

ARTICLE

Female refugees: the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, according to the theory of social reproduction

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Abstract

Discrimination against female refugees, the majority of the world's displaced people, encompasses multiple dimensions not often considered by institutions addressing the issue in host countries, such as sexual, cultural, and psychological violence. This article is based on non-systematic bibliographic research, statistical analysis, descriptive data, and documentary research. The aim is to explore academic literature and official data to identify the multiple dimensions and forms of violence that must be considered when developing public policies for women seeking refuge in Brazil. The results based on the theory of social reproduction allowed us to explain the phenomenon of feminization of forced migrations and indicate the variables socioeconomic vulnerabilities and psycho-emotional weaknesses, sexual violence, motherhood, and territoriality as dimensions that can support future elaborations in terms of public service policies for female refugees in Brazil.

Keywords: Human rights. Refuge. Public policies. Women's rights. Social reproduction.

Mulheres em situação de refúgio: as mais vulneráveis dentre as vulneráveis, segundo a teoria da reprodução social

Resumo

Mulheres refugiadas compõem a maioria do contingente de pessoas mundialmente deslocadas, abarcam múltiplas dimensões. Sofrem discriminações que nem sempre são consideradas pelas instituições responsáveis em países de acolhida como violências de ordem sexual, cultural e psíquica. Neste artigo, mediante levantamento bibliográfico não sistemático, análise de estatísticas, dados descritivos e levantamento documental, buscamos identificar as múltiplas dimensões e formas de violência que devem ser consideradas, segundo a literatura acadêmica e dados oficiais, para a elaboração de políticas públicas voltadas a mulheres em busca de refúgio no Brasil. A análise dos resultados com base na teoria da reprodução social permitiu explicar o fenômeno da feminização das migrações forçadas, bem como indicar as variáveis como dimensões que podem embasar elaborações futuras em termos de políticas públicas para mulheres refugiadas no Brasil: vulnerabilidades socioeconômicas e fragilidades psicoemocionais, violências sexuais, maternidade e territorialidade.

Palavras-chave: Direitos humanos. Refúgio. Políticas públicas. Direitos das mulheres. Reprodução social.

Mujeres en situación de refugio: las más vulnerables entre los vulnerables

Resumen

La discriminación contra las mujeres refugiadas, las cuales representan la mayoría de las personas desplazadas del mundo, abarca múltiples dimensiones, que generalmente no son consideradas por las instituciones responsables en los países de acogida, como la violencia sexual, cultural y psicológica. En este artículo, a partir de un relevamiento bibliográfico no sistemático, análisis estadístico, datos descriptivos y relevamiento documental, buscamos identificar las múltiples dimensiones y formas de violencia que deben ser consideradas, según la literatura académica y los datos oficiales, para el desarrollo de políticas públicas dirigidas a las mujeres que buscan refugio en Brasil. El análisis de los resultados basado en la teoría de la reproducción social permitió explicar el fenómeno de feminización de las migraciones forzadas así como señalar las variables: vulnerabilidades socioeconómicas y debilidades psicoemocionales, violencia sexual, maternidad y territorialidad como dimensiones que pueden sustentar elaboraciones futuras en términos de políticas de servicios públicos para mujeres refugiadas en Brasil.

Palabras clave: Derechos humanos. Refugio. Políticas públicas. Derechos de las mujeres. Reproducción social.

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INTRODUCTION

Refugees are dire since neither the State of the country of origin nor the one that receives them seems willing to take responsibility for them and guarantee them minimum rights to live with dignity (Butler & Spivak, 2018). This situation creates an apparent “paradox”: although refugees appear to be “stateless,” they are the target of constant control and violence, which includes their daily lives in their countries of origin, escapes, and attempts to start over in the host country. The lack of responsibility by States for them makes them highly vulnerable, a situation that worsens when the host country does not offer them the necessary conditions for their restart (Butler & Spivak, 2018).

The gender variable becomes part of this context with the female population seeking refuge, which further exacerbates the vulnerability of this part of humanity. The economic, political, and social marginalization of refugee women (and children) is not restricted, however, to those from the Global South who migrate to more prosperous countries and make up the so-called Global North. It also occurs in cases of forced migration, when people flow between countries in the Global South (Morais, 2019). Regardless of the geographic direction of such flows, one in every five women seeking refuge suffers some sexual violence, as shown by data from the document “Action against sexual and gender-based violence: an updated strategy,” produced by the High Commission of the United Nations for Refugees (Alto-comissariado das Nações Unidas para os Refugiados [ACNUR], 2017).

The scenario described constitutes the justification for the present study: It is necessary for countries in the Global South, such as Brazil, a signatory of the 1951 United Nations Convention – when it assumed the international commitment to receive people as refugees – to exercise the state responsibility of offer conditions worthy of reception, via public policies for this purpose. To this end, it is crucial to know the specific forms of violence faced by women in refugee situations so that the State may propose better adjustments and actions to this population’s needs.

Due to the reality of forced migration in a global context, throughout the years, public policy makers around the globe developed different international instruments to protect women in refugee situations. However, as Schwinn and Costa (2016) point out, they are the target of different discrimination, even in the host countries, both for reasons of misogyny and because they are refugees. In the authors’ analysis, discrimination against refugee women encompasses multiple dimensions, not always considered by the responsible institutions in host countries, such as sexual, cultural, and psychological violence. Therefore, according to the authors, the State and society should work together in host countries in order to combat gender-based violence against refugee women (Schwinn & Costa, 2016).

However, what are the multiple dimensions Schwinn and Costa (2016) refer to that, once known, could contribute to society and the State’s joint efforts towards developing public policies better suited to refugee women in Brazil?

We intend to answer this question through this article. We aim to identify qualitative variables and forms of violence through a non-systematic bibliographic survey, presentation of quantitative descriptive data, and documentary survey. We seek to consider these aspects, according to academic literature and official data, to develop public policies aimed at women seeking refuge in Brazil.

This text is structured as follows: Initially, we resort to Brazilian academic literature from the last five years on refugee women in Brazil, aiming to point out essential variables for analyzing the situation of these women in the country, such as socioeconomic vulnerabilities and psycho-emotional weaknesses, violence sexuality, motherhood, and territoriality.

Subsequently, we used statistical data and official international documents in order to present forms of violence that affect these women and transnational agreements that seek to mitigate them. Finally, we analyzed official Brazilian statistical data on refugees based on the theory of social reproduction to explain the phenomenon of feminization of forced migration. By considering the results found, we hope they can support future developments in terms of public policies aimed at refugee women in Brazil.

REFUGEE WOMEN'S SITUATIONS: ADDITIONAL BARRIERS ON THE DIFFICULT TRAJECTORY TO SEEK REFUGE IN BRAZIL

Taheri et al. (2022) explain that forced migrations comprise a long trajectory characterized by a succession of traumatic events. In addition to issues such as post-traumatic stress, extreme socioeconomic vulnerability, and emotional and psychological complications that affect people seeking refuge, women also suffer from gender oppression, as they are more subject, for example, to sexual violence (Taheri et al., 2022). However, it is worth highlighting that refugee women, like women from any other social group, do not represent a homogeneous unit. Different peculiarities make them unique and, therefore, demand specific perspectives, both for academic analyses and for their possible developments in terms of the elaboration of related public policies.

In addition to gender oppression, refugee women and men are distinguished due to different factors, highlighted here through analytical categories highlighted by Brazilian academic studies published in the last five years on the situation of refugee women in our country. The first category highlighted is sexual violence. The lack of infrastructure in receiving countries to accommodate families can result, as stated by Aching and Granato (2018), in the separation of family members in different spaces and, consequently, of girls and/or women from their families, which exposes them more to sexual violence.

Recent academic literature also points to the issue of motherhood as a reason for apprehension on the part of refugee women. Aching and Granato (2018) present the existence of additional barriers for pregnant women in refugee situations. In this case, the challenges of motherhood are compounded by socioeconomic conditions of vulnerability and prejudice since they are an ethnic-racial minority, in addition to the condition of recent migrants in the new country of refuge. Experiencing the problematic postpartum period in a still unknown country, without being able to count on a support network, makes motherhood even more challenging for this group, compromising the physical and mental health conditions and socio-cognitive development of mother and baby (Aching & Granato, 2018).

Therefore, the analysis conducted by Marques and Souza (2022) regarding the vulnerability of Venezuelan female refugees in Brazil is appropriate. In addition to considerations about gender, race, and class oppression in studies on refugee women and public policy proposals aimed at them, the authors emphasize that markers of nationality and the consequent territoriality contribute to the understanding of the structures that shape forms of various exploitation-domination faced by these women.

Territoriality also involves ethnic-racial considerations. M. Oliveira (2020) highlighted this issue by comparing statistical data on refugee people, men and women residing in Rio de Janeiro (RJ) and São Paulo (SP), from two different countries: Syria and Congo. In analyzing his research data, M. Oliveira (2020) concludes that, in the case of the Congolese, racial discrimination occurred regardless of declared gender identity. Among Syrian people, only women reported racial discrimination. Although the data presented by M. Oliveira (2020) indicate that the level of education of the refugees who participated in the research is, in general, above the Brazilian national average, the majority are unemployed and report difficulties in validating higher education diplomas in Brazil. According to the author, this may partly explain the 25.2% unemployment rate among Syrian and Congolese refugees in the country.

Another analysis variable discussed in recent academic literature is ageism, which, in addition to affecting older adults, ends up affecting, above all, older women. Souza (2021) reminds us that although older adults make up a minority in migratory flows to Brazil, it is necessary to consider that refugee women who enter the country young will also grow old. The author points out that, recently, in Brazil, a pension (de)reform was approved, making the retirement process more complex and time-consuming. Both refugee and Brazilian women constitute the majority within the group of unpaid domestic workers engaged in informal activities: this makes them more likely to not guarantee minimum conditions to (sur)live in old age.

In addition to pointing out new variables still uncommon in studies on refugee women in the country, another trend observed in Brazilian academic studies over the last five years is the analysis of narratives. In common, the works from this perspective point to singularities in trajectories and can contribute to the visibility of specific characteristics of women's demands depending on the country of origin, as well as highlighting differences in regional conditions in Brazil for the reception of refugee women. From this perspective, Balestro and Pereira (2019) analyzed the narrative of a refugee from The Gambia who left her country due to human rights violations: She dreamed of studying, but at the age of thirteen, she was forced to get married and had a daughter, who managed to bring to Brazil after two years living in the country.

The authors' work highlights the phenomenon known as the "feminization of forced migration". In addition to highlighting the quantitative variable, which has led to greater demands from the international community for governments and entities that work to welcome refugees to include the gender variable in their analyses, the authors reveal a tendency established since the 1970s. During this period, more women began to leave their countries for greater autonomy, no longer migrating to accompany their families or spouses (Balestro & Pereira, 2019).

In a study of the narratives of ten Haitian women refugees in the city of Porto Alegre (RS), Romano and Pizzinato (2021) have realized that a vision of forced migration – due to the socioeconomic conditions of the poorest country in the Americas – prevails in national identity. In this study, the interviewees report that, unlike the preponderant pattern in other nationalities of refugees seeking Brazil, among people from Haiti, most are women who tend to travel alone, without partners or families. The research by Romano and Pizzinato (2021) reveals that, even when Haitian women seek refuge accompanied by family members and husbands, they are the protagonists of decisions for the family throughout the complex process of the forced migration trajectory. Also interesting is the authors' observation that all Haitian women who migrated alone to Brazil sent money remittances to their remaining family members in their home country. This observation indicates that Haitian refugees who came to the country unaccompanied remain responsible for their family of origin (Romano & Pizzinato, 2021).

Given the above, we can consider that, when addressing migration, we are dealing with a process of human displacement that can be voluntary or forced within the border limits of a country or outside them. During this displacement, people settle in a specific context in another region or country, temporarily or permanently. When we refer to forced migration, we are referring to individuals who are fleeing war, political, religious, social persecution, or human rights violations. The forced displacement conditions, along with legislation and international conventions, determine whether a person falls into the refugee category.

METHODOLOGY

The research has no initial hypothesis, is characterized as exploratory, and delimits a field to be researched (Faria, 2012). We conducted the research through a bibliographical survey, documentary analysis, and studies on descriptive statistics and numbers released by the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) on asylum requests in Brazil.

An initial difficulty in the analysis concerns the limited availability of Brazilian statistical information on the refugee population through open access via the CONARE database. This difficulty is because the Brazilian State's data gives little emphasis to gender oppression. There is, at most, a separation of men and women into tables. However, men and women are considered homogeneous categories within themselves. Therefore, based on academic literature from the last five years on women in refugee situations, which make up our study focus, we seek to show the multiplicity of variables that could expand knowledge about women seeking refuge in Brazil. This approach would allow us to support social policies that are more targeted to the specific demands of this population, as we will discuss throughout our analyses.

We used the "traditional narrative review" as a data collection method for the bibliographic survey. With the adoption of this method, the need for more systematic procedures to survey the scientific literature observed and used in the text became visible. In this sense, we opted for a time frame of the last five years in national scientific journals intending to present an updated overview of Brazil's "state-of-the-art" studies. We emphasize that the search for references relevant to the object of study does not exhaust the sources of information, and it subordinates to the subjectivity of the text's authorship. This approach, however, can serve as a theoretical foundation for future academic work due to its articulation of concepts from different sources (Sant'anna & Paulin, 2014).

Additionally, we carried out documentary research in search of international agreements to which Brazil is a signatory and laws relating to granting refuge in Brazil. We also observed on official Brazilian government websites the existence of policies aimed at women in refugee situations or who have requested it. The timeline of the research was from March 2022 to March 2023.

ANALYSIS OF RESULTS: LEGISLATIVE MILESTONES FOR THE FEMINIZATION OF FORCED MIGRATION IN THE WORLD AND IN BRAZIL AND THE INTERNATIONALIZATION OF SOCIAL REPRODUCTION RELATIONSHIPS

The 1951 United Nations Convention, relating to the Status of Refugees, establishes concrete rights for any person forced to flee their country of origin due to persecution related to race, religion, nationality, social group, political opinions, and severe violation of human rights, and who is unable to return to her country, running the risk of losing her life in doing so (ACNUR, 1951).

The Refugee Status Protocol came into force in 1967. It operationalized the definitions present in the 1951 Convention in all signatory countries, including Brazil, enabling the international application of the legal status of refugees without being limited by time or geography (ACNUR, 2011b). Based on this protocol and different international conventions, legislation has emerged to protect the human rights of individuals seeking refuge in various countries that are signatories to international conventions, agreements, and protocols, including Brazil. In recent years, the Brazilian Refugee Statute of 1997 (Lei nº 9.474, 1997) and the Migration Law (Lei nº 13.445, 2017) stood out, which seek to consolidate part of the agreements the country is a member in our legislation signatory.

In the context of forced migration, women refugees face a greater risk compared to refugees in general. UNHCR points out, through research carried out in 2016, that women and children make up more than half of individuals in forced displacement worldwide and are the most exposed to different types of violence.

Based on these findings, the Women's Refugee Commission (WRC) surveyed women who moved in search of refuge in some European countries in 2015 in partnership with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA). The study concluded that these women are more vulnerable to a certain type of human rights violation motivated by gender issues, which makes it essential to adopt additional protection measures so that women can seek refuge safely. Women in refugee situations, according to research data, are more exposed to sexual and gender-based violence from the moment they leave their country of origin. It is worth noting that rape continues to be used as a weapon of war in different armed conflicts, representing a palpable danger and worsening the situation of exposure to violations of these women's human rights (ACNUR, 2017; Schwinn & Costa, 2017).

Exposure to different forms of gender-based violence, therefore, may be part of the human rights violations of women in situations of forced displacement. There is also no guarantee that such attacks will be mitigated throughout the refugee journey or even upon arrival in the host country (ACNUR, 2016). As the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (ACNUR, 2017) points out, women in refugee situations also face intersecting gender issues, various discriminations, such as those related to ethnic origin, ableism, religious intolerance, as well as discrimination arising from social class, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Considering these issues, the UN Security Council approved and promulgated, in 2000, Resolution 1,325 (Fritz, 2010), which seeks to observe the specificities of the situation of women seeking refuge, given the context of violence they faced during this process. The resolution mentioned above recommends that United Nations Member States strengthen the protection of girls and women from conflict areas and points out recommended measures. However, despite the creation of agreements and conventions, data from the report on Women, Peace, and Security was released in 2004 (ONU Mulheres, 2013), the Secretary General of the United Nations pointed out that such violations persisted in the face of increasing conflict zones and forced displacement. In response to this scenario, the UN Security Council enacted four more resolutions to protect women in regions affected by sexual crimes, namely resolutions 1,820 (2008), 1,888 (2009), 1,960 (2010), and 2,106 (2013) (Fritz, 2010).

On the one hand, the drafting of these resolutions may indicate recognition of this violence against women, leading representatives of UN member countries to demand legal responses. On the other hand, it reinforces the need for rigorous investigation of such violations to bring justice to those who promote such crimes. It also determines the need for women's participation in designing responses to protect refugees (ONU Mulheres, 2013), given that women and children make up more than half of the world population in refugee situations (ACNUR, 2016).

As we argue in this paper, the prevalence of women and children among refugees can be better understood when we address the phenomenon of globalization itself, taken here in its critical meaning proposed by Chesnais (1996): "globalization of capital." In this approach, the large number of people in international refugee situations reveals that, despite the promises of globalization (Santos, 1997), capital and goods (and not people) obtained free movement between countries. The primary purpose of the globalization of capital is the reordering, on a global scale, of the organization of work, intending to provide the global bourgeoisie with cheap labor to meet their extremely accumulating demand, even in the face of social achievements in certain countries. It occurs by relocating manufacturing plants and capital to locations that offer greater profitability, whether through tax incentives, the reduction of labor rights, and/or the dismantling of environmental legislation (Chesnais, 1996).

In this way, especially "rich" countries benefit from the flow of women and children as refugees. While children can replace an increasingly aging workforce resulting from the demographic transition on the European continent, poor refugee women carry out care work in a poorly paid or unpaid manner via domestic work, compensating for the States' lack of responsibility for the supply of social policies aimed at the survival and maintenance of the working classes in the neoliberal economic system (Falquet, 2008).

After all, if social policies are no longer offered by the neoliberal State, education and health become the responsibility of women in their homes, whether via homeschooling (studying at home, with mothers as teachers or supervisors) or through care aimed at people from families in need of medical treatments, such as the elderly and/or sick who fail to create "public expenditure" on essential health. All of this was possible thanks to women's unpaid reproductive (or domestic) work in the domestic environment (Federici, 2019).

Federici (2019) clarifies that the reproductive work carried out by women in the homes of capitalist societies is always work provided to the State, as they assume the responsibility of maintaining and caring for the working classes, which should, in principle, be a state function. Thus, the author considers reproductive (or domestic) work to be the "zero point" of the social revolution that can break with capitalism, exposing racism and misogyny as fundamental elements supporting the exploitation of the working classes in the current phase of financialized capitalism, which has the neoliberal doctrine as its ideological support (Federici, 2019).

The feminization of forced migration plays a functional role in the context of the triumph of globalization in the current phase of capitalist accumulation, both in rich countries in the Global North and in impoverished countries in the Global South. For the former, it guarantees a supply of cheap labor that is profoundly vulnerable to non-white and impoverished women coming from the Global South, who, subjecting themselves to precarious working conditions, will perform domestic tasks (reproductive work) that contribute to hiding the fact that, even the wealthiest nations, are increasingly distanced from social policies.

CONFRONTING STATISTICAL DATA AND EXPLAINING THE FEMINIZATION OF REFUGE IN BRAZIL

Between 2011 and 2020, the total number of asylum requests from women in Brazil was around 38%. Concerning the number of processes granted to request recognition of refugee status by sex, according to age groups in Brazil, we observed that, in 2020, around 36.4% of processes granted to request recognition of refugee status were of women, 62.3% of men and 1.4% is not specified, according to Table 1.

Table 1
Number of processes granted to request recognition of refugee status, by sex and according to age groups – Brazil, 2020

Age groups	Processes for requesting recognition of refugee status			
	Total	Sex		
		Men	Women	Não especificado
Total	24.880	15.492	9.051	337
0 to 4 years	29	5	24	0
5 to 14 years	99	23	73	3
15 to 24 years	5.375	3.159	2.127	89
25 to 39 years	12.400	8.022	4.223	155
40 to 59 years	6.133	3.864	2.197	72
60 or more	829	406	405	18
Not specified	15	13	2	0

Source: Silva et al. (2021, p. 24).

According to Silva et al. (2021, p. 25):

We also observed that, in almost all age groups, the number of men whose processes granted exceeded the number of women, except among people between 0 and 4 years of age and between 5 and 14 years of age, groups in which verified a more significant presence of women [...] the 25 to 39 years old segment had the highest proportions, for both sexes, considering the age groups analyzed, concentrating 51.8% of the total of men and 46.7% of the total number of women whose requests for recognition of refugee status granted by CONARE in 2020.

Since processes are generally not assessed in the same year as the asylum request, it is worth questioning whether or not the duration of analyses described by the Ministry of Justice (MJ) on its website, which would be approximately three years, has been met. Furthermore, the data reveals that, in total, most refugees entering the country are adults and older women, demonstrating the need for reflection on issues such as maternity and ageism, for example, according to Souza (2021).

Furthermore, the numbers that point to those who had refugee status in Brazil do not represent the totality of requests sent to the Brazilian government. This situation suggests that, despite the existence of legislative advances, it is worth pointing out that there are more challenges to overcome when it comes to refugee women:

Migrating is a human right. Ensuring refuge guaranteed to all people, without distinction, is the role of everyone, both the State and Society, which is mainly relevant for welcoming migrants. The challenges that arise now involve legal and framework issues: it is vital to observe the effectiveness of applying the Migration Law in the country, but in addition, to ensure accountancy of gender issues. In a macro way, we must start from the legislation, which, however, never mentions gender issues, so that States and municipalities can contemplate the specificities of migration and gender in their policies in a micro way (Dornelas & Ribeiro, 2018, pp. 261-262).

In administrative terms, the processing time and judgment of a refugee request process in Brazil is at least three years. Furthermore, according to the Ministry of Justice, this period may be longer or shorter, depending on different factors, such as the applicant’s form of entry and nationality. Put another way, it is a long and time-consuming process. The Ministry of Justice itself (2021, s.p.), on its website, clarifies:

The analysis varies according to the nationality of the applicants, the updated registration of these applicants (making it possible to contact them when necessary), the specific history of each applicant, the complexity of the case, and the information available from the country of origin. On average, requests are analyzed within three years, a period that can vary more or less, depending on the variables listed.

We present his information about the bottleneck generated between request and judgment time in Table 2.

Table 2
Asylum requests per year X asylum requests assessed by CONARE between 2011 and 2019

Year	Number of asylum requests per year	Number of asylum requests assessed by CONARE per year
2011	1.465	86
2012	1.345	165
2013	6.810	536
2014	11.069	2.015
2015	15.906	1.449
2016	5.843	1.743
2017	32.009	1.216
2018	79.831	12.543
2019	82.552	32.649
2020	28.899	63.790
Total	265.729	116.192

Source: Adapted from Fernandes (2021, p. 522) and Silva et al. (2021).

Serpa and Felix (2018, p. 57) point out that: “Brazil adopts a rapid analysis procedure for cases of women at risk [...]” UNHCR confirms his procedure (ACNUR, 2011c, s.p., emphasis added):

In Brazil, 25% of the approximately 4,500 refugees residing in the country are women and girls. Within the framework of its Solidarity Resettlement Program, Brazil adopted a rapid analysis procedure for cases of women at risk – which has already allowed the resettlement of around 20 women and their families. **The refugee recognition process in the country also pays special attention to women victims of gender-based violence, who are considered a vulnerable group.** Furthermore, they benefit from national legislation that criminalizes gender-based sexual violence, and they all have access to public sexual reproductive health and HIV/AIDS services.

Suppose we observe the number of requests for recognition of refugee status by sex concerning the number of requests for recognition of refugee status granted by gender. In that case, one can cast doubt on the assertion that there would be “[...] special attention to women victims of gender-based violence, considered a vulnerable group” (ACNUR, 2011a). Statistical data suggest the existence of bottlenecks in terms of speed in judging requests for recognition of women as refugees.

With the increasingly high cost of living, both in the Global South and in the countries of the Global North, there is still what Hirata (2002) interprets as a sexual division of labor in the dynamics of globalization. This scenario implies that women in rich countries, in order to dedicate themselves to paid work “outside the home,” increasingly delegate reproductive or domestic work to impoverished women from the Global South. These, the more vulnerable they are, the more subject they become to precarious working conditions. Therefore, explains Hirata (2002), the remuneration attributed to them, if any, becomes so

insignificant for women and men workers in the Global North countries that employ them that the risk of such people feeling the impact of the reduction of social reproduction services resulting from state social policies. This context contributes to the construction of the image, in the Global South, of the “capitalist dream” achievable in the Global North.

Such a fragmented view of capitalism as a global reality, which manifests itself in an idiosyncratic way according to the role played by each country in the globalized capitalist world, helps to prevent forms of solidarity between the working classes of the North concerning the Global South and in the countries of each region. In itself. This process contributes to hiding the relationship of mutual capitalist dependence between central and peripheral countries in this economic system. Dependence develops through a process in which some so-called “developing” countries provide raw materials, food, labor, and other cheap goods to “rich” countries. At the same time, the latter specialize in industry and finance thanks to the supply of goods – primary schools from the most impoverished countries (Onuma & A. L. Oliveira, 2023).

The absence or precarious provision of public services capable of guaranteeing forms of care and maintenance of the lives of the working classes, together with the ideological diffusion of neoliberalism, has forced more and more women, impoverished and non-white women from countries in the Global South to poorly paid or unpaid reproductive work so that they can guarantee their survival and maintenance, as well as that of their families (Falquet, 2008; Hirata, 2002). In addition to providing reproductive services to replace social policies that no longer exist, they also fulfill the function of an “industrial reserve army,” offering a large contingent of cheap labor and contributing to reducing wage prices in the countries’ labor markets of origin and reception, since in none of them they find the support of social status, thanks to racism and misogyny that place them at the base of hierarchies in social classes (Arruzza, 2018; Falquet, 2008; Hirata, 2002).

Therefore, a question arises as an invitation to reflect on the entire Brazilian population that is concerned about the reception of refugee women in Brazil: the bottleneck in processing the legalization of refuge in the country would be the result of an operational deficit in the country’s Public Administration apparatus or reflection of a capitalist project to generate, at each moment of accumulation, new layers of vulnerable people, in order to maintain a permanent and continuously renewed supply of people who need to subject themselves to precarious working conditions? This question motivates us to present some considerations about this study below.

CONCLUSIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Under the social reproduction theory, we can understand the increase in the number of women in the flow of forced migration in Brazil and worldwide. In this regard, we note that, with the escalation of armed conflicts and the deterioration of human rights in many territories, in addition to economic and social crises, the number of refugees tends to rise. In such a scenario, women and girls suffer more heavily from a series of violence that encompasses social, cultural, economic, and sexual perspectives (ONU Mulheres, 2013). Abuses worsen when women in refugee situations are unable to access fundamental rights or integrate into the host society in order to establish relationships based on legal guarantees.

Data collection at CONARE, an organization linked to the Brazilian Ministry of Justice, analyzed in light of the social reproduction theory, allows us to point out limitations in the official data presented regarding gender analytical focus. In addition to the gender variable, we indicate, based on Brazilian academic literature from the last five years, the existence of multiple barriers and their impacts on women in refugee situations. The results show how these barriers are neglected in Brazilian statistical data since they treat women as a homogeneous group and highlight only issues such as country of origin. There is no attention to differences, such as whether or not to exercise motherhood, nor to issues that give visibility to other possible oppressions suffered by these women, such as ableism.

Therefore, by way of the conclusion of this work, it is essential to highlight that the violence suffered by women in refugee situations permeates their entire trajectory, from living in the country of origin to leaving, extending along the route towards their destination and persisting when one reaches the end of the journey. Violence manifests itself in different forms, including physical violence and sexual violence, despite different international treaties and agreements on the subject. Often, the institutions responsible for their protection cannot promote their rights in the context of widespread human rights violations, even though there are efforts to adopt protective actions. This scenario proves that such initiatives have insufficiently consolidated the points addressed in international agreements.

Using the inductive logic of propositions in this work, we highlight the need for legal frameworks and national and international policies to offer protection to the female contingent in forced migration flows in Brazil and around the world. However, in Brazil, there needs to be more legislation aimed at women seeking refuge and policies for integrating these women into society. The economic, social, political, and cultural fragility of refugee women places them as an especially vulnerable group, even within the already vulnerable working class. Considering that national women, poor and non-white women, already have a lower social status in the labor market, refugee women find themselves in an even more precarious situation. Overcoming this cycle of violence against refugee women, therefore, implies, as suggested by authors of the theory of social reproduction, such as Arruzza (2018), Falquet (2008), Federici (2019, 2021), and Hirata (2002), reviewing our form of domination and exploitation in capitalism (not only national but international), in order to create more effective protection mechanisms via public policies aimed at these women.

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The dataset supporting the results of this study is publicly available at the following link: <https://www.gov.br/mj/pt-br/assuntos/seus-direitos/refugio/refugio-em-numeros-e-publicacoes>

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