

Explorando el proceso migratorio en mujeres que migran en la infancia y las que lo hacen en edad adulta. Un estudio de caso múltiple.

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Summary

The migration process of women is conditioned by a variety of obstacles and threats, such as gender. Therefore, this study begins with the contextualisation of the reality of these women in relation to the moment in which they migrated, comparing cases in which this process takes place during childhood or during adulthood. Consequently, the aim of this study was to analyse the differences and similarities of the migration process and its impact on the social adaptation of migrants, depending on the time of life at which migration takes place (childhood/adolescence versus adulthood). The methodology used is framed within the interpretative paradigm, following an eminently qualitative methodological approach using the collective case study technique. The sample consisted of eight migrant women selected through a purposive process, whose ages ranged from 21 to 60 years old. A semi-structured interview was used to collect the data and content analysis was used for its interpretation. The results obtained have allowed us to explore the women's experiences of their migration process, taking into account the differences in the country of origin and host country and the psychological processes involved in this process by comparing women who have completed their studies in the country of origin and who migrated as adults (n=3), and women who migrated as children and even adolescents, and who have gone on to study in the host country (n=5).

Key words

social inclusion, social integration, immigrant women, gender.

Introduction

Since 1950, Western European countries have gone from being primarily migrant-sending nations to being the main destination of global migrants. Specifically, in Spain, the migration boom began in 1998, but the rapid flow of immigrants continued until the global economic crisis of 2008-2009. This migration has been conditioned by multiple factors, including gender. Men and women have different migration processes, so the way they perceive socialization and discrimination upon arrival also varies (Lee et al., 2020; del Pino-Brunet et al., 2023; Alekseev, 2023).

As a consequence, migrant women see their migration process conditioned by a social transition threatened not only by the common discrimination of both genders, but also by female stereotypes, gender boundaries, and the difficulties that as women underlie the migration process, among which we highlight the ruptures and changes in the social and family structure, economic insecurity, lack of knowledge of the rights or resources of the host country (Remennick & Adi, 2023; Cuesta-Garcia et al., 2023).

The ability to cope with the different situations to come will be linked to the different types of social support to which migrant women are linked, as it will depend on various more or less facilitating factors, among which we highlight the high level of capital, physical appearance and youth, which may or may not facilitate the creation of these social networks. In turn, these factors condition the progress of socialization in immigrant women by underlying generational differences that we find depending on whether the person belongs to the first or second generation (Shaymardanov et al., 2023; Remennick & Adi, 2023).

Consequently, the age of arrival in the destination country may be an influential factor in their evolution, since first-generation migrants should be considered as belonging to a middle plane of adaptation between their country of origin and the receiving country. These migrants can differentiate their evolution depending on the age at which they have arrived in the receiving country, since, if they are too young, development takes place almost fully in the host country (García-Gómez et al., 2023; Checa et al., 2022).

In this sense, the difference between belonging to the first and second generation of migrants can be frankly defining for the socialization process. This is because first-generation immigrants belong to a middle plane of adaptation between their country of origin and the host country, as opposed to second-generation immigrants, who are fully socialized in the host country. Thus, this implies that the first generation of immigrants spends their childhood in the country of origin, while the second generation spends it in the host country (García-Gómez et al., 2023; Checa et al., 2022).

This fact, added to the numerous difficulties that women must face in their migratory process, leads us to focus our research on the importance of the context in which immigrants socialize in their adult life, where their values and preferences change and resemble the norms of the host country, in relation not only to their generation but also to their gender (García-Gómez et al., 2023). Therefore, the present research aims to determine those elements that characterize the migration process of the women interviewed in terms of social, cultural and labor dimensions, in relation to the time of life in which such migration has taken place.

We must bear in mind that our interviewees are 1st generation migrant women, therefore, the comparison will be made between women who have completed their studies in the country of origin and who migrated as adults (n=3), and women who migrated as children and even adolescents, and who, as a result, have studied in the host country (n=5).

Method

The study is framed within the interpretative paradigm, following an eminently qualitative methodological approach with the collective case study technique, that is, to carry out a rigorous and in-depth interpretative study of a system or unit of analysis where the relevance, impact and effectiveness of contextual particularization replaces the validity of naturalistic generalizations (McKernan, 2008; Stake, 2020; Wiener, 2022).

Participants

Participants were selected intentionally, as it was considered which women are the most apt to provide information in relation to the needs of the study. For this purpose, a description of personal characteristics was requested beforehand, specifically, immigrant

women with sufficient communication skills, who were able to express themselves orally. Eight women were interviewed whose age ranged from 21 to 60 years (\bar{x} 35.25). On the other hand, the women in this study have different profiles. Specifically, in terms of country of origin, we found El Salvador, Argentina, Morocco and Algeria. Likewise, with regard to the level of education, 65.5% (n = 5) have university education, 12.5% (n = 2) have high school education and 12.5% (n = 1) have basic education. Likewise, in relation to work occupation, 75% (n = 6) belong to the tertiary sector, 12.5% (n = 1) and 12.5% (n = 1) have no occupation. Finally, in reference to economic level, we found that 37.5% (n = 3) have a medium-high level, 37.5% (n = 3) medium and 25% low.

In order to safeguard the informants' privacy and maintain the confidentiality commitment established, we will refer to it through the use of coding:

Table 2.
Coding of the informants.

Coding	Age	Country	Employment	Economic level	Educational level	Moment of migration
M1	31	El Salvador	Lawyer	Medium/High	higher education	Adolescence
M2	60	Argentina	Biodance teacher	Medium	Non-university tertiary education	Adult
M3	54	El Salvador	Restaurant owner	Medium/High	unfinished higher education	Adult
M4	22	Algerian	Waiter	Medium	higher education in process	Childhood
M5	50	Morocco	Dental prosthesis	Medium/High	Advanced degree	Adult
M6	22	Argelin	Student	Low / Medium	higher education in process	Childhood
M7	21	Argentina	Cleaner	Low	unfinished building	Childhood
M8	22	El Salvador	Waiter	Medium	higher education in process	Childhood

Source: Own elaboration.

However, it is worth mentioning that the consideration of this group as a case does not prevent intra-case differences from being detected. These differences may be reflected

both in the experience of the migration process and in the culture and experiences in the host country. Thus, the case is considered as a single and integrated unit, with its temporal, physical and social limits that give it entity, therefore, it is a bounded system (Ceballos, 2009).

Procedure

The interviews were analysed using MAXQDA Analytics Pro-2022 software (version 22.3.0). The process involved a transcription of the interviews, and a subsequent generation of initial codes that were applied to the data. These codes were extracted by analysing the responses to the questions posed during the semi-structured interviews.

The women's participation was strictly voluntary. On the other hand, the individual interviews were conducted online. The duration was approximately two hours per participant. Beforehand, the researchers met with the women in order to create a climate of trust and comfort. During the interview, they were encouraged to freely express their perceptions and opinions about their experiences of the migration process, sense of belonging and social inclusion and integration, among others. All interviews were recorded with permission and transcribed verbatim for content analysis (Bardin, 1996; Krippendorff, 2004). Prior to analysis, the corresponding interview transcript was reviewed with each interviewee to ensure accuracy (MacLean et al., 2004).

Instrument

The data collection technique chosen for this research is the semi-structured interview. This interview, previously designed, has made it possible to obtain information of a pragmatic nature, about how the women interviewed reconstruct social representations in their practices (Taylor and Bogdan, 1992; Toscano, 2009). The aim is to explore women's experiences of their migration process, taking into account the differences in the country of origin and host country and the psychological processes involved in this process (Guasch and Ribas, 2013).

The semi-structured interview script was validated by three expert researchers in the field, who gave their judgements according to clarity, coherence and relevance. To assess the reliability of the degree of agreement between the expert judges, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated, which showed moderate agreement ($\kappa = 0.55$).

Data analysis

To reduce the data and organise the information, a deductive system of categories was established. These categories were defined to meet the requirements of this study (Table 1). As can be seen in Table 1, each category (e.g. social relationships) was coded, presented by capital letters (RS). This category system is validated through expert judgement and triangulation (Denzin, 2009; Merriam and Tisdell, 2016; Rodriguez et al., 2005). Three expert researchers in the field made their judgements according to

exclusionary criteria (Bardin, 1996), completeness (categories cover the entire planning process), mutual exclusion (each recording unit cannot be included in more than one category), homogeneity (categories are defined according to the same principle of definition), objectivity (fairness in naming the categories), relevance (importance of each category for extracting information from the interviews) and productivity (categories provide valuable results in the information). To assess the reliability of the degree of agreement between the expert judges, Cohen's Kappa coefficient was calculated, which showed moderate agreement ($\kappa = 0.45$).

Table 2.

Category system for analysing interview protocols.

Metacategory	Category
Social dimension (SD)	Migration process: accompaniment (MPA)
	Migration process: causes (MPC)
	Migration process: obstacles and difficulties (MPO)
	Social relations (SR)
	Mental health and socio-emotional support (MHS)
	Situations of violence (SV)
Cultural dimension (CD)	Homologation of studies (HS)
	Differences in the educational system (DES)
Educational Dimension (ED)	Gender Discrimination (GD)
	Discrimination by origin (DO)

Source: Own elaboration.

Results

The results of this research, obtained through the content analysis of the interviews with immigrant women, have allowed us to explore the women's experiences of their migration process, taking into account the differences in the country of origin and host country and the psychological processes involved in this process, comparing women who have completed their studies in the country of origin and who migrated as adults ($n=3$), and women who migrated as children and even adolescents, and who have gone on to study in the host country ($n=5$).

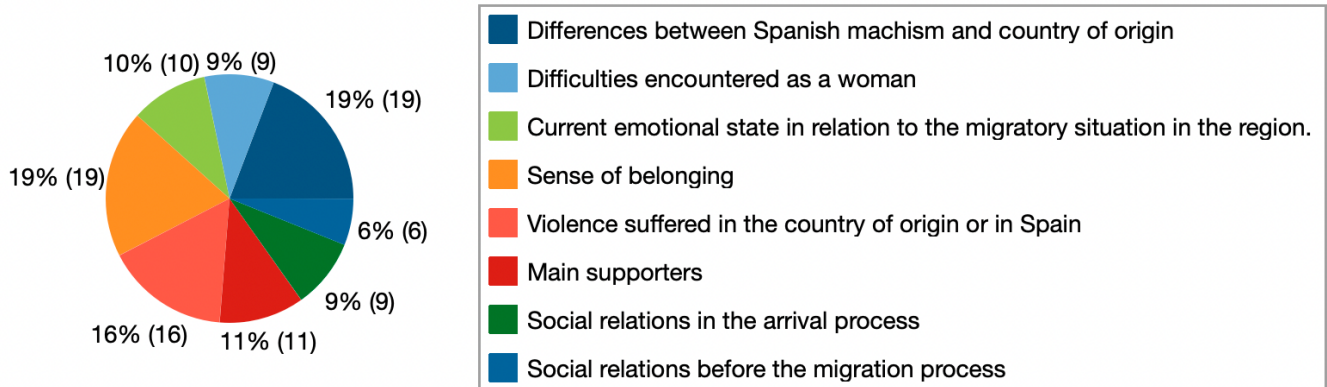
Social dimension

The aspects most highlighted in the interviews about the social dimension in relation to both groups of women are the sense of belonging (19%) together with the differences

between machism in Spain and in the country of origin (19%), since addressing these aspects allows us to better understand the challenges they face and to situate their current situation as migrant women.

Graph 1.

Social dimension.



Source: Own elaboration.

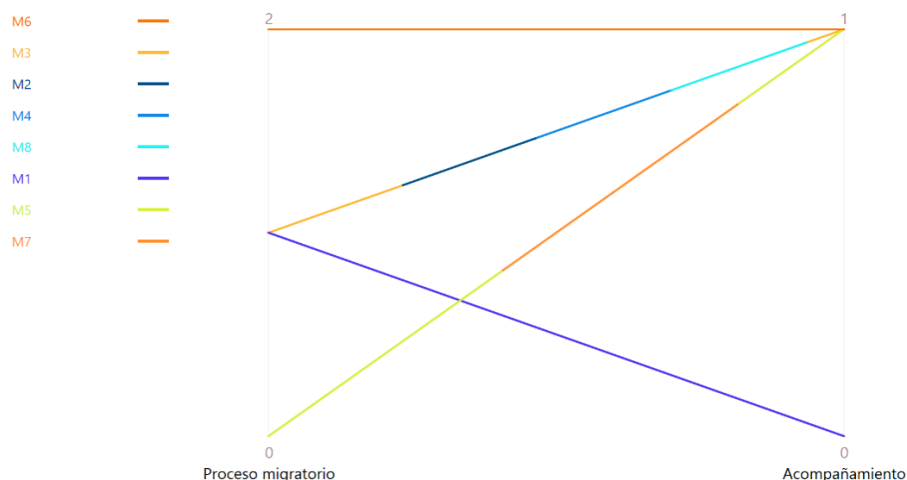
Accompaniment in the migration process

The following graph shows the accompaniment during the migration process. Thus, we can see that most of the women (n = 7) have been accompanied throughout their migration process, except for one (n = 1). Specifically, the accompanying persons are family members.

"My children and my husband" (M3); "Family, siblings and father" (M8); "I arrived at the age of 17 accompanied by my parents" (M5); "[...] So at first we came to live in Spain, me, my parents and one of my older brothers and one younger brother [...]" (M6); "My father was the one who took me with him to Spain" (M7); "Father, mother, older sister" (M4); "With my son and my son's father" (M2).

Graph 2.

Accompaniment in the migration process.



Source: Own elaboration.

Migration process: Causes of the migration process

The qualitative analysis of the interviews revealed a diversity of causes for women's migration. The main reason lies in the improvement of quality of life (n = 5), followed by access to better academic opportunities (n = 2), insecurity in the country of origin (n = 2), economic crisis in the country of origin (n = 2), murder of a family member and/or death threats (n = 2), improvement of life (n = 1) and, finally, a sense of belonging to Spain (n = 1). Of the eight women interviewed, only one woman said that she wanted to return to her country.

Women who migrated in adulthood

All the women who migrated as adults (n=3) share the ultimate goal of improving their quality of life.

[...] and from there to Spain, because we didn't want to go back to Buenos Aires, we wanted to set ourselves up, "make our own land". Besides, I always felt very close to Spain because my grandparents were Spanish. Spain reminded me of my grandparents' meals; coming to Spain was more like coming home than to the Dominican Republic" (M2).

However, the existence of different specific motives among those already mentioned stands out. One of the migrants (M3) comments not only on the search for academic opportunities for her children, but also on the need to flee due to threats received from a Salvadoran mafia that killed her father.

"The murder of my father and the search for better opportunities for my children." (M3)

The third interviewee (M5) shares the migratory motive of seeking academic opportunities, this time for herself.

"I came to Spain with the intention of being able to study" (M5).

Women who migrated as children/adolescents

It is worth noting that all the interviewees who migrated as children/adolescents (n=5) did not take the decision to migrate autonomously; instead, it was their parents who made the decision to carry out the migration process.

However, among the parents' motives, we highlight, on the one hand, the situation of insecurity in the country of origin (M1, M8) and the improvement in the quality of life (M1).

"We had to flee the situation of insecurity in the country, to find a better life. The culminating moment was the murder of my grandfather and for that, they threatened my father with a gun to his head when we were there" (M1).

"Improved quality of life and insecurity in the country of origin" (M8).

On the other hand, two of the interviews (M4, M7) share the economic situation as a migratory motive. It is worth noting that both are Argentinian.

"We left for economic reasons, the crisis in Argentina. My grandparents are Spanish, so we have Spanish nationality" (M4).

"The economic situation of my family before emigrating to Spain was bad, things were not good here and even less so now, the economy and the possibilities are nothing like in Spain. Thank God I didn't have any problems to go to Spain" (M4).

Women who migrated as adults

None of the interviewees who migrated in adulthood (n=3) considered that they had experienced any kind of difficulty/obstacle in the migration process.

"I don't think I have encountered any difficulties in this process" (M2).

"I would say none" (M5).

However, one of the interviewees (M3) did observe limitations in relation to gender and migrant status, both in others and in her own daughter.

"Both as a woman and being from another country, she has felt limitations to get involved in jobs such as police or street sweeper. And as a woman I have seen this with my daughter, how she is treated as a woman in her work as something inferior" (M3).

Women who migrated as children/adolescents

Among the women who migrated as children/adolescents (n=5) only one of them (M1) considers that she has experienced situations in which she has encountered difficulties/obstacles.

"Because of my origin and gender I felt more unprotected and exposed to violence" (M1).

"I have not encountered difficulties" (M7; M8).

However, some of those who have not suffered have seen their mothers face situations of violence (n = 2).

"However, I have seen it in my mother" (M4).

"My mother is the one who lived through the process. The worst thing was adapting to the environment, because of the headscarf, giving administrative documents, not pronouncing Spanish well..." (M6).

Social relations before arrival in the host country

Women who migrated as adults

All women who migrated in adulthood (n=3) stated that their social relations in their country of origin were positive, emphasising above all those practices that unite the family, such as the culture of mate, the day of the friend and Sunday gatherings.

"We have always been very family-oriented. I have also always been very much a friend, and in Argentina, friendship is also very important. We have a day of friends and a culture of sharing mate that unites us a lot" (M2).

"Very good" (M5).

"My family and friends were good, we saw each other a lot. We got together every Sunday" (M3).

Women who migrated as children/adolescents

Only one of the interviewees who migrated in childhood/adolescence (M1) remembers what her relationships were like before the migration process, highlighting that they were positive and mainly family-oriented.

"We are very close in my family on my father's side. We had meetings every week" (M1).

However, the rest of the interviewees who migrated in childhood/adolescence (n = 4) do not know what their social relations were like before arrival in the host country, as their migration process took place in their childhood.

Social relations after arrival in the host country

As far as social relations in the host country are concerned, we found that a part of the interviews suffered rejection (n=4) for reasons related to adaptation to the new culture or the language barrier, while others maintain that they did not have any type of difficulty/obstacle in the new country (n=4), which is justified because they had knowledge of the language, which facilitated adaptation and socialisation.

Women who migrated in adulthood

Two of the women who migrated in adulthood (n=2) consider that they did not encounter difficulties, one of them due to her ability to adapt (M2).

"It is easy for me to adapt to places, I feel at home easily" (M2).

"None" (M5).

However, one of the interviewees (M3) acknowledges having experienced this rejection by the local population.

"Yes, I have had difficulties. There are many people who still have a lot of rejection. Here I have had acquaintances but no friends" (M3).

Women who migrated as children/adolescents

Among the women who migrated as children/adolescents, only one of the interviewees (M1) stated that she had not had any problems in the socialisation process.

"No, at the end of the day, although I have an accent and Latin words, my language is Spanish, and I am not very dark" (M1).

However, the rest of the women (n=3) did encounter difficulties. Among the causes were the sense of belonging, the language barrier and culture shock.

"Both me and my sisters do not feel that we belong to either Argentina or Spain. For Spaniards we will always be Argentinian and for Argentinians we will always be Spanish. This has affected my socialisation, but more so when I was little, because my first friends were very different from me. For example, in Argentina you only kiss once, but here you kiss twice. In that sense, I felt displaced and it was difficult for me to start making friends" (M4).

"When it came to socialising, I had difficulty with the language because I mixed Arabic and Spanish. When it came to making friends I did have problems, they even hit me for being a 'Moor', shouting 'fucking Moor' and smashing my head open with a wastepaper basket" (M6).

"When I arrived and started to socialise in my first school, it was difficult with the girls in my class, as it was difficult to understand customs, music, parties, they were things I was not used to" (M8).

Mental health

In the area of mental health, half of the women (n = 4) reported the psychological distress they are facing in the host country. This psychological distress is exacerbated by identity crises, social anxiety, economic hardship and feelings of homesickness and guilt about leaving the country of origin. One of the migrants (M7), who is currently in her country of origin, shares the above-mentioned causes in addition to the death of a parental figure, abortions, sexual abuse, family abuse and depression.

However, only two women are receiving psychological help. The rest of the women reported their psychological well-being (n=4).

Women who migrated as adults

In general, the general discomfort derived from economic problems (payment of taxes, bad administrations) is highlighted, however, only one of them (M3) verbalises it in relation to mental health.

"We opened several restaurants and we lost a lot of money because of bad administrations even though we have worked hard all our lives. We have thought about leaving because we work a lot, we pay a lot of taxes and we don't want to die here"; "As self-employed we are used" (M3).

The two remaining interviewees (M5, M2) consider themselves to be in a moment of psychological well-being.

Well, I am on a path and it's wonderful, it's a good thing" (M3).

Socio-emotional support

Regarding the socio-emotional support they receive, the vast majority of women rely mainly on family support, except for two women who receive more social support than family support (M3, M8).

Women who migrated in adulthood

Two of the interviewees (M3, M5) consider family support as the main support. However, the remaining interviewee (M2) does not share this opinion, as she considers her main support to be her closest circle.

"Everything is important but it was my own family that helped me to move forward. No support from the government, we have worked for them. We have had friends but they have not been supportive. Here being an immigrant is uglier. As a person I have not been left behind, we come to work" (M3).

"The support of my friends and people in my close social circle" (M2).

Women who migrated as children/adolescents

All women who migrated as children/adolescents (n=5) see family support as the most important, backing up their choice with the fact that the family they migrated with are the only people who really understand what a migration movement represents.

"Family support mainly. In the end they are the only ones who understand what you are going through" (M1).

"Even if I don't see them all the time, they are the only ones who have experienced what I have gone through" (M6).

"At the moment my main support is my family" (M7).
"Family support by far, when you come from an immigrant family and you go to a country where you have nobody, the sense of belonging becomes your family" (M4).

We highlight a last case (M8) who considers social support as essential. However, he mentions family support in terms of financial support.

"Social support but family support financially speaking" (M8).

Situations of violence

In terms of the situations of violence experienced, all the women interviewed reported various experiences (n=8) of violence. More than half of the interviewees (n=5) share situations of violence related to the fact of being a woman.

Women who migrated as adults

Among the causes of violence suffered by women who migrated in adulthood, social and institutional racism, social discrimination and culture shock stand out.

"[...] in 2020 I had institutional problems with the health sector." (M2).
"People just hear your accent and tell you where you are from. We wanted to rent a flat and they turned us away because we were foreigners" (M3).

Likewise, one of the interviewees (M5) said that she had suffered gender violence due to the fact that her job is a male-dominated profession.

"My job (dental technician) is a male-dominated profession, so at the beginning it was much more difficult to get them to trust me because I am a woman. I had to fight twice as hard to be noticed as a professional" (M5).

Women who migrated as children/adolescents

In relation to the violence suffered by women who migrated as children/adolescents, on the one hand, the macho violence suffered in the workplace stands out.

"Working in the legal field as a woman is complicated. Making a place for yourself among so many men and being taken seriously has been something that has cost me a lot and that I still find difficult" (M1).
"Well, in the pizzeria my boss was quite macho, but you know, the mythical forty-something of I never do the washing up, you women do the washing up and things like that" (M6).

On the other hand, we find narratives (n=3) that share the violence experienced by their mothers, both in the country of origin (M1) and in the host country (M4, M8).

"My mother was robbed one day when she was picking me up from school, she was pregnant and they tried to put a nail in her belly. I pissed my pants out of fear" (M1).
"The times when my mother has been treated in the worst way, pejoratively. Situations of going to talk to the bank or a shop, customer service, that you are less just because of your accent" (M4).
"It is true that in the process of nationality my mother was given it much later than my father, and we were separated from her from the family nucleus" (M8).

One of the interviewees (M6) shared that she had experienced violence at school.

"When I changed schools, they didn't even ask me if I spoke Spanish well, they sent me to a support teacher without even asking me, assuming that I didn't know how to write or speak when I had been living here for 7 years" (M6).

Finally, two of the interviewees (M7, M8) report having experienced situations of domestic abuse, both in the country of origin (M7) and in the host country (M8). It is worth noting that both emphasise culture shock as the main reason for this physical and psychological abuse.

"I had violence from my mother, with whom we love each other but we have a lot of differences, because my family grew up in a very bad environment, where there were rapes, murders, robberies, etc., they are very closed-minded and support the typical idea that women have to serve men while he goes to work" (M7).

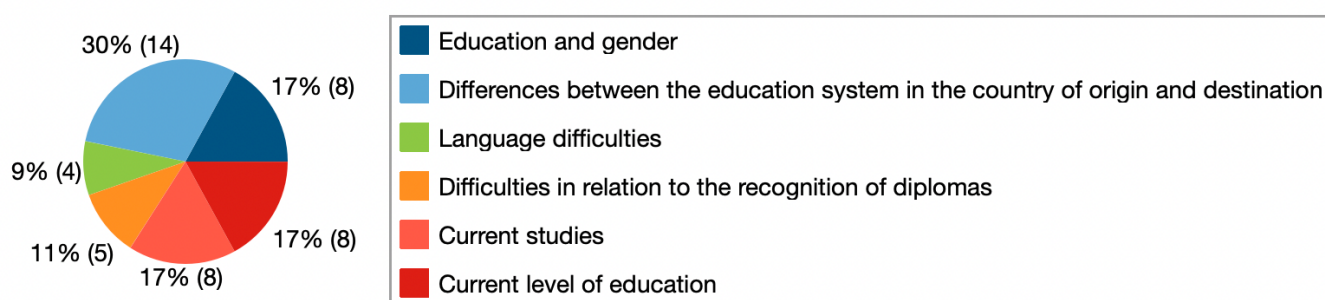
"Born from the relationship with my parents, as they arrive with a mentality, customs and ideas that are very well formed, and I was formed in Spain, so it clashes with those of my parents" (M8).

Educational dimension

The aspect most highlighted by all interviewees in relation to the educational dimension is the differences between the education system in the country of origin and the host country (30%) because these distinctions are the beginning of other issues to be addressed, such as education and gender (17%), their current level of education (17%) or their current studies (17%).

Figure 3

Educational dimension.



Source: Own elaboration.

Recognition of studies

Regarding the recognition of qualifications, it is worth noting that only one of the women who migrated in adulthood (M2) had studies before migrating; she has not been able to have her studies recognised because the training she has acquired is considered informal education.

"I cannot validate my degree because it is not formal education" (M2).

Differences between the education system in the country of origin and host country

The vast majority (n = 6) revealed that, as far as the education system is concerned, there are differences between the two countries. Some of the main differences are the distance between school and residence, affectivity and authority in teachers, more advanced education, earlier school entry and ease of access to more academic opportunities. However, two women were unaware of the existing differences and one said that the differences were abysmal but did not specify which ones. It is worth noting that the women who migrated as children/adolescents (n=5) tell us what they know about what their relatives have studied, since they began to form part of the education system already in Spain.

"Of course, the campuses are very far from the city, and if you go by public transport you don't get there alive" (M1); "The system in Argentina is more fluid, more affective, the teachers are mothers. Here there is more distance, more authority" (M2); "What was happening in Spain had been seen years ago in El Salvador. There are much more advanced things in one country than in the other" (M3); "There they start much earlier and leave earlier" (M4); "It is obvious that in Spain there is more educational facility [...]" (M7).

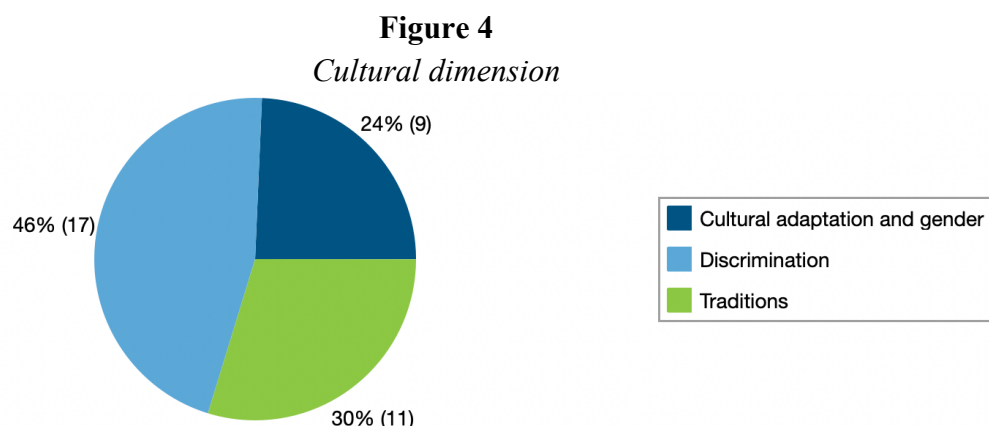
"I don't know" (M5; M8); "Abysmal differences" (M6).

On the other hand, all of them stated that they did not have more difficulties in their educational trajectory in the host country because they were women.

"No, I don't think it has affected me"; "No, I don't think it has affected me" (M1; M2; M3; M4; M5; M6; M7; M8).

Cultural dimension

The aspects most highlighted by all interviewees in relation to the cultural dimension are mainly cultural adaptation and gender (21%) and discrimination suffered (41%), due to the importance that both actions have in the migration process of migrants.



Source: Own elaboration.

Gender discrimination

The vast majority (n = 6) of the participants revealed that they had not been discriminated against because of their gender, except for two women who migrated as children/adolescents, one because of the insecurity of her parents due to the fact that she

is a woman and another who, despite being discriminated against, considered that it was not such a conditioning factor.

"No, I don't think it has affected me at all" (M2; M3; M4; M5; M7; M8).

"It was hard for my parents to adapt to the fact that Spain is safer, it was hard for them to get over the fear that I would return alone. Where do you go? Who comes? I've always been more careful because I'm used to El Salvador, where you have to walk looking backwards" (M1).

"In a way yes, but it has not been such a conditioning factor" (M6).

Discrimination by origin

All the women (n = 8), except one (M7), have experienced discriminatory situations. Some of the racist and xenophobic actions they have faced are related to being foreigners, skin colour, stereotypes and clothing.

Women who migrated as adults

Among the causes of discrimination suffered by women who migrated in adulthood (n=3), we find stereotypes and culture shock. Discrimination is found in situations related to school, at the bank and in access to decent housing.

"Yes, people tend to have very strong stereotypes and usually wrong stereotypes of what a person born in Morocco should be like and they don't understand or tend to make comments that are out of place towards me because I don't fit in with them due to my appearance or level of education" (M5).

"Yes, for example when going to the bank" (M3).

"At school with my son, because there were both mother and children who marginalised me and my son" (M2).

One of the interviewees (M2) argued that because of her skin tone and her westernisation, she has suffered less discrimination than her friends who are also foreigners.

"In general, thanks to my skin tone and being more westernised, I have suffered less discrimination than my Peruvian or Bolivian friends" (M2).

Women who migrated in childhood/adolescence

All the women who migrated as children/adolescents (n=4) except one (M7) consider that they have suffered discrimination for multiple reasons such as accent or indigenous features.

"You are always considered a foreigner. Neither from here nor from there. The difficulty in renting houses, opening a bank account, some specific deals, yes there is, moreover, how much more indigenous features..." (M1).

"At school they laughed at me, they insulted me, they called me a fucking Argentinian" (M4).

"Typical comments like fucking moroccan girl, go back to your country", my mother was looked at strangely because of her headscarf... In short, those little things" (M6).

I have felt discriminated against because of the fact that I am Panchita, when you meet a person who is not a Panchita" (M6).

Discussions

The main objective of this research was to analyse women's experiences of their migration process, taking into account the differences in the country of origin and host country and the psychological processes involved in this process by comparing women who have

completed their studies in the country of origin and migrated as adults (n=3), and women who migrated as children and even adolescents, and who have gone on to study in the host country (n=5).

The accounts included show that there are differences in relation to the experiences that affected women who migrated as adults versus those who migrated as adolescents. On the one hand, with regard to the causes that led to migration, the main difference between the two groups of women lies in the fact that migrants who arrived as children did not make the decision to migrate themselves, so the motives are the choice of their relatives. However, taking the latter into account, in general, in both groups we find the need to improve the quality of life, better academic opportunities, insecurity in the country of origin, economic crisis, murders and death threats, and the sense of belonging to the Spanish territory. These factors that encourage leaving the country of origin have already been captured in other studies (Beine et al., 2019; Haas et al., 2019; Helbling and Leblang, 2019), which found that migration is mostly driven by political and economic components, such as conflicts in the country of origin, labour market demand, income inequalities and supply of public goods. When considering the Iberian Peninsula, the factors that make it a desirable destination are economic conditions, climate and environment, migration policies and the quality of public goods. However, other elements also include culture, geographical and institutional location (Beverelli, 2012; García-Muñoz and Milgram-Baleix, 2021; Martínez-Zarzoso, 2021).

Clearly, the migration process includes numerous obstacles. Women reported that difficulties were related to gender, origin, use of particular clothing, adaptation to the host country, administrative institutions and language pronunciation. However, it is worth noting that women who migrated as children consider that these obstacles were mainly experienced by their mothers, not by themselves. Thus, El Mouali (2021) argues that the fact that many situations faced by women in their migration process are understood from the dominant political and media discourses that limit the problem to the poor living conditions and lack of human rights in the countries of origin, thus making invisible the structural obstacles found in the host country. On the other hand, these difficulties are also originated by the receiving society, as it is often reluctant to the arrival of foreigners who jeopardise the construction of national identity (Lapresta, 2006; Lizama, 2018; Vivas et al., 2009). Also, the feeling of powerlessness due to the lack of knowledge of the language hinders social inclusion (Alonso-Bello et al., 2020; Fernández-Simo et al., 2022).

On the other hand, in relation to social relations in the country of origin, women who migrated as children did not remember what they were like or had not managed to create such ties. However, women who migrated as adults mention the weekly meetings, the celebration of friend's day and the mate culture. However, in the host country, these practices are replaced by a lack of a sense of belonging, a feeling of rejection, physical violence for coming from a certain country, difficulty in adapting to the new culture. It is worth noting that we find more difficulties in adaptation in women who migrate as children than in those who do not.

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However, the life of a migrant before migration remains unknown in the scientific literature (Sánchez et al., 2012), so it is of particular relevance to note that most migrants decide to migrate voluntarily in search of better opportunities in their lives, they are not victims of war or refugees forced to leave their countries, thus, pre-migration life expectations in the new country may greatly influence the resettlement process of many migrants (Bhattacharya, 2008). The contrast between pre-migration life and post-migration challenges may increase the likelihood of a migrant's resettlement process (Bhattacharya, 2008).

The contrast between pre-migration life and post-migration challenges can potentially increase women's vulnerability to poor health and quality of life, where feelings of loneliness, isolation, social exclusion and grief predominate (Rashid et al., 2013; Sanchez et al., 2012).

Along the same lines, the language barrier, fear and unfamiliarity with the culture of the new country hinder social inclusion. Therefore, it is necessary to examine migrants' experiences within the country of origin not only to have a fuller contextual understanding of their lives, but also to have a better picture of their social functioning and mental health after the migration process (Rashid et al., 2013; Ryan, 2011).

In terms of mental health and socio-emotional support, no significant differences are found in relation to the age difference at the time of migration. Most of the women expressed psychological distress, which is enhanced by identity crises, social anxiety, family death, economic scarcity, feelings of longing and guilt for leaving the country of origin, depression, poor administration and paying taxes, with only family support, except for one woman who had social support. In this sense, chronic exposure to stress is a social determinant of health that may be of particular relevance to racial and ethnic minority communities (Bekteshi and Kang, 2020). Consistent with other studies (Aljazeera, 2020; Mia and Griffiths, 2020) that lack of integration in the new country hinders economic stability and mental health. Moreover, other challenges such as fear and anxiety of not being reunited with family members in the country of origin, being victims of exacerbated hatred, xenophobia and violence. Moreover, this vulnerability is significantly increased due to their gender status, racialisation and non-citizenship (Liversage, 2009; Meares, 2010). In this sense, it is recommended that greater responsibility for support be taken to provide strong programmes aimed at the social inclusion of these women. The anxiety

and fear of being in a new country and culture in difficult and unstable circumstances point to the need for specific initiatives designed to support migrants during such a situation and a more nuanced approach that addresses the complexity of different lives and experiences to help women manage the challenges of transnational life (Arora et al., 2022).

Finally, when it comes to situations of violence, experiences are negative. On the one hand, women who migrated as adults share experiences related to machismo in the workplace, public institutions and discrimination. On the other hand, women who migrated as children highlight situations related to machismo in the workplace, discrimination in public institutions and discrimination in the workplace.

It is clear that social integration processes are complex, but the way in which women's emancipation is approached will determine whether they find themselves in a position of social exclusion or inclusion. Then, if they are not adequately integrated in various contexts (educational, labour, social...) they will find themselves in situations of marginalisation that will affect their mental health (Arnau and Gilligan, 2017; Reillo, 2013; Santana et al., 2018). In line with other studies (Caro, 2011; Romero, 2007), the homogenisation of migrant women not only leads to a differentiation based on gender, but also on social class and origin, in addition to suffering a stronger culture shock than men upon arrival in the new country.

In relation to the educational dimension, we found that some women who migrated in adulthood, despite having been trained in different educational stages in their country of origin, have not been able to homologate their studies because they have to go back to the same studies in the new country and the education they have is considered informal, except for one woman who stated that she had access to a private institution with the studies she had. In relation to women who migrated as children/adolescents, none of them had studies to accredit. In addition, they also generally expressed that education in the host country was characterised by authority and greater access to academic opportunities; however, none of them had difficulties in accessing education in the host country.

According to Guerrero et al. (2022), education has an impact on the construction of the individual's cultural identity and the influence it generates in relation to self-perception and the feeling of belonging. There are processes, such as assimilation, that can generate cultural confusion and isolation in the immigrant him/herself when educational policies consciously and/or unconsciously reject the education of these migrants. However, there is little scientific literature on the specific situation of migrant women in education (International Organisation for Migration, 2020).

Finally, with regard to the cultural dimension, all but one of the women have experienced violence because they come from another country. In this sense, no differences are found between women who migrated as adults and those who migrated as children/adolescents, as all of them have suffered situations related to racist and xenophobic actions, related to skin colour, stereotypes and clothing. However, one woman who migrated in adulthood argued that because of her skin tone and westernisation she has suffered less

discrimination than her friends, who are also foreigners. The consideration of migratory processes as a European problem has led to the proclamation of discourses and social representations of immigration in Spain (Yufra, 2013), who consider it to be a cultural threat. To avoid this threat, culture is used as a coping mechanism (Tijoux, 2014).

In recent years, several studies have also emphasised the problem of racism/discrimination, generally focusing on racialised people's own experiences and perceptions (Hellgren, 2019; Spanish Government Report, 2020). Furthermore, there are indications that racism and discrimination are currently on the rise, a trend that is intensifying with the expansion of the anti-immigrant political party Vox (Spanish Government Report, 2020). The way in which such differentiations are made has tangible consequences for the treatment and opportunities of those affected. Numerous studies confirm the discrimination faced by immigrants and racialised minorities in European societies, and the serious consequences for them in terms of damage to their material and psychological well-being (Alarcón et al., 2021; Safi, 2010; Zick et al., 2008). Most of the time they manifest themselves as subtle forms of rejection that are difficult to prove. It is not uncommon that even the person concerned cannot be fully sure that he or she has not been selected for a job or a rental contract because of his or her ethno-racial characteristics. However, when individual incidents of rejection are repeated over a lifetime and among a large number of people with racial/ethnic characteristics, it can be difficult to prove that the person concerned was not selected for a job or a rental contract because of his or her ethnic/racial characteristics.

However, when individual incidents of rejection are repeated over a lifetime and among large numbers of people with similar characteristics, at some point these incidents become patterns of exclusion (Cortina, 2017; Warmington, 2020).

In conclusion, experiences of immigration are affected differently by many factors that exist in both the sending and receiving countries. The present research extends the literature that immigration is an active process that cannot be limited to a single moment in time, and that the person's life context prior to migration influences the post-migration adaptation process. A holistic approach to understanding lives before and after the migration process is therefore particularly relevant to understanding migration as a lived experience that integrates losses, weaknesses, disappointments, pain, successes and strengths. It also offers deeper insights into the day-to-day challenges associated with the migration journey, thus the need to give more importance to the health issues that arise before and after arrival in the new country. Understanding these concerns is relevant for different social actors to be able to offer treatment, counselling and emotional support to migrant women. Finally, we would not like to conclude the study without mentioning the main limitations: a) Given the small sample size, the generalisability of the results is limited and cannot represent the totality of the experiences of all immigrant women; b) The diversity of the sample in this study was low; c) The participants had almost the same profile and experience, so research with a larger and more diverse sample size is needed.

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