

Abstract

Migrant social networks and their effects have dominated international migration discourse over the past few decades. The importance of social networks and social capital in migration decision-making is underscored by large volumes of research across many disciplines. There are however few comparative analyses of the refugee experience across disparate geographical spaces particularly cities in the so-called global ‘South’. Drawing on original survey data collected from refugees in Pakistan, Turkey and Nairobi in mid-2016, this paper argues that access to social networks and the value of the social capital embedded in these networks, is strongly dependent on the pre-migration social, political, cultural and economic contexts of migrants and refugees. Social networks generate positive social capital in some contexts and negative social capital in others. Logistic regression and correlational tests of association were used to analyse the relationship between social networks, employment, and well-being of refugees in the three cities mentioned. The findings speak of the complex economic and social environments refugees often find themselves, and networks of personal relations either hamper or facilitate the ability of refugees to secure employment.