

### Migration and its Multidimensional Effects on the Transnational Family

### La migración y sus efectos multidimensionales en la familia transnacional

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#### ABSTRACT

This article approaches the transnational family in a comprehensive manner. Not only remittances are analyzed, but also the dynamics and changes that family members face as a consequence of migration. To this end, a documentary review of empirical research on migrant families from Ibero-American countries, mainly from the last decade, was carried out in various databases. The findings suggest that new information and communication technologies have led to the emergence of new family dynamics, and to the strengthening of filial ties. Furthermore, labor and cultural inequalities between men and women are evidenced in the content of migration. This study contributes to acknowledging that the voice of children is necessary to understand migration processes, based on their experiences and the meanings they construct in the transnational context, for which the school scenario is essential.

*Keywords:* 1. migration, 2. transnational family, 3. remittances, 4. Ibero-America, 5. United States.

#### RESUMEN

En este artículo se aborda el tema de la familia transnacional de manera holística. Se analizan no solo las remesas, sino también las dinámicas y los cambios que afrontan sus integrantes como consecuencia del fenómeno migratorio. Para ello, se realizó una revisión documental en diversas bases de datos de investigaciones empíricas realizadas con familias de migrantes pertenecientes a países de Iberoamérica, principalmente de la última década. Los hallazgos sugieren que las nuevas tecnologías de la información y la comunicación han propiciado el surgimiento de nuevas dinámicas familiares y el fortalecimiento de los vínculos filiales. Además, en los contextos migratorios se evidencian las desigualdades laborales y culturales entre hombres y mujeres. Este estudio aporta al reconocimiento de que la voz de los niños es necesaria para comprender los procesos migratorios, a partir de sus vivencias y significados construidos dentro del contexto transnacional, para lo cual el escenario escolar es trascendental.

*Palabras clave:* 1. migración, 2. familia transnacional, 3. remesas, 4. Iberoamérica, 5. Estados Unidos.

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## INTRODUCTION

Migrating to a host territory does not only consist of preparing a suitcase, and getting on a plane with all the required papers or crossing a border illegally. Behind migration there are various transformations that arise from family separation. When it comes to international migration, the migrant expects to sustain family dynamics despite the distance, which is done through calls, letters, participation in parties over the Internet, and other spaces of interaction that arise between the family and the migrant.

When any of the family members migrate, especially the parents, the family faces a series of changes, new spaces and different dynamics emerge when establishing emotional ties from a geographical and physical distance, which in turn triggers the emergence of the transnational family. In the migration scenario, the family must be analyzed comprehensively to better understand its dynamics, since technology, the economy, education, the emotions and feelings of the children of migrants, their care and caregivers, become determining factors when analyzing each of the transformations that arise when one of the members, be it the father, the mother or both parents, decide to migrate in search of a better future for their family. Next, a series of investigations will be cited that have addressed different dimensions of migration, which constitute the starting point for the creation of the transnational family.

## METHODOLOGY

A total of 54 empirical investigations were investigated to elaborate this documentary review article, mainly from the last decade and related to migration and the transnational family; this made it possible to analyze emerging categories, such as: the role of technology in family dynamics; remittances; emotions and feelings generated by parental migration in children and adolescents; the child as a social subject in the phenomenon of migration; migration and education; migration and gender relations; care and caregivers of the children of migrants in the territory of origin.

The aforementioned categories allowed to address the issue in a comprehensive manner, since each of the dynamics and changes faced by the members of a family in a transnational condition were analyzed, as a consequence of the migration phenomenon.

For the selection of the studies to analyze, research carried out with families of migrants belonging to Ibero-American countries was taken into account, since these are territories where migration has occurred for common causes: lack of job opportunities in the country of origin, as well as poverty and search of a better future for the children; although some research carried out in receiving countries such as Spain and Chile, with Ibero-American immigrant fathers or mothers, was also selected.

The search was conducted in journals from Ibero-American and European universities, and in international organizations; sociology, anthropology, and psychology were the disciplines guiding the selected research. The main databases reviewed were Ebsco, Scopus, Ebook, Oxford Academic, and Scielo.

## WHAT IS THE TRANSNATIONAL FAMILY?

### *Some Theoretical Contributions*

The phenomenon of migration has always been there throughout the history of humanity and, unquestionably, has brought significant changes in society; so much so that it has crossed the family sphere and has given rise to a new social imaginary of the family. Consequently, the family has been transformed under new practices, configurations, and meanings, in terms of what it means to live together, despite the distance (Martínez & Reyes, 2017). It is at this point where, when talking about migration and the changes that this social phenomenon brings about in mother/father-child relationships, it becomes essential to look back at the concept of the transnational family. For Bryceson and Vuorela (2002), these are families that have the capacity to reconstitute and redefine themselves in the absence of one or more of their members, due to migration. These families, so as to sustain their filial ties, acquire new social, emotional, and material practices that allow their members to stay united despite the territorial and political limits separating them, their objective being to seek the collective good and the unity of the family across borders.

When analyzing this concept from the various dimensions that frame families in a transnational situation, new dynamics come into consideration that facilitate their reorganization based on migration (Sánchez et al., 2013), where not only remittances constitute a link between parents and children, but also other practices and emotions are developed that allow bonds to be strengthened, despite physical and geographical separation. Along this line, Zapata (2016) takes up the concept of *transnationality* from the dynamics that allow studying the family, in which its movements, changes, and adjustments are highlighted. At this point, the author focuses on three types of binding practices: continuous, discontinuous, and creative, which help keep parent-child relationships despite physical distance, based on the senses and meanings that the subjects (family members) assign them.

Likewise, Parella and Cavalcanti (2007) assert that migrants and non-migrants create a transnational social space in their daily lives, based on the establishment of links and interaction networks between themselves, the society of origin, and the receiving one. These same authors recognize that the most relevant transnational practice between the migrant and his family is distance communications via the Internet, since through these communications decisions are made and some family issues are discussed, such as the economy, parenting, and education of the children.

In this order of ideas, Zapata (2009) makes a significant contribution to research in this field: the family must be studied and understood not only in its national space, but also from the transnational stage. This implies rethinking the concept of family, and approaching the members who stay in the place of origin, so as to understand the changes that take place, as well as the family dynamics and practices that are reconstructed from international migration.

In summary, in the research on the transnational family consulted for this article, multiple dimensions (economic, social, family, emotional) are accounted for, which give it meaning and allow for us to understand the experiences and meaning of living as a family, despite the geographical and political borders separating the members.

*The role of Technology in Family Dynamics*

In the context of migration, it is important to determine the role that new technologies play in the dynamics arising in transnational families aimed at keeping their ties. To do this, it is necessary to look back at the research of Quintero (2021), in Madrid, and López and Loaiza (2009) with families from nine municipalities of the Coffee Region in Colombia. The first study was conducted with immigrant parents in the receiving country, and the second addressed the migrant's family in the nation of origin. Although these populations are in different places, they share one aspect: the migration of their parents. When taking into account the findings of both investigations, the importance of new technologies stands out, because they allow migrant children and their parents to reconfigure their expressions of affection and thus solidify their ties.

In Rodríguez's (2016) study on the situation of a teenager and her grandmother in Colombia and the migrant mother who lives abroad, information is collected about the scenarios in which mother and daughter share family time by means of technological tools that are useful for them to communicate. The study concluded that the schoolwork done through a computer screen between the daughter and the migrant mother allow interaction, dialogue, expansion of ties, and interrelation between families in a transnational situation. The use of technological tools such as the Internet, social media, cell phones, and computers allows verbal and non-verbal language to open a virtual space, where doing schoolwork will not only make possible a teaching and learning process to take place between the migrant mother and her daughter, but also an exchange of affections and daily experiences.

In this same line of research, Zapata (2020) carried out an analysis of the family practices that allow keeping parent-child relationships between the migrant father or mother and their family in the country of origin. The author divided family practices into three types: discontinuous, continuous mediated, and creative. All three practices share a common objective: to strengthen the emotional ties of the transnational family members. In this sense, the second practice pertains the use of technological means to include members in family routines (schoolwork and play), traditions (birthdays), and celebrations (Christmas). In the light of this research, it is important to analyze how technological resources in the transnational family not only allow the family to unite despite the physical and geographical distance, but also can revitalize those shared moments and routines that will always characterize relationships within a family, such as schoolwork, displays of affection, and special dates, among others.

On this same topic, the works of Zapata (2021) and Rodríguez (2011), carried out with families in Valle del Cauca (Colombia) and in the city of Bogotá, agree that the changes in the dynamics of the transnational family allow the integration of new experiences and the reconfigurations of daily activities, loaded with meaning and significance. This new transnational home is strengthened by memories of a past where remembering plays an important role in recreating those places, objects, routines, and family rituals (birthdays, Christmas, father's or mother's days) that once filled the home of moments that generated unity, which in the transnational context become

the basis that strengthens family ties and that, despite the distance, are revitalized by means of technology (Zapata, 2021).

The new information and communication technologies (ICT) are able to create significant spaces that allow members of transnational families to express their feelings through the screen of a computer or cell phone, thus reducing the risk of forgetting, and keeping the presence of the migrant latent, despite the physical separation (Rodríguez, 2011).

In this sense, in his research carried out in the canton of Cañar (Ecuador) with families of migrant parents, Escobar (2008) concludes that, despite the distance, the daily practices woven in the family, such as sending remittances and virtual communication, allow the relationships of the members to be transformed, that is, the transnational family adapts to the new reality.

As mentioned, virtual media have become a fundamental tool for the expression of affection among transnational families, but they also allow parents to exercise their authority despite the distance, as asserted by González and Restrepo (2010) in their study on families with migrant parents from the coffee region. There, authority is exercised through virtuality, communication technologies being essential, even to reprimand or scold children.

In that same sense, in their study conducted in the city of Cali, Colombia, with children, caregivers and migrant parents, Micolta and García (2011) reported that authority becomes challenging in the relationships between the members of a transnational family, due to the contradictions and flexibility on the part of migrant parents or caregivers when exercising it. In some cases, parents call their children so as to keep bonds with them in a friendly way and thus gain obedience, respect, and love from them. Micolta (2011) also defined authority as an action established in participation with the caregivers of the children in the place of origin, made possible through by means of virtual tools that facilitate communication between both subjects (parent and caregiver).

As can be seen, the use of ICT is a mediating and linking factor between migrant parents, children, and caregivers, by allowing the reestablishing of those practices that united the family while they shared the same geographical space, since as a result of migration, many activities began to be carried out on a virtual space conducive to filial ties.

### *Remittances*

Family finances are one of the main reasons that drive many Ibero-American fathers and mothers to make the decision to migrate in search of better economic benefits for their children. This is how remittances have become a fundamental goal in migration and, therefore, a link between those who leave and the family that stays in the territory of origin.

Mexico is an Ibero-American country with a high migration flow to the United States. This phenomenon is ingrained in the life of Mexican families; Mexico's geographical proximity to the United States has favored migration flows to grow considerably from generation to generation (López Espinosa, 2002). Various researchers agree that remittances are the reason why many

Mexicans think of their neighboring country as a place to provide financially for their families, thus ensuring them greater opportunities, based on the economic and job stability that they do not find in their country of origin (Corona, 2014; Pardo & Dávila, 2017; Rivas & González, 2011).

In the study by Lamy and Rodríguez (2011), conducted in the state of Guanajuato (Mexico) with families of migrant parents, it was found that remittances represent a valuable economic resource that still will not suffice to overcome other challenges faced by families in raising children. This is because motherhood or fatherhood is a challenge, as many parents realize that sometimes they must face their children's rebelliousness and depression, resulting from physical distancing. In the families studied, the family support network is identified as important to sustain the migration project, especially when the migrant has the support of women in their country of origin for the care of children and the administration of remittances. Along these lines, López and Loaiza (2009), in their research in the Colombian coffee region, concluded that remittances are a favorable consequence of the migration of the parent, as they improve the financial standing of the family and save children from economical vulnerability.

It is also essential to address the social networks that families weave and that motivate and drive the decision to migrate for economic reasons. In this regard, family and friends play an essential role when making such decisions (Del Ángel & Robolledo, 2009). In many cases, it is the family members who facilitate the migratory journey, either because they obtain a loan to finance it, or because, in the case of there being other members already settled in the host country, they will be in charge of arranging a job and a place to live.

In turn, Pérez (2017) evidenced the functions that social representations and networks have. The first is a medium through which a series of information circulates that feeds the imaginary of migration. The latter enable the immigrant to provide resources to the emigrant-to-be; be it money, housing or work in the host country. Pasantez's (2006) research, carried out with twenty Ecuadorian immigrant families in Spain, revealed how family networks facilitate migration: the members who are already settled in the receiving country help future migrants financially, providing them with housing and helping them secure a job. This has enabled Ecuadorian migration to Spain to grow exponentially.

This way it can be seen how economic remittances are a motivational factor that has driven large migration flows in the history of Ibero-America. On this long trip, the only purpose of migrants is to reach the North (United States), the South (Chile) or Europe, to find a job, start earning money, and send it to their children and caregivers in the country of origin, who will use the money to meet basic needs such as food, housing, health, and education. Although many migrants have fulfilled the purpose of supporting their family, they have also assumed the consequence of their migration project: being apart from their family, especially from their children.

### *Emotions and Feelings Generated by Parental Migration in Children and Adolescents*

In the social scenario of migration, it is not only the adult migrant with their narratives and experiences who contribute significant elements to strengthen the knowledge and understanding of this phenomenon, which for years has been changing the family, social, political and economic dynamics of the home. Also the children who stay in the place of origin or who travel with the migrant, whether they are young children or adolescents, have had to face changes at a family, economic, and even emotional level. On this topic, Quecha (2014) investigated, through an ethnographic study, the feelings of minors from Costa Chica, Oaxaca (Mexico), whose parents had migrated to the United States. The results report feelings of disappointment, sadness, and anger due to the absence of their parents, which is termed *migratory grief*.

Likewise, López (2009), in his work carried out with families from Tlaxcala (Mexico) with parents in California (U.S), presents a series of results based on the feelings experienced by both the parents who leave and the children who stay. Vulnerability, insecurity, sadness, and anxiety are characteristics that children of transnational families share.

For example, young people from public schools in Cuitzeo, Michoacan (Mexico), felt made invisible by their migrant father, which generated resentment, anger, sadness, and frustration in them, and affected their physical and emotional health (Obregón & Rivera, 2015). In some cases, although they receive financial remittances, the father's absence translates into a sense of abandonment, since money will not replace his affection or physical presence (Guzmán et al., 2014). However, this position is not shared by all adolescents, as evidenced in Salvador's (2012) research.

Thus, various studies show this ambivalence in the feelings experienced by children. Lamy and Rodríguez (2011) and Piras (2016) concluded that young people experience feelings of sadness due to the absence of their parents, especially when they see others holding hands with their parents or during a family celebration; but there are also moments when they feel proud of the efforts that their migrant father and/or mother make to raise the family, and for their achievements.

For their part, one of the negative experiences faced by the children of Ecuadorian emigrants who stay in the country of origin is the lack of self-esteem, because they (the children who stay) perceive themselves as inferior and discriminated against by not having the presence, affection, and care of their parents (Suárez et al., 2012). This has generated in children a feeling of abandonment that they express through sadness, aggression towards their peers, and, consequently, poor academic performance. This behavior is also subject to the lack of authority and affection on the part of their caregivers, since in the majority of cases (74%), grandparents are in charge of their care, but physical exhaustion due to age makes them perform poorly at that task (Miranda et al., 2018; Vizcarra et al., 2013).

*The Child as a Social Subject in the Phenomenon of Migration*

The abovementioned research revealed the experiences and feelings that are generated, as a result of the departure of parents, in the children who stay in their place of origin, but it is equally important to rescue the experiences of those who accompany their parents in crossing the borders of their country into a new territory.

Like adults, migrant children face great challenges in the destination country, such as adapting to new sociocultural and educational practices, both in the neighborhood and at school. These changes are accompanied by exclusion and discrimination on the part of non-migrant children, which makes the integration process in the new territory difficult. In Pavez's (2017) research conducted in Recoleta (metropolitan region of Chile), the socialization role that the school plays in the integration processes of migrant children is highlighted; the school, due to the rejection migrant children receive from some of their fellow students, becomes a space of oppression. This is why Pavez insists on the importance of strengthening and/or developing public policies that allow the protection and prevention of the rights of migrant children. This work also talks about the relevance of children voicing their opinion about their experiences as migrants, as a way of participating in new social scenarios, which allows them to function as subjects of law.

Many sociologists of childhood have aimed at opening a space for children in research on migration, despite the adultcentrism in some families and in certain academic studies, where children are the object, but not the subject of research. Pavez (2011), in research carried out with Peruvian families, migrants in Spain and Chile, takes up the experiences of children and concludes that child migration is a multidimensional phenomenon, since, when they stay in the country of origin, they face sadness due to the absence of the parents, especially if it is the mother who migrates, and when they travel with the parents in the immigration process or after family reunification in the receiving country, racial and linguistic discrimination is a barrier to the interpersonal relationships with native children. Both investigations highlight that children must be protagonists of the reconstruction of migration scenarios, based on their voice and the experiences they live.

Quintero (2021) focused on the narratives and experience of Venezuelan boys and girls, and their migratory and transnational condition in Madrid. The researcher highlighted them as social agents with the capacity to reflect on their lives, and pointed out how the use of communication technologies allows them to keep and strengthen ties with family members in their place of origin or in other foreign territories, a situation that makes it possible to interact with other cultures, broadening the transnational space. This research found in the children's voices the importance of parents communicating the decision to undertake the migration project, because this way they may feel responsible and satisfied. However, when the opposite happens, they feel rather displaced, which can negatively influence their adaptation process in the destination place.

In this sense, Soto's (2012) research, carried out with young people from the municipalities of Anserma, Manizales, and Villa María-Caldas, Colombia, concluded that the parents' decision to



migrate is an issue rarely discussed with the children, which causes young people to create imaginaries about migration only on the basis of seeing their parents leaving, but not because they have had any preparation for this new family experience. From these voices, the importance of their participation in their parents' migration is reflected on, since, despite their age, children must be acknowledged as having the ability to reason and of sound judgment in the situations that involve and affect them as members of a family nucleus.

### *Migration and Education*

Migration as a social phenomenon has brought with it significant changes in various contexts of childhood, such as education, and in the role played by teachers and schools in this process.

Pavez (2013) highlighted that “the role of formal education is to compensate and transform inequalities, and not reproduce them” (p. 199). This contribution constitutes a starting point to reflect and analyze the task that the school must fulfill in migration contexts.

Sometimes, in educational spaces, the students and families who do not legally belong to the host territory experience social exclusion, as evidenced by García et al., (2016) in their comparative study with children of immigrant parents and children of native parents in the region of Murcia (Spain). Among their findings, it stands out that the social exclusion experienced by immigrant students, due to cultural and linguistic shock, generates a breakdown in communication between immigrant families and the school, due to the fear migrants feel of being singled out for social differences. A comparable situation was addressed by Ramón and Guahichullca (2018) in the city of Machala, Ecuador, where the consequences of the internal migration rural populations to the urban area were studied.

In both scenarios, it is evident that discrimination and inequality at a cultural and social level cause children and young people, children of immigrants, to perform poorly in school and opt for dropping out, a situation that is also a product of the parents' low educational level. Therefore, these investigations call out for educational institutions to become a space where not only learning prevails, but also respect and recognition of the importance of cultural diversity to strengthen the educational processes of students, and thus make migration a phenomenon full of opportunities and learning, both for those who arrive and for those who already live at the destination.

Despite this panorama of exclusion and social discrimination that many immigrants face in foreign territories, education is a motivational aspect that has driven many families to cross distant borders to improve their economy and, therefore, have sufficient resources (remittances) to provide a better education to their children, whether in the country of origin or the host country. In the research conducted in Cañar, province of Ecuador, Mancheno (2010) introduced two hypotheses. The first is that one of the consequences of the national government's low investment in the educational sector is that the academic level of the students is not the best; it is for this reason that many of its residents see migration as a way to improve their children's education and choose to pay for a private institution. The second hypothesis pertains the fact that the high school dropout rate in the province of Cañar is due to the fact that the income received in the territory of origin is

lower than the income in foreign countries, such as Spain. This economic disparity has encouraged many residents to leave the classrooms to go to a receiving country with better economic and labor benefits.

Also, Castañeda (2014), in his research conducted in the Metropolitan Area of Guadalajara (Mexico), confirmed that school dropping-out is a consequence of the incidents brought about by a sociocultural and economic context with high migration flows. The information that young people receive from family members, friends, neighbors, or immigrant acquaintances about jobs, salaries, and daily life in the neighboring country, the United States, in addition to the remittances they receive or see others receiving, make them develop an imaginary loaded with desires and fantasies about the opportunities and economic stability they will achieve in the receiving country. In some cases, this situation results in them considering education as the last option to fulfill all their desires and goals, and seeing migration as a better option. Likewise, in the interviews conducted in the homes of the community of San Jerónimo Coyula, Puebla, young people, upon seeing that their relatives were sending remittances, did not want to continue studying, but rather go to work abroad (Corona, 2014).

Three aspects were found in the abovementioned research on how education is related to the migration phenomenon and transnational families. The first is the challenge that education faces today in the face of the discrimination and social exclusion that take place in many educational establishments with children of migrant parents. The second aspect refers to the view that many parents have on education as a factor that drives them to migrate to another territory, so as to improve and guarantee the future of their descendants. The third element evidenced is that many parents migrate with the purpose of their children studying, but some families also decide to start their migration project because they have grown up with an imaginary about the possibilities of working and earning money abroad, based on the experiences of migrant friends and family.

These findings are partially contrary to those of Pérez and Pesantez's (2017) research with young people from the Sígsig canton (Ecuador), who found in the participants' narratives that education is an opportunity to improve their living conditions, since it implies the possibility of becoming professionals and building an economically stable home, where no member of the (current or future) family has to migrate to fulfill their dreams.

From these scenarios in which migration and education are related, it can be seen that the imaginaries of the former, built from the migratory experiences of others, can influence the thoughts of many young people; still, the dream of migrating will not always be the way to achieve their ideals of economic and professional stability, since they can also reach them through education.

### *Migration and Gender Relations*

To frame the importance of this issue within the context of migration, it is necessary to bring the research of Vizcarra et al., (2013) to this scenario, in which a rite at the moment of birth is what defines the functions that men and women must fulfill in the Mazahua indigenous community (Mexico): the girls' umbilical cord is placed under the stove to symbolize the domestic tasks that

women must perform in this community. The above is not only an act that symbolizes gender differences, but it is the starting point for developing a set of asymmetries between the tasks culturally assigned to men and women, where the latter are limited to domestic work and the first to providing for the household. This situation becomes accentuated when the man migrates, since the woman's domestic and community tasks increase, for which she will never receive a salary. The remittances sent by the husband from abroad (United States) are managed by her father-in-law, so there is no autonomy or emancipation of the woman in terms of the money.

Female migration is not very frequent, but when it occurs, women are criticized upon their return because they arrive with new experiences and knowledge, such as the use of household appliances to facilitate household tasks. However, despite these comforts that they have thanks to technology, they do not have time to develop skills and free themselves from the domestic burdens that were assigned to them from birth and by tradition, and that by culture seem irrevocable.

The parenting and care tasks assigned to women and men, by tradition, match the findings of Lagomarsino's (2014) research, carried out with immigrant mothers in Genoa (Italy) and their relatives in Ecuador. The interviews revealed that the woman is socially singled out and criticized for migrating, since she is considered to be abandoning her children by leaving for another territory; while in fathers' migration is perceived as something normal, since they are in charge of providing for the home.

In this research, the author found ambivalence in the concept of female migration. In the country of origin, it brings with it the destruction of the family. In the country of destination, the reunification of mother and children is seen by many professionals such as psychologists, teachers, and social workers, as a risk and irresponsibility for the mother to take her children to Italy, because work will not allow her to fulfill her task of care and upbringing. From these situations, the necessity is realized to be aware that female migration is not synonymous with abandonment and destruction by the departure of the mother modifying the traditional family model, since, from a distance, she can still fulfill her tasks through constant communication and dialogue with their children, that is, motherhood is reconstructed from a distance.

Likewise, Zapata (2016) raised a series of reflections on how culture and society have been responsible for assigning the obligations of caring for children to the mother, whether she migrates or not, while the father is in charge of the economic part of the family, both in person and from geographical distance. This gender inequality is also evident in the networks of caregivers, constructed due to the migration of one or both parents. That is, caring for children will always be the responsibility of women, whether aunts, grandmothers, sisters, or other women close to the family.

Micolta (2014) also helped reveal a series of aspects that frame the daily life of migrant parents, children, and caregivers in Cali, Colombia, based on the network of care woven in the family. In the context of migration, the same inequalities persist in household tasks between men and women: the father is the one who migrates and provides for the family financially, while the mother carries out the household chores and cares for the children. Still, cases were also found in which mothers

were the ones who migrated and fathers were in charge of caring for the children and other domestic activities, with the difference that they (fathers) needed the support of other women, whether aunts or the grandmothers of the minors.

In this same sense, Gimeno et al., (2014) presented a series of stories about the experiences of the migration process of Colombian families to Spain. In this study, the woman is the pioneer, but her work is not well paid, and she is still overloaded with domestic tasks in the receiving territory. The work of Gutiérrez (2017) confirms the man as the provider and authority in the family, and affection and nurturing as assigned to the woman. This causes the children to feel more affection for the mother, while only an economic bond is developed with the father, this resulting in occasional family conflicts.

Now, although research is cited that points to gender inequalities, it is also necessary to mention those investigations where migration has allowed changes in the role that women play in their home, as has been demonstrated in the work of Unzueta et al., (2011), carried out with Colombian migrants in Spain; there, transformations are presented that arise in the transnational family due to changes in the tasks that have traditionally been assigned according to gender. Women go from being in charge of housework and childcare to being the provider of material goods and the economic sustainability of the home; while the man begins to carry out the tasks that the woman carried out when she was in her country of origin. It is important to clarify that these role changes present some variations, such as that both are in the receiving country, that they share the housework, and that both financially support the family in the country of origin.

Some cases were also found in this research where the freedom and empowerment of women play a leading role in their migration process. However, the authors question these statements, because in the receiving country, in the case of Spain, the immigrant woman works caring for children and the elderly, in addition to performing domestic tasks; thus, she must spend long hours caring for to another woman's family, while she also works in a profession. That is to say, even if the woman migrates, she is still subject to the work that she carried out in her place of origin and with much longer hours.

Parella (2012) found a similar ambivalence in her research carried out with Bolivian mothers in Spain. Bolivian women are pioneers of migration and find in this phenomenon a form of emancipation from the activities carried out in their country. However, their empowerment is also questioned, since many enter Spain to do domestic work and take care of other women's children, which is not well paid in this European country, due to the illegal status of immigrants.

In the research carried out in Spain by Alcalde-Campos and Pavez (2013) with Latin American migrant single-parent families, where the woman is the head of the household, the situation of poverty and vulnerability in which boys and girls find themselves was analyzed. This social condition has an impact on their school performance, since mothers lack sufficient income to buy books, pay access to the internet, transportation, food, and comfortable housing to carry out activities. Many women who participated in this research made the decision to emigrate with their

children due to a breakup with their partner in their place of origin, or in some cases they were victims of domestic violence at home, and saw migration as an emancipatory solution.

Such is the case of some Colombian families in which gender inequalities are accentuated due to the mother's migration, a situation that is negatively pointed at by some parents, and reproduced in their children (Morad et al., 2011). Other findings evidenced that marital breakdown occurs before migration due to domestic violence or infidelity, situations that open a gap in the family, where in some cases the man neglects his economic and emotional obligations with the children in the country of origin.

As has been noted, women have transformed motherhood in the transnational family. The conditions of poverty experienced by many Latin American households have led them to participate in the migratory phenomenon not only by receiving remittances from abroad, but also by taking care of the household's economic obligations, both in the country of origin and in the destination country.

#### CARE AND CAREGIVERS IN THE CONTEXT OF MIGRATION

The caregivers of the children of migrants are also part of the transformations and dynamics that the transnational family goes through when one or both parents migrate, which is why this aspect is analyzed in several studies. In many instances, those who are left in charge of the children are the mothers, grandmothers, aunts, or close friends of the family. In Campos's (2018) research, carried out in Brazil, the importance and function of transnational networks created by parents and caregivers in the care and upbringing of children who stay in the country of origin is revealed. This network consists of creating domestic strategies, such as remittances, for the economic improvement of family members who did not migrate, especially sons and daughters, and guidelines for their care and protection, assigned by migrant parents.

González and Restrepo (2010) investigated the reorganization that takes place in families of the coffee region of Colombia, when the father or mother migrates to a foreign country. The dynamics are modified by the assignment of tasks and responsibilities to a caregiver for the protection of the children who stay in the country of origin. Their research also revealed that in the first year of the absence of the migrant father or mother, children go through an adaptation process characterized by rebellion and poor academic performance, yet thanks to the virtual contact they establish with the migrant parent and the role played by the caregiver, young people and children adapt to this new reality of living without the physical presence of their father or mother.

Caregivers take charge of the social, emotional, educational, and nutritional tasks towards the children of migrant fathers or mothers, while parents are the providers of financial resources; this situation has allowed the development of very strong emotional bonds between caregivers and children, to the point where the absence of the parents does not negatively influence the minors. In this sense, in many cases, it is the grandmothers who, from the first stages of the children's lives, have been in charge of their upbringing (López 2011).

Agreeing to take care of their grandchildren is understood by grandmothers as a moral obligation rooted in their customs; despite poverty or their advanced age, they can never refuse to exercise this second motherhood, in addition to feeling useful when carrying out the task of caring for their grandchildren (Pérez & Neira, 2017). This research highlights the low educational level of grandmothers, which makes it difficult for boys and girls to continue in school. In some cases, these children even dedicate more time to work outside the home to contribute to supporting the family, since the money sent by their parents from abroad is insufficient. Furthermore, in the narratives of some grandmothers, the lack of communication between migrant parents and their children is evident due to the rural context in which they live. The importance of creating public policies to aid these grandmothers is also highlighted, since poverty and advanced age make them vulnerable.

In addition to the above, a study by Micolta and Escobar (2010) in the city of Cali evidences that, in some cases, grandmothers are appointed to care for grandchildren, but due to rebellion, low educational level, and difficulties in adapting to the absence of the parents, they usually seek support from other family members. A call is made in this research to make visible the work of grandmothers in the migratory phenomenon, because despite their exhaustion due to age, they continue to exercise motherhood, and even fatherhood, over their grandchildren. They are in charge of food, schoolwork, and protection while the parents are abroad. Many have dedicated their entire lives to raising children and doing domestic chores, and so they do not have a pension or any income, and in some cases they only depend on the remittances their children send from abroad.

As in such research, Parella and Cavalcanti (2007), in their study carried out with Peruvian and Ecuadorian migrants in Spain, found that grandparents play an essential role, since they are tasked with caring for and providing affection to their grandchildren. The elderly are also considered for reunification in the destination country, but many refuse to leave the country of origin, as they have other children and other responsibilities there.

#### CLOSING REMARKS

Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador, Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, and Colombia (Latin American countries) share a common denominator at the social level: poverty, and lack of work and education opportunities, which has prompted an increase in migration flows to countries with greater economic development; there, the family scenario has been transformed and, in turn, different spaces have been created for the family to continue together despite physical distance.

Migration has also brought significant changes to the family nucleus, which have allowed for transnational dynamics that make geographical distance no longer an obstacle to bringing the migrant father or mother closer to their family, especially children. This situation has not weakened motherhood or fatherhood, it has only transformed and adapted it to this new transnational family, where new technologies, economic remittances, and networks of caregivers share the same objective: strengthening their emotional ties.

In many families that experience the same scenario as those separated by geographical boundaries, such as the transnational family, the gap between men and women that has characterized humanity for years can be found: gender inequality. This social phenomenon permeates childcare and parenting practices, the labor market, and cultural beliefs, which assign better opportunities to men and leave women vulnerable in terms of their rights. This scenario of social and family inequalities is also evident in migration processes, where the man who migrates is the economic provider of the home, while the woman is in charge of caring for the children and for household chores, and in some cases, she must also contribute economically. In the case of women's migration, they continue with their maternal role from a distance, through a care network built with those in charge of their children in the place of origin; in addition, women must also contribute financially to the needs of the home.

There is ambivalence in the context of migration, since many women make the decision to migrate to free themselves from male domination, but upon arriving at their destination, they find a labor market governed by gender inequalities. Thus, they not only have to face linguistic and cultural discrimination due to their status as immigrants, but also gender inequality, which is a phenomenon that crosses geographical, social, political, cultural, labor, and economic borders.

This research review has made it possible to highlight the importance and need for children's voices in migration processes, where the experiences of children must also be subject to academic attention, so that the experiences and meanings that children have constructed can be studied, experiences and meanings built either from their place of origin or when accompanying the father or mother in the immigration project. Children have witnessed the social reality that afflicts their families, who saw migration as an opportunity to improve their economic conditions, and have also experienced the unpleasantness of discrimination in school, the streets, and the neighborhoods of the receiving territories.

Many fathers and/or mothers found in migration an option to satisfy their economic needs, but in this new territory they also found inequality, rejection, and discrimination from some native citizens of the destination country. This situation is not exclusive to a certain age or to gender: both men and women, children and adult migrants have suffered indifference for not having the same nationality as the host country. It is at this point where the school must be a promoter of spaces for socialization and research that make it possible to raise awareness on the phenomenon of migration as a starting point to understand the social reality of many Ibero-American countries. In this sense, migration should be considered as a cultural, ethnic, and racial encounter where the knowledge, experiences, and beliefs of both the migrant and the natives of the receiving country converge, with no room for intolerance, racism, and inequality.

Translation: Fernando Llanas.

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