

'Feminization of Migration': Migration Experiences of Afghan Women Living In Ağrı

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Abstract

The present study addressed the migration experiences of Afghan women that had migrated to the province of Ağrı. In this context, the study examined women's reasons for migration, the party or parties that had made the decision for migration, the problems they had encountered in the province, the problems they had encountered in the migration process, and the attitudes of the people of Ağrı towards Afghan women. The study employed the semi-structured interview method to hold face-to-face interviews with 18 Afghan women. The study determined that women's migration mainly stemmed from the war, while establishing a fundamental finding as to how women, who had become the main actor of migration, were affected much more negatively by migration when compared to men.

Keywords: Migration, Woman-Migration Relationship, Feminisation of Migration, Afghan Women

'Göçün Kadınlaşması' : Ağrı'da Yaşayan Afgan Kadınların Göç Deneyimleri

Özet

Bu çalışmada Ağrı iline göç eden Afgan kadınların göç deneyimlerine yer verilmiştir. Bu bağlamda kadınların göç etme nedenleri, göç kararının kim veya kimler tarafından alındığı, ilde karşılaştıkları sorunların neler olduğu, göç sürecinde hangi sorunları yaşadıkları, Ağrıli vatandaşların Afgan kadınlara bakış açılarının neler olduğu gibi konularda kadınların deneyimleri irdelenmiştir. Araştırmada yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme yöntemi kullanılarak 18 Afgan kadın ile yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Çalışma, göçün kadınlar üzerindeki etkilerinin anlaşılması ve toplumsal cinsiyet bakımından göçün hangi sorunlar ve sonuçlar doğurduğunun anlaşılması bakımından önem taşımaktadır. Kadınların daha çok savaş nedeniyle göç ettiklerinin anlaşıldığı çalışmada, göçün temel aktörü haline gelen kadınların, erkeklere göre göçten çok daha fazla olumsuz etkilendikleri araştırmanın temel bulgularındandır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Göç, Kadın-Göç İlişkisi, Göçün Kadınlaşması, Afgan Kadınlar

Paper Type: Research

Makale Türü: Araştırma

1. Introduction

Migration represents a dynamic phenomenon featuring economic, cultural, and political dimensions and embodying a wide variety in terms of its causes and effects. Recent years have seen an increase in the number of studies examining migration along the axis of gender and in the reiteration of the question as to how migration affects women. Furthermore, the visibility of the matter is improved further through dissertations addressing how migration creates more challenging conditions for migrant women and women are faced with a range of issues that are more commonly of an economic nature. Even though the traditional roles assigned to women rendered women more invisible, these dissertations started to establish how women represent a standalone category in migration and how deficient the approaches of the studies were towards women (Fiskeci, 2019: 35). Moreover, the studies put forward an approach that underlined the distinct social, cultural, economic, and political consequences migration bore for women and men and how women were kept away from decision- and policy-making mechanisms governing migration (Akalin, 2014: 33).

The literature offers individual definitions for migration depending on the geographical sources or receivers of migration with the main actors of migration varying on spatial grounds. 'Irregular migration refers to an illegal entry to a country, illegal residence in a country or a legal entry to a country

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followed by a failure to exit the said country after the legally allowed term' (<https://www.goc.gov.tr/duzensiz-goc-hakkinda>, accessed on 25.10.2020). Considering irregular migration, the dominant opinion argues that the aforementioned occasions for migration appear as a matter of necessity. In fact, migration becomes a necessity and reaches a 'massive' nature owing to the distinction between northern and southern hemispheres being rendered more visible on grounds of global economic relations with northern countries enjoying an improved level of welfare and southern countries suffering from more extreme poverty (Güllüpinar, 2012: 55). On the other hand, a migrant in an irregular situation is 'a person who suffers from a lack of legal status in a transit or host country due to their illegal entry or violation of entry conditions or the expiry of their legal period of stay' (*Göç Terimleri Sözlüğü*, 2009: 27). Moreover, migration flows of a global nature differ from the other types of migration in quite a significant aspect: There are two countries involved in global migration: One person is furnished with the same rights and the same treatment in both countries (Altıntaş, 2014: 258).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) 2019 *Global Trends* offers information on the state of refugees around the world. The Report indicates that 79.5 million people were displaced as of the end of the year 2019, marking the highest ever figure so far. The Report also emphasises that 1.5 million refugees returned to their respective countries of departure on average every year in the 1990s, but this figure has decreased to 385.000 in the last decade and this trend means that 'the increase in cases of displacement has far surpassed the number of solutions formulated for the issue of displacement'. The Report also states that 41 million people were forcefully displaced in the year 2010, but this figure has reached 79.5 million today; that 80% of forcefully displaced people live in countries or regions affected by severe food insecurity and malnutrition and most of these countries are faced with the effects of climate change and other disaster risks; and more than three-fourth (77%) of refugees around the world are in a situation of long-term displacement. As an example, the situation in Afghanistan has been going on for longer than 50 years (<https://www.unhcr.org/tr/24189-dunyadaki-insanlarin-1i-yerinden-edilmis-durumda-unhcr-kuresel-egilimler-raporu.html>, accessed on 21.10.2020). *World Migration Report 2020* reports on how emigration in Asian countries commonly arises from displacement arising from national disasters. Accordingly, the number of individuals forced to emigration due to natural disasters as of the end of 2018 was 3.8 million for the Philippines; approximately 3.7 million for China; 2.7 million for India; and 853 thousand for Indonesia. What is more, there is another element that triggers this phenomenon in conflicts in respective countries. In fact, displacement due to conflict was the case for approximately 1.6 million individuals in the Syrian Arab Republic; 372.000 individuals in Afghanistan; 252.000 individuals in Yemen; and 188.000 individuals in the Philippines (https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wmr_2020.pdf, accessed on 16.03.2021). The same Report underlines an increase in the estimated number of international migrants. Accordingly, among 272 million migrants, the number of people living outside their countries of birth was 119 million as of the year 2019, while this figure was noted as 153 million in the year 1990 and had reached more than triple the estimated figure (84 million) in the 1970s. During this period, while the ratio of international migrants has increased at the global scale, the great majority of the population are observed to continue residing in their countries of birth. The same report also indicates that the majority (approximately 74%) of migrants were of working age (ages 20-64), while a decrease was registered in the number of migrants under 20 years of age (from 16.4% to 14%) between 2019 and 2020. Moreover, international migrants of and over the age of 65 represent approximately 12% of all migrants as of the year 2000. The Report specifies the ratio of men and women among international migrants as 52% and 48%, respectively (https://www.un.org/sites/un2.un.org/files/wmr_2020.pdf, accessed on 22.10.2020). The breakdown of migrants by sex is 48% women and 52% men.

In this context, migration can cause social, economic, and cultural problems in both origins and destinations of migration. The capacity of a destination to shoulder immigration gives an idea about the range of its social and economic adaptation. There is, thus, a potential determinant here arising from the possibilities granted to immigrants in accessing public services such as healthcare and education

with a special focus on housing. Communication problems represent the most clearly visible face of migration, involving a challenging curve for immigrants to learn the language of their destination. Every movement of migration, albeit of an inevitably massive nature, ‘becomes crystalised’ (Çağlayan, 2006: 67), i.e., takes on an original nature in and of itself, owing to its specific characteristics. At the same time, migration can happen both within and between countries. There may be overlapping causes of migrations in both directions. Domestic migration can be motivated by an aspiration to achieve better living conditions and employment opportunities due to the current interregional differences in development levels in a country. Undoubtedly, there are movements of migration triggered by war conditions in a country. On the other hand, migration between countries does occur on similar grounds as domestic migration, while the most notable causes of migration today include civil wars, political instability, vacuums of authority, terrorism, and poverty, etc. Nevertheless, the current state is marked by further difficulties in identifying whether a movement of migration is economically or politically motivated (Danış, 2004: 2). The present study focuses on women of Afghan origin and relates whether or not they encounter issues of social, economic, and cultural integration through their migration experiences.

Historically Turkey has been a host country for movement of immigration both from neighbouring countries and more remote geographical regions. Turkey is observed to have become a ‘target country for immigration’ at the international arena in recent years due to its geographical location (İçduygu and Toktaş, 2005: 84). Turkey initially accepted individuals of Turkish origin as migrants but has hosted a more diverse group of immigrants starting from the 1990s (Barın, 2015: 13). Turkey has become a country affected heavily by movements of international migration and has been positioned as a stop or a bridge through such movements. The recently globalised nature of migration has created a diversity in the immigrant population in Turkey in terms of both quality and quantity. *2016 Turkey Migration Report* indicates an increase of 19% in the number of immigrants in an irregular situation apprehended in Turkey in the year 2016 when compared to the figure in 2015. Moreover, the Report observes that the number of immigrants in an irregular situation was 57.428 in the year 2005 and increased to 174.4.66 in the year 2016. The total number of immigrants in an irregular situation between 2005 and 2016 is 817.863. The breakdown of immigrants by their countries of departure lists the most notable of such countries as Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan, Georgia, Bangladesh, Iran, Uzbekistan, Myanmar, and Azerbaijan in that order (2016 Turkey Migration Report, <https://www.goc.gov.tr/yillik-goc-raporlari>, accessed on 24.11.2020) .

Table 1: Number of Illegal Immigrants Apprehended in Turkey in 2016 (Top 10 Countries of departure)

| <i>Country of departure</i> | <i>No. of Immigrants</i> |
|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Syria | 69.755 |
| Afghanistan | 31.360 |
| Iraq | 30.947 |
| Pakistan | 19.317 |
| Georgia | 2.679 |
| Bangladesh | 2.390 |
| Iran | 1.817 |
| Uzbekistan | 1.648 |
| Myanmar (Burma) | 1.169 |
| Azerbaijan | 1.138 |

Map 1 shows the data concerning the breakdown of immigrants in an irregular situation by their provinces of apprehension in Turkey.



Map 1: Data on Irregular Immigrants Apprehended in Turkey by Province

As can be seen in Map 1, immigrants in an irregular situation in Turkey mostly enter the country through eastern and western borders. The most common points of entry for immigrants in an irregular situation include the provinces of Erzurum, Ağrı, and Van each receiving 5000 or more of such entries.

TURKSTAT data published in 2019 show that Turkey recorded 677.042 instances of immigration in total in the year 2019. According to the breakdown of instances of immigration by sex, there were 368.515 men and 308.527 women among these immigrants. Their breakdown by age indicates that women and men in the age range 25-29 were the majority. The age range with the least incidence of immigration is 75 and older. The same study represents that Iraq was the first among the origins of the foreign population immigrating to Turkey in 2019 with 14.5%, followed by Turkmenistan with 13.5%, Afghanistan with 8.2%; Syria with 7.5%; and Iran with 7.3% (TURKSTAT, International Migration Statistics, 2019, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index?p=Uluslararası-Göç-İstatistikleri-2019-33709>, accessed on: 16.03.2021).

Turkey has long been a destination for heavy immigration flows from neighbouring countries most notably, as well as from countries without a natural border with Turkey such as Afghanistan. 'European countries became the most notable points of attraction owing to their geographical proximity to these regions, as well as their more developed levels of economy and human values, while countries bordering European countries, like Turkey, received irregular migration flows as either destination or transit countries' (İçduygu and Aksel, 2012: 7). The immigration flow from Afghanistan into Turkey intensified along with the Soviet intervention arising from the historical process and the ensuing civil war, never-ending terrorist incidents, political uncertainties, and the American intervention of early 2000s in the country. The Afghan population migrating from Afghanistan to Turkey are currently scattered around almost all areas of the country notably including the metropolises and the border provinces in the Eastern Anatolian Region.

The migrating Afghan population mainly travel individually with some bringing their families along. Women are in the most disadvantaged position in this migration process in terms of their workload and are more vulnerable to the negative effects of migration. In fact, the literature addressing migration from the gender attitude establish the distinct manners in which migration unfolds for women and men

and the extent to which women and men are affected by migration. At this point, Ravenstein argues that the process of migration differs between women and men. Accordingly, women migrate over shorter distances and tend to be involved in domestic migration. The case is the exact opposite for men. Men migrate over longer distances (Ravenstein, 1889). Although Ravenstein argues that distance does not matter the same for all migrants, distances appear to be of value for waves of migration around the world (Ince, 2019: 2585). In fact, the migration experience of Afghan women, depicted here as the main subject-matter, offers an understanding of the difficulties of migration regardless of the distance involved.

The present study addresses the migration experiences of Afghan women that have migrated to the province of Ağrı, which is significant as one of the first provinces of arrival for Afghan immigrants in Turkey. The study represents the experiences of 18 Afghan women during and after the immigration process as identified through semi-structured interviews. In this context, the study considered the experiences of women with respect to such matters as their reasons for migration, the decision-maker(s) for migration, problems encountered in the province, and the approaches of the people of Ağrı towards Afghan women. The first step in the study consisted of a literature review on the 'feminisation of migration' implemented through domestic and foreign resources. This first step was followed by the methodology, which designated the method to be applied for the study and the manner of outreach to Afghan women. The findings obtained through the study were examined under two headings, namely demographics and analyses. These findings were divided into various groups, namely the working lives, migration experiences, reasons for migration, problems encountered during the migration process, problems encountered in Ağrı, thoughts about going back to their countries of origin, and expectations from life for Afghan women. The study questioned whether the concept of the 'feminisation of women' applied to Afghan women throughout. Therefore, the study is of significance in its understanding of the issues and consequences brought forward in migration in terms of gender, as well as of the impact of migration on women. The study determined that women became a significant actor in migration and migration had a negative impact on women, as well as on children, and created an excessive burden on women.

2. A Theoretical Look at the Concept of the 'Feminisation of Migration'

The 'feminisation of migration' has recently become a concept that is thoroughly discussed and considered in the literature. Almost all areas of life are rife with events and processes that deepen the already subordinate position of women. While the position of women in the hierarchy of inequality is visible within the framework of economic, political, and social interactions, it is also possible to witness situations where women are entirely ignored and where no measurement can even be offered for their level of exposure. In fact, migration appears as a phenomenon where the manner or level of exposure among women are pushed to the background and rarely addressed as a matter of priority. Despite the recent increase in the number of studies examining the relationship between women and migration, the literature is observed to have ignored the position of women as a subject of migration or their level of exposure at times. 'While Ravenstein refers to how 'a woman is more of a migrant than a man' in describing the issue of migration, no specific attention has been given to the positions and situations of women in the migration process and women have been considered more as dependants or in the context of their positions within the family (as spouses, mothers, or young daughters) in the migration process' (Buz, 2007: 38). Thus, given the increasing prominence of the international aspect of migration today, there is an emerging need for the specific examination of such matters as how women articulate into the phenomenon of migration, the role of women in migration, and their manner and level of exposure to migration. Moreover, any description of reasons for migration fails to refer to the roles of women in this process, women's labour, and their pregnancy status, etc. (Öder, 2008).

The aforementioned represents the exact points underlined by the concept of the 'feminisation of migration' as established in the literature. 'The said concept points out not only to the higher number of migrant women than that of migrant men, but also to the increase in the demand for jobs associated

with women, the tendency among women towards individual migration, and the involvement of women in all forms of migration' (Yılmaz, 2019: 383). Essentially questioning the position of women in migration, this concept pursues the secondary aim of identifying the role of women in migration processes. Migration, be it over a short or long distance or a necessity or a choice, leads women to tackle more challenging conditions. The most disadvantaged actors in this process are represented not only by women, but also their families and especially children migrating along with them. In its essence, the 'feminisation of migration' points out to the negative level of exposure to migration among women from the gender attitude and to how women, as a group already oppressed within the capitalist patriarchal system, is under a higher risk in terms of movements of migration than men (Uçan Çubukçu, 2013: 230). In fact, the Marxist perspective on migration says that migration 'is a structural consequence of the capitalist system' (Bal, Aygül, Oğuz, and Uysal, 2012: 194). However, neoclassical theory argues that human is not a social being and the society that shapes an individual is separate from such elements as 'class, religious affiliation, group, trade union, judgment, and political opinion' or 'sex, age, conviction, and marital status', etc. (Gül, 2020: 371). Then, migration appears as a concept that deepens the subordination of women within the context of relations of dominance.

Kofman (2004: 64) states that various approaches to the mainstreaming of differences arising from gender relations (integrative approaches: transnationalism, structurationism, and alternative circuits of globalisation) into theories of migration deepen the migration mechanism to varying extents. Even though these developments have secured significant progress in the gendered understanding of movements of migration, they have not been able to challenge reductionist opinions and failed to take into account the more complicated gendered stratification observed in both countries of departure and countries of destination.

Yılmaz (2019), in their study entitled *Migration and Woman: The Feminisation of Migration and the State of Migrant Women*, refers to the concept of the 'feminisation of women' and studies the migration processes of migrant women. The study seeks answers to such questions as to the reasons for migration and the manners of migration among women and the problems they experience in the migration process, etc. According to the study, the reasons for migration among women include 'labour migration, family reunification and marriage, asylum, and victimisation in human trafficking'. Women are notably faced with risks of physical and sexual harassment and cannot access adequate healthcare during the migration process. Determining that single women, women responsible for their families, victims of sexual violence, and homosexual women encounter further negative experiences, the study points out to the positive aspects of migration as access to better education and healthcare and advanced social status.

Selim (2017), in their study entitled *Is Migration Feminising in Turkey?: An Econometric Analysis*, deliberates on the concept of the feminisation of migration and examined whether this phenomenon applied to Turkey or not. The study employs data from 2003, 2008, and 2013 Turkey Population and Health Research (TNSA) implemented by Hacettepe University Institution of Population Studies and analyses the probability of migration among married women in the age range of 15-49 in Turkey through the Logit model, concluding that the most important variables on migration among married women in the age range of 15-49 in Turkey are 'residential area; age, educational status and employment status of women; educational status of their spouses; familial wealth; time spent in marriage; and number of individuals in the household'.

The study entitled *Gender and International Migration in Europe: Employment, Welfare and Politics* (2000), carried out by Kofman, Phizacklea, Raghuram and Sales, is prominent as a study that incorporated the gender aspect into current migration theories. Specifying that temporary and continued movements have become globalised, accelerated, diversified, and feminised, the study emphasises that the United Nations estimates the number of migrants around the world as 125 million. Furthermore, the

study points out to an increase in migration arising from the recent prominence of Europe as an important player among countries affected by movements of migration, the study states that women represent approximately 45% of the 15-16 million residents of third countries in Europe.

The study entitled *Feminisation of Migration and Migrant Women's Organisation*, authored by Ünlütürk Ulutaş and Kalfa (2009), underlines that migrant women work in domestic service and prostitution in the countries of destination, the fundamental reason being the increased demand for both industries, which additionally do not require any specific qualifications. Women working in domestic service and prostitution are exposed to social risks such as discrimination and stigmatisation with those working in prostitution being specifically susceptible to sexually transmitted diseases, as well as acts of violence in the hands of their clients. Women employed in domestic work can also be victims of violence in the hands of their clients. These women settle for the toughest jobs that are not popular among local labourers in return for extremely low wages and work long hours under slavery conditions and without social security coverage.

Buz (2007), in their article entitled *Women in Migration: A Study in the Framework of Feminist Approach*, addresses the relationship between women and migration in the context of women asylum seekers. The study conducted interviews with twenty female and twenty male Iranian and Somali asylum-seekers living in Turkey. The study points out to the reasons of migration among women based more on their experiences of violence and persecution on grounds of their gender. The author states that the attribution of reasons for migration merely to social motivations 'reduces the visibility of the political and societal background that shapes social motivations'.

Rebeca Rajjman, Silvina Schammah-Gesser and Adriana Kemp (2003), in their study entitled *International Migration, Domestic Work, and Care Work: Undocumented Latina Migrants in Israel*, underline the two-fold disadvantage experienced by migrant women in terms of employment opportunities when compared to migrant men. As domestic service represents the only occupation made available to women, they are forced to put up with a narrower and irregular employment environment that involves patriarchal and vertical ties with their respective employers. What is more, their employment-related costs and illegal status are coupled with the fact that women working in domestic service are faced with emotional issues upon leaving their families and especially their children in their countries of departure. Migrants continue to work on the ties with their families and their communities in their respective countries of departure during the entirety of their stay in host countries.

Similarly, Ünlütürk Ulutaş and Kalfa (2009: 14) state that housework is still carried out by women with no division of labour with men due to such housework still being perceived widely as the responsibility of women only. Moreover, aging populations and the withdrawal of the state from basic healthcare services lead to housework, care, and health responsibilities being shouldered mostly by migrant women in their countries of destination.

Finally, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) points out to five reasons behind the consideration of migration as a feminist issue. Accordingly, nearly half of migrants are represented by women and girls and an increasing number of women migrate either by themselves or as the heads of their families. Migrant women are faced with severe risks including sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and violence and are exposed to two-fold discrimination by reason of their status as women and migrants. Moreover, women can get pregnant during the migration process. It is also more likely for migrant women and girls to experience health conditions at their points of both transit and destination (UNFPA, <https://www.unfpa.org/news/five-reasons-migration-feminist-issue>, accessed on 23.10.2020).

The 'feminisation of migration' appears as a concept that facilitates the understanding and visibility of the problems encountered by women in the migration process upon being forced to migration specifically on grounds of wars, economic crises, and turmoil, etc. As actors mostly placed at the centre of migration, women play an important role in allowing themselves and the other individuals migrating with them to sustain themselves, shouldering serious responsibilities from the beginning to the end of

the process. The gender roles traditionally imposed on women are observed to become more prominent in the migration process, which also deepens the problems already affecting them in their daily lives. Nevertheless, as seen in the literature review, there is an added significance to the inclusion and consideration of children forced to migration along with women in relevant studies and the widespread uptake of studies on the impact of migration on the most disadvantaged populations with an emphasis on child migration.

3. Methodology and Implementation

The distinction of the present study in the field of social sciences lies in the use of feminist methodology centred around women as the main subject. The attitude of the author is of significance in their ability to understand women and to collect information on women within the context of the feminist methodology (Kümbetoğlu, 2017: 53).

'The pattern in phenomenology focuses on the phenomena which we are aware of, but do not have an in-depth and elaborate understanding of. In the world we live in, phenomena appear as individual incidents, experiences, perceptions, orientations, concepts, and situations' (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011: 72). The present study, on the other hand, represents an effort to understand the current conditions of Afghan women living in central Ağrı on the basis of their life experiences around migration. The present study features the experiences of women as the most negatively affected actor in migration. Before the conduct of the study, it was considered more meaningful to get together with women and to write down their own statements in order for the study to achieve a better understanding of their lives pre- and post-migration. Therefore, the study was implemented through the qualitative semi-structured interview method (Demir, 2017: 291; Büyüköztürk *et al.* 2015: 152) with the aim of examining the migration experiences of 18 Afghan women living in Ağrı. This method allows both the interviewer and the interviewee to go deeper into the questions (Arıkan, 2011: 27). The study, designed in line with the qualitative research method, employed snowball sampling, which firstly reaches out to one individual that represents a sample of the universe and then uses support from this individual to reach out another one, and this sequence continues until the study achieves the pre-planned sample size and range (Böke, 2017: 129). This method is preferred more in cases where the author does not have a clear understanding of the size of their sample (Kümbetoğlu, 2017: 99). The study firstly started interviews with Afghan women in Ağrı Provincial Migration Management Office and the women thus interviewed reached other Afghan women, thereby providing the targeted sample for the study.

The ethics committee approval required for the interview form employed in the collection of research data was obtained from Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Scientific Research Ethics Committee (through its decision dated 20.10.2020 and No. 145). The semi-structured interviews posing 15 questions prepared under the study were held with Afghan women at the Provincial Directorate of Migration Administration under the Governorate of Ağrı in November. 15 questions were prepared to be used during the interviews with consideration for the demographics of interviewees and aimed to identify their migration experiences. The study suffered from a limitation in the difference between the mother tongue of the women involved and that of the author. As the majority of the respondents could not speak Turkish fully, the interviews with Farsi-speaking women were held with the interpreting support secured from the Provincial Directorate. The responses provided by the women were noted down throughout the interviews and all such notes were analysed with additional consideration for post-interview observations. The interviews were organised on a voluntary basis and started with an elaboration of the aim and scope of the study and an indication that the results to be obtained from the study would be employed only in line with the scientific aim, ensuring that women feel safe throughout the interviews. The names of the respondents were coded as K1, K2, K3... for ease in field work and for the smooth-going of the study.

There are three reasons for the location selected for the study, namely Ağrı. First of all, the province of Ağrı represents one of the first points of arrival for the Afghan population, i.e., the study universe, thereby facilitating accessibility. Secondly, the study aims to offer contributions to further studies in the

province concerning migration experiences of Afghan women. Finally, the close proximity of the author to the study universe gave an impetus to the selection of this location for the study.

4. Findings

The findings obtained as a result of the study were addressed under two main headings.

4.1. Demographics of Respondents

The demographics of 18 Afghan women responding to the study are as given in Table 1.

Table 2: Demographics of Respondents

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Age</i> | <i>Marital Status</i> | <i>No. of Children</i> | <i>Educational Background</i> |
|-------------------|------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------------|
| K1 | 19 | Single | - | Elementary Grade 2 Drop-Out |
| K2 | 26 | Single (Divorced) | 1 | Elementary Grade 4 Drop-Out |
| K3 | 28 | Married | 1 | Elementary Grade 5 Drop-Out |
| K4 | 33 | Married | 3 | University Graduate |
| K5 | 38 | Married | 4 | Elementary Grade 2 Drop-Out |
| K6 | 23 | Married | - | Secondary School Graduate |
| K7 | 26 | Single | - | Elementary Grade 5 Drop-Out |
| K8 | 27 | Married | - | Elementary Grade 5 Drop-Out |
| K9 | 38 | Single (Widowed) | 4 | High School Graduate |
| K10 | 42 | Married | 4 | High School Year 1 Drop-Out |
| K11 | 27 | Married | 2 | Elementary Drop-Out (Grade 6) |
| K12 | 21 | Single | - | Elementary Grade 2 Drop-Out |
| K13 | 23 | Single | - | High School Year 1 Drop-Out |
| K14 | 27 | Married | 5 | Never Schooled |
| K15 | 23 | Single (Widowed) | 1 | Secondary School Graduate |
| K16 | 29 | Married | 2 | Never Schooled |
| K17 | 24 | Married | 3 | High School Graduate |
| K18 | 30 | Married | 2 | University Graduate |

The breakdown of the respondents by age indicates the youngest woman to be 19 years of age and the oldest 42 years of age. The average of the ages of all responding women is 28.

The study points out to a generally low level of education among the women. There are only 2 university graduates, 2 high school graduates, and 2 secondary school graduates among the women. 2 of the women have never been schooled and the remaining women have not completed their education. Considering the marital status of women, 11 are married and 7 single. 2 of the single women lost their spouses during the conflicts on-going in Afghanistan. On the other hand, one of the single women is

divorced. The study observes that the maximum number of children is 5 among the women and the average number of children per woman is 3.

4.2. Data Analysis

For the purposes of the field study, Afghan women were posed questions on their working life, their motivations for migration, their reasons for migration, the individuals accompanying them during migration, the party or parties that made the decision for migration, the problems they had encountered during migration, the problems they encountered in Ağrı, the attitudes of the people of Ağrı towards them, and whether they wanted to return to their country of departure or not. The findings obtained in the study with respect to the migration experiences of the women were classified under sub-headings through the descriptive analysis technique (Demir, 2009: 313) with the incorporation of the responses of the women to the questions in quotes. Studies like the present one typically quote the original version of the data in order to add meaning to the study for the readers, as well as credibility to its results (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2011: 270). The findings of the study were divided into five main themes as can be seen below.

4.2.1. Working life

This part indicates the experiences of Afghan women in their working life.

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Are you employed?</i> | <i>What is your occupation?</i> | <i>How often do you go to work?</i> | <i>If you are unemployed, why?</i> |
|-------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| K1 | Yes | Cleaning | 3 days a week | - |
| K2 | Yes | Cleaning | Continuously | - |
| K3 | No | - | - | Childcare |
| K4 | Yes | Dishwashing | Continuously | - |
| K5 | No | - | - | Family care |
| K6 | No | - | - | Pregnancy |
| K7 | Yes | Salesmanship, cleaning | Continuously | The pandemic |
| K8 | No | - | - | Health conditions |
| K9 | Yes | Cleaning | Occasionally | - |
| K10 | Yes | Cleaning | Continuously | - |
| K11 | Yes | Cleaning | Continuously | - |
| K12 | Yes | Cleaning | Occasionally | - |
| K13 | No | - | - | - |
| K14 | No | - | - | Childcare |
| K15 | Yes | Cleaning | Occasionally | - |
| K16 | No | - | - | Childcare |
| K17 | Yes | Breadmaking | Continuously | - |
| K18 | Yes | Cleaning | Continuously | - |

In terms of their employment status, most of the women are observed to be employed. Afghan women in Ağrı mostly work in domestic or hotel cleaning jobs. Even though the majority of the employed women work continuously, they mentioned that there had been a decline in domestic and hotel work due to the pandemic. For unemployed women, the reasons behind their unemployment commonly include health conditions and family care and childcare. Especially women who have migrated together with their families encounter obstacles in employment due to their responsibilities in domestic work notably including the care of their mothers and fathers.

A striking finding of the study relates to the fact that the university graduates among the responding women are employed in jobs that do not require specific qualifications. K18 explains her experience as follows: 'I was a teacher there (in Afghanistan), but I work as a cleaner at a hotel here...' As can be seen, migrant women are deprived of any opportunities to maintain their level of education and occupations from their country of departure in Ağrı. Women involved in cleaning jobs are observed generally to work every day, while those that have experienced health problems reduced their working hours. Moreover, the women are identified to be employed without social security coverage due to their lack of legal work permits.

The general association of domestic work and childcare with women is not considered as a merely economic activity. The fictional attribution of these tasks with women on grounds of gender roles brings with it a process of social exclusion for women, as well as the emergence of varying states of womanhood. In fact, 'paid domestic work, while providing a context for the boundary to be set in a practical relationship (or struggle), also creates room for experience to demonstrate that gender refers to differences between women themselves, as well as those between women and men, and that the 'societal' nature of gender stems from the relational characteristic of its build-up. Domestic work is both an area of partnership establishing the differences of women from men and an area for women to experience the differences among themselves (differences in boundaries, age, and culture)' (Bora, 2010: 77). Afghan women consider mere domestic work, cleaning, and childcare as a given in their working life and embrace the perception that they will never be able to move beyond this framework. Specifically, cleaning jobs have created a communication network among women, who tend to act in solidarity and unity owing to this network.

4.2.2. Migration Experiences

This part addresses the questions on the countries of departure of the women, the individuals that accompanied them in migration, the time of their migration, and the party or parties that made the decision for migration.

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Your country of departure?</i> | <i>Who accompanied you in migration?</i> | <i>When did you migrate?</i> |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------|--|------------------------------|
| K1 | Iran | Mother-niece | 2016 |
| K2 | Iran | Spouse | 2015 |
| K3 | Afghanistan | In-laws | 2011 |
| K4 | Afghanistan | Spouse, children, and sibling | 2018 |
| K5 | Afghanistan | Spouse, children, and father-in-law | 2011 |
| K6 | Iran | Mother-father and sibling | 2012 |
| K7 | Afghanistan | Mother-father, 5 older brothers | 2010 |
| K8 | Iran | Mother, 2 older brothers, sibling | 2010 |
| K9 | Afghanistan | 4 children | 2011 |

| | | | |
|-----|-------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| K10 | Iran | Spouse and 4 children | 2017 |
| K11 | Afghanistan | Spouse and father-in-law | 2011 |
| K12 | Afghanistan | Mother-father, 4 siblings | 2017 |
| K13 | Afghanistan | Sibling | 4 months prior |
| K14 | Afghanistan | Spouse and children | 2019 |
| K15 | Afghanistan | Children | 2018 |
| K16 | Iran | Spouse and child | 2017 |
| K17 | Afghanistan | Spouse and in-laws, children | 2017 |
| K18 | Afghanistan | Spouse and children | 2018 |

While all respondents are Afghan, 6 of them migrated from Iran. The women who related their migration experience in Iran informed the study that their immigration to Turkey was the result of the problems they had encountered in Iran. 2 of the women migrated to Turkey in 2020; 4 in 2011; 1 in 2012; 1 in 2015; 1 in 2016; 4 in 2017; 3 in 2018; 1 in 2019; and 1 four months ago.

None of the women experienced the migration process by themselves. Those that migrated with their own families or in-laws are generally observed to have been in a large group during this process. Women were accompanied in migration by their in-laws, if not their own mothers and fathers. K1, a single woman, shared her experience, saying 'My mother made the decision for migration'. K3, pointing out to her spouse's family as the decision-maker for migration, says 'I then had to come along'. K4 and K5, both married women, indicate that they have made the decision for migration with their spouses. K9 and K15, both single women, and K14, a married woman, made this decision by themselves.

The study, as an effort to question whether women were decision-makers in the migration experience that affected and changed their lives in every aspect, attaches importance to the party or parties that have made the decision for migration.

| <i>Respondent</i> | <i>Who made the decision for migration?</i> |
|-------------------|---|
| K1 | Mother |
| K2 | Jointly with her spouse |
| K3 | In-laws |
| K4 | Jointly with her spouse |
| K5 | Jointly with her spouse |
| K6 | Family |
| K7 | Father |
| K8 | Mother and older brothers |
| K9 | Herself |
| K10 | Father |
| K11 | Father-in-law |
| K12 | Mother and father |

| | |
|-----|--------------------------|
| K13 | Jointly with her sibling |
| K14 | Herself |
| K15 | Herself |
| K16 | Spouse |
| K17 | Father-in-law |
| K18 | Jointly with the spouse |

The findings indicate that only 3 of the women have made the decision for migration themselves. The remaining women are observed to have migrated together with their spouses, siblings, and in-laws. A review of the correlation between the decision-maker for migration and marital status shows that 2 single women in the sample and only one of the married women have made the decision themselves. The remaining married and single women are observed to have made the decision jointly with their families. Therefore, women who bear the challenging conditions arising from the migration process, are pushed to a passive position in the context of decision-making for migration.

4.2.3. Reasons for Migration

The study questioned the reasons behind women's migration. With women being the main actors in migration, reasons for migration tend to be diversified and intertwined.

'Dependant migration' appears to be the most common element among the reasons for migration specific to women. 'Dependant migration is a phenomenon that defines the movement of a woman following male members of a family that have already migrated for any reason (finding a job or reassignment, etc.)' (Ilkcaracan and Ilkcaracan, 1998: 3). Nevertheless, the reasons for migration as indicated by Afghan women show that the phenomenon of 'dependant migration' does not apply to them.

The most important reason for migration among Afghan women is based on the environment of law and conflict that has persisted for years. Women are forced to migrate to another country due to their deprivation of the safety of life and property, their experience of restlessness, and their exposure to unemployment arising from the economic crisis, all results of this environment. Even though almost all women share the same set of reasons for migration, there have been instances of migration based on personal reasons, as well. K2: 'My father was abusing drugs. He would make me take them, too. I couldn't take it anymore. Afghans were marginalised in Iran. They would say, 'What are you doing here?'. On the other hand, K3 explained how they migrated to Turkey on account of her and her spouse's families with the following statements: 'I fell in love. My family would not let me. This is why we came here. We got married'. Moreover, K8 said: 'My older brother had some problems with the family of the woman he was going to marry. There was animosity between the families due to a problem in the ceremony of asking the family for their daughter's hand in marriage. As the family was threatening us all the time, we had to run away'.

As stated above, the war environment in Afghanistan appears to be the most important factor in women's migration. K4 explains her reason for migration as follows: 'My spouse was a public servant. Taliban asked my spouse to place a bomb-laden car into the public building. After he rejected the request, we started to receive constant threats. This is why we migrated...' There are also religious elements at play when it comes to women's migration on grounds of the war. Women of different sects experienced migration as a matter of necessity. 'We migrated due to the war. We were under additional pressure due to our Shiite sect' (K6).

The war created deeply rooted changes in the family structures of women. The interviews found out that the spouses of two women had been killed during the war. K9, despite pointing out to the war

as the main reason for their migration, expresses her anger by saying, 'Taliban is our enemy. Taliban martyred my husband'. K5 also migrated on similar grounds: 'ISIS killed my husband, and I came here with my child...'

The reasons for migration are different with Afghan women that migrated from Iran. K10 expresses herself with the following words: 'There was war in Afghanistan. Iran would not give us residence and work permits. So, we migrated...' The current economic and social structure in Iran led women to be faced with a second wave of migration. K12 describes her experience as follows: 'We did not have any financial power in Iran. I could not study as schooling was not free. They were treating us very badly because we were foreigners. We would live in rental homes. There was a man, 40 years old. He came in and asked my hand in marriage. I was 17 years of at the time. My family did not give me to him because I did not want that. The man came into our home one night and tried to rape me. I yelled and I screamed. My parents saved me. We reported him, but he threatened us because he was very rich, and we had to withdraw our report. This is why we escaped to Afghanistan. He found us there, too. He forced it again. We came to Turkey as a last resort.'

K13, whose brother was killed during the war, stated that it was 'loneliness' that drove her to migration: 'My parents had died. When my brother was killed too, I came here to be with my other brother...'

K18, a university graduate and a former teacher in Afghanistan, tells of a migration experience that adds a different dimension to the migration experiences of women: 'I was a teacher there. The students would threaten me so that I would give them good marks. They would say, 'We will kill you'.'

As can be seen here, the most common reasons for migration from both Iran and Afghanistan among the women include the safety of life and property, war, and economic and social problems.

4.2.4. Problems Encountered in Migration Process

The question 'How?' was of specific relevance to the question concerning the women's reasons for migration. In fact, the question 'Why?' both brought with it a tendency among the women to offer short answers and made it more difficult for them to secure an easier understanding of the actual migration process that left permanent marks on their lives. Therefore, the question 'How?' offered more freedom to women, thereby allowing for the unseen aspects of migration to come to the surface. This method enabled interviewees to complement their stories with elements that they considered to be significant (Becker, 2015: 106-107).

Afghan women have experienced a variety of problems during their migration process. More specifically, all women are observed to have entered Turkey illegally. The women generally travelled in a vehicle on the road between their country of departure and the border to Turkey and then, walked from this point until they reached Ağrı. The women stated that they had encountered various problems notably including hunger and thirst in the migration process. K11: 'It was gruelling, we travelled most of the way on foot, one night we walked until the morning... After we were apprehended at the border, they did not let us in, and we found a different route to come here. We were starving... I nearly drowned while crossing the border in water...'

Another problem of significance that affected women in this process stems from their constant fighting with the 'smugglers', who they indicated had brought them here. K2 shares her experience as follows: 'We were smuggled here. We had a fight with the smugglers on the way... We came here after walking for 2-3 days. They had originally said that this route would take 5 hours, but it took us 3 days. They had a fight with my spouse. They would ask me, 'Why did you even marry such a man?''.

The migration process had a specifically negative effect on women with younger children. Their burden became heavier due to the need to soldier on along the way on one hand and to their need to feed and carry their children on the other. 'We put our lives on the line. It took us 1 day to walk to the border.

We went to Van on a vehicle and from there to Ağrı. We were riddled with hunger... My baby was 1.5 years old at the time. We had to carry it around all the time' (K3). The interviews showed that the province of Van was among the areas where Afghan women had been taken upon their entry to Turkey. The interviewers were informed that those women had been transferred to Ağrı from Van following their legal procedures.

Barriers relating to monetary resources and language are among the important issues that made their marks on women's migration experiences. Women who have no or little command of the language experience difficulties in social adaptation and in expressing themselves and develop feelings of restraint or distrust towards the nationals of their country of destination, etc. (Çalım, Kavlak and Sevil, 2012: 16). Not only were the families already of little means, but also they had given any money they had to individuals who would bring it to their places of arrival for the purposes of the migration process. 'There were man at the border who asked for money. They threatened us... They took all our money. After taking our money, they gave us some food. It was rather difficult with three children. We had nothing – no shoes, no nothing' (K4).

Women expressed that they had experienced health conditions on top of their financial problems during their migration journey. Hunger and thirst, coupled with the long distances they had had to cover, had worn them out and caused them to fall ill. The experiences of K7 reveals yet again how migration represents a much more challenging process for women: '... It was night. We came here on foot. We could only climb over the hill until the morning. The men who had smuggled us in beat me because I could not walk anymore. I got sick on the way. I could not feel my body...' K8 also shared a similar experience: 'We arrived in Ağrı after 1 month of travelling on foot. The smugglers were violent towards us. Hunger and thirst are a natural part of the process, as I came here illegally (laughs).' Fear and cold weather are the other elements that accompanied women in their migration process. 'The migration process was dangerous. We came here after travelling on foot for 2 days. We were afraid of the police and thieves. I was seriously ill after I arrived here' (K13). Women being forced to take their children with them during their migration adds to the already difficult conditions posed by migration. While men with children tend less to bring their children with them during their migration, the case is the exact opposite for migrant women. Fathers leave their children with their mothers, but mothers are perceived as 'care-givers' in parallel with the gender roles traditionally imposed on them (Adanu and Johnson, 2009: 179).

4.2.5. Problems Experienced in Ağrı

This part focuses on the problems experienced by Afghan women in Ağrı, the attitudes of the people of Ağrı towards them, and their experiences of discrimination, if any.

The language barrier represents an important problem for the women in Ağrı. The inability of the women to express themselves, their needs or wishes through a single channel of communication leads to communication problems notably including their lack of access to public services. 'There is a barrier in language. We have been here for four years, but we cannot speak [it] well. For this reason, we cannot get much work' (K1). Similarly, K2 expresses herself with the following statements: 'When I go to the doctor, I cannot express myself well. The doctor does not listen to me or treat me well, either, because I cannot speak the language...' A good command of the Turkish language was observed with those among the interviewed women that had attended the language courses available at the Public Education Centre. The interviewers were also informed that the women who had experienced problems with language before this course had been able to overcome this barrier in time. '... I used to have the doctor shouting at me because I could not speak the language. It is better now' (K8).

The migration process creates a detrimental effect on women and especially children in terms of health. While women enjoy certain advantages if they can access a more advanced level of healthcare in their country of destination, but the lack of such better conditions throws women further into a pit of problems. Women's effective access to healthcare services in their countries of destination depends on their command of language and their employment status. In fact, Afghan women experience a process

of problems that come one after the other, almost a process of ‘multiple oppression’, due to their language barrier leading to an inability to communicate well with doctors and to their irregular employment hindering their access to social security services (Tuzcu and Ilgaz, 2015: 59).

Afghan women in Ağrı experience another problem of significance with unemployment. The women indicated that they had financial problems and could barely sustain themselves despite their employment. The women residing in rental homes stated that they were not able to work continuously due to the pandemic and could not do so even if they wanted to on grounds of the need for childcare and family care. ‘They treat us well in Ağrı, but there is the issue of work. Corona reduced the number of jobs available to us, down to 1 or 2 a week’ (K11). The low wages paid to women in their jobs exacerbate their financial problems. Indicating that the government supports were not at their former level, the women stated that they were also affected severely by the increasing prices. ‘The Social Assistance and Solidarity Foundation gives us only little support. I am ill, but the state hospital cannot cover my injections. So, I am forced to provide them from a private hospital. Due to my illness, all the money goes into buying my medicine’ (K8). The women being deprived of access to social security is mainly a matter of access to healthcare, but also brings with it numerous other problems. ‘One surely has difficulties after leaving their home country and arriving in a foreign county. Be it the language barrier or difficulties in adapting to the society. Our biggest problem now is not being able to go to the doctor due to our lack of social security coverage’ (K4). The relationship between migration and health is one that concretely embodies the consequences of migration. During their initial time in their countries of destination, migrants are both at a disadvantage in the social and economic contexts and open to serious health-related threats. This situation is specifically problematic for ‘unregistered refugees and migrants without a legal residence permit’ (Gündüz, 2011: 87).

For the purposes of the study, the responding women were asked whether they had been able to adapt to their places of arrival or not and what kind of an attitude the local people of Ağrı showed towards them. The women generally described the attitude of the people of Ağrı towards them as positive. ‘I get on well with my neighbours’ (K16). ‘The people of Ağrı love us...’ (K15). ‘The people of Ağrı are quite helpful, I am not alienated (K14). ‘They are quite nice. We are alike in terms of our cultures. Sometimes they say, ‘We are happy you have come here’’ (K4). Despite some of the women indicating that they were not alienated from the society, the interviews also offered examples of experiences to the contrary. ‘The people of Ağrı are nice... You have good people and bad people everywhere. Some of them insult us. They say, ‘Look at those Afghans, how relaxed they are while walking around’...’ (K1). K3 stated that the people of Ağrı had a different attitude towards them because of the way they dressed: ‘The way we dress appears weird for the people of Ağrı. They think we should dress more modestly’. ‘They always see us as foreigners. They always say, ‘Why are you here?’. This doesn’t do me good psychologically...’ (K6). ‘They tell the children, ‘Why are you here? You’ve ruined us!’’ (K9). Bauman (2019: 72-74) positions ‘foreigners’ at the exact opposite side in the divide between ‘us’ and ‘them’. ‘Foreigners’ challenge such divide on one hand and deny its boundaries on the other. If one is to call someone a ‘foreigner’, they need to get to know the person first. Otherwise, that person is a ‘nobody’ in their eyes. However, a ‘foreigner’ is a person whose presence is not ignored. This is the reason why they are neither far nor near. They are neither friends nor enemies and for this reason, ‘they cause confusion and anxiety’. Therefore, Afghan women in Ağrı experience exclusionary practices and the process of social adaptation at the same time.

4.2.6. Plans to Return and Expectations from Life

The field study asked the women whether they wanted to return to their country of origin. Almost all of the women responded negatively to this question and described their reasons for this response. The most important reason behind the unwillingness of the women to return is the war that represents their original reason for migration. ‘If there is war, there is no peace. I will only go to Afghanistan to die. I will stay here to live. There are no women’s rights there. Women are not allowed to study or to go

outside...’ (K1). Concerns relating to safety hinders the return of the women, while there are also some women who are thinking of returning to their country of origin after the war has ended. ‘If war is no longer a problem... I will, of course, return to my country...’ (K3). Thoughts of Afghan women around returning to their country are coupled with hopelessness and uncertainty, adding further difficulty to the ability of women to express themselves. As mentioned by Chambers (2014: 14), ‘Such a journey turns into a never-ending questioning that also eliminates the very reference points of the journey with its starting point already lost. Even though an exile assumes that one has a principal home and will circle back there in the end, the problems encountered *during* the journey will continually plough through the scope of such an itinerary. The possibility of maintaining the assumptions of a principal home and a homecoming become increasingly faint and is eventually lost.’

Despite the fact that some women indicated that they could return to their countries upon the achievement of peace, there are also opinions that are distanced to this idea on grounds of future anxiety. K4 responds to this question in anger: ‘No, no. I am rather afraid. They killed children in a university this week in Afghanistan. I am rather afraid for my children. I don’t want to go [back]. Life is very difficult when you are there... My daughter got diabetes due to stress. There were even times when I thought of committing suicide. Then we said, let’s go away, maybe our life will change. My mother stayed there. I feel so sad for her. It is difficult to be a woman. I was engaged at 12 and married at 13. I had no idea at the time about what an engagement was. People would cry for me back then. I could not understand why they were crying for me...’ K4, referring to the challenges of being a woman in this process, is anxious about the future of the children in her care. K7 also relates a similar experience: ‘No, I hate it there. Because that country is no country. A country is a mother, a father to its citizens. Our lives are in danger there. We cannot go [back]. They kill those around us...’

The Afghan women tended to compare their lives specifically with those of their daughters while describing their migration experiences. The women, who surely did not want the fate of their daughters to follow their own, also shared their perception of migration as a source of hope. ‘There is war there. Our lives are in danger. If we go there, we already have some family problems to deal with... I think a lot about my daughter. I did not study, but I really want her to do so. I don’t want to go back for their future’ (K11). ‘No, I am not considering it. There is always war there. I overcame a lot of hardships to be here. I am illiterate myself. I don’t want our children to be that way. I want them to study and have a job...’ (K14). ‘No, never and never. There is war there. Nobody wants to live there. It would be a shame for my children. We already spent our lives in war. At least, our children should study and have a job’ (K16).

5. Conclusion

Migration has maintained its multidimensional nature in the context of both migrants and destinations. Movements of migration are known to bring along various problems notably concerning shelter, employment, and socio-cultural adaptation, etc. in destinations, all arising from the economic, political, and social motivations underlying this phenomenon depending on seasonal conditions.

The present study addressed the migration experiences of Afghan women and primarily focused on the manner in which women were portrayed in migration studies. The recently increased visibility of the international aspect of migration brought to the agenda the question as to whether women were the main actors in migration and resulted in the incorporation of the concept of the ‘feminisation of migration’ into the literature. The articulation of the gender dimension into migration studies added further visibility to the migration processes of women and the problems they encountered during such processes. Furthermore, the migration experiences of women show that the same deepens the subordinate and unequal position of women with respect to men further.

The findings compiled from the migration experiences of 18 Afghan women in Ağrı are supportive of the argument on the ‘feminisation of migration’. While the most common reason for migration is the war, women are observed to represent a significant component in this process with their hopes for a better life and to encounter events that completely change their lives from the start. In fact, migration

brings forth much heavier workload than women can handle and involves difficulties in their access to the working life. The fact that women are employed in jobs that require no specific qualifications regardless of their educational background clearly reveals a striking reality in migration. Afghan women are exposed to various traumatic events, notably including illnesses, during their migration to Ağrı and try to maintain their daily lives in the midst of financial difficulties. The migration experience constitutes a source of hope as it brings for the possibility of allowing their children, if not them, to access better education and better employment.

Given that the international dimension of migration is on the foreground today, it is essential that the general effects and consequences of migration be reconsidered in the context of women and children. Specific mechanisms should also be put in place to allow for sustainable social adaptation along with policy measures that will facilitate the integration of women and children in social and economic life. In this sense, migration not only creates economic consequences, but also brings women and children face-to-face with possibly long-term psychological problems. The experiences of Afghan women point out to the possibly long range of implications of psychological problems even for the solution of economic problems.

Conflicts of Interest

On behalf of all authors, the corresponding author states that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval

The ethics committee approval required for the interview form employed in the collection of research data was obtained from Ağrı İbrahim Çeçen University Scientific Research Ethics Committee (through its decision dated 20.10.2020 and No. 145).

Funding Statement

The author received no specific funding for this work.

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