The Importance of Education on Bhutanese Refugees and their Personal Incomes

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ABSTRACT

In this paper, I look to find the personal income rates of Bhutanese Refugees. I have been looking to find how variables like a refugee's educational attainment, poverty rate, and family situation affect how much money they make. Through the usage of Integrated Public Use Microdata Series(IPUMS) quantitative data, I took a sample of the specific year 2018 to visit the causation behind these variables and the result. An increase in the educational attainment of a Bhutanese Refugee will lead to an increase in their personal income and with a larger family, they will make more money. This means that the actions of the variables, whether they increase or decrease, have an effect on the personal income rates of a refugee.

Introduction

In 2022, The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees(UNHCR) found that there were more than 100 million people had been forcibly displaced worldwide by persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations, or other serious events. While the program has had the United States as a host for refugees since 2007, most have sought the ideal image of the American Dream in their hopes to come to the states. Bearing the tragic conditions of their resettlements, most refugees have trauma with the consequences of their former residence. Education often can take a back burner in these situations and in many cases, like the ones shown in this research paper, this can affect them negatively in the long run for the refugees themselves and also their families.

The development of this paper was looking at one common value: personal income driven by education and family lifestyle specifically Bhutanese refugees. In questioning this, I asked myself why was this important and what could it show. First, there was an opportunity to raise awareness for those who could go achieve more education. With enormously low numbers of those that attended college and are Bhutanese Refugees, it reveals much behind the output of their finances and the value of the educational system. Yet resources for acclimation to all refugees can be hard. From signing up to schools to picking classes to get school supplies, the whole entire process outside of the necessities like food, water, and a home can be very hard to get information on. This is even more prevalent when they don't know English and have a very hard time communicating with it. This may set them back grades and ultimately have them end up dropping out of school and working, something not uncommon within the Bhutanese Refugee community. With little to no help in acclimation to American society, refugees are bound to stay out of schooling. Some cities, like Austin, Texas, have stepped up to help refugees by providing them with systems that are willing to match native speakers with families in order to help them navigate simple tasks. With even more cities following this help, the distress and trauma of having to emigrate here can turn into lesser trouble with more focus on living a healthy, happy life.

In this paper, I will be focusing on specifically Bhutanese Refugees and their population in the United States from data in the year 2018. With my hometown Dallas, Texas containing the second largest Bhutanese population by percent, I have had the privilege of getting to know and making friends with many Bhutanese

children. They have prompted my passion for helping their community and exploring the reasons behind some of the struggles they face.

The question navigating my research is in what ways do the educational attainment, poverty rates, and family situation of a Bhutanese refugee affect their personal income rates? I look to infer that the educational attainment of Bhutanese refugees almost always has a correlation with their personal income rate in particular. Through thorough quantitative analysis, I look to use my data to piece together quality charts, graphs, and descriptions regarding this question. With weighted averages and accurate numbers, I will ultimately be able to conclude that my inference is correct and display this in all aspects of my research. The variables of poverty rates and family situation will also display whether they have a direct impact as well. Thinking about if a refugee has a bigger family makes me infer that they make more money as they are forced to feed more mouths. This can also be the opposite of the case though if multiple individuals in the family work so they each make less money to work around each other's schedule to have time for themselves or raise their family. Also, family situations with language barriers may take place if an elder cannot speak English as well or have problems communicating with others. These are all some of the things that I look to cover in my research.

The Bhutanese Refugee's Background

Nepal and Bhutan are both small countries in South Asia that lay between India and China, two very powerful countries. Lhotshampas, or the Nepali Bhutanese Refugees that are most common in the United States, are from the Southern side of Bhutan and are made up of those of both Nepali and Bhutanese descent. In the 1890s, the Lhotshampa people were hired by the Bhutanese government to help clear the southern jungles of Bhutan. They settled there and in 1958, the Bhutanese Citizenship Act was passed resulting in their community becoming home to Bhutan. Over the next quarter of a century, the population of the community grew but they received backlash from the Bhutanese government because of their different cultural spaces. The Bhutanese government in short kicked the Lhotshampas and forced them to seek refuge elsewhere. With rejection from Indian though, nearly all of them ended up in Nepal and a few years later, the United Nations involved themselves to set up Refugee camps for the stranded population in Nepal. There was then even more conflict that took place. The Maoists, a communist sector of the Nepali government, attacked several districts and started the "Peoples War".

Back-and-forth conflict happened for several years until 2007 when the UNHCR allowed Bhutanese refugees to emigrate to Western countries, with the United States as a top option. Starting then, thousands of people flooded into the United States. Some to my hometown but many all across the nation. They were provided with only eight months of help from food to housing to financial stability. The Voluntary Agencies provided short-term help to a long-term problems. They offered help to certain locations after eight months but provided clauses that only allowed this for people with severe disabilities (Reddy, 2021). Bhutanese Refugees looked inward and made tight-knit communities all over the nation as a way to tackle this new home together. They nearly all looked for immediate jobs and had no discussion is going to receive an education as they only had eight months of security.

The background of the Bhutanese Refugees serves to show the amount of adversity that they had to overcome. It doesn't mean to represent any ignorance against why they often don't have high educational attainment or why their personal incomes may be lower than the average household. The journey that the refugees have had to travel is there to represent an unspoken variable of hardship and proof of the lack of education in workers. One of the most tragic parts that the Bhutanese have endured which is also not represented in any data is the long-term toll on their mental health that the violent conditions that they once were a part of have done to them (Reddy, 2021). It is completely necessary to understand how the physical and mental obstacles of traveling to a new country to seek asylum or citizenship can be from a place of violence. This paper serves to represent the entirety of the outside environment that people of Nepali Bhutanese Ancestry have faced.

Data Representation

The analysis of my data was used through the IPUMS Bhutanese Registry of 2018. While the data represented 2018, not all of the people were surveyed in the year and most were from a collective of a few years prior. In my requested data from IPUMS, I had nearly every variable possibly from the data bank like the variables of age, personal income, and even amount of family members(multigenerational, etc.). The most used codes in the data representation were the ones connected to the years that the survey was taken, the percentage average weight of the person represented, their family situation, age, average personal income, educational attainment, and how many years they had been in the United States. Some datasets were created in Google Sheets to ease the accessibility of numbers and columns like the average age, average personal income, and age of immigration to the United States were created.

Many requested columns were deleted in the making of this data. Region and other location indicators were not helpful in the breakdown of my paper so they were removed from the representation. Other variables like language and specific family numbers like parents were removed as they didn't provide helpful usage in the text. The data off of the IPUMS website was extremely clean and there were no problems with exaggerated entries of numbers like 99999 which can be inputted sometimes in places where the answer is unknown. The main data points that I broke down were around the variables of educational attainment(how many years of schooling they received after high school or whether they moved onto schooling past high school), if they lived in a multigenerational household(displayed if there were a lot of people to take care of), and finally the age of their immigration(whether they were above or below the age of 18).

Quantitative Analysis

The analysis of my data first started out with arranging the rows. I removed all unnecessary rows in my data cleaning and only kept those rows relevant to my research. I then calculated some rows to keep the numbers easier and more readable when sorting through.

The age of immigration was my first category created. To make this category, I used a different sequence which was the number of years that they had been in the US subtracted by their overall age. This demonstrated a few things. It told me if they were above the age of 18 when coming to the United States. It also told me if they were able to receive a high school education at the age of their arrival. In total with my filtered IPUMS data, I had 514 Bhutanese Refugees that were used to understand the overall trends of their ancestry.

After creating new rows, equations were added to find the averages of the most important variables. The average of the Bhutanese Refugees that were surveyed was approximately 36 years. Since there was an average of older age, next the data was manipulated to find the total amount of schooling they did (finished high school and moved on to college or just had some high school education). This was beyond any prediction, out of all the refugees the total percent that hadn't gotten past a high school education was 83%. Less than 1/5th of the Bhutanese Ancestry that represented the entirety of 2018 had some sort of education at a college level. With a barrier of a college degree to most high-paying jobs, the reason for a lower education could be prompted by the fact that there were such educational attainments in the community.

Graphs were created to represent the trends of Bhutanese Refugees from their education and personal income. It correlates Years of Education to Yearly Income to depict the overall trend. The results are depicted in the graph below.
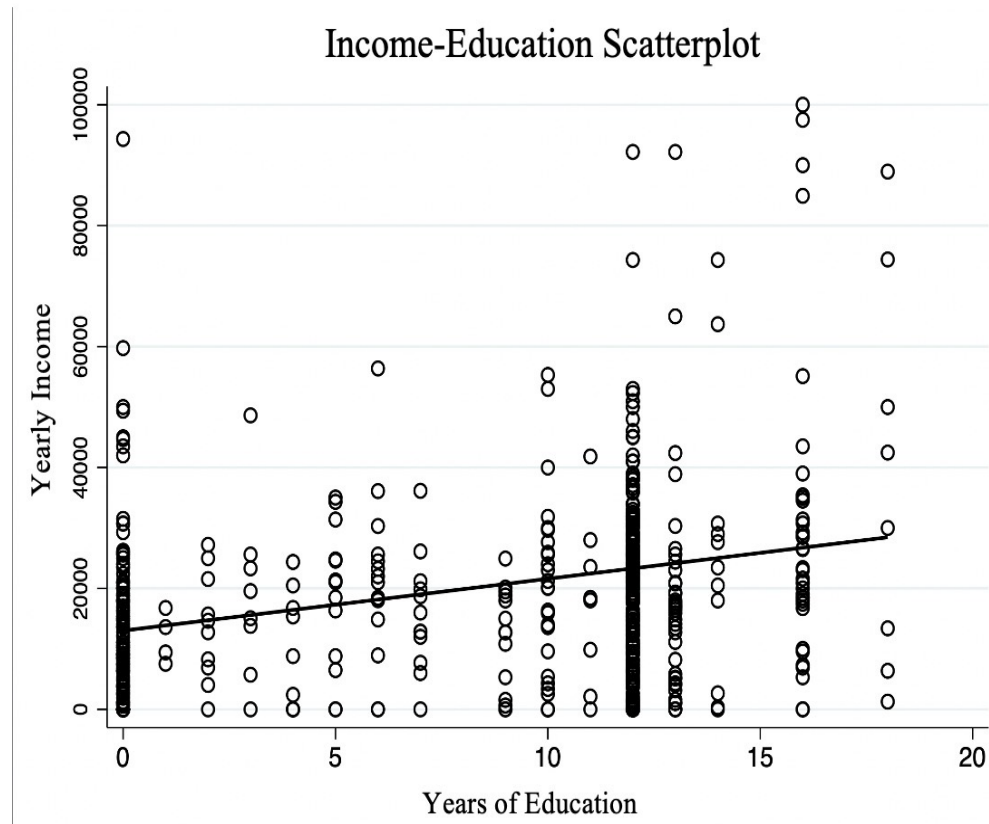
Figure 1. Income-Education Scatterplot. Integrated Public Use of Microdata Series 2018.

Results & Conclusion

The results of the research proposed and supported that educational attainment does in fact affect the personal financial income of a Bhutanese Refugee. While Bhutanese Refugees make much less than the average American, there is still a significant gap between those who are educated and those who are not within their own community. The overall emphasis of this was displayed in the graph.

In this cycle, the refugees who had a 6 or lower meant that they had not received any sort of college education. In this particular group, there were many individuals who hadn't attended and hadn't made any money. If there was an income from these people though, it was almost always minimal with less than 4 people exceeding the national average income– all of which were people who completed all of high school. The others who had fully completed high school were much less of a population but held higher weight when looking at the amount of personal income they accumulated each year.

In conclusion, the effects of education that are so often tested are in fact true. In the near future, the hope for the Bhutanese community is for them to receive higher levels of education so that they can look to make a higher personal income to support their families. Yet again, the educational system that can definitely be criticized also has a lot of potential in helping people who are new to the country and can guide them to fulfilling their American Dream.

Acknowledgments

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