian coast to some European countries.

From answers of the study sample and after reading the literature, the study of Sassi (2018), and the study of Dakhala (2014) and the study of Shatawi (2014), we can explain illegal immigration in the death boats of Algerian youth with the effect of the following factors or motives:

➤ **Economic motives:**

The search for a livelihood to provide a safe and comfortable life is one of the first and most important motives, as it leads immigrants to leave their homelands and migrate to any other countries where they could find job opportunities to earn a living. The economic situation in most original countries of immigrants is largely linked to their demographic situation, as the population growth rate increases in line with the growth in national income, which leads to the state's inability to meet the requirements of these increasing

population numbers. The standard of living then decreases and pushes many individuals to search for better job opportunities in another place or country, especially the unemployed youth category who seek to form a family life, in light of the growing unemployment rates.

Economic factors are largely linked to the social factors and societal transformations that most developing countries are going through in particular, as these transformations carry out increasing economic and social bottlenecks, rising inflationary pressures, declining standard of living, and worsening crises in the areas of housing and facilities and lack of development; therefore, migration for work has become a necessary process. The most important factors of expulsion that lead to migration are the following:

- The continuous increase in population with a decrease in mortality rates, due to health progress, which leads to an increase in supply in the labor market and a mismatch between supply and education and training outcomes with available job opportunities, which prompts many to migrate, whether legally or illegally.
- Low wage levels, due to increased supply and inefficient employment and recruitment policies, which is reflected in a decrease in marginal productivity and a decrease in wages with the continuous increase in living standards and rising prices.

As for the most important factors of attraction to other countries, they are:

- High wages in the countries receiving immigration are a major factor in

attracting many immigrants to those countries.

- Ease of life in the country receiving immigrants by providing housing and means of transportation.
- The desire for renewal and change in work.

➤ **Social motives:**

The social motives for illegal immigration are closely linked to economic motives, as the economic system and the family system at the societal level are linked to the patterns and forms of migration.

Migration takes place in two different demographic areas, one of which is experiencing a population increase to the point of inability to meet local demand for work, housing and social services... The other is experiencing a decrease in the population, One of the serious consequences of the demographic explosion is the emergence of unemployment problems, which affects individuals at all educational and professional levels, even those with higher degrees, in light of the inability of the local labor market to secure these demands for work, which makes individuals turn to seeking them abroad, even in difficult working conditions.

In addition to the failure to solve social problems represented by poverty, famine, unemployment and diseases..., and also the image of social success that the immigrant shows when he returns to his country to spend the holiday, as he devotes himself to highlighting the manifestations of wealth from owning cars and buying real estate..., in light of the wide media

coverage of these manifestations (Suni, 2012).

➤ **Political Motives:**

The state of political and security instability resulting from internal conflicts, and human rights violations due to their religious or political affiliations, is one of the main reasons for migration movements that force individuals to move from unsafe areas to safer ones.

In addition to that, there are political factors at the local internal level, which push individuals to migrate, as political instability in some developing countries where public freedoms (freedom of thought and expression of opinions) are weak or non-existent, which pushes many people with scientific competencies and intellectuals to leave the country and search for another outlet to express their opinions freely.

We must also not miss an opportunity to emphasize the repercussions of political unrest and internal instability on the economic conditions of the country, which leads to disruption in production processes, with which the conditions of society worsen (Sassi, 2018).

➤ **Psychological Motives:**

Psychological motives are among the most important factors influencing the phenomenon of immigration in general and illegal immigration in particular. The deeper the feeling of attachment to the homeland and the attachment to the family, the more difficult it is to make the

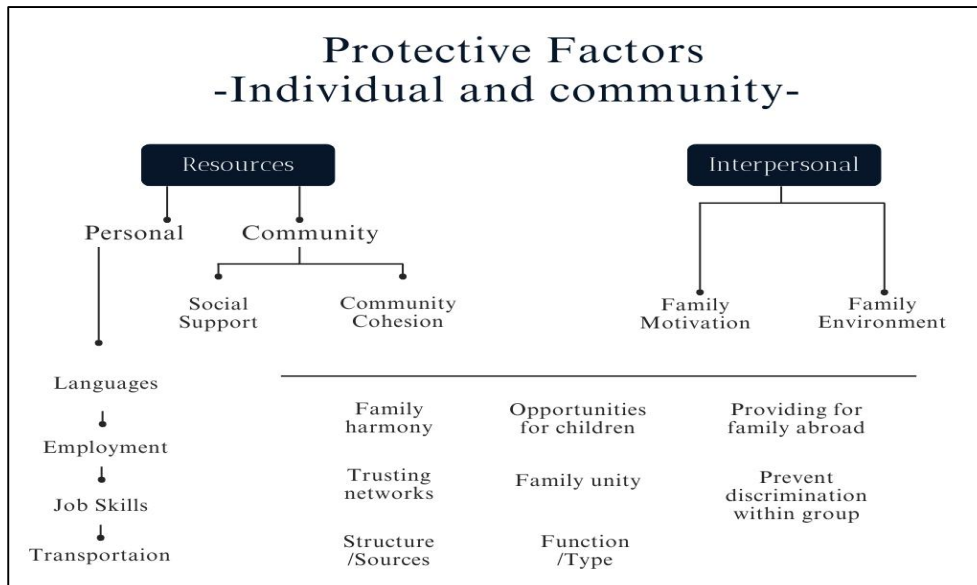
decision to immigrate, although in some cases the family may push its members to immigrate intentionally to improve their standard of living.

Especially after the prevalence of economic motives, lack of job opportunities, high prices, and lack of opportunities for a decent life, as the psychological traits and characteristics of the individual play a prominent role in making the decision to immigrate, especially illegal immigration, according to the lifestyle.

The psychological motives appear to be represented by the individual's feeling of frustration in trying to live a better life or achieve their goals through the work they currently do, and also represent the suffering that young people live in, which makes them risk their lives in illegal immigration while they are aware of the dangers they are exposed to during immigration.

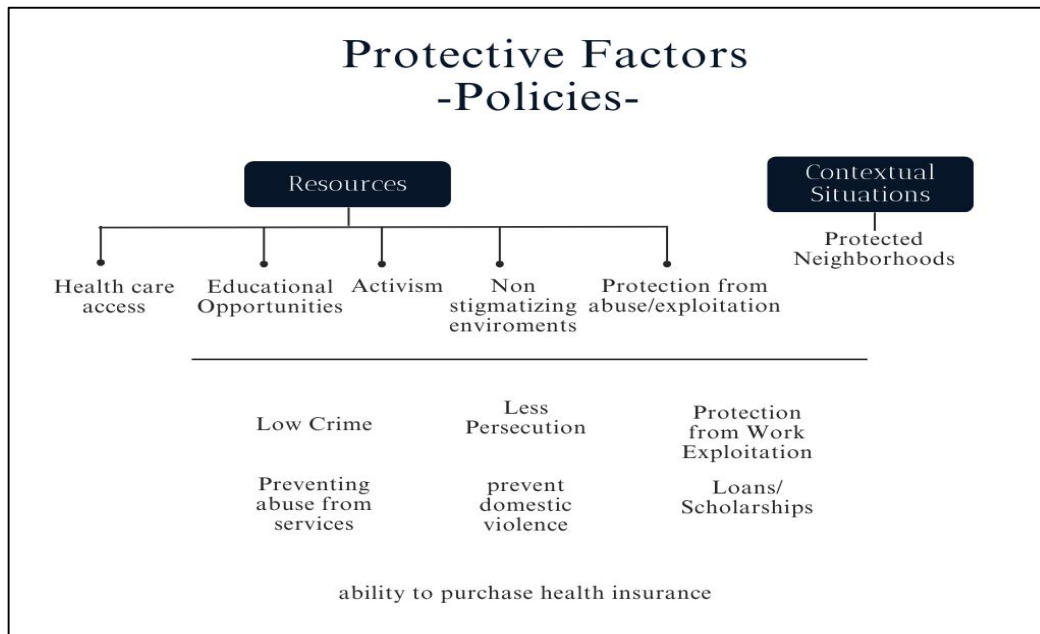
After analyzing the answers of the study sample, it is important to note that these individuals are only a drop in a sea of young people who attempt illegal Immigration, and it is important to provide a way to protect their general wellbeing. Garcini and Colleagues (2021) suggested a set of protective factors that can benefit the wellbeing of undocumented immigrants, and can also benefit the executive offices and decision making bodies to improve the origin countries and limit the attempts at illegal immigration. We present them in the following figures:

Fig.1. Illegal Immigration Protective Factors (individual and community levels)



Source: Garcini et al, 2021, p.20

Fig.1. Illegal Immigration Protective Factors (policies levels)



Source: Garcini et al, 2021, p.20

7. CONCLUSION

Illegal immigration does not happen in a vacuum, but is determined and driven by social and cultural contexts in the first place. Immigration in its entirety is a transition or transformation from an undesirable context or situation for migration in order to achieve psychological and material satisfaction and social adaptation and its inability to satisfy needs and desires, to another context or situation in which the potential for achieving all of these things is available, even to a relative degree. This is on the one hand, and on the other hand, the psychological characteristics of individuals play a significant role in explaining their tendency of some individuals, rather than others, to carry out the process of immigration despite them sharing the same circumstances with others. Based on this, we can say that there are motives or situational characteristics related to the social context, whether in the individual or the group they live in, i.e. the original homeland or the permanent place of residence, and these are called motivating factors, in addition to the attraction factors related to the place to which the immigrant wishes to immigrate. It can be said that it is difficult to determine the motives and reasons that could fully explain illegal immigration via death boats, as it is a difficult attempt, as a group of social and psychological studies and research revealed a huge number of reasons and motives that are difficult to limit in simple sentences.

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