
Implications of the gender approach in migratory studies

Implicaciones del enfoque de género en los estudios migratorios

Implicações da abordagem de gênero nos estudos migratórios

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Abstract

The gender approach to study population migrations is a powerful way to highlight the participation and protagonism of women in these movements. This essay is based on the following question: What are the implications of the gender approach in migratory studies? To this end, the objective is to discuss the main characteristic aspects of the gender approach in studies on population migrations with emphasis on female migrations. The theoretical framework consists of Domenech and Dias (2020), Gil (2004), Julià (1998), Piscitelli (2013), Pizarro (2003), Guizard, Torralba and Stefoni (2018) and Sassen (2003). Therefore, the reflections in this writing started from the transdisciplinary effort to discuss the theme based on an articulation between the literature used on gender and mobility of the female population.

Key words: gender approach. migration studies. female migrations.

Resumen

El enfoque de género para estudiar las migraciones de población es una forma poderosa de resaltar la participación y el protagonismo de las mujeres en estos movimientos. Este ensayo se basa en la siguiente pregunta: ¿Cuáles son las implicaciones del enfoque de género en los estudios migratorios? Para ello, el objetivo es discutir los principales aspectos característicos del enfoque de género en estudios sobre migraciones poblacionales con énfasis en las

migraciones femeninas. El marco teórico está formado por Domenech y Dias (2020), Gil (2004), Julià (1998), Piscitelli (2013), Pizarro (2003), Guizard, Torralba y Stefoni (2018) y Sassen (2003). Por lo tanto, las reflexiones en este escrito partieron del esfuerzo transdisciplinario para discutir el tema a partir de una articulación entre la literatura utilizada sobre género y movilidad de la población femenina.

Palabras clave: Enfoque de género; Estudios de migración; Migraciones femeninas.

Resumo

A abordagem de gênero para estudar as migrações populacionais se apresenta como uma potente forma de evidenciar a participação e o protagonismo das mulheres nesses movimentos. Este ensaio parte da seguinte questão: Quais as implicações da abordagem de gênero nos estudos migratórios? Para tanto, objetiva-se discutir os principais aspectos característicos da abordagem de gênero nos estudos sobre migrações populacionais com ênfase nas migrações femininas. O referencial teórico constitui-se por Domenech e Dias (2020), Gil (2004), Julià (1998), Piscitelli (2013), Pizarro (2003), Guizard, Torralba e Stefoni (2018) e Sassen (2003). Portanto, as reflexões sucedidas nesse escrito partiram do esforço transdisciplinar de discorrer sobre o tema com base numa articulação entre a literatura utilizada sobre gênero e mobilidade da população feminina.

Palavras-chave: Abordagem de gênero; Estudos migratórios; Migrações femininas.

Introduction

Migrations can be considered as human and social phenomena that draw attention to the aspects that are involved and also by the conditions to which they originate. These are population displacements that occur for certain reasons, in order to overcome, even partially and momentarily, a certain situation of conflict and/or difficulty in relation to socializing in a given place, so it moves to another in the search for improvements.

Routinely, one can perceive the discussion about the phenomenon of migrations closely linked to aspects about work and income, that is, people who migrate between cities or regions in search of opportunities to generate income for the support of the family or oneself, considering that the place of origin no longer offers minimum conditions of permanence. Another context that the discussion on

migration is associated with is that of humanitarian crisis or wars in so-called underdeveloped or developing countries.

In the case of South America, some cases tend to become more emblematic than others, led by so-called national governments and that have implemented radical migration policies that have accentuated immigration and border control (DOMENECH and DIAS, 2020). Border control is one of the main instruments that has been widely used by countries as migration policy, treating population displacement as mere movements of labor appropriation and internal crisis generators.

However, migrations are old and specific processes, go beyond the mislocation itself, involve a network of people both in the place of origin and destination, even if only a single person is in transit. In this sense, the complexity of migratory movements requires from scholars a treatment that goes beyond the origin-destination relationship, that is, that addresses aspects that can demonstrate the depth of interrelations that permeate each specific event.

The gender approach to study population migrations is a powerful way to highlight the participation and protagonism, especially, of women in these movements and which has always been, in a way, predominant, despite being invisible by other approaches that tend to emphasize other issues, such as economic, demographic, political and social. Another aspect to be highlighted is the emptiness existing in the migratory theories of the gender approach, which mention female participation only in population calculations, as is the case of most conventional migratory theories.

Thus, the written present is part of the following question: What are the implications of the gender approach in migratory studies? To this end, it aims to discuss the main characteristic aspects of the gender approach in studies on population migrations with emphasis on pheninimas migrations.

The article is structured as follows: this introduction that presented and justified the writing on the gender approach in migratory studies. The second section

reflected the aspects that characterize migratory studies under a gender approach. The third section addressed interfaces of the genero focus on the economic debate related to cross-border migrations. In the fourth section, discussions were concluded with the explanation of constrates about migratory studies under a gender approach.

Gender approach in the study of migrations

The gender approach in migratory studies can be considered as a relatively recent discussion, but of necessary adoption, especially from the moment when conventional theoretical perspectives on migration no longer account for specific issues of the migratory process and do not meet the needs of researchers and researchers investigating female migrations, whereas they stand out among population displacements.

In the context of migration policies, according to Julià (1998), even considering migration in a different way, some migratory policies have used a patriarchal perspective to deal with migrations, highlighting male migration as of a work character and female son of a dependent character, that is, the man in a productive function as a subject who migrates to work and, the woman, in a secondary way in a reproductive function, as her dependent and responsible for the care of the house and children.

However, according to Gil (2004), in “esencia, el desempleo para las mujeres – como para los hombres – es una de las causas estructurales explicativas de su emigración. [...]” (GIL, 2020, p. 254). Income generation is one of the main causes of spontaneous migration, the lack of work has repercussions on precarious housing and poor nutrition not only in the country of origin, but also in the country of destination. In the case of female migrations, gender inequality is based on the type and quality of the work that is offered, favoring the sexual industry's grooming.

The labor motive in migrations inspired numerous migratory theories to consider only male migrations, from the traditional gap between the so-called

functions of men and women's functions, imposing so-called male forms of work for women (JULIÀ, 1998). On the other hand, migrant women face the challenge of computing unemployed labour in places of origin, even if it is not a surplus workforce for various types of employment, such as domestic work that is more common among migrant populations (GIL, 2004).

A gender approach should seek the causes that differentiate sex patterns are established, making a critical analysis of processes, models and variables, in order to build a gender approach that thinks about how migrations happen and what factors constitute and accentuate the differential picture of migrations, as well as the processes developed in the destination places (JULIÀ, 1998).

According to Gil (2004), the predominant presence of women and the peculiar characteristics conformed by them in migratory movements has moved towards the constitution of a process of generization del proceso migratorio as a central element of definition of migrations based on gender relations. In this sense, “[...] la importancia que tengan las relaciones de género en la caracterización de los flujos migratorios dependerá de lo relevante que sea el sistema de género en la definición de una sociedad dada. [...]” (GIL, 2004, p. 262), that is, it will depend on the type of existing society so that gender relations or not have greater importance in the analysis of migratory processes.

According to Julià (1998, p. 10), "to be able to understand las migraciones femeninas en toda su complejidad es necesario tener una visión de conjunto de la situación de las mujeres implicadas.". The author reaffirms the importance of the gender approach in the study of a situation that is quite complex and that to obtain an understanding of the process as a whole, it is necessary that the parties be addressed according to their peculiarities. Thus, the proposal is that the analysis assimilates first the macro aspects, such as sociocultural, economic and legal; and, therefore, micro aspects, such as personal characteristics, life cycle stage and family structure; impact on the journey of migrant women (JULIÀ, 1998).

Another important aspect that makes all the difference in a gender approach is to consider migrations also as a process permeated by and by power relations, since the act of migrating happens according to a decision-making process that involves numerous other relationships, so in the "[...] estudio de la decisión de migrar el centro de interés pasa a ser el individuo." (JULIÀ, 1998, p. 13-14). This perspective relates to the conditions in which migrant women live both in the family context and in the Community context, that is, their place of origin. One should consider the position that migrant women occupy in the family structure, how much the family depends on their income generation, how their absence in the family can have repercussions only in the sending of remittances and not in the occurrence of other social problems.

In this sense, Gil (2004) approaches that international female emigration can reverberate in the production of unintended changes that maintain gender inequalities in social and economic relations, that is, such changes have happened in the sense of reproducing and not eliminating gender inequalities, because the "ideological structures that sustain a gender system if muestran tan estables that, aun cambiando dentro de los grupos domésticos [...], no se ha producido em términos globales una mayor igualdad en las relaciones de género." (GIL, 2004, p. 264).

Still with regard to power relations in the decision-making process, Jùlia points out that "[...] el poder de influir en la decisión de migrar de una mujer adulta dependerá del momento del ciclo de vida en que se encuentre y de la existencia o no de otras mujeres y el poder relativo que tendan éstas dentro de la familia. [...]" (JULIÀ, 1998, p. 15-16). Female relationships, if existing, tend to have a very significant potential for influence in female migrations themselves, since there are elements of identity and belonging permeating the relationships and, consequently, the decision to migrate.

Therefore, the decision to migrate is a complex process that involves many interfaces, not only economic and social issues, but mainly issues related to the

personal and family life of women, so it becomes important to keep in mind that "[...] las relaciones de poder establecidas no son unidireccionales ni simples e que están fuertemente influidas por las relaciones de género." (JULIÀ, 1998, p. 16). Thus, it is evident that migratory theories that do not have a view on gender relations in migratory processes will not realize such aspects in the paths of investigations and even the contestation of the events that characterize the international female displacements.

Gender in the economic debate on cross-border migrations

In the context of the global economy circuits and, in particular, cross-border alternative circuits, migrant women play a crucial role (SASSEN, 2003). From this perspective, the gender approach becomes essential, because it will be able to account for the specificities inherent to female migrations involving their participation in the global economy. According to Sassen (2003), it is possible to identify three first phases in gender studies in the recent history of economic internationalization.

The first phase consists of the implementation of market agriculture and the salaried work of foreign companies, processes in which the participation of women took place inaneely as a way of subsidising the wage labor of men with domestic production and subsistence agriculture, that is, in addition to the non-valorization and recognition of women's work, the same was submitted to that of man as a subsidiary of his wage labor, contributing to the maintenance of low wages and the modernization of the sector based on the surplus capital produced (SASSEN, 2003).

The second phase is characterized by questions about the internationalization of manufacturing production and feminization of the proletariat, which, in a way, are interrelated. Female participation occurred in the formation of a disproportionate manufacturing workforce, historically, from outside the metropolises, not necessarily industrial; and in industrial cases with the predominance of women in textile

industries and electronic assembly, composing an immigrant female proletariat that even facilitated the non-formation of labor unions, despite the strong trend in countries (SASSEN, 2003).

In the third phase on the relationship between women and the global economy, we also highlight the formation of a collective female consciousness which focuses on "las transformaciones en las subjetividades de las mujeres y en las nociones de las mujeres en cuanto a sus grupos de pertenencia. [...]" (SASSEN, 2003, p. 58). It is a movement of engagement and recognition of the role that women play in migratory processes, reflections on changes in gender patterns in international migration, the importance of a female collective thinking that can articulate support networks with each other, forming a form of cross-border solidarity based on experiences of belonging and the creation of a representative female identity that also includes elements of feminist thought (SASSEN, 2003).

According to Piscitelli (2013), national borders correspond to the areas in which research contributions on Brazilian female migrations have been highlighted by the first formulations of transnational feminisms. In this sense, "[...] one of the main effects of dialogues with the formulations of transnational feminisms is the effort to articulate an intersectional perspective to the notion of transnationality." (PISCITELLI, 2013, p. 7), that is, an articulation between important social aspects, such as gender, race/ethnicity, sexuality, class, nationality, among others; different locations on a transnational scale.

According to Guizard, Torralba and Stefoni (2018), the change in analytical perspective and the incorporation of the gender approach

[...] se debe a la actuación de mujeres científicas sociales que, compartiendo la condición femenina y trayectorias familiares migratorias (o incluso la experiencia propia como migrantes) con aquellas mujeres a las que estudian, promoverán un giro epistémico y situarán al enfoque de género como un eje ineludible –central y articulador– para el estudio de las comunidades migrantes⁸. Esta transformación estructuró el surgimiento de la perspectiva transnacional, la cual se ha convertido en una línea preponderante de

los debates internacionales sobre las migraciones. (GUIZARD; TORRALBA E STEFONI, 2018, p. 44).

The authors demonstrate a certain type of endogeneity in the characterization of the epistemological turn, that is, the internal construction of an approach based on personal experience of daily life, which focuses on the gender relations that permeate the processes of transnational migrations, starting from their own experiences and experiences as migrants or migrant researchers, which represent the female protagonism not only in the scientific career but also in transnational transit.

According to Gil (2004, p. 260) “[...] el resultado de la existencia de procesos transnacionales está siendo la construcción de sistemas de género interrelacionados a partir de la interacción de las desigualdades entre géneros, clases y etnias. [...]”. Transnational processes in the midst of gender inequalities, have created the articulation of other unequal interfaces, such as class and ethnicity, in order to perpetuate the maintenance of hegemonic class privileges, for example, from the performance of migrant women in domestic work of middle and upper class families, in addition to having a lower impact on men's commitment to the support of the family (GIL, 2004).

In many cases, migrant women performing such functions leave husbands and/or children in their place of origin, keeping them with remittances. Remittances can be considered as a central aspect in economic discussions on female migrations. According to Sassen (2003) it is through sending remittances that women are included in the countries' development strategies, although remittances represent a relative participation in a country's economy in relation to other forms of revenue, which does not mean that they are not equally important.

Consistent with this idea, Pizarro (2003) highlights the importance of remittances in promoting the visibility of migrant people, one that is through migratory networks as an instrument of direct link between the country of destination and country of origin, accrediting migrant people "an increasingly bad

role in the economic and social life of the national." (PIZARRO, 2003, p. 17). Remittances pass through physical barriers and connect migrant people between long distances, not only between the family group, but also as a member of a nation, since sending remittances represents an economic articulation between countries, including, under heavy taxation. However, Pizarro (2003, p. 17): "si los migrantes son actors económicos, ¿por qué no pueden serlo también en la vida política?".

Political participation, despite being closely related to the economic life of a country, does not present itself as peacefully as the sending of remittances appears to be. It is recurrent to note that discussions on the political participation of migrant persons always fall within the debate of whether or not they have principles that characterise them as national citizenship, i.e. whether there are sufficient official links that can demonstrate partial or permanent belonging to the nation, which is not the case when the subject is revenue generation or taxation for the State, on the basis of the labour force of migrant people, mainly migrant women in low-wage jobs.

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Final considerations

If talking about migration already becomes a challenging act, what about female migrations and how should we approach them in our discussions? Thus, the reflections in this writing started from the transdisciplinary effort to discuss the

theme based on an articulation between the literature used on gender and mobility of the female population.

More than that, dealing with migration under a gender approach represents recognizing the role and performance of women who for years have had their voices and expressions invisible by a hegemonic analytical thinking that has as its premise to consider at the primary level the economic and demographic effects that result from population displacements, relegating migrant women to a stratigraphic position in the migratory process, that is, to know only about how many women migrated in relation to men, their age and what are the main destinations.

Knowing the place of origin and destination is an important data in the analyses on migrations, especially in the field of geography, but it is also important to have the clarity these processes do not translate by that alone. The degree of complexity of migrations and migratory networks today requires that gender relations should be considered as a central point of discussions. Origin and destination relationships no longer account for the migratory phenomenon, since transnational migratory network establishments form a kind of circuit, in which personal, family and social relationships are simultaneously interconnected between different places.

Being dynamic as are migrations and led by women, it is possible to consider that only a male-oppressive ideological framework can justify the non-insertion of the gender focus in the migratory debate, because being processes of female predominance, its denial will hide and hinder the reading and analysis of the real events that resulted in them, that is, to ignore the protagonist participation of women in migration is to deny and distort the facts.

However, it is important to highlight that considering female participation in migration as a representative protagonism does not mean romanticizing or constructing a victimist narrative of the process – despite the violence faced by these women – on the contrary, it is a path of social struggle for a space in societies permeated by various inequalities that is conquered. To speak of female migratory

protagonism is to express the overcoming of numerous barriers, from the departure of the place of origin and at every moment of their stay in the places of destination.

Finally, the gender approach on migration is a necessary treatment in research on migrations and requires the establishment of theoretical-methodological rigor by researchers and researchers who intend to intensify their investigations on the subject, so a State of the Art or State of Knowledge research is a very important tool for mapping the conceptual and theoretical bases that deal with gender relations as a primary aspect in migratory studies, observing how scientific productions have treated this theme, its categorical extension and limitation, besides contextual, according to each space-time cut-out demarcated.

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