

# opción

Revista de Antropología, Ciencias de la Comunicación y de la Información, Filosofía,  
Linguística y Semiótica, Problemas del Desarrollo, la Ciencia y la Tecnología

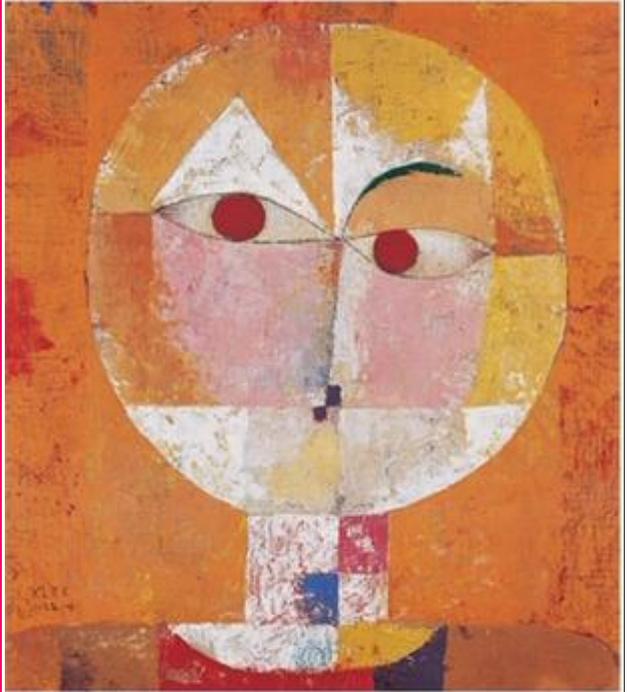
Año 35, 2019, Especial N°

# 23

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales

ISSN 1012-1587/ ISSNe: 2477-9385

Depósito Legal pp 198402ZU45



Universidad del Zulia  
Facultad Experimental de Ciencias  
Departamento de Ciencias Humanas  
Maracaibo - Venezuela

# Gendering international migration

**Kamila Danilovna Shaibakova, Rustem Shamilevich Davletgildeev**

Kazan Federal University

[kamila.shaibakova@mail.ur](mailto:kamila.shaibakova@mail.ur), [rustem.shamilevich@mail.ur](mailto:rustem.shamilevich@mail.ur)

## Abstract

The article looks at the development of the research on women migrants and establishes the occasions when women become more vulnerable and when special regimes are required in order to make migration easier and to avoid discrimination via comparative qualitative research methods. As a result, women have more likely become victims of gender-based violence especially if a ground for intersectionality can be found. In conclusion, women face unique problems in migrating that men might not be experienced. Stereotypes, intersectionality, the high risks of being subjected to domestic or sexual violence make them more vulnerable than men.

**Keywords:** Gender, Migration, Integration, Women, Men.

## Migración internacional de género

### Resumen

El artículo analiza el desarrollo de la investigación sobre las mujeres migrantes y establece las ocasiones en que las mujeres se vuelven más vulnerables y cuando se requieren regímenes especiales para facilitar la migración y evitar la discriminación a través de métodos comparativos de investigación cualitativa. Como resultado, es más probable que las mujeres se conviertan en víctimas de violencia de género, especialmente si se puede encontrar una base para la interseccionalidad. En conclusión, las mujeres enfrentan problemas únicos en la migración que los hombres podrían no tener experiencia. Los estereotipos, la interseccionalidad, los altos riesgos de ser sometidos a violencia doméstica o sexual las hace más vulnerables que los hombres.

**Palabras clave:** Género, Migración, Integración, Mujeres, Hombres.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

The landscape of international migration has become increasingly diversified as a result of globalization, relaxed visa regimes and global labour market. International migration has become a global phenomenon, leaving few countries unaffected by international flows.

The relevance of the migration resulted in a considerable number of research and studies. While a lot has been said about refugees, human rights and security, the gender approach to the migration have still been criticized. The share of female migrants has declined from 49.3 percent in 2000 to 48.4 percent in 2017. Moreover, between 2013 and 2017, the share of women among migrant workers fell from 44.3 percent to 41.6 percent. In 2017, migrant workers were estimated to be 58.4 percent male and 41.6 percent female. Nevertheless, females comprise somewhat less than half, 125 million or 48.4 percent, of the global international migrant stock.

## **2. METHODS**

The purpose of this paper is to answer the following research question: what are the reasons for migration become more gender-based? And what are the difficulties women face in international migration? The assumptions taken in this paper is that the women

indeed migrate more and face some unique problems that neither men migrants, no native-born women, transgender people do not experience. While there is extensive research on men migrants, the assumption that women and men migrants have different problems seems to be proven. Despite the fact that migrant women and men both tend to cluster in a restricted number of sectors, but migrant women cluster in fewer sectors than men. At the same time, are women migrants are more vulnerable than native-born women? This assumption cannot be easily accepted; therefore, it will be tacked in the paper (MIRZAEI, & ALIAKBARI, 2017; PARMIN ET AL, 2018).

### **3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Early studies on migration either focused on male migrants or described migrants in genderless, neutral terms. Migration models and theories were based on the male experience. It was stated that the same mechanisms are applicable to both men and women. Women as independent research subject were included, but without systematically explaining the reasons for that. The other thing is that further research was focused exclusively on women rather than on gender (CHOLEWINSKI, 2003). Therefore, the term feminization of migration was used. There is sometimes confusion when it comes to gender and sex. While sex is defined as a biological outcome of chromosomal structures, gender is socially constructed. In feminist theory, gender is seen as a matrix of identities, behaviours, and power

relationships that are constructed by the culture of a society in accordance with the sex (ESTRADA-CLAUDIO, 1992).

Research on feminization focuses on, *inter alia*, a number of women migrate rather than on the gender perspective as a whole. Thus, in 2000, female migrants constituted nearly 51 percent of all migrants in the developed world and about 46 percent of all migrants in the developing countries. The perception of women and their decision-making power was different. In the 1970s and 1980s, migration was seen as the outcome of individual decisions. The responsibilities of women as wives and mothers (and the role of men as breadwinners) were thought to influence the decisions of women. Those gender and family roles were used to explain why the majority of migration decision was made by the male persons (fathers, husbands) (JONES-CORREA, 1998).

Despite the predominant view, in the 1960s, the international migration theory has started to become more gender-sensitive. However, in an effort to correct the invisibility of women in migration theory, there is a chance that researchers will begin to over-emphasize the migration experience of women, paying less attention to that of men. This is why the term feminization has been criticized. In addition, the feminization of migration might have certain drawbacks. Often, women are portrayed as victims. This approach has been called by some authors as a sacrifice and suffering approach. It is a consistent association of female migration with exploitation. There is a strong policy orientation in much of this work, and recommendations usually

focus on various forms of protection of migrant workers. In this image, the female migrant is constructed as a naive woman, migrating out of her own free will, but being duped into a hopeless situation (GRIECO & MONICA, 1998).

The gendering of migration is a broader term as it shall include observation of any gender rather than just women. The gendering is a more favourable term as it helps to avoid inadvertently undermining the gendered view of migration that helps explain the experiences of both males and females. Much of the literature makes it clear that the focus is on women rather than on gender, and surely, this is a legitimate agenda. Therefore, it is important to identify the differences and unique problems that women might face while in migration.

Nevertheless, the feminization of migration has been recognized as a tendency at the global level. The feminization of migration is connected to at least four facts:

1. Improved statistical visibility, partly related to a changed perception of women- dominated migration as work migration in its own right;
2. The increasing participation of women in most, if not all, migration streams;
3. The increasing inability of men to find full-time employment in the origin countries;

4. The growing demand for feminized jobs in destination countries (ALSABA & KAPILASHRAMI, 2016).

The market developed a special demand for specific female forms of migration. These include the migration of domestic workers, the migration and trafficking of women in the sex industry, and the organized migration of women for marriage. Au Pair is specifically popular migration reason. While there is a prejudice that only women (or people in general) migrate from less developed countries to the so-called western world, au pairs are coming even from developed countries. For example, au pairs from Eastern Europe have become a form of hidden domestic labour, which has enabled them to build up contacts and overstay as undocumented domestic workers (Carling, 2005). So, what are the particular problems women migrants face and what make them particularly vulnerable?

Women migrants are more dependent on their spouse. Increasing female migration is not always a signifier of their increased freedom of movement or increased independence. The representative example is Sweden. While being considered as a role model in gender equality, the interview with the Women Lobby NGO in Stockholm opened the alarming problem that women can face. This is a so-called two-year rule. The two-year rule, which can be found in the Swedish Aliens Act, dates back to 1983 and is applicable to the couples where one of the people is a migrant. This rule was created to combat the practice of fictitious marriages. According to this rule, if such a couple gets divorced within two years, the spouse from a foreign country,

usually a woman, loses the right to reside in Sweden. The two-year rule creates an emotional and economic dependency on a spouse and therefore less likely to seek help for gender-based violence due to fear of deportation. Thus, gender-based violence becomes an issue in these relations. In Europe, North America, Australia and New Zealand, migrating under the family reunification category is still clearly dominated by women (SCHROVER & MOLONEY, 2013).

Right to remedy and access to justice allow individuals to seek redress for violations of their rights. Why is it relevant in regard to women migrants? Female migrants often experience sexual harassment, which is linked to their ethnic minority status. First of all, coming from different legal systems, it is difficult for migrants to figure out where to seek help in the case of personal danger. This is especially relevant if a person comes from the jurisdiction where gender-based violence perceived as not serious and a family issue. Women do not have knowledge of other legal instruments that can be used in order to protect themselves, for example, protective orders or women's shelters. According to the UNHCR, more than half of the world's refugees come from Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia, which have historically excluded women from public life and the formal economy.

Under these circumstances, refugee women who experience violence outside of their home countries are going to be reluctant to report it or seek assistance because they have been socialized into

subordinate gender roles and often embrace the culture of shame and silence in response to violence against women (EREL ET AL., 2003).

In addition, most of the women (both native-born and migrants) are unaware of the international mechanism of the protection of their rights (the ECHR, the UN mechanisms). Much of the debate on the rights of migrants has focused on the legalistic aspects revolving around the existing international law framework for the protection of migrants or on more specific rights, such as political rights, and this has typically occurred in the context of liberal states' role as countries of immigration. A joint report published by the United Nations Refugee Agency, United Nations Population Fund, and Women's Refugee Commission highlighted the difficulties of addressing gender-based violence with limited resources. Nonetheless, some of the recommendations from this report are promising, such as (1) providing safe reception centers and accommodations for women and children, (2) disseminating culturally appropriate educational materials, and (3) providing translation and legal services.

While both women and men could wear religious or national clothes, women migrants are the one who can be easily distinguished from the non-migrant women, says Katri Linna, the senior legal adviser of Civil Rights Defenders and former ethnic discrimination ombudsmen. They become more visible and this makes them more likely to be discriminated or harassed. Undoubtedly, national and religious clothes are one of the debate topics in the so-called western world. In this regard, the question of intersectionality comes up.

Intersectionality is discrimination based on several bases. It might be discrimination on the basis of sex and nationality, sex and religion, sex and disability. Intersectionality does not strictly link to the sex, the intersectional discrimination may occur based on disability and religion, or sexual orientation and nationality, etc. The headscarf and burka have been a subject of debates, discussion on a higher level and even matter before the European Court of Human Rights.

The other thing that makes women migrants more vulnerable is the health sector. According to article 12 CEDAW, the states oblige to eliminate discrimination in the area of access to health care. The unique feature of women is that they need to have access to reproductive rights as well as appropriate services in connection with pregnancy (ASCP) what make them particularly vulnerable. However, while being one of the biggest concerns, the other cases might cause the basis for discrimination. The recent cases of doctors who refused to treat their female patients because they could not shake hands with a man. A woman decided not to shake the hand of a doctor and instead placed her hand against her own chest and nodded to him. The doctor perceived it as an offense and refused to treat her. It was later put into her medical journal that in the future she would be treated by a woman (CASTLES & MILLER, 2003).

However, the woman was okay with a male doctor to treat her, it was just a matter of shaking hands with a man. This case is a clear case of intersectional discrimination based on the bases of sex and religion. The similar case (outside the health sector) took place in

Uppsala, Sweden, where a job interview of a Swedish Muslim woman was terminated when she refused to shake hands with a man. In 2018, the first judgment of its kind was delivered where the Swedish labour court ruled against the company had discriminated this woman.

#### **4. SUMMARY**

Women, men and transgender people often face difficulties in migration. However, all of them have specific problems based on their gender. The role of women has been understood as a caretaker, therefore, the great demand for feminized jobs exist. Women have more likely become victims of gender-based violence especially if a ground for intersectionality can be found. Women could face difficulties and discrimination in the sector of health care more often. In addition, the perception of them as wives, partners, daughters sometimes deprive them of independence and put them in less favorable situations.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

The general globalization, the more emerging independence of women, the growing demand for feminized jobs in destination countries, the change of their perception of an accompanying person rather than an independent actor make the migration more gender-based. However, while researchers and practitioners were more

focused on female challenges and hindrances, men are not discussed extensively. The problem of the feminization v. gendering migration arises. In order to put everyone in the same position, the gendering is a more proper research area rather than purely feminization of migration. Last December adopted Global Compact for safe, orderly and regular migration mainstreams a gender perspective and promotes gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls, recognizing their independence, agency and leadership in order to move away from addressing migrant women primarily through a lens of victimhood.

The similar position is provided by Global Compact on refugees. However, despite this, it is obvious that women face unique problems in migrating that men might not be experienced. Stereotypes, intersectionality, the high risks of being subjected to domestic or sexual violence make them more vulnerable than men. One of the most obvious solutions is to use a gender-responsive approach to the migration and increase the level of legal assistance and protection for women migrants. Unfortunately, as it stands now, even some of the most advanced states still have some provisions like the two-year rule in Sweden.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The work is performed according to the Russian Government Program of Competitive Growth of Kazan Federal University.

**REFERENCES**

- ALSABA, K., & KAPILASHRAMI, A. 2016. **Understanding women's experience of violence and the political economy of gender in conflict: the case of Syria**. *Reproductive Health Matters*. Vol. 24, N° 47: 5-17. UK.
- CARLING, J. 2005. **Gender dimensions of international migration in Global Migration Perspectives**. Amsterdam University Press. Vol. 35. p. 9. Netherlands.
- CASTLES, J., & MILLER, S. 2003. **The Age of Migration**. Guilford Press. p. 67. USA.
- CHOLEWINSKI, R. 2003. **Migrant Workers in International Human Rights Law, Oxford University Press, 1997; T. Alexander Aleinikoff and Vincent Chetail**. *Migration and International Legal Norms*. Springer. Germany.
- EREL, U., MOROKVASIC, M., & SHINOZAKI, K. 2003. **Bringing gender into migration**. In: Morokvasic M., Erel U., Shinozaki K (eds) *Crossing Borders and Shifting Boundaries*. Schriftenreihe der Internationalen Frauenuniversitat. Vol. 10. p. 15. USA.
- ESTRADA-CLAUDIO, S. 1992. "Unequal exchanges: international tourism and overseas employment". **Community Development Journal**. Vol. 27, p. 410. UK.
- GRIECO, M., & MONICA, B. 1998. **Women and migration: incorporating gender into international migration theory**. Amsterdam University Press. p. 2. Netherlands.
- JONES-CORREA, M. 1998. **Different paths: Gender, immigration and political participation**. *Immigration Migration Review*. Vol. 32, N° 2: 338. USA.
- Mirzaee, A., & Aliakbari, M. 2017. Ethicality of Narrative Inquiry as a Tool of Knowledge Production in Research. **Research in Applied Linguistics**, 8(2), 119-135.
- PARMIN, P., NUANGCHALERM, P., & EL ISLAMI, R. A. Z. 2018 "Exploring the Indigenous Knowledge of Java North Coast Community (Pantura) Using the Science Integrated Learning (SIL) Model for Science Content Development". **Journal for the Education of Gifted Young Scientists**, 7(1), 71-83.

SCHROVER, M., & MOLONEY, D. 2013. **Gender, Migration and Categorisation: Making Distinctions between Migrants in Western Countries.** Amsterdam University Press. pp. 13-24. Netherlands.



**UNIVERSIDAD  
DEL ZULIA**

---

# **opción**

Revista de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales  
Año 35, Especial No. 23 (2019)

Esta revista fue editada en formato digital por el personal de la  
Oficina de Publicaciones Científicas de la Facultad Experimental de  
Ciencias, Universidad del Zulia.  
Maracaibo - Venezuela

[www.luz.edu.ve](http://www.luz.edu.ve)

[www.serbi.luz.edu.ve](http://www.serbi.luz.edu.ve)

[produccioncientifica.luz.edu.ve](http://produccioncientifica.luz.edu.ve)