Literature Review
Women and Migration

Purti Sadhwani

The UN defines a long-term migrant as an individual living in a foreign country for more than a year, and a short-term migrant as living abroad between three months and a year (UN DESA 1998). **Women make up approximately half of the migrant population in the world** (even 70-80% in some countries) but most of the research based on Migration has been focused on men, only since the 1980s has research begun to focus on women in the context of migration. However, a presentation by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA) shows that from 1990 to 2010 the number of countries with sex-disaggregated migrant data has actually decreased (Hovy 2013).

Migration can be empowering for women, allowing women to access employment and education, improving gender equality and norms, and strengthening agency—the ability to make independent decisions to achieve desired outcomes. Conversely, migration may also exacerbate vulnerabilities, including abuse and trafficking, particularly when migrants are low-skilled or irregular, indicating that gender norms have a positive as well as a negative aspect attached to them when it comes to migration.

Researchers have coined the phrase **"Feminisation of Migration"** for the migration among women across the globe.

Before we discuss the causes and effects of migration for women it is imperative to know the statistics including the relative importance of South-North and South-South flows. For example, a substantial proportion of recent growth in female migration has taken place in Asia, from countries in South and South East Asia to Gulf and East Asian states. Among the countries sending migrant women, the prominent ones are Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. And those on the receiving end are the Gulf States, particularly Saudi Arabia and Kuwait. Hong Kong, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Malaysia, and Brunei. Migrant women who come to work in southern Europe are from a wide variety of countries and origins, including Morocco, Eritrea and Ethiopia and the Philippines in Italy, from the Dominican Republic, Morocco and Peru in Spain, from Poland, Albania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Ethiopia, Somalia and the Philippines in Greece and from the Philippines

1 Reasons for Migration

1.1 Marriage Purposes and Family Reunification

The prominent reasons for Women's migration are Marriage purposes and Family reunification. International marriage migration can include "mail order brides," whereby men from more affluent countries marry women from developing nations. According to the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), the United States Department of Justice reported that from 1995 to 2005, an estimated 80,000 Russian women migrated to the United States for this form of marriage, and even more migrated to Western Europe. Chant and Radcliffe (Chant & Radcliffe 1992) find that women are more likely to make migration decisions based on their family, rather than individually. The decision to move is often based on helping the family, as is seen in the Philippines. In the Philippines, concepts like the "martyr mother" or "dutiful daughter" encourage women to migrate more than any other factors. One of the main reasons for families sending their daughters abroad is also because daughters send more remittances than sons do which brings us to the next point of employment opportunities as a reason for migration for women.

1.2 Economic and Labour Purposes

Women are now increasingly migrating for Economic and Labour Purposes. Countries with aging populations or high women's labor force participation have a higher demand for domestic work and care for children and the elderly. This phenomenon is known as the **"global care chain"** A chain reaction occurs with increased women's labor force participation, whereby employed women hire other women as domestic helpers and caretakers, who then rely on other women, such as their mothers, female relatives, or eldest children, to care for their families, potentially keeping them out of economic or educational opportunities. This supports the view that many of the gains that indigenous women have made have depended on the exploitation of other women from poorer countries in the international division of labor (Anthias & Lazaridis 2000). This is an important instance of how differential labor market incorporation can be divisive for women. While women of the majority improve their position it is at the expense of migrant women. Moreover, this pattern reproduces traditional family arrangements where women remain responsible for the domestic sphere, even though they work.

The right to residence is usually linked to employment and to the forms of exclusion and racialization linked to women's ethnic, legal, and class position. Foreign domestic maids in a number of Asian countries are often not allowed to change jobs within two years of their employment contract. Migrant women workers are prohibited from marrying local citizens; they are not allowed to become pregnant, and some countries can even subject them to pregnancy tests every six months. Few domestic maids have a migration status separate from

their work entitlement on entry as domestic workers, and they are therefore vulnerable; if they leave their employer they could be deported. Some women are undocumented, which makes them particularly vulnerable and exploitable. Lack of formal regulation and personal rights deprives them of any ways of countering potential forms of abuse and may trap them in unhappy and at times dangerous dependencies on the families that employ them. (Anthias & Lazaridis 2000)

While women make up less than 40 percent of total employment, their share of all those working part-time is 57 percent. (ILO 2016) Women fill particular functions in the labor market, being cheap and flexible labor for the service sectors, and in some countries, small/light manufacturing industries. Asian women make up the fastest-growing category of the world's burgeoning, 35-million-plus population of migrant workers. Asia is also the scene of a booming "migration industry," which operates both legally and illegally, providing contract labor to some of the world's wealthiest and most dynamic economies, often at a high human cost. (ILO/96/1).

There has also been growth in the entertainment industry linked to sexual services such as cabaret, dancing, massage parlors, etc. The feminization of flows to southern Europe is linked to changes in women's employment, with the restructuring of labor markets towards the service sector (Williams, King & Warnes 1997). Prostitution, in fact, is hidden by some of these activities and has become very lucrative, sometimes for co-ethnic employers or pimps. Migrants represent a large part of the sex worker community across the globe. In some Western European countries, as many as 70% of sex workers are migrants. In Thailand, the focus group participants put the figure at around 30%. A study in South Africa found that some major cities had 39% migrant sex workers from other countries with a further 46% migrating internally from other South African regions. (Global Network of Sex Work Projects) (Crago 2022) The trafficking of women in the sex industry is largely illegal and undocumented. Where women are not illegal entrants they may be documented as cabaret artists and musicians as in the case of Cyprus. Many of these women are promised jobs in clubs and other forms of leisure but find themselves forced into prostitution on arrival. If they are illegal entrants any attempt to avoid prostitution could lead to deportation (Campani 1998). Trafficking discourses most often harm sex workers and undermine sex workers' rights advocacy because the migration of sex workers is conflated with human trafficking and sexual exploitation, and reinforced by anti-migrant policy and societal attitudes, especially in the Global North. The resulting legislation tends to ignore empirical data and creates circumstances in which sex workers are more vulnerable to violence. The statistics quoted regarding trafficking are also frequently misleading. In Canada, the anti-trafficking agenda re-directs large amounts of government funding to police and 'rescue' organizations, which leads to the harassment, surveillance, and deportation of migrant sex workers.

Migrant sex workers in almost every region surveyed reported moving to higher-income countries or regions to seek economic opportunity. In South Africa, Uganda, and Zimbabwe, the movement of migrant sex workers is often linked to the mining industry, which attracts migrants and is a source of clients. Likewise, in Nicaragua and Tanzania, the movement of sex workers relates to the mobility of workers in mining and agriculture. In the Balkans, sex workers migrate on a seasonal basis to North Macedonia during the summer period, as do other seasonal workers. Migrant sex workers are also motivated to travel, simply to see the world and experience different cultures, as emphasized by sex workers from Empower in Thailand.

Another important aspect attached to female migration is associated with the income classes of women migrating. Research indicates that poor women migrate more, and owning land, a home, or a business is associated with less female migration, though those factors increase the probability of male migration (Cerrutti & Massey 2001). A study finds poorer rural households in the Philippines to be more likely than rich households to send young women to migrate to cities for work (Lauby & Stark 1988). In Bangladesh, 80 percent of female domestic workers came from landless homes, compared with only 54 percent of male and female garment workers, implying higher levels of poverty for migrant domestic workers (Afsar 2006). In Bangladesh, the majority of female domestic workers had no formal schooling, and those that had any generally only studied through primary or junior secondary school (Afsar et al. 2009). Research further indicates that education levels and current employment are positively correlated with migration among women, in Rural Mexico and Morocco, the increased rates of employment and education have resulted in higher immigration rates.

1.3 Political and Personal Reasons

Migration in general and Women's migration specifically are both strongly correlated with political instability in the country of residence. Refugee women and girls or those who are displaced are particularly vulnerable when they find themselves in situations where their security cannot be ensured and where they may be subject to sexual violence or exploitation.

Women migration is also strongly correlated with Gender-based norms and inequalities in host countries as well as native countries. Expectations and gender norms strongly influence the decision to migrate. It is based on how a woman's role is perceived as a caretaker and sacrificing life for a family so that they migrate because of family reasons. Women often migrate to avoid the structural norms and gender-related stigma. At a certain threshold, discrimination in the originating country is so high that it hinders female migration. But at the same time, migration can only occur if the woman has agency, and can both make the decision to migrate and is capable of leaving. Although in most cases, migration also results in propagating these rigid gender norms and

inequalities, these women migrating to new places face discrimination and abuse without external support, and language and cultural barriers make it even more difficult to overcome and adapt to the new environment.

2 Discussing the Consequences of Women Migration

Unfortunately, in the past two decades, **immigrant women in Europe have faced a double disadvantage**, determined by both their gender and their immigrant status. Additionally, the labor market outcomes of immigrant women in the EU have improved over time, neither overall nor relative to those of native women and immigrant men (Frattini & Solmone 2022). In 2020, the immigrant-native differential in employment probability was ten percentage points on average across the EU. However, the gender differences are substantial: even though native female employment rates are already significantly lower than male ones (71% versus 82%), the immigrant gap among men is 6%, while the gap between immigrant and native women is as high as 14%. In Germany, the European country with the largest presence of Ukrainian women, the employment probability gap of immigrant women relative to native women was 22 percentage points. Besides having lower employment probabilities overall, employed immigrant women are disproportionately more likely than both immigrant men and native women to be in the bottom decile of the national income distribution. Across Europe, 35% of immigrant women are in the bottom income deciles, and less than 5% reach the top decile.

The high concentration of immigrant women in occupations that offer very little economic gratification and very few career prospects (Fasani, Llull & Tealdi 2020), as well as the total number of hours worked, explains 61% of their higher probability of being in the bottom income decile compared to native women, who already earn significantly less than native men (Roulet, Stabile & Palladino 2021), and – surprisingly – than immigrant men. Individual characteristics such as age and education explain less than 7% of the differential. In fact, immigrant women are better educated than immigrant men: the share with tertiary education was 33% in 2020, three percentage points higher than among men, while the share with at most a lower secondary degree was 33%, one percentage point less than men. Their education levels are better in almost all European countries. Conversely, as much as one-third of the immigrant-native gap in the probability of being at the bottom of the income distribution between women cannot be explained by any of those factors, indicating a specific **immigrant-women labor market penalty.**

The phrase used for migrant women's experiences in the skilled sector is unemployment, underemployment, and discrimination. **A fine balance: Women, work, and skilled migration by Carina Meares** (Meares 2010) examines the post-migration experiences of highly-skilled Eastern European migrants.

The research has been undertaken predominantly in those parts of the world that have placed an increasing emphasis on skills as criteria for selecting migrants: Canada, Europe, and Australia. The research suggests that international migration has a negative impact on the working lives of skilled migrant women. Devaluation of foreign credentials, a lack of working experience in the host country, gendered social responsibilities, an absence of social support, and time spent in resettlement activities led to downward occupational mobility; decreased income, and damaged career prospects; career redirection such as retraining or employment as cultural brokers; and under- or unemployment.

Research in Europe also suggests that international migration damages the careers of skilled migrant women. Although some women, predominantly those with skills in the natural sciences, were able to retain their former professional identities, for others the process of adjustment was much more difficult. Some of these latter women found work in different areas of the labour market by retraining or becoming "cultural brokers" for fellow immigrants, while yet others were unable to enter the highly-skilled sector of the labour market at all. These women experienced having the **gendered identity of "housewife" thrust upon them.** International migration, they conclude, does little to destabilize home country gender norms, but rather hardens the line between women's and men's identities and tightens the ties that bind women to the home. Women migrating with their spouses in the sector of blue-collar jobs have experienced disrupted or damaged careers and an increase and/or intensification of domestic responsibilities. These career changes and losses were accompanied by often painful shifts in identity, from career women or professional women to housewives, and from financially autonomous "partners" to economic dependants

An important aspect in the case of women migrating for employment opportunities is remittances, that is, migrants, sending earnings home to support family members. According to UN Women, women are more likely to send remittances and show more stability and frequency in sending home remittances and therefore are preferred to be sent out for work. In general, women remit a higher proportion of their income than male migrants, though total amounts of remittances may be lower because of lower wages (United Nations Population Fund 2016). Studies show that migration improves autonomy, human capital, and self-esteem, as well as women's authority in their families and communities, female migrants gain income and are able both to assist their families and provide for their own basic needs and futures by increasing savings.

When discussing the consequences of Migration for Sex Workers, a survey of women working in the sex industry confirmed that stigma and discrimination affected their health, safety, and self-esteem, and impacted their capacity to fulfill their basic needs. Frequently, stigma is described as coming from many fronts. Respondents from All Women Advocacy (AWA) in Zimbabwe described migrant sex workers as suffering from the **triple stigma "of being a sex worker, a foreigner and most often being undocumented."** Sex workers in DRC

noted that migrant sex workers from Rwanda and Burundi face the threat of violence from local colleagues, who see them as competitors and responsible for declining prices. In Peru, Venezuelan migrants report being attacked and thrown out of public parks. They frequently find themselves excluded from accessing essential services including housing and healthcare, particularly HIV/STI prevention, sexual and reproductive health programs, mental healthcare facilities, and accommodation facilities due to being non-national, and undocumented, as well as punishing those seen as benefiting from sex work. For example, in France and other countries, a landlord can't knowingly rent an apartment to a sex worker for fear of being prosecuted for allowing sex work to take place on their premises. (Global Network of Sex Work Projects) (Crago 2022). Migrant sex workers reported having an overwhelmingly negative relationship with law enforcement and justice systems, especially in their interactions with the police. This was invariably due to a combination of the criminalization of sex work, corruption, and the persecution of migrants, especially those who were undocumented. In all cases, their status as migrant sex workers essentially acted as a barrier to justice.

One of the prominent aspects is **when women remain behind as their husbands migrate**, they often gain greater control and authority in their households, acting as the decision maker for the family's choices and finances. Several studies state that when wives remain at home they are more likely to have autonomy and decision-making power in the household on issues related to land, children's education, and household expenditures. Evidence from Costa Rica, Indonesia, Kenya, Peru, and India confirms that the households turn into more of a matriarchal hierarchy than otherwise. (Fleury 2016)

"Women and Migration-Challenges and Constraints – A South African Perspective" by Kalpana Hiralal (Hiralal 2017) discusses the narratives of immigrant women in South Africa who have been victims of domestic violence and explores how immigration-related factors such as xenophobia, language, unemployment and lack of familial support hinder their attempts to seek help thus making settlement and assimilation in the new environment particularly challenging. Many are imprisoned in marriages and relationships of domestic abuse and hence face extreme issues as a consequence of migration.

The risk of maternal mortality and severe morbidity is another consequence of migration for women. The maternal morbidity risk increased among most groups of women migrating from low-income to high-income settings, compared to host populations (van den Akker, Thomas; van Roosmalen, Jos, 2016)(van den Akker & van Roosmalen 2016). This means that migrant women require increased vigilance during pregnancy and childbirth to prevent emerging complications. Besides, the vulnerable position of migrant women within high-income health systems means that access to and quality of obstetric care in this population should be prioritized. Integration policies should, however, include the stimulation of literacy about the prevailing health care system in the countries of destination. Even highly educated women often

fail to understand the insides of this system where they arrived. The paper concludes that we need improvements in family planning and antenatal services, and audits and confidential inquiries should be extended to include maternal morbidity and ethnic background and all of this requires scientific and political efforts.

We find that migration can be an opportunity as well as a cost in various cases. The causes and the consequences of migration are interlinked and we need better research to navigate through these aspects of migration separately. Understanding the intricacies of gender and migration can result in better programs and policies that enhance the benefits and decrease the costs for female migrants.

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