

Determinants of vulnerability among refugees and other population sub-groups in South Africa- A case of refugees in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Abstract

Refugees in African countries are at higher risk of being victims of crimes and are highly vulnerable. We examine some important determinant factors that may explain the degree of vulnerabilities among refugees. Four vulnerability concepts were considered; environmental, socio-political, socio-economic and socio-cultural vulnerabilities. Data for the analysis was collected from 2028 respondents from Alexandra and Inner-city. About 59 percent of respondents were IDP from South Africa, 25% are Zimbabwe refugees and 15% are refugees from other countries. Chi-square test and logistic regression model were performed to examine determinants of vulnerabilities. Results showed that about 10% were considered as environmental vulnerable, 28% as socio-political, 71% as socio-economic, 15% as socio cultural vulnerable. Country of origin, was significant in predicting all forms of vulnerability except for socio-cultural. Also, education was significant determinant of any forms of vulnerability. The study concluded that understanding of the determinant of vulnerability will help in protecting refugees.

Brief

According to published evidenced by the World Bank (2000), vulnerability is defined within economic construct in terms of risk in relation to income and consumption instability. The ODI definition emphasizes normative and contextually specific notions of vulnerability and focuses explicitly on the poorer individuals and groups in society. Vulnerable was also viewed in terms of exposure to risk without social protection (Sabates-Wheeler and Waite 2003). Sabates and Waite in their work also identified three types of vulnerability which include environmental vulnerability, socio-political vulnerability and socio-cultural vulnerability. Going by the definition of the World Bank, I introduced a measure of socio-economic vulnerability.

For the analysis, four main measures of vulnerability were computed: environmental vulnerability, socio-political vulnerability, socio-cultural vulnerability and socio-economic vulnerability. The construct of each is as follows:

1. **Environmental vulnerability:** An individual is considered to be vulnerable in this sense if the person is homeless or displaced
2. **Socio-political vulnerability:** This is measured in terms of those whose residence status are irregular, lack police protection, victim of crime and lack access to social services due to irregular migration
3. **Socio-economic vulnerability:** This is measured in terms of people who lacked economic and social support.
4. **Socio-cultural:** This is measured in terms of people with any evidence of xenophobic attack.
5. **Any form of vulnerability:** This is measured in terms of people with evidence of any of the four forms of vulnerability.
6. **All forms of vulnerability:** This is measured in terms of people who have suffered all four forms of vulnerability computed.

Eight explanatory variables were utilized for the analysis which include; sex, country of origin, length of stay in current place, educational level, residence, reasons for leaving origin, reasons for moving to destination, self-assessment of health status.

Each of the outcome variables were dichotomized into “not-vulnerable” and “vulnerable”. Cross tabulation with chi-square test and a binary logistic regression were employed to test and examine the major determinants of vulnerability. Table 2 presents the results of the Chi-square tests while table 3 presents the results of binary logistic regression.

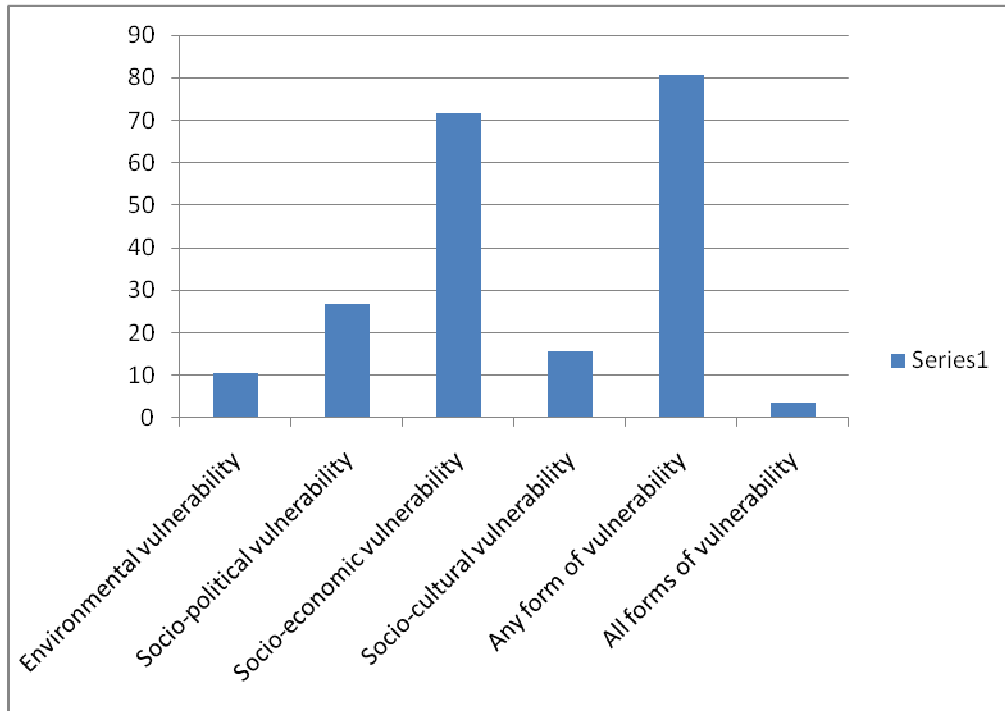
Results

About 11 percent of respondents were considered as environmental vulnerable, 27 percent vulnerable to socio-political issues, 71.5 to socio-economic and 16 percent as socio-culturally vulnerable. About four-fifth of the respondents had suffered at least one form of vulnerability while about 4 percent had suffered all four forms of vulnerability (Figure one shows the results).

Results from cross-tabulation and chi-square tests performed showed that education was significant in predicting exposure to all the four forms of vulnerability. Sex, country of origin, length of stay, residence, reasons for leaving country/place of origin and assessment of health status were significant in predicting three out of the four indicators of vulnerability. Reasons for moving to current place were only significant in predicting socio-economic vulnerability. About 78 percent of South Africans compared with 85 percent and 84 percent respectively of those from Zimbabwe and other countries respectively had suffered at least one form of vulnerability ($p < .05$). Less than 1 percent of South Africans compared with 5 percent of those from Zimbabwe and 13 percent of those from other countries had suffered all the four forms of vulnerability ($p < .05$). Also, about 5 percent of those who have stayed for about 6-10 years in current place of residence compared with those who have stayed for less than 1 year (0.7%) or over 11 years (2.3%) had suffered all forms of vulnerability ($p < .05$).

Six logistic regression models were presented in table 3. The first model examined determinants of environmental vulnerability; the second model examined the determinants of socio-political vulnerability; the third is on socio-economic vulnerability, and the fourth on socio-cultural vulnerability. Model five examined the determinants of exposure to any of the four forms of vulnerability; and the sixth on those who had been exposed to all the four forms of vulnerability. Results from the models, country of origin was significant in predicting all forms of vulnerability except for model 4. Those from “other countries” reported a higher odd-ratio than those from Zimbabwe and South Africa to be exposed to any form of vulnerability- (odd-ratio of 15 for environmental and 5 for socio, economic). Those from Zimbabwe are also more likely than those from South Africa to be exposed to any of the forms of vulnerability. Those with higher education level were less likely to be exposed to any of the forms of vulnerability (significant at $p < .05$ for socio-political and socio-cultural vulnerability).

Figure 1: Indicators of vulnerability by percentage exposed to one form, any form and all the forms of vulnerability



References:

World Bank 2000. World Development Report 2000/2001. Washington DC: World Bank.

R. Sabates-Wheeler and M. Waite (2003): Migration and Social Protection: A Concept Paper Institute of Development Studies, Sussex