FEMINIZATION OF MIGRATION AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON TRADITIONAL ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE FAMILY AND SOCIETY

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Abstract

This paper examined female migration and how it redefines the role of women in the family. Tabular presentation of female migrants as a percentage of all international migrants from 1960 to 2005 is analyzed to compare the current trends and patterns of female migration for proper background. The causes of this phenomenon are also discussed and two theories; functionalist theory and Historical-Structural theories were used to back up the analysis. The researcher recommended aggressive female education to promote literacy and improved language skills amongst women to minimize female migrant exploitation. The Study however concluded that the Feminization of migration is not a problem to be solved, but a phenomenon that should be seen as a powerful force for sustainable development for both migrants and their communities.

Keywords: international migration, feminization, female migrants

INTRODUCTION

Africa is one of the continents that is experiencing a surge in female migration. It is gradually becoming a norm with more and more women migrating independently. Nigerians tag it the 'Japa' syndrome. In the olden days, men were mostly known to migrate in search of formal employment while women stayed

home to nurture the family. In cases where women migrated, it was mostly for a short period to trade or to do seasonal work and they did that as dependents of men. It is not surprising to know that feminization has been declared to be the core of the new age of international migration. This is so because the number of female migrants has doubled. To many, feminization of migration is a new phenomenon but to a few, it is not, because observing global patterns of migration over the years has led to a more unbalanced understanding of the definition of feminization. Ravenstein (1885) argues that the migration of females in the world is barely two centuries old.

Women have always been part of global migration flows for more than four centuries. The early period of European Empire-building saw many migrants, not universally male, coerced into labour. The gender statistics of forced African migrants vary. Although there was an increase in male-coerced migrants throughout the Atlantic slave trade, the presence of women varied by destination. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, men were often the first to migrate while women followed as colonies grew. In the mid-1920s, immigration regulations in many countries were enhanced towards gender balance. Women became a larger share of the immigrant population. By the first decade of the 21st century, many migrants worldwide were characterized by gender balance (Donato&Gabaccia, 2015).

Unfortunately, for a long time, gender was not regarded as a benchmark for understanding the drivers of international migration, rather women were simply seen as dependent migrants of their husbands (DeLaet,1999). In the 1980s, this view started to change with a special publication on women in the *International Migration Review* (1984). This publication

brought the feminization of migration to the limelight, even though it has always been unaccounted for in migration studies (Donato, Alexander, Gabaccia & Leinonen, 2011). One of the reasons for this is the fact that women were previously absent from literature but now they are being included in policy and research matters (Buijs, 1993; DeLaet, 1999; Green, 2012). Feminization of migration comes with a whole lot of positive and negative implications for women thereby redefining their traditional roles in the family and by extension, in the country. Since the family is the first agent of socialization, the role of women in the family is key. The surge in female migration can have both rewarding and damaging effects on a family and by extension a country because women are regarded as nurturers and builders. Their role in nation-building cannot be overemphasized.

Drivers of Feminization of Migration

Why is there a seeming surge in female migration? We can examine the factor of the feminization of migration from a push-and-pull angle. The push factors include economic instability, food insecurity, civil war, severe gender-based violence against women, human rights violations and attempts to escape human trafficking (Crush and Williams, 2001). On the other hand, the pull factors are linked to women searching for greener opportunities in careers and professions because of the advantageous economic climates that are conducive to these types of career pursuits.

What then is the feminization of migration? It is defined as the migration of women independent of men and most often, it is always linked to the feminization of poverty. When there is an increased impoverishment of women and children, due to

severe economic instability, then female migration abounds for families to survive. This in turn redefines traditional gender roles within families and societies. Castles & Millers, 2003; Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000, emphasize that the unbalanced economic development between nations is closely connected and complex the relationships of gender which is the reason for the increase of migrant women.

Wide-ranging factors are driving the feminization of migration; from changing socioeconomic dynamics to the ever-changing cultural perceptions of women, as well as the rising levels of divorce. Hofman & Buckley, (2014:510) argue that to "understand the root of these transformations, we need to appreciate external influences both from the global, state, community and household levels". The high level of male unemployment as well as a high demand for feminized job types in receiving countries, is a major indicator of feminization of migration (Sasen 2000). In response to a crisis of care in receiving countries, women are taking up jobs as domestic workers while some are pulled into the sex industry.

Looking at this phenomenon with a more instructive lens can shift focus to local policy about migration and the changes in social attitudes towards migrants (Hofmann & Buckley, 2013). For example, many host countries have extremely gendered policies in terms of migration for work as some immigration policies favour women against men. Some countries see women from a cultural sense, as needing protection (Belanger & Rahman, 2013; Chan, 2014).

Since the world has been experiencing structural economic changes, manufacturing industries now operate on a flexible and cheap labour force. Cynthia Enloe explains that the majority of manufacturing industries, including food processing,

garment, textiles and cigarettes have been feminized. It is not surprising that factory managers in these industries now prefer to hire women over men. Gender stereotypes have made women ideal candidates for manufacturing jobs because women are believed to be hardworking, docile and compliant. They do not organize unions and they are replaceable.

Another aspect to consider in the feminization of migration is love and sexuality. No matter the circumstance or situation, humans are undeniably sexual beings either expressing, wanting to express or being denied the chance to express their sexual identities. Indeed, there is an emotional turn in migration which clearly emphasizes emotions, especially love and affection at the centre of migration decisions. King (2002, pp.99-100) states that migrating for love is an essential component of the 'new map of migration'. Typical examples are the negotiation of love and romance on the internet which becomes a forerunner to mobility (Constable 2003; Johnson 2007). The dynamics of migration can be seen in the transformation of values and sexualities when examining the impact of migration on the detraditionalization of established sexual norms (Ahmadi 2003; Gonazalez-Lopez 2005; Hirsh 2003).

According to adaptation theory, female migrants especially unmarried ones usually experience conflict between their culture of origin and the cultural environment of the new location. This conflict usually leads to indiscriminate sexual behaviour among females as a means to survive and succeed in the new environment as they believe this is the major means of getting economic support from men. The desperate attempts to get employed either full or part-time in their new environment usually lead to discriminatory sexual activity.

The migration of women can be categorized thus;

- Reunion of the family: This only happens if a member of the family has stayed in a particular country for a certain duration of time and also has an independent ability to earn a living without financial support. In this case, the migration of a married spouse or children is allowed.
- Marriage immigration: Migration can be done at a lower expense through international marriage brokers and agents. Some women engage in commercialized marriages just to migrate.
- Labour immigration is mainly for employment purposes following the labour market of the migration country: There are cases of labour immigration involving women which are exclusively for the productivity of their bodies and sex and there are even cases where the national control relating to women's sexuality are justified.
- The case of refugee or exile: Due to the rapid increase of regional and international war and situations of armed conflicts, the number of women among refugees increases constantly. The situation becomes worse when their refugee status or exile application is rejected. This can open refugee women to serious security threats.

Trends in Female Migration

The surge in female migration constitutes a critical change in gender roles in Africa, thereby creating new challenges for public policy. In South Africa, for instance, there has been a significant increase in female migration since the country's

majority rule in 1994 (Dodson, 1998). Dodson further attests that gender sensitivity studies of Basotho, Mozambican and Zimbabwean immigrants in South Africa show more females than males between the ages of 15 - 44.

Before the outbreak of civil war in West Africa, an ongoing economic crisis in Cote D'Ivoire did not hinder female migration from Burkina Faso. Since the commercial sector was less affected by the economic crisis than the wage sector, women tend to cluster in the informal commercial sector making them migrate for trading purposes.

Nairobi is not left out as recent qualitative research shows an increase in independent female migration either for education or employment opportunities. Whereas in Sub-Sahara Africa, the figure has increased from 42.7% to 46.7%. (Pos, 2003). In South Africa, the number of female migrants has risen from 30% to 34% (Posel, 2003).

Female migration in many parts of Sub-Sahara Africa has created autonomous female heads of household. In Ghana and Kenya, the estimated female-headed families are approximately 47% and 35% respectively (Mbugua 1992). In the capital city of Kenya, for example, 60% of households are migrant females headed from rural areas (Vorlaufer, 1985; Oucho, 1990).

This phenomenon prompted the National Urban Mobility Employment and Income Survey (NUMEIST, 1972) in Tanzania to gather comprehensive data on migrants. The data collected shows that in recent years, the rate of female migration has been higher than those of men. Although 13% of those who migrated in 1952 were unmarried, the number had increased to over 30% by 1970 (Bienefield and Sabot, 1972). Zlotnik 2003 emphasizes that women and girls have recorded a high number

of international migrants. In 1960, the number of female migrants was nearly 47 out of 100 migrants living outside of their home countries (See Table 1). Since then, the figure has been increasing steadily to reach 49% and 50% in 1990 and 2005, respectively.

Table 1: Female migrants as a percentage of all international migrants, 1960 - 2005.

Quinquennial Years 1960-2005.

Regions	1960	1965	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000	2005
World	46.8	47.1	47.2	47.4	47.2	47.2	49.0	49.3	49.7	49.6
Developing regions	45.3	45.6	45.8	45.5	44.8	44.4	44.4	44.7	45.1	44.7
Africa	42.2	42.3	42.6	43.0	44.1	44.4	45.9	46.6	47.2	47.4
Eastern	41.9	42.3	43.2	44.3	45.3	45.8	47.3	47.9	47.9	48.3
Central	44.0	44.9	45.5	45.8	45.8	45.9	46.0	46.1	46.2	46.3
Southern	30.1	30.3	30.3	32.8	35.6	36.1	38.7	40.0	41.3	42.4
Western	42.1	42.7	43.0	42.6	43.5	45.4	46.4	47.6	48.8	49.0

Source: United Nation, 2007.

Table 2 compares Sub-Saharan African female migrants to other regions of the world. In the same vein, data gathered can be used to compare the whole continent of Africa versus Sub-Sahara Africa. The table shows that in 1960 the number of international female migrants in Africa stood at 42.2% and 40.6% in Sub-

Sahara Africa, less than the world average of 46.8%. Getting to 2000, the number had increased to 47.2% in Sub-Sahara Africa.

Table 2. Percentage of female migrants among the total number of international migrants by major area. 1960 - 2000.

DECENNIAL YEARS 1960-2000.

MAJOR AREAS	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
World	46.6	47.2	47.4	47.9	47.8
More developed Regions	47.9	48.2	49.4	59.8	50.9
Less developed Regions	45.7	46.3	45.5	44.7	45.7
Europe	48.5	48.0	48.5	51.7	52.4
North America	49.8	51.1	52.6	51.0	51.0
Oceania	44.4	46.5	47.9	49.1	48.8
North Africa	49.5	47.7	45.8	44.9	42.8
Sub-Sahara Africa	40.6	42.1	43.8	46.0	47.2
Southern Asia	46.1	46.9	45.9	44.4	44.4
Eastern Southern Asia	45.2	47.6	47.0	48.5	50.1
Western Asia	45.2	46.6	47.2	47.9	48.3
Caribbean	45.3	46.1	46.5	47.7	48.9
Latin America	44.7	46.9	48.4	50.2	50.5

Source: Zlontnik, G. (2003) The Global Dimensions of Female Migration.

Effect of feminization on migration

Feminization of Migration can greatly liberate women from restrictive family control and rigid societal gender roles. When women migrate to other countries for work, their financial status potentially changes and they become breadwinners, not only abroad but also at home. The growth in the export of migrants can lead to a major financial boost to the economy because the workers who travel overseas send remittances (i.e. money and goods sent to households by migrant workers) back home (Rahman & Fee, 2012:689). According to the World Bank in 2016, these remittances are big business, providing a total of US$441 billion to developing countries in 2015. Studies have proven that, although some women engage in unskilled and semi-skilled domestic labour which makes them earn less, yet they tend to send more money home. Women tend to provide money for nutritional, educational and healthcare needs while men provide money directed at buying consumer goods, such as television, cars, Investment in property and livestock (International Organization for Migration, n.d.; UNPFA, 2011).

Tager (270) shows that most West African women migrants continue to maintain ties with family in their countries of origin and also contribute to the development of communities in their home countries. This goes a long way to enhance women's status in the home societies.

Despite the positive aspect of the feminization of migration, this phenomenon also comes with its challenges. Female migration has led to a change in gender roles in Africa as more pressure is being put on women to combine work and

family responsibilities. As a survival strategy, more African women are migrating to improve their economic status and also to gain control over their lives (Adepoju, 2002:7). Since the removal of subsidies on basic commodities, women are left with no choice but to do more with less money and migration becomes a must. This has further put a strain on gender roles as more women leave behind children in the care of their husbands. Children of migrant women are left at the receiving end of this phenomenon by complicating the lives and education of the children left behind. Studies have shown that the majority of children left behind by mothers become school dropouts and are more prone to addiction, health and delinquency, than children left behind by fathers. These children are starved of motherly love and care (International Organization for Migration, 2011). Since migrant women cannot bring their children with them in most situation, these women tend to give to the children of the Western world the love they cannot give to their children. In an article written by Arie Hochschild, "The Nanny Chain", she asked, "Is the Beverly Hills child getting "surplus" love, the way immigrant farm workers give surplus labour? Are first world Countries such as the United States importing maternal love as the White imported copper, zinc, goods and other ores from the third world countries in the past?"

With the growing "Care industries" and demand for care workers, millions of children in less developed regions have been left behind by their mothers or left in the care of another woman. In the Philippines, for instance, approximately 9 million Philippine children with one or both parents working as migrants overseas. The figure is considerably higher in Africa. The question is, how are these children coping? Although there is inconclusive research on these a study in Moldova and

Ukraine proves that the absence of a parent in a child's life can be detrimental to a child's social, emotional and psychological development. This drainage in care affects not only the left-behind children but also the entire country. Like in Nigeria, doctors and nurses are migrating elsewhere despite the country's weak healthcare system.

The effect of feminization of migration in health is complex because it has to do with access to healthcare services and the availability of culturally appropriate care. The type of jobs that female migrants undertake directly expose them to health problems and accidents, especially unskilled migrants and they may not be qualified for healthcare benefits. Due to their precarious legal status, female migrants may be compelled to continue to work in their ill health for fear of losing their employment and income. The stress of adjusting to a new country, plus experiencing violence and sexual exploitation can further compromise the health status of migrant women. Since women are good at multitasking, their mental and physical health can be affected by abusive employers, domestic violence and certain working environments. Female migrants are vulnerable to sexual abuse which places them at risk of sexually transmitted diseases such as HIV, etc. To add insult to injury, many health staff are insensitive to the needs of female migrants from other countries different from that of the host country.

Feminization of migration can expose women to more racial abuse, discrimination and harassment. Their skills can be underutilized and they can end up in jobs for which they are overqualified. There are cases of African female migrants who left their highly skilled jobs in their home country to take up jobs which are way below their skills. An analysis of skill wastage of highly skilled immigrants in the USA proves that

between 2009 and 2013, 32% of educated female migrants were underemployed or unemployed compared to United States educated women which stood at 21%. Using the United States and United Kingdom as examples, over one-quarter of homecare workers are immigrants 85% of whom are women (Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000). Due to strict immigration policies of host countries, most women may find it difficult to meet the necessary conditions necessary for migration as a result of this, many migrant women are exposed to illegal immigration routes into these countries. This is one of the reasons why it is common to find female migrants connected to human trafficking or sex trafficking (Kofman, 2001, p.122; Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000).

When women move back and forth between countries it could lead to hybrid identities. Beneria 2003:74 indicates that the link between globalization on migration can cause behavioral changes. Feminization of migration creates a transnational relationship between the country of origin and the new host countries. When women migrate either for a long or short period, they become integrated into the host country and yet they may still feel loyal to the traditions and customs of their countries of origin, thus developing hybrid identities. Levitt and Javorsky 2007:134 emphasize that it is not the rejection of the significance of borders and the differences in economic or political processes but having the understanding that the connections between citizens and the state are evolving, rather than disappearing. The extent of transnational practices depends on the level of constraint of migrants.

Theoretical Discussion

The ability to meaningfully interpret empirical facts to understand the factors (macro-structural) that shape migration

processes is largely hampered by a lack of systematic theorizing. Several social science disciplines have emerged with various theories aimed at understanding the processes that drive migration. These early migration theories can be categorized into two social theories; Functionalist and Historical-Structural theories.

The functionalist paradigm of social theory focuses on optimization strategy of individuals making cost-benefit movements. This theory houses other theories from other disciplines classical equilibrium models (Economics), migration network theories (sociology), migration systems theories and the push-pull models (demography and geography). Meanwhile, the historical-structural theory also known as conflict theory draws attention to how the rich exploit poor and vulnerable people as well as how capital recruits and exploits labour. Other theories that can be categorized under historical-structural theory are; Marxist conflict theory, dependency theory (Frank 1966), dual labour+market theory (Piore 1979), critical globalization theory (Sassen 1991) and world systems theory (Wallerstein, 1974, 1980)

According to the Functionalist migration theories, migration is a positive phenomenon that brings about productivity, prosperity and greater equality by redirecting the flow of resources such as goods, money and knowledge. This theory sees migration as an optimization strategy that individuals use to get access to a higher source of income and other good opportunities. This shows that when people migrate, it is based on rational decisions to maximize income.

The Historical-Structural theory focuses on how social, cultural, economic and political structures limit as well as direct the behaviour of people and this leads to less equilibrium and in

turn reinforces inequalities. This theory highlights the role of businesses and states' control over migration as they see labour migrants, both forced or voluntary, as providing a cheap labour force (de Haas et al. 2020, Piore 1979). This can be seen in many migration rules that favour only the skilled and wealthy while despising the less skilled and poor migrants. The major problem of historical-structural theory is that it portrays migrants as victims of capitalism who have no choice but to migrate for survival.

Recommendations

The feminization of migration indeed brings about liberation and empowerment to women, however, empowerment and how it is assessed is a difficult concept to define. Taking a cue from the United Nations's five components of women empowerment include; women's right to have and determine choices, their sense of self-worth, their right to control their own lives both within and outside the home and have access to opportunities and resources and finally their ability to direct social change to create a more balanced social and economic order.

Since domestic and care work is in high demand, the Government and private sector need to create vocational training and skill development programmes to reduce the perception that domestic and care work is unskilled. Qualification recognition agreements must be put in place to guide skills assessment at both the national and regional levels.

Feminization of migration plays a vital role in the economic development of migrants' countries; therefore, it is important to support female migrants, especially those with fewer literacy and language skills for them to achieve their full potential and minimize exploitation.

To control the massive feminization of migration, countries of origin of migrants should promote stability, education and employment opportunities. Reducing the drivers of forced migration enables the individual to choose between staying or migrating. When potential migrants see the improvement in human capital through sustainable development and long-term economic growth, they will have second thoughts about migrating.

For countries to reap the benefits of female migration, their policies and practices should be geared towards advancing the socioeconomic well-being of migrants and society, at the same time adhering to international standards to protect and fulfil the human rights of individuals, irrespective of nationality, race, gender, religion or migration status.

In the matter of sex trafficking involving women, victims should not be seen as criminals who have illegally crossed the border, rather it should be handled as a special circumstance caused by gender difference. This is so because victims, especially women are always commercialized and subjected to prostitution. It should be dealt with as a threat to the basic rights of human beings and a systematic framework of policies aim at protecting these women's rights should be established (Walby, 2000, pp. 21-22).

The United Nations General Assembly in 1990 adopted a comprehensive document for the protection of migrant workers. It is called the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, also referred to as the Migrant Worker Convention. Unfortunately, only 50 countries are State Parties to the Convention to date; 16 countries are signatories and 132 countries including the World Power (US) have taken no action.

Ratifying the existing treaties aimed at improving migrant women's living and working conditions is a must.

Another instrument to use is the Domestic Workers Convention (No.189) and Domestic Workers Recommendation (No.201) of 2011, which seems to guarantee minimum labour protections to domestic workers. This includes;

- the right to collective bargaining
- the right to overtime compensation and periods of rest
- the right to paid annual leave by national laws
- the right to decent living and working conditions
- the right to keep their travel and identity documents
- the right to minimum wage coverage amongst others

Unfortunately, only 23 State Parties have adopted this convention and once again, the United States is not one of them.

Conclusion

The search for a more comprehensive knowledge of the causes of migration, including the factors that motivate the decision for women to migrate is highly significant. The functionalist social theory that describes migration as a strategy for income and other opportunity gaps. It indicates that households are rational actors in a long-term economic optimisation strategy. The harsh economic situation in a country and the desire to escape the harsh reality forces women to migrate in search of financial and career advancement.

It is important to note that Feminization of migration is not a problem to be solved, but it should be seen as a powerful force of sustainable development for both the migrant and their community. If handled well can bring massive benefits in form

of skills, strengthening the labour force and cultural diversity. Feminization of migration has become highly politicised with a greater amount of economic, social and political change, producing significant impacts in both host and origin countries. However massive female migration can come with its challenges. Migration that is unsafe and illegal results in problems just like the thousands of migrants who died or went missing along risky migration routes, human trafficking and migrant smuggling. To avoid this, it is imperative to put in place efficient border management policies and tools. This action will further minimize illegal migration as well as protect the rights of migrants.

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