



Algerian Women Migrants in Spain: Sacrifice and Intergenerational Impact

Migrantes argelinas en España: sacrificio e impacto intergeneracional

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Resumen

La migración familiar de Argelia a España constituye un proceso complejo en el que convergen presiones económicas, expectativas socioculturales y dinámicas de género. Este artículo analiza las experiencias de mujeres argelinas que migran principalmente mediante la reagrupación familiar, un mecanismo que a menudo implica seguir a sus cónyuges y renunciar a identidades profesionales consolidadas. Muchas de ellas abandonan carreras de alto nivel en sectores como la educación, la sanidad o la administración pública con el fin de asegurar mejores oportunidades educativas y sociales para sus hijos. A partir del estudio de caso de Sabra, antigua profesora universitaria en Argel, se examinan los desafíos personales, culturales y estructurales que enfrentan estas mujeres durante su proceso de asentamiento en España. La trayectoria de Sabra evidencia las negociaciones culturales y religiosas necesarias para preservar las tradiciones argelinas e islámicas mientras se adaptan a las normas de la sociedad receptora. Su experiencia también revela las vulnerabilidades

Abstract

Family migration from Algeria to Spain is a multifactorial process guided by the convergence of financial pressures, cultural expectations, and gendered based duties. This article examines the experiences of Algerian women who migrate mainly through family reunification process, often joining their husbands and consequently stepping away from their established careers. Many of these women leave behind highlevel careers in sectors such as education, healthcare, and administration in pursuit of a better life conditions for their children. Taking the real life case of Sabra, a former university professor in Algeria, the study explores the profound personal and cultural challenges migrant women encounter during their transition to life in Spanish society. Sabra's narrative illustrates the cultural and religious negotiations required to maintain Algerian and Islamic traditions while adapting to the norms of a European host society. Her experience is also an eyewitness to the emotional and economic instabilities that arise when women's migration is tied to marital dependency. At

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emocionales y económicas derivadas de la dependencia matrimonial que caracteriza muchos proyectos migratorios femeninos. No obstante, su historia muestra la resiliencia y la agencia que las mujeres migrantes despliegan al reconstruir sus vidas transnacionales. Tras un abandono marital, Sabra reorientó su trayectoria profesional, completó un doctorado en España y logró reincorporarse al ámbito académico. Al situar este caso dentro de patrones más amplios de la migración familiar argelina, el artículo destaca los impactos intergeneracionales de la movilidad, las estrategias de negociación cultural empleadas por las mujeres y el potencial transformador de sus contribuciones sociales y familiares. Se sostiene que estas experiencias, a menudo invisibilizadas por narrativas centradas en la movilidad masculina, ofrecen claves fundamentales para comprender las dinámicas de género en los procesos migratorios contemporáneos.

Palabras clave: Reagrupación familiar, pacto intergeneracional, migración femenina, resiliencia, sacrificio, género.

the same time, her story demonstrates the resilience and agency migrant women mobilize as they rebuild their lives across borders. After being abandoned by her husband, Sabra reconstructed her professional trajectory, completed a doctoral degree in Spain, and ultimately rejoined academia through a Spanish university. By putting Sabra's experience within broader patterns of Algerian family migration, this article highlights the intergenerational impacts of migration, the strategies women use to fix cultural boundaries, and the far-reaching influence embedded in their contributions to both family and society. It argues that women's migration stories, often overshadowed by the hegemonic frames of male mobility, offer critical insights into the gendered patterns shaping migration and the complex processes of integration, empowerment, and social change that unfold in cross-border contexts.

Keywords: Family reunification, intergenerational impact, female migration, resilience, sacrifice, gender.

Introduction

Family migration is a multifaceted and deeply life-changing phenomenon that covers economic, social, cultural, and gendered dimensions. Migration from a country to another is not a mere geographical relocation of human being across borders but a complex family reconstitution either in terms of roles, aspirations or even identities. In the Algerian context, migration to Spain has increased in a significant way over the past decades, due to a combination of structural pressures and personal motivations. Economic instability, limited employment prospects, and concerns about the quality of education in Algeria have pushed many families to seek more stable future abroad (Bensaïd 2018, 15). Spain, with its relatively accessible migration pathways, established North African communities, and renowned public education, has become a particularly attractive destination to Algerian citizens who seek a better life condition either for them or for their kids.

Migration decisions, however, are rarely gender neutral. A growing body of research demonstrates that migration processes are often shaped by gendered expectations and inequalities. For many Algerian families, men migrate first to establish economic stability, while wives and children join them later in

what scholars describe as “secondary migration” (Sadiqi 2017, 47). This pattern frequently results in women sacrificing personal and professional aspirations to support the family’s adaptation in the host country. Therefore, their migration is not only a geographical movement but also a profound restructuring of their social roles and identities. As Hondagneu-Sotelo (1994, 21) argues, women’s migration experiences are deeply embedded in gendered power relations that shape both the decision to migrate and the consequences of migration.

The case of Sabra, university professor in Algeria

A particularly illustrative case is that of Sabra, a university professor in Algeria whose story encapsulates many of the challenges and transformations experienced by Algerian migrant women in Spain. Sabra held a prestigious academic position and had built a successful professional identity in Algeria. Yet, when her husband decided to migrate to Spain, she chose to step away from her professional career to offer her children access to better educational opportunities and enjoy a healthier family life (i.e. to be with their father who is already living in Spain). This decision reflects a broader phenomenon described in the literature as “transferred human capital,” in which women prioritize the educational and social advancement of their children over their own professional trajectories (Sadiqi 2017, 128). In the early years following migration, Sabra dedicated herself entirely to domestic responsibilities and childcare-taking, given that her third child was born shortly after arriving in Spain. Her experience mirrors that of many migrant women who undergo a process of “deskilling,” where their qualifications and large experience are undervalued or rendered invisible in the host society (Kofman and Raghuram 2015, 79). In many cases, the homologation of foreign degrees requires over two years, reflecting significant delays in the governmental approval process.

Six years after migration, Sabra faced a profound personal and economic crisis when her husband abandoned her, leaving her solely responsible for raising three children, two teenagers and one preschooler. This moment marked a turning point in her life. Despite the emotional and financial strain, she rebuilt her life from the scratch, while navigating the intersecting challenges of single parenthood, cultural adaptation, and economic survival (Sayad 1999, 78–79). Her resilience is emblematic of what scholars describe as “gendered strategies of survival,” in which migrant women mobilize personal, social, and institutional resources to overcome adversity (Mahler and Pessar 2006, 34).

Later, when her husband demanded that she return to live in Algeria with the children, Sabra’s teenagers refused, demonstrating their strong attach-

ment to Spanish society, their schools, and their emerging identities. Their refusal highlights the generational dimension of migration: children often integrate more quickly and profoundly into the host society than their parents, creating new forms of belonging that may diverge from parental expectations. Sabra ultimately remained in Spain, raising her children independently and gradually resuming her academic trajectory. She completed her PhD whilst caring for her family and eventually secured a position as a university professor in Spain. Her story is a testament to resilience, determination and professional fulfilment despite structural and personal obstacles.

This article examines the experiences of Algerian women in Spain who face similar sacrifices and challenges. It explores the cultural and religious barriers they may encounter, the effects of migration on the second generation, and the strategies of resilience that enable them to rebuild their lives. Sabra's story serves as a case study illustrating the broader realities, struggles, and triumphs of Algerian migrant women in Spain. By placing her experience within theoretical frameworks on migration, gender, and identity, this study contributes to a comprehensive insight of the gendered dimensions of family migration and the emancipatory capacity of female's effort to survive cross-borders circumstances.

Migration theories and gender

Migration theories are considered as important tools for understanding the motivations, processes, and consequences of crossborder movements. Among the most influential frameworks is the pushandpull model, which identifies the structural conditions that drive individuals to leave their home country, families, professions, houses due to poverty, political oppression or else. On the other hand, there are factors that attract them to specific destinations such as safety and stability, higher wages and better job opportunities. In the Algerian context, economic instability, limited professional opportunities, and political pressures function as push factors, while Spain's educational system, the quality of services, and established migrant communities serve as pull factors (Lee 1966, 49–50). Although this model offers a useful starting point, it does not fully capture the complexity of familybased and gendered migration.

Transnationalism theory provides a more nuanced comprehension by emphasizing the ways migrants keep simultaneous relationships with both origin and destination countries. Migrants engage in transnational practices such as remittances, keeping constant communication with relatives, and the

preservation of cultural and religious traditions abroad. For Algerian women in Spain, these practices are central to maintaining a sense of identity and belonging while adapting to new social environments (Vertovec 2009, 16). However, transnational networks can also reinforce traditional gender roles, as women are often expected to preserve cultural continuity within the household (Massey 1990, 38). While these networks provide emotional support, information flows, and a sense of belonging across borders, they frequently reinforce the same patriarchal norms that shape women's roles in the country of origin. In many Algerian migrant families, women are positioned as the main source of language safeguard, religion, and cultural practices, which burden them with more responsibility than is reasonable to sustain family continuity. This heavy responsibility often limits their opportunities for social integration and professional improving in Spain, as their time and energy are directed toward sustaining cultural identity of the country of origin for the family (particularly for the children).

Moreover, the close connection to transnational networks' expectations can lead to subtle pressures discouraging women from pursuing either professional opportunities, economic autonomy or redefining their roles in the new life condition. Advice and expectations transmitted through other family members abroad may reinforce consciousness about appropriate behaviour, motherhood, and household duties, even when the host society offers new options. As a result, women find themselves into the challenge to keep the balance between new opportunities in Spain and keeping the cultural obligations maintained by their communities of the origin. This controversial opposition between here and there illustrates that migration does not change gender relations to the better; instead, it can enhance traditional norms within the migrant family setting.

Another useful framework is the concept of "social reproduction" which highlights the unpaid work, childcare, cultural transmission, that women carry out. Migrant women shoulder the responsibility of ensuring the cohesion within the family and facilitating children's integration, even when this comes at the expense of their own professional aspirations (Parreñas 2001, 42). This perspective brings into focus the gendered nature of migration and the unequal distribution of tasks within migrants' families.

Family migration experiences are significantly shaped by gender. Research consistently shows that women bear the social and emotional costs of migration in a disproportionate way, mainly in cases of secondary migration where they follow male relatives (Sadiqi 2017, 52–53). While quitting their career in their country of origin, Those women often have a limited access to the job market in their host country. They also suffer from social isolation because of

linguistic and cultural barriers. The migration becomes for women as a family obligation instead of a personal choice, which leads to reinforcing existing gender norms.

Despite these limits, migrant women demonstrate significant mandate. Their crucial role to household management, children's education, and strongly acting as cultural mediators are essential to the family's adaptation and future success. As Ennaji and Sadiqi (2008, 124) argue, women are central in negotiating cultural boundaries, balancing the preservation of Algerian traditions with the demands of integration and the entitlements associated with life in Spanish society. Therefore, their mandate is relation-based and context-dependent, influenced by social limitations and the personal strategies they use to tackle them.

Women also constitute the main mediator of cultural continuity, responsible for transmitting language, religious practices, and social norms to their children. This role is not merely symbolic, rather it requires continuous emotional and cognitive work since women must create the balance between the expectations of the community, the integration pressures of the host society, and children's dual identities. At the same time, integration with Spanish society introduces new opportunities and boundaries that reconstitute the role that women can play inside the household or within the society. The open access to education, job, and social services can expand their capacity to renegotiate traditional gender roles, yet bureaucratic boundaries, linguistic barriers and discrimination may limit their ability to fully participate in public life. Therefore, selected adaptation strategies are adopted by women, embracing aspects of Spanish culture that facilitate social advancement while maintaining root characteristics of Algerian identity that provide stability and maintain a sense of belonging.

This process demonstrates that migrant women negotiated autonomy is not fixed nor absolute. Instead, it emerges out of everyday decisions, compromises, and acts of resilience that reflect the interaction between personal goals and binding realities. Through managing these convergence pressures, Algerian women in Spain actively dominate both their own lifestyle and the cultural horizons of the next generation.

Cultural and religious identity

Cultural and religious identity are considered as central dimensions of the migration experience mainly for Muslim families from North Africa. Islamic and Algerian cultural norms shape family daily life, that lead to high expect-

tations in terms of gender roles. Migrant women often supervise maintaining cultural identity, they are responsible for transmitting language, religion, and values to their children. Simultaneously, they must encourage adaptation to Spanish norms, educational expectations, and everyday practices, debate, which constitutes a real challenge (European Commission 2023, 8). Making a balance between the two often extremes is quite challenging to the Algerian woman.

This balancing act has significant implications for both mothers and children. For mothers, it can generate emotional stress as they involve conflicting expectations. For children, it can engender a sense of dual belonging or, in some cases, identity conflict and dislocation. The intergenerational dynamics of cultural adaptation are therefore central to understanding the broader impact of migration on family life. When families resettle, progenitors and children do not integrate to the society in the same way or at the same rhythm. Children that are enrolled in local schools often adapt more rapidly to the linguistic, social, and cultural norms of the host society. Their daily interactions with classmates, teachers, and institutions accelerate their sense of belonging and reconstitute their identities in ways that may differ from their parents' expectations.

Parents, by contrast, frequently adapt through more limited and structured channels, workplaces, migrant associations, where cultural boundaries remain firm. This disparity can lead to tensions inside the house, as children's newly acquired identities challenge traditional norms and parental authority.

For Algerian families in Spain, these dynamics are especially pronounced. Mothers often assume responsibility for preserving cultural and religious norms, at the same time, they must support their children's integration into Spanish society. This dual role requires constant negotiation: encouraging academic success and social participation while safeguarding values tied to language, religion, and family traditions. However, as children assimilate in the Spanish norms of autonomy, gender relations, and social interaction, parents may perceive a gradual attenuation of cultural continuity. Conversely, children may experience parental expectations as incompatible to their lived realities. This may instigate a generation-conflict and that is due to multicultural background versus the Algerian culture of preservation on the part of the parents.

These intergenerational negotiations shape not only family relations but also longterm trajectories of identity formation, belonging and advancement within the social hierarchy. Understanding such engagements and dynamics is therefore crucial for analysing how migration changes family life across generations.

Methodology and data collection

This study employs a qualitative and descriptive research design, a methodological choice suitable for investigating the lived experiences and subjective interpretations of migrant women. Qualitative approaches allow researchers capture the complexity of social realities, particularly in contexts where identity, gender, and migration intersect (Creswell and Poth 2018, 42–45). Because the aim of this research is to examine how Algerian women handle career disruption, cultural negotiation, and intergenerational dynamics, a qualitative framework provides the depth and flexibility necessary to explore these multidimensional processes (Hesse-Biber 2014, 3–7).

The study relies on two primary methods: case study analysis and literature review. Case studies give us the opportunity to explore individual trajectories while placing them within broader sociocultural and political structures (Yin 2018, 15–18). This approach is particularly suitable for migration study, where personal narratives explain how macrolevel forces, such as employment markets, integration policies, and gender norms, shape everyday life (Sadiqi 2017, 120–122). Literature review, including academic literature and policy reports, complements the case studies by providing contextual grounding and supporting triangulation of findings (Bowen 2009, 27–29). Bowen argues:

...documents can provide data on the context within which research participants operate -a case of text providing context, if one might turn a phrase. Bearing witness to past events, documents provide background information as well as historical insight. Such information and insight can help researchers understand the historical roots of specific issues and can indicate the conditions that impinge upon the phenomena currently under investigation (2009, 29–30).

The sample consists of women of Algerian origin who migrated to Spain with their husbands and who have children either brought from Algeria at a young age or born in Spain. This group was intentionally selected because their experiences reflect broader patterns of gendered migration in North Africa–Europe mobility systems (Morokvasic 2014, 370–372). These women often find themselves occupying a dual role: they are responsible for maintaining cultural continuity within the household while at the same time facilitating their children's integration into Spanish society, a dynamic widely documented in crossborder family research (Levitt and Schiller 2004, 1006–1008).

Respondents were selected through community networks, cultural associations, and informal social contacts with Algerian migrants in Spain. Snowball sampling is commonly used in migration studies due to the difficulty of accessing populations who may face linguistic, cultural, or administrative

barriers (Atkinson and Flint 2001, 2–4). While the sample is not statistically representative, the literature provides rich, detailed narratives that align with the goals of qualitative inquiry.

Data collection was conducted through semistructured interviews, a method that allows respondents to narrate their experiences while ensuring that core themes are consistently addressed (Kvale and Brinkmann 2015, 150–153). Interviews explored three central areas, namely career sacrifices and professional identity loss, cultural and religious debate in the host society, and intergenerational impacts on children's identity and adaptation.

Semistructured interviews are particularly effective for migration research because they allow participants to articulate emotional, cultural, and relational dimensions of their experiences (De Haas, Castles, and Miller 2020, 55–58). Interviews were conducted in the languages preferred by each participant, namely Arabic, French or Spanish, in order to ensure comfort and accuracy of expression. All interviews were analysed thematically following Braun and Clarke's (2006, 79–82) approach to identify recurring patterns and divergences.

The literature review supplemented the interview data by providing contextual information on migration policies, integration frameworks, and existing scholarship on North African migrants in Europe. This triangulation enhances the credibility and validity of qualitative findings (Patton 2015, 316–320).

Critical reflections on methodological limits

Several limitations must be acknowledged in interpreting the findings of this study. First, the research focuses mainly on women with higher education backgrounds. While this group offers valuable insight into issues such as professional deskilling, career sacrifice, and the negotiation of cultural identity, it represents only one segment of the Algerian migrant women in Spain. Research consistently shows that educational level significantly shapes migration experiences, access to employment, and integration pathways (Kofman 2012, 64–66). Highly educated women may possess linguistic advantages, greater familiarity with bureaucratic systems, or stronger transnational networks, all of which may lead to easier adaptation. Consequently, the findings may not fully include the realities of Algerian women with lower levels of formal education or those employed in informal employment sectors, who often face more precarious working conditions, limited institutional support, and heightened vulnerability to exploitation. Their experiences may involve

different forms of resilience, constraints, and strategies that may fall outside the scope of this study.

Secondly, reliance on selfreported narratives introduces the possibility of emotional filtering, or subjective interpretation. This is a welldocumented limitation in qualitative research, as respondents may unintentionally come up with past events in a way that may align with present identities or emotional states (Silverman 2020, 112–114). Memory is not neutral, but a dynamic process ruled by context, meaning, and time. The narratives presented in this study should be understood as interpretive accounts rather than objective historical records. They reflect how women make sense of their migration journeys, negotiate identity, and combine decision making power within particular social and cultural frameworks.

A third limitation concerns the small sample size, which reflects the depthoriented nature of qualitative research but limits the extent to which results can be generalized. Such a research based on case analysis offers a rich, contextualized understanding over statistical representation, facilitating a more refined understanding of lived experiences. However, this methodological strength also engenders a limitation: the experiences of the women included in this study cannot apply to all Algerian migrant women in Spain. As Patton (2015, 316–320) notes, qualitative samples are designed for analytical rather than statistical generalization. The insights generated here are therefore most appropriately applied to theoretical discussions of gendered migration rather than broad demographic conclusions.

Additionally, this study is focused on family reunification context-based migrant women, or the so-called secondary migration. This emphasis excludes other migration pathways, such as labour migration, illegal migration, or student mobility, that may produce distinct challenges and opportunities. Women who migrate independently, for example, may experience different challenges, autonomy, or vulnerability compared to those whose migration is directly related to marital or family reunification. The scope of the analysis is then restricted to a specific category of migration. Therefore, future research needs to incorporate wider range of migration pathways.

Another limitation relates to the geographic focus on Spain, which has its own specific migration policies, integration frameworks, and sociocultural contexts. The experiences of Algerian women in Spain may differ significantly from those in France, Italy, or United States, where historical ties, labour markets, and public attitudes toward North African migrants vary in a significant manner. As Sayad (1999, 78–79) emphasizes, the migration context profoundly shapes migrants lived experiences, influencing everything that may include employment opportunities to resolving the tension between personal

continuity and transformation or the so-called identity formation. Thus, while the results offer valuable insight into the Spanish context, they should not be assumed to apply universally to other destination countries.

Finally, the study examines experiences at a particular moment in time, since migration is a developing process. Women's identities, strategies, and challenges shift as they spend more years in Spain, as their children mature, and as political or economic conditions shift. A deeper insight, into how these dynamics function, through a longitudinal approach unfold over time, capturing the fluidity of adaptation, resilience, and belonging. Despite the above-mentioned limitations, the study offers significant contributions to the comprehension of the gendered dimensions of Algerian migration to Spain.

Consequences of career sacrifice and religious barriers

Sabra's trajectory reflects a broader pattern among migrant women from North Africa who quit their career to settle in Europe. Many, like her, previously held respected positions in Algeria in various sectors such as academia, healthcare, public administration, and education (Sadiqi 2017, 128). These roles were not merely sources of income but also demonstrations of a social status, personal success, and intellectual fulfilment. The decision to migrate therefore entails a profound rupture, one that disrupts career progression and reshapes self-perception. Possibly making it as a trip across the Mediterranean sea while in Europe for a lost equal right between the two genders in their native country:

The evolution of women's struggle for equal rights is an interactive process between women's insistence on acquiring these rights and the forces that deny them such rights on account of the myth that they violate tradition, belief and culture (Sadiki, 2017: 127).

Upon arriving to Spain, Sabra found herself compelled to rearrange her daily life around domestic responsibilities. The early years of settlement were influenced by childcare, household management, and the emotional work required to support her family's adaptation. This shift was not simply a matter of practical necessity; it also reflected gendered expectations within both the migrant community and the host society. Women in diasporic communities are often positioned as the primary agents of family cohesion, responsible for maintaining cultural continuity while facilitating integration. Sabra's withdrawal from the work force echoes a broader phenomenon in which women's professional aspirations are subordinated to the immediate needs of the household.

The emotional stress associated to this transition is significant. Sabra described feelings of frustration and loss as she watched her professional skills go unused, coupled with the anxiety of discovering a new environment without her own social networks and institutional recognition she once possessed. Her experience brings into focus how migration can produce a form of “deskilling,” where highly qualified women are relegated to unpaid domestic work, later, to lowwage sectors that do not reflect their qualifications. This reorganization of family roles is therefore both a personal sacrifice and a structural manifestation of gendered migration pathways.

Beyond economic and professional challenges, migrant women must also negotiate complex cultural and religious expectations in the host country. Sabra's daily life in Spain involved a continuous balancing act between preserving her Islamic identity and adapting to the norms of a secular European society. At home, she maintained religious practices, linguistic and cultural traditions that dominated her family's sense of belonging. Yet outside the home, she encouraged her children to succeed academically, participate in school activities, and engage confidently with their Spanish peers.

This dual responsibility requires deploying a significant cognitive and emotional effort. Sabra often acted as a mediator between two cultural worlds, i.e. educating her children on Spanish social norms while simultaneously explaining Algerian traditions in ways that remained meaningful to them. Such negotiations are not static; they evolve as children grow older and as the family becomes more embedded in Spanish society. As Sadiqi (2017, 210) notes, migrant women frequently shoulder the burden of cultural translation, ensuring that integration does not come at the cost of erasing their heritage. Moreover, Sabra faced subtle forms of cultural misunderstanding and occasional prejudice, which demanded resilience and adaptability. Navigating these barriers required her to develop strategies for asserting her identity while avoiding conflict, demonstrating the intricate emotional work involved in sustaining cultural continuity in a new environment.

Second Generation impacts

The experiences of Sabra's children illustrate the complexities of second-generation identity constitution. Her teenager children, who arrived in Spain at a young age, experienced dual inside and outside society: They were expected to uphold family traditions at home while simultaneously integrating into Spanish society. This often-produced tension, particularly around issues such as autonomy, social relationships, and educational choices. They were

keenly aware of the expectations placed upon them by their parents, yet they also felt the pull of peer culture and the desire to belong.

In contrast, Sabra's youngest child, born in Spain, demonstrated a more fluid adaptation. His early exposure to Spanish kindergarten, language, and social norms allowed him to navigate the host society with greater ease, highlighting the generational differences in integration trajectories (European Commission 2023, 8). This contrast within the same family underscores that age at migration shapes identity, belonging, and learning outcomes. Together, these dynamics reveal the complicated and intergenerational nature of migrant adaptation, where parents and children experience the migration process in profoundly different ways.

Resilience and rebuilding

Following her husband's abandonment and his request that she return to Algeria, Sabra faced a critical juncture that would profoundly shape her migratory, professional, and familial path. Rather than complying with expectations that often compel migrant women to return to their country of origin after marital rupture, she chose to remain in Spain and reconstruct her life independently while assuming full responsibility for raising her three children. This decision represents a significant act of courage within a context marked by gendered fragility, unstable legal status, and social exclusion. Her experience challenges dominant representations of diaspora of migrant women as passive subjects of migration and instead foregrounds their capacity for strategic decisionmaking and tenacity. Many other women, after leaving everything behind and beginning to integrate into Spanish society, faced a devastating reversal when their husbands changed their minds about migration. In several cases, husbands deliberately manipulated the situation by sending their wives and children to Algeria "for holidays" and then prohibiting them from returning to Spain, effectively trapping them and severing their access to the life they had started to build.

Sabra's pursuit of a PhD while engaging with single motherhood responsibilities illustrates the intersection of migration, gender, and education as structuring forces guiding her life. Sayad (1999, 99–102) conceptualizes migration as a "total social fact," the effects of displacement extend beyond spatial movement to encompass changes in identity, family structure, and social positioning. In this framework, Sabra's academic engagement can be understood as both a response to structural constraints and means of redefining social legitimacy. Higher education provided her not only with professional qualifi-

cations but also with symbolic capital that enabled her to resist dependency and social invisibility.

The recommencement and eventual consolidation of her academic career, resulting in getting a university professorship in Spain, underscores the role of education as a tool for social mobility and empowerment among migrant women. This trajectory is particularly significant given the multiple constraints she encountered, including economic instability (though her husband continued sustaining the family economically), caregiving responsibilities, and limited institutional support. Rather than perceiving resilience as an individual attribute, this case supports conceptualizations of tenacity as a relational and processoriented phenomenon, emerging from the convergence of personal determination to access high academic resources. Sabra's success thus reflects both individual courage and the transformative potential of inclusive academic structures.

Beyond individual achievement, Sabra's experience reveals important intergenerational dimensions. As the primary caregiver, her commitment to education and professional advancement profoundly influenced her children's socialization and aspirations. Growing up in a multicultural environment shaped by Algerian cultural heritage and Spanish social institutions, the children's perceptions of gender roles and social possibilities were mediated by their mother's example. Her perseverance and autonomy functioned as a counternarrative to traditional gender norms that often associate women's value with marital status. Existing research on migrant families highlights the positive correlation between parental educational attainment and children's academic and social integration, a dynamic clearly observable in this case.

At a broader analytical level, this case study contributes to ongoing debates on the representation of North African women in European migration contexts. Dominant narratives frequently enhance subordination, cultural constraint, and victimhood, thereby sidelining women's strategies of adaptation and resistance. Sabra's trajectories disprove these narratives by illustrating how migrant women can reconstruct their identity and integrate in host societies, particularly in high level knowledgeproducing institutions. While structural inequalities remain pervasive, such experiences demonstrate the heterogeneity of migrant women's trajectories and the limits of homogenizing analytical frameworks.

In conclusion, Sabra's individual pathway exemplifies how experiences of marital breakdown and migrationrelated adversity can be transformed into opportunities for agency and social re-anchoring. Her trajectory aligns with Sayad's understanding of migration as a deeply torn process, producing both dislocation and new forms of agency. Through sustained educational invest-

ment and tenacity, she not only redefined her own social position but also created positive intergenerational effects, thereby challenging reductive prejudice of migrant vulnerability and highlighting the intricate realities of Algerian women in Spain.

Sabra's journey illustrates the gendered costs of migration and the strategies of resilience adopted by women. Women face repeated sacrifices but exert significant contribution to family, cultural, and professional domains (Sadiqi 2017, 302–303). Cultural mediation, intergenerational education, and professional reintegration are central to migrant women's adaptation. Policy implications include recognition of foreign qualifications, access to professional development, and social support for singleparent migrant households (Ennaji and Sadiqi 2008, 124; European Commission 2023, 12). Comparative studies indicate similar patterns in France and Belgium, but Spain provides unique opportunities for educational advancement, highlighting the importance of tailored support programs for migrant women and their children (Sayad 1999, 99–102).

Conclusion and recommendations

Sabra's trajectory offers a compelling illustration of the complex sacrifices, forms of struggle, and pathways to achievement that characterize the experiences of many Algerian migrant women in Spain. Her decision to leave behind a prestigious professional career in Algeria, followed by the unexpected abandonment by her husband, placed her in a position of profound instability. Yet her determination to remain in Spain to secure her children's education, complete a doctoral degree, and ultimately attain a university professorship demonstrates the remarkable capacity of migrant women to navigate structural constraints while opening new pathways either for themselves or their families. Thus, her story encapsulates both the systemic boundaries that shape migrant women's lives, such as the devaluation of foreign credentials, gendered expectations, limited institutional support and the extraordinary practices that they mobilize in turn.

The analysis of Sabra's experience brings into sharp a set of policy and social priorities that are essential for bettering women migrant conditions and those of their families. First, systems for the recognition of foreign degrees and pathways for professional reintegration remain critical. Many highly qualified migrant women face regression of employment mobility upon arrival, not due to insufficient competence, but due to bureaucratic obstacles and institutional biases. Facilitating the validation of prior training and expe-

rience would not only support individual strengthening but also contribute to the host society's economic and intellectual capital.

Secondly, it is necessary to provide good social services, particularly for singleparent migrant families. Accessibility to childcare options at reasonable cost, educational support, and culturally sensitive integration programs can lower the disproportionate pressures placed on migrant mothers, giving them the opportunity to look for employment, better education, and enhance social participation. These services are highly relevant for women who, like Sabra, must rebuild their professional lives and at the same time assume full responsibility for their children's socialisation processes.

Thirdly, educational initiatives that address the dual adaptation of second-generation migrant children are vital. Children of Algerian, Arab, and Muslim frameworks often experience multiple cultural contexts, and schools play a central role in shaping their sense of belonging, identity, and academic success. Programs that recognize and value their linguistic and cultural heritage can foster a more inclusive learning environments and support positive inter-generational dynamics.

Finally, and in congruence with the argument of Sadiqi (2017) that women are key agents of change throughout the migration processes, and that it is crucial to promote the professional, social, and community frameworks that enable migrant women to exercise leadership and empowerment. Women's effort not only enhances their individual path but also contributes to broader social redefinition of both migrant communities and host societies.

To conclude, Sabra's journey demonstrates that while the sacrifices inherent to migration are often unavoidable, tenacity, determination, and suitable public sector support can enable women to re-establish their lives, pursue promising professional goals, and empower the next generation. Her story finds strong resonance among the experienced realities of many Algerian, Arab, and Muslim mothers in Spain, demonstrating the sophisticated interdependence between gender, migration, cultural negotiation, and responsibility throughout generations. As such, it serves as both a witness to individual perseverance and a call for a fairer and more socially responsive migration policies. By foregrounding women's voices and experiences, this study highlights the multifaceted interaction between structural limitations and personal agency, providing a foundation for subsequent studies that broaden the range of participants, contexts, and methodological perspectives.

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