

MIGRATORY PROCESSES AND PSYCHOSOCIAL INTERVENTION

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En este trabajo realizamos una breve panorámica de la situación de las migraciones internacionales poniendo de relieve las distintas dimensiones psicológicas y sociales de este complejo fenómeno. Desde una visión positiva de las personas que emigran (empresadora, proactiva, etc.) describimos algunos factores contextuales y personales que sitúan a esas personas en riesgo psicosocial. Para cada uno de estos factores proponemos algunas estrategias de intervención desde los modelos y teorías de la Psicología.

Palabras clave: Migraciones internacionales, Factores de riesgo, Exclusión/inclusión social, Intervención psicosocial, Perspectiva de género.

In this work, we examine the situation of international migrations, highlighting the different psychological and social dimensions of this complex phenomenon. From a positive view of the people who emigrate (enterprising, proactive, etc.), we describe some contextual and personal factors that place these people at psychosocial risk. For each of these factors, we propose a number of intervention strategies from the psychological theories.

Key words: International migrations, Risk factors, Social exclusion/inclusion, Psychosocial interventions, Gender perspective.

Despite the fact that psychology was incorporated later than the other social sciences into the study of migratory processes, important theoretical and research development has been established in the last three decades. However we still have a major challenge ahead: to connect the research and its results to social policies and specific intervention programs.

Faced with the human tragedy that is occurring every day in the waters of the Mediterranean and in the refugee camps of Europe and the Middle East, psychology must urgently consider how it can help to better understand this reality and what answers can be given to deal with this dramatic humanitarian problem. Likewise, given the constant increase in human diversity from new settlements in numerous urban contexts, psychology should provide fair and inclusive integration strategies to migrants.

Our approach to this phenomenon must avoid an excessively individualistic and clinical approach since the psychosocial dimension of migration is evident at the different ecological levels (individual, group, organizational, social, and community): acculturative stress, ethnic prejudice, intercultural relations, social support networks, cultural empowerment, and community integration, etc.

In this article we approach the phenomenon of human migrations from the perspective of the person who emigrates, placing special emphasis on the psychological constructs and theories that can help us to better understand the phenomenon and guide the psychosocial intervention.

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SOME NOTES ON THE CURRENT MIGRATION PHENOMENON

International migration is a complex phenomenon that involves a multiplicity of economic, social, psychological, security, and other aspects that affect our daily life in an increasingly interconnected world (IOM, 2017). It falls within the processes of mobility of people and is linked to the significant differences among the different regions of the world. As a natural demographic phenomenon, it is not alien to any region of the planet, to any period of time, or to the human being since its origins, and no people or nation exists that is not an heir or the result of a great migration. But it is also a right that must guarantee the adaptive coping of people and/or groups to adverse situations such as hunger, wars, persecution or the simple desire to improve their living conditions.

According to the International Organization for Migration (hereinafter IOM), the number of migrants has grown progressively and noticeably in the last fifteen years. In the last report it is recorded that in 2015 the number of people residing in a country other than their country of birth (international migrants) was the highest ever recorded (244 million), although the proportion of the total population has remained constant over the last decades, around 3% (IOM, 2016).

In recent years, *forced migration* is taking a dramatic central role in international migration flows. We understand this phenomenon to mean every migratory movement in which there is an element of coercion, including threats to life and livelihoods, whether due to natural causes or instigated by man: movements of refugees and internally displaced persons as well as individuals displaced by natural or environmental disasters, chemical or nuclear disasters, famines or development projects, etc.



According to the annual report on Global Trends of the United Nations Agency for the Refugee (ACNUR [UNHCR], 2016), at the end of 2016 there were an estimated 65.6 million people forcibly displaced, of whom 22.5 were refugees, 40.3 were internally displaced individuals and 2.8 were asylum seekers. According to the IOM, (2017) the total number of deceased victims counted in 2016 was around 7,500 (it was the worst year for forced migrants), and all of the usual routes (Mediterranean, North and South Africa, Central Africa and the border between Mexico and the United States) recorded more deaths than in the previous year. During the first 6 months of 2017 (Figure 1), 101,266 immigrants and refugees arrived in Europe by sea, 2,279 of whom died (IOM, 2017).

Within *forced migrations*, *environmental migrants* are those who flee to survive natural disasters or move due to difficult and deteriorated environmental conditions, in search of opportunities for survival or improvement elsewhere. Unlike asylum seekers, the figure of a person displaced by environmental causes is not included in international legislation, which makes it difficult to quantify and protect them. The aforementioned UNHCR report predicts that in the next 50 years between 250 and 1,000 million human beings will leave their homes because of climate change (ACNUR [UNHCR], 2016).

In Spain, immigration did not stop growing from the 1980s to the beginning of the economic crisis of 2008. According to the General Secretary of Emigration and Immigration (SGIE), the number of foreigners with a valid registration certificate or residence card as of 30th June 2017 was 5,131,591 (SGIE, 2017). The five largest resident nationalities together account for almost half of the total number of foreigners: Romania, Morocco, United Kingdom, Italy, and China. The distribution by Autonomous Community shows that Catalonia, the Community of Madrid, Andalusia, and the Valencian Community are the 4 communities that have the greatest number of foreigners (65.8% of the total) and, as it is primarily economic immigration, the age range between 25 and 49 years represents around 58% of the total.

With regard to forced migrations, applicants for international protection have been growing in Spain in recent years, reaching the figure of 15,755 in 2016 (CEAR, 2017). Out of the total, 6,855 cases (67%) were resolved favorably, of which 355 achieved refugee status and 6,500 subsidiary protection. This percentage of applicants is still only 1% of the 1,259,955 applications registered in the whole of the European Union. The Spanish Government has been repeatedly accused of non-compliance with its commitments regarding the relocation and resettlement of refugees.

THE MIGRATION PROCESS AND SOCIAL EXCLUSION

When we analyze the migratory phenomenon from the perspective of the individual, we can see the existence of various factors (labor, economic, community, psychological, political, etc.) that affect the net result of the migratory project, directing migrants either through processes of social inclusion or exclusion.

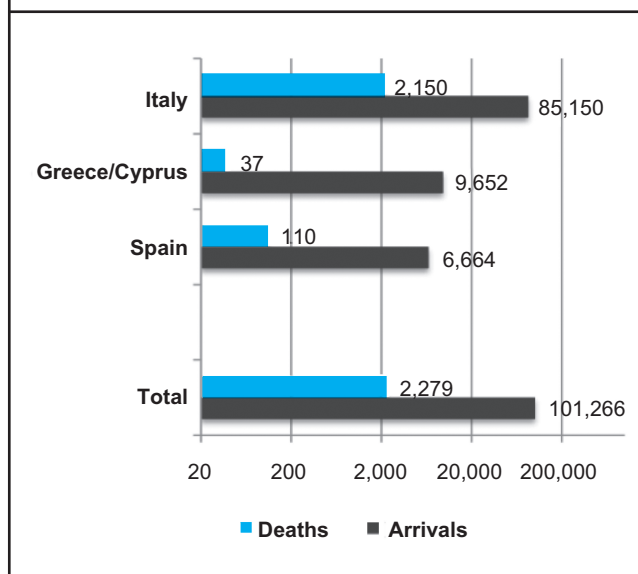
The current concept of social exclusion goes beyond only being linked with poverty and is associated with situations such as: (1) generalized disadvantages in terms of education, skills, employment, healthcare, housing, economic resources, etc.; (2) lower possibilities of accessing the institutions that distribute these capacities and resources; and (3) these diminished disadvantages and access persist over time. Most of the migrants who arrive in our country are already in a situation of high social risk. Moreover, being white or black, Christian or Muslim, female or male significantly conditions their chances of integration. If we add to this, disorientation in the first phases of settlement, a situation of illegality, difficulties in accessing work and/or decent housing, ignorance of the language, biological-cultural racism to which they may have been subjected, etc., the risk of exclusion rises exponentially (Martínez, Sánchez, & Martínez, 2017).

This situation is more dramatic in the case of asylum seekers. The risks to life in forced migrations are obvious, derived from the difficulties experienced by migrants throughout their migratory journey: violence in transit countries, illegal returns at borders, criminalization, restrictive asylum policies, etc.

MIGRATIONS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE PERSON

Another aspect to highlight when we approach migrations from the point of view of the person who emigrates is the importance that the psychosocial dimension acquires due to being a paradigmatic phenomenon of the psychological process of adaptation to the environment. In contrast to the pessimistic literature on migrant issues, we wish to highlight a positive side reflected in their entrepreneurial capacity, their resilience to stressful situations, the deployment of a cognitive-behavioral repertoire aimed at obtaining their migration objectives, and

FIGURE 1
ARRIVAL OF MIGRANTS TO EUROPE (IOM, 2017)



personal enrichment due to entering into contact with people from other cultures.

However, like all ecological transition, migration represents a period of personal imbalance that requires profound changes in many life areas to adapt to the new environmental demands. In addition to the grief that the migrated person must go through as a consequence of the losses that are intrinsic to the migratory process, the daily tension that the necessity to adapt to a hostile environment causes them can originate what has been called *culture stress*. If these adverse circumstances are perpetuated over time, Ulysses Syndrome or chronic migrant stress syndrome may appear (Achoategui, 2009), although it is not the only negative consequence of the increase in vulnerability, similarly depression has also been described, as well as abuse of alcohol and other substances, prostitution, etc.

Given this situation, and from the perspective of affirmative human diversity, psychosocial intervention focuses more on the strengths and resources of the people that have migrated in their contexts than on their deficits and weaknesses (Martínez, Calzado, & Martínez, 2011). Since migration often involves stress, the concept of resilience is useful in the study of migratory experiences and corresponding intervention projects. However it is a conception of resilience not as a (negative) feature internal to the individual, but as a result of the dynamic interaction among interconnected systems and cumulative factors of protection (Leadbeater, Dodgen, & Solarz, 2005).

Psychosocial intervention should provide a framework in which the dignity, culture and capacity of the person is respected, taking into account the interaction between personal and environmental factors. There are diverse practices taking place in Spain to serve this population. Based on theories of stress, psychological empowerment, social support, etc. the goals of these experiences are focused not only on increasing the *resilience* of people to cope with difficult situations and overcome them, but also on empowering them to actively take back control of their lives: to increase their critical awareness, and improve emotional control and decision making in relation to finding solutions to their problems (Martínez et al., 2017).

As in other community interventions with people at risk, the psycho-educational workshop format has proven to be very efficient since it can reach a greater number of people, it is based on the paradigm of self-help (people with similar circumstances receive and provide help in the same context) and it enables group learning regarding the knowledge, attitudes and behavior in relation to the problems that are common. The implementation of the program consists of participatory learning workshops whose general contents are: (1) *Critical knowledge of the environment*: linking migration and personal stress; (2) *Awareness*: improving self-concept, self-esteem, and self-efficacy; (3) *Managing emotions*; and (4) *Improving decision making*.

Due to their special situation of precariousness, in Spain, and in accordance with international agreements, people who acquire refugee status or are in subsidiary protection are sheltered by state programs that are implemented from what are

known as refugee shelters, although in collaboration with NGOs and other public units: (1) Aid-related (accommodation, maintenance and economic benefits); (2) Psychological (counselling, support, etc.); (3) Attention to the labor field that can include financing of work establishment projects, occupational training, etc.); (4) Cultural and academic training, of special importance in minors and (5) Free basic health care provided by the Red Cross.

MIGRATION AND COMMUNITY SERVICES

One of the most important contextual barriers that hinders the social inclusion of migrants must be sought within the framework of the set of laws and regulations of the host country that regulate rights and the conditions in which they can be exercised. In this area we wish to emphasize that if a person does not have access to citizenship rights, the individual does not officially exist for that society and, according to the Maastricht Treaty, the status of citizenship is ascribed only to people who hold the nationality of a State member of the Union.

A negative consequence of not having citizenship status is the partial or complete lack of access to social protection systems (education, health, benefits, etc.), which can lead to a situation of social exclusion. Furthermore, although access to these services and resources is possible for migrants, there are a number of psychosocial barriers that hinder their capacity to benefit from them or that create inadequate provision for the socio-cultural characteristics of these people.

These deficits of accessibility to community resources or adaptation of the care received have traditionally been related to the existence of a number of shortcomings in migrated individuals: poor command of the language, lack of habit in the use of services, search for other alternative resources, etc. (Martínez & Martínez, 2011). In contrast to this oppressive approach we understand that, based on the paradigm of human diversity, these problems are better explained by emphasizing the strategies of the dominant group (or culture) for maintaining privilege in the access and use of resources. In the case of community services, problems of accessibility and/or adequacy would be linked to: (1) a lack of commitment to human diversity; (2) inequality of power in the practitioner-user relationship; (3) a lack of agreement between the objectives of the services and those of the users; (4) highly demanding care requirements; (5) care practices not adapted to the culture of the user; or (4) professionals scarcely aware of or prepared to attend to new users (Martínez & Martínez, 2006).

To address this discriminatory situation, a series of care models based on cultural *competence (empowerment)* have been proposed: a congruent set of behaviors, attitudes and policies that come together in a system or organization, or among the professionals, which enable them to work effectively in multicultural situations (Cross, Bazron, Dennis, & Isaacs, 1989). For the professional, cultural empowerment involves (APA, 2003): (1) being aware of the biases towards the outgroups; (2) having knowledge of the culture of the user; (3) knowing how to carry out an assessment and a culturally



sensitive action plan; and (4) having experience of interaction with users of different cultures.

At the organizational level, cultural empowerment must be governed by: (1) valuing human diversity; (2) having the ability to self-evaluate culturally; (3) being aware of the dynamics inherent in the interaction between cultures; (4) having institutionalized cultural knowledge; and (5) having adapted the provision of services to cultural pluralism.

These approaches respond to a current conception of the process of *acculturation*, traditionally focused only on migrants. A fair organization of intercultural contact requires that the acculturative changes in the host communities occur at the different ecological levels. Since 2007, the FORINTER program aims to give training in migrations and diversity management to the human resources of the Andalusian public sector (education, healthcare, social, legal, etc.) in order to address, in conditions of equity and justice, the new composition of all its users.

IMMIGRATION, INTEGRATION AND SOCIAL SUPPORT LINKS

Numerous studies have shown beneficial effects on health and well-being derived from social relationships, and that a significant reduction in these relationships increases people's vulnerability (Martínez et al., 2001). In the case of migrants, all of their social ties: (1) contribute to a more adjusted decision to emigrate; (2) provide a frame of reference for assessing the reality and increase the sense of predictability, stability and control of the new environment; (3) improve the access to formal resources; (4) participate in the configuration of a new positive identity; (5) encourage social participation; (6) promote a sense of community; and (7) improve the acculturation processes.

Strong bonds (partner, parents, and compatriots) play an important role in the emotional support and are decisive in the first moments of settlement. Weak links (friends, members of the host society, acquaintances, etc.) are a powerful force of social capital in the area of work: they provide employment opportunities, enable mutual trust and work cooperation, etc. But social support is also a buffer against the negative effects of acculturative stress, preventing mood disorders such as depression (Martínez et al., 2001). By favoring the satisfaction of basic needs, reducing loneliness and despair, social support contributes to improving mental health. These facts highlight the need to implement psychological intervention programs based on social support:

- a) Individual level: (1) cultural skills for giving and receiving support; (2) change in attitudes to decrease resistance to receiving support; (3) search techniques for informal support in coping with acculturative stress, etc.
- b) Dyadic level: after receiving training, a person from the host society (volunteer mentor, etc.), provides support (instrumental, material and/or emotional) to the migrated person.
- c) Group level: aimed at encouraging belonging to social groups. This facilitates new links and enhances their multidimensionality. Immigrant women's associations, or self-help groups are good examples of these programs.

d) Organizational level: This involves the modification of specific contexts (healthcare, education, work, etc.) to achieve support-providing scenarios: community mediators in public centers, counselling services, proximity, training materials in different languages, telephone translation service, etc.

e) Community level: Intended to increase community empowerment through the improvement of the supply and use of informal and formal sources of support: support program for migrated mothers, schools of migrated fathers and mothers, information campaigns on community resources, etc.

INTEGRATION THROUGH ACCESS TO ECONOMIC AND EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS

Although *forced migrations* have increased in recent years, *economic migration* continues to be the protagonist in transnational movements. However, a significant percentage of these people do not achieve one of the main objectives of their migratory project: employment.

The relationship between unemployment, social exclusion and mental health is especially dramatic when it comes to socially disadvantaged groups such as migrants. Hildegard (2012), using Madrid City Council as a source, points out that a lack of work was the most frequent response (48.3%) as the cause of finding themselves on the street by the immigrant homeless persons surveyed. This same author describes the profile of this group as a young and middle-aged male, although there is a growing presence of women, unaccompanied minors, elderly people and those of retirement age.

The fact is that the Spanish labor market has undergone a long process of third-worldization that is clearly observed in the underground economy, with solid national roots to the point of exerting an attraction effect on migrants from less developed countries.

The discrimination suffered by migrants in the labor market is very varied. Cachón (2006) refers to three types of discrimination: (1) *institutional*, from the restrictive administrative rules and practices in their interpretation or application; (2) *structural*, from the general units of the labor market; and (3) in the *company* itself, manifested in multiple ways. If the first two forms of discrimination could be considered as *discrimination without actors*, often undeclared and not (necessarily) appearing to be intentional, the third is individual discrimination with actors that may be diverse: entrepreneurs, labor intermediaries, trainers, workers, customers, etc.

Some indicators that demonstrate this triple discrimination can include: (1) high rates of unemployment, temporality, and accidents; (2) high sectoral concentration such that three quarters of non-EU migrants are concentrated in construction, agriculture, hospitality, and domestic service; (3) migrants occupy the most difficult, dangerous and precarious jobs: in many cases with lower salaries, longer working hours and specific working conditions that are worse than those of Spaniards in their profession, etc.

If we specifically analyze unemployment as an indicator of



discrimination, we find that in Spain the data from the Labor Force Survey (EPA in Spanish) show that although unemployment has increased among the Spanish population since the beginning of the economic crisis, it has done so at an even higher rate among migrants. One year before the economic crisis (2007), the difference in the rate of unemployment between the two communities was somewhat less than 5 percentage points, and this figure increased to reach around 12 percentage points in 2015 (INE, 2007-2015). The migrants who are suffering most from the crisis and who are in a situation of social exclusion or on the edge of it are: (1) those who are illegal; (2) those who depend on temporary contracts or work in sectors with a lot of fluctuation in terms of employment; (3) those who have linguistic difficulties, require retraining, recognition of qualifications, etc.; or (4) those who have a more fragile socio-familial support system.

To deal with this situation, a series of activities have been developed by community organizations in order to improve the employability of migrants through training and career guidance. Town councils and NGOs that work in the field of immigration have *training programs and career guidance* within local, regional and community intervention strategies. In some of these programs, a personalized methodology is being applied throughout the orientation and training process with a high degree of flexibility and permanent adaptation to the needs and interests of the users. These are what are known as the personalized integrated itineraries of socio-labor insertion that take into account the migrated person, the labor market situation and the local development needs in each territory.

In the case that concerns us, we must also take into account the diversity of their customs and values in relation to work or the way of finding it, the scarce knowledge of the administrative, legislative frameworks, etc. of the labor market, the probable deficit in the knowledge of the language, the ignorance of the social-labor insertion networks, etc. Therefore, the training and career guidance programs and the professionals who implement them must strive to achieve significant values in what we have called *cultural competence* so that the care provided is fair, effective and adapted to the cultural characteristics of this group.

THE AUTOCHTHONOUS POPULATION AS A PROBLEM

Migrated people end up settling in dynamic, complex local communities with their own idiosyncrasy and historical-cultural heritage. The increase in diversity in these community contexts means that people of different races, ethnic groups, religions, etc., are involved in relationships of daily interaction and coexistence. The results in this new scenario can be very diverse because the host community perceives immigration to a large extent as a threat to its status of privilege, wellbeing, and cultural identity (Martínez et al, 2017).

Research in the area of intergroup relations has shown that many problems of intercultural coexistence are based on conflict (Sheriff, 1966) due to access to resources. In this case, the conflict is established within the framework of an asymmetrical power relationship: autochthonous population vs. immigrant

population, and begins with the perception that the available resources are scarce (jobs, social benefits, etc.), and that there are other social groups (e.g. immigrants) that compete for them. Given this situation, the autochthonous population develops what is known as *resource-related stress* that manifests itself in two ways: (1) as a cognitive perception of threat in the form of zero-sum beliefs: the resources received by the migrants are being taken away from the native population; and (2) as an affective perception of threat in the form of fear and anxiety.

The intergroup conflict develops with a progressive deterioration of the mutual perception and, in the case of the autochthonous population, the negative stereotype that they create (low level of qualification, laziness, highly demanding, lack of responsibility, averse to integrate, etc.), would serve to justify their efforts to relegate them to lower positions in the labor market and in society as a whole. Thus, discrimination and intergroup hostility arise.

Some of these psychosocial processes are reflected in the surveys of the Center for Sociological Research, in which a significant percentage of respondents believe that migrants take employment from nationals, abuse social benefits or that numerous Muslims will dilute the national identity. Along the same lines, the editorial of the 2012 RAXEN report indicated that the increase in xenophobia, the rejection of religions and, in general, intolerance in all areas is a proven fact in Europe (Ybarra, 2012). The aforementioned author foresaw the future prospects as worrying, given the increased frequency of agitation and harassment of migrants in the streets or on the Internet.

Other psychosocial processes underlying these intergroup relations that should guide the psychological intervention are: subtle and blatant prejudice, group-related deprivation, self-fulfilling prophecy (especially in schools), an orientation towards oppressive social dominance on the part of the autochthonous society; perception of invasion, perceived threat, etc.

To deal with this situation, which is not at all favorable for a peaceful and enriching intercultural coexistence, programs should be designed to develop the cultural empowerment of both the autochthonous and immigrant population. Two strategic aspects must be taken into account: (1) the action must be aimed at the different ecological levels, since discrimination occurs in all of them: family, school, company, town hall, health center, neighborhood, etc.; (2) all activities and messages must be framed within a broader strategy: the valuing and promotion of affirmative human diversity. A number of objectives to cover in these strategies are:

- ✓ To promote contexts that facilitate symmetrical and egalitarian relationships between immigrants and autochthonous people, and that allow mutual knowledge between the two groups: their multiple similarities, and identifying and valuing their differences.
- ✓ To promote interdependence: cooperative activities in the approach to common problems, in which immigrants and autochthonous people jointly define objectives and implement activities.



- ✓ To improve the cultural competence of citizens, professionals and organizations for work in multicultural contexts.
- ✓ To develop campaigns of awareness and reduction of prejudices through truthful information that helps to dismantle rumors and prejudices.

In the framework of the European *Communication for Integration* program (C4i), a series of anti-rumor networks (Getxo, Tenerife, Fuenlabrada, Barcelona, etc.) have been created in Spain in the field of migration involving local entities, institutions, NGOs and individuals in their personal capacity. In Andalusia, the Anti-rumor Network is promoted by the General Directorate for the Coordination of Migration Policies and aims to raise society's awareness of the positive values of human diversity, rejecting all forms of racism and xenophobia, and any kind of discrimination, promoting the processes of cultural exchange and contributing to the management of human diversity for the achievement of a cohesive society. As in other networks, anti-rumor agents are being trained throughout Andalusia among social organizations, migration experts and committed people who wish to act to promote more positive and integrating attitudes and perceptions about cultural diversity in their environment. Within the framework of this initiative, a manual has been prepared (Martínez, 2015), as well as a practical guide (Jiménez & Jiménez, 2015) and four videos, as didactic materials for training these anti-rumor agents.

MIGRANT MINORS AS A COLLATERAL EFFECT

Within the generalized migratory movements, one of the most striking issues and one that has been of greatest concern has been the growing incorporation of minors traveling without the company of their relatives or of adults to take charge of them (unaccompanied foreign minors). These children seem to be part of a family strategy that considers that the child is less likely to be returned than adults. If we add to this group the minors that come as a result of the regrouping within a family migratory project, or the children of immigrants born in national territory, we find ourselves with a phenomenon of special social and human interest: due to the psychosocial characteristics of this group.

For some time, minors and young migrants were considered a collateral effect of migrations: a secondary, marginal social group and, therefore, invisible from the perspective of the intervention. However, since the 1980s, the myth of the unavoidable linear adaptation of the descendants of the migrated people has collapsed completely. The expected and desired assimilation did not occur as had been hypothesized and, in many cases, the lack of expectations of social integration in the same conditions as the natives caused processes of ethnic identity and rebellion to reverberate in response to a chronic situation of social injustice.

In the case of minors and young immigrants, discrimination processes occur at all ecological levels, the most noteworthy being the school context because of the importance it has in their psychosocial development. Direct discrimination (derision, insults, expressions such as "go back to your country", physical

aggression, etc.) and indirect discrimination (feeling undervalued by teachers in terms of their abilities, for example) are commonplace in schools. This was exemplified in the comments collected from a South American student: "My first feelings in Spain were of great confusion. I felt very bad, weird and I could not sleep. I wanted to go back to my country. Here because you are Latino, you feel more discriminated against. In class, my classmates sent me notes calling me an immigrant and such. In the geography class on Spain, which I did not know anything about when I arrived here, I was the one that the geography teacher expected the most of."

Also in this area, intervention programs can be designed that have different psychosocial theories as references. Thus, for example, the DIVERSA program is a pilot experience that is being implemented in two public schools (primary and secondary) in Andalusia. With a participatory methodology, work is carried out within the family, school and community mesosystem to address rumors and prejudices about immigrants (and other disadvantaged social groups) and to improve intercultural coexistence (Martínez, Bouzid, Zamorano, Martínez, & Pérez, 2017).

In a bibliographical review, Díaz (2017) draws attention to the situation of children and adolescents immersed in processes of forced migration. A significant percentage of them have high anxiety due to family problems, discrimination, child labor, or early marriage, so it is common for them to somatize this anxiety and suffer anxiety problems. Therefore, it is urgent to carry out humanitarian and psychosocial programs focused on establishing effective measures to guarantee the protection of this group in the different contexts: countries of origin, refugee camps, host countries, etc.

MIGRATIONS AND GENDER

One of the essential characteristics of the evolution of international migration has been the greater protagonism of women, and not only because of the significant number of displaced women, but above all because of the social, political, economic, labor, etc. repercussions that this is having in both the contexts of origin and destination. This double perspective has led to at least two ways of approaching the study and understanding of female migrations: (1) *The feminization of migrations* places the emphasis on the study of this sector of society in terms of the relative importance that it has in the global context of migratory flows, and may or may not lead to a feminist analysis; and (2) *The feminist perspective* considers the influence of gender systems as organizing principles of migration (Gregorio, 1998).

Regarding the first perspective, the presence of women in international displacements is around 48% of the total (IOM, 2016), with significant differences between some regions and others. A fact with psychosocial implications for intervention is the increase of transnational households led by migrant women who, for economic reasons (not due to family reunification), move alone independently, leaving family members dependent on them in the country of origin.



The female population of immigrant origin in Spain has undergone a significant process of transformation during the years of the crisis. According to the study on the labor situation of immigrant women in Spain (Iglesias, Botella, Rúa, Mielgo, & Caro, 2015), in January 2015 around 30% of the total female foreign population had been nationalized (in 2008 it was only 18%), a percentage that rises to 41% if we only take into account Latin American migrants. These figures give us an idea that not only have these people not returned during the crisis to their countries of origin, but they have mostly opted to remain and continue with their projects of establishing roots, settling, and personal, family and socio-cultural integration in Spanish society.

A relevant aspect to highlight is the need to dismantle the dominant stereotype in Spanish society about this group (people without studies or job skills), since only 2.4% of migrant women have no studies and the percentage with higher studies (27%) is similar to that of the Spanish female population (INE, 2015). An oppressive consequence of this social representation is the overpresence of women migrants with higher qualifications in manual sectors requiring little or no qualification.

This is a female immigration of women that have come to stay in Spain and who are helping us to move ahead in very critical moments due, among other factors, to the neoliberal convictions that flood the world panorama. Women who, with their very diverse families and homes, are an important part of our landscape and who are inserted in general community contexts characterized by diversity. But to understand the social and labor situation of migrant women in Spain and to design intervention programs, it is necessary to take into account factors such as: (1) social class: status of foreigner, not citizen; (2) ethnicity: different culture and religion, if any; and (3) the gender perspective in a sexist society. These three factors determine in this context situations of inequality, psychosocial vulnerability, and therefore, triple discrimination. Hence, to reverse this situation it is necessary to promote and stimulate public policies of social and labor integration that guarantee the social mobility of this group, and by doing so, to overcome the gaps of gender, ethnicity and social class that exist in our society. Programs based on individual and community empowerment are being very effective in achieving these objectives.

IN CONCLUSION

Throughout the preceding paragraphs we wished to offer a brief overview of the situation of international migrations and highlight the different psychological dimensions of this complex phenomenon. Whilst we have a positive vision of the people who emigrate (entrepreneurs, proactive, capable of making decisions in difficult situations, etc.), the truth is that the contextual factors of the migration process place these people at psychosocial risk. This justifies the intervention of the psychology professional, but we must take into account the psychosocial perspective that our discipline reinstates in the social context, within the historical reality in which people (in this case

migrants) live within a network of interpersonal and intergroup relationships whose life experiences are not alien to the events of the world that surrounds them and where they seek to find the meaning of their life (Martín-Baró, 1998). In addition, this perspective involves a comprehensive approach to people, groups, organizations, and communities (and the associated problems) based on the different theories and/or models that psychology as a science has been substantiating and validating through the evidence and the results of the research, which takes into account the importance of the *subject-context* dialectical interaction.

Although it has not been addressed in this work, we cannot forget that the professionals of the psychology of social intervention must also participate in the evaluation of programs aimed at the migrated population and make contributions to the public policies aimed at this group.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors state that there is no conflict of interest of an economic nature or of other relationships with individuals and organizations

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