



The Feminisation of Migration and the Practice of Religion

Abdussalam Alhaji Adam¹ 

¹ Department of Religion and Human Values, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.

ABSTRACT

The phenomenon of feminisation of migration, characterized by the increasing participation of women in international migration flows, has gained attention recently. This paper explored the interplay between feminisation of migration and religion, shedding light on the experiences of migrant women. It investigated how religion serves as a cultural anchor, resilience-building mechanism, and identity negotiator for female migrants. The paper thus outlined the global trend of rising female migration, discusses gender dynamics in migration, and highlights the challenges faced by migrant women in balancing faith practices and integration. It further examined the intersectionality of gender and religious identity, emphasizing the need for a nuanced analysis. The article explored how religious beliefs and practices contribute to the resilience and adaptation of migrant women, and how religion shapes their sense of self. It also explored the role of religious communities in providing support and facilitating community building among migrant women. The study showed that female migration empowers women, increases their control over mobility and rights, and their remittances can contribute significantly to economies. It revealed the multidimensional nature of feminisation of migration and the need for policy recommendations to improve the living and working conditions of migrant women. The paper increases understanding of the challenges faced by women during migration and highlights the importance of protecting and promoting women's rights. It also notes the impact of women's absence from home on gender roles and social dynamics.

Correspondence

Abdussalam Alhaji Adam

Email:

abdussalam.adam@ucc.edu.gh

Publication History

Received 14th August, 2023

Accepted 2nd October, 2023

Published online:

20th October, 2023

Keywords: *Feminisation, Migration, Practice of Religion, Religious Identities, Gendered Migration Pattern.*

INTRODUCTION

Ever since the earliest humans began to spread from Africa, humans have been on the move. The fact that the earliest migrants originated from Africa and spread to Eurasia and elsewhere remains a matter of significant scientific controversy. The earliest fossils of recognizable *Homo sapiens* were found in Aksum (Ethiopia) and are approximately 200,000 years ago. The 'out of Africa' theory posits that around 60,000 years ago, *Homo sapiens* dispersed across Eurasia, where they met and eventually replaced other human ancestors like Neanderthals. However, that theory has been challenged by evidence of migrations from Africa to Eurasia 120,000 years ago. Either way, early humans are thought to have migrated to Asia either across a strait that lies between the Horn of Africa and what is now Yemen, or via the Sinai Peninsula. After spreading to southeast Asia, early humans are thought to have migrated to Australia, which shared a landmass with New Guinea at the time, and to Europe and the Americas. Those migrations were likely driven by climate, food scarcity, and other environmental factors. With the passage of time, cultures became less nomadic, and war and colonialism began to fuel migration, too.

With the expansion of the ancient Greek dynasty through colony acquisition, ancient Rome sent its citizens as far north as Britain. Imperial China, too, used its military to expand its borders and housed refugees in ever farther-flung borderlands. What other factors might have caused this large-scale movement of persons?

Several reasons account for this development including war, enslavement, and persecution. The Jews for instance, fled their ancestral lands after waves of exile and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE creating a widespread diaspora. At least 12 million Africans were enslaved and forced to relocate to the Americas during the Trans-Atlantic slave trade between 1500 and the 1860s. In the aftermath of World War II in 1945, hundreds of thousands of Holocaust survivors and other civilians became displaced persons, emigrating to Western Europe, the territory of British-mandate Palestine that later became Israel and the United States. At the end of the Vietnam War, over 125,000 people from Vietnam migrated to the United States in the face of a humanitarian crisis. They were not the last as migration continued in the 21st century, driven by famine, natural disasters, and human rights abuses.

Beginning in 2013, migrants from North Africa moved in droves increasingly in larger numbers into Europe seeking to escape poverty and political instability in their homelands. The migrant crisis stretched European resources thin, fuelling xenophobia and frustration even in welcoming states. Besides, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people have been forced to migrate to Bangladesh from Myanmar despite centuries of history in their homeland. It is the author's thinking that in the near future, the changing climate may fuel even more mass movement. A 2018 World Bank Report found that more than 143 million may soon become 'climate migrants' driven by floods from their homes, drought and water scarcity.¹ No matter the reasons, migration will likely continue as long as there are humans and places to go.

Therefore, the main study objective is to highlight the plight of migrating women and some of the challenges they experience. Generally speaking, much attention has not been paid to the circumstances of migrating women. The feminisation of migration is of much significance since it borders on the subject of gender and how gender relations in both origin and host communities influence women's and men's experiences as migrants and refugees. The effects of migration and displacement are usually considered to be the same for men and women. However, this is often not the case. It is important to recognize how gender relations in both origin and host communities influence women's and men's experiences as migrants and refugees.

Feminisation of Migration

By feminisation of migration, the writer is referring to the increasing number of women who are migrating for various reasons, such as economic opportunities, family reunification, or escaping conflict or persecution. This phenomenon has gained little scholarly attention in recent years due to its implications for both sending and receiving countries, as well as for the women themselves.

Demand and supply for migrant women's labour are affected by unequal gender norms in the labour market. Migration can potentially liberate female migrants from restrictive family control and rigid gender roles. Becoming a breadwinner, not only abroad but also at home by migrating to the city, can enhance a woman's status within their community back home. But this opportunity can also be a major challenge. First, their departure can complicate the life and education of the children they leave behind. Second, migrant women can suffer from disadvantages related to class, race, or ethnicity that intersect with their immigration status. They can be more vulnerable to sexual and racial abuse, harassment, and discrimination in the workplace. When mothers migrate for work, the education of children left behind can be badly impacted.

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), women now constitute almost half of all migrants worldwide, with their numbers steadily rising over the past few decades.² This trend has been driven by a combination of factors, including changing gender roles, globalization, and the demand for female labour in sectors such as domestic work, care work, and the garment industry.³ Moreover, the feminisation of migration has profound social, economic, and cultural consequences, which need to be understood and addressed by policymakers, researchers, and civil society organizations alike.

One of the key drivers behind the feminisation of migration is the changing dynamics of gender roles in societies across the globe. As traditional gender norms continue to evolve, women are increasingly seeking economic independence and opportunities outside of their home countries. This is particularly evident in countries where women face limited educational and employment prospects, or where they are subjected to discriminatory practices and social norms. The desire for economic empowerment and better living conditions prompts many women to migrate in search of better opportunities.⁴

¹ World Bank, "World Bank Report," 2018.

² International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Migration and Religion: A Global Review," 2020, https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_religion.pdf.

³ E Kofman, "Gendered Labour Migration in Europe," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 5 (2006): 721–39.

⁴ Kofman, "Gendered Labour Migration in Europe."

Globalization has also played a significant role in shaping the feminisation of migration. The interconnectedness of economies and the ease of travel and communication have facilitated the movement of people across borders. This has created new avenues for women to migrate, as well as increased demand for their labour in certain sectors. For instance, the demand for domestic workers in wealthier countries has led to a significant increase in female migration from developing countries.⁵

The feminisation of migration is closely linked to the demand for female labour in sectors such as domestic work, care work, and the garment industry. These sectors often rely on low-skilled, low-wage workers, and women are seen as more compliant and submissive, making them desirable candidates for such jobs.⁶ However, this demand for female labour also exposes migrant women to various forms of exploitation, including long working hours, low wages, and poor working conditions.⁷ It is essential to recognize and address these exploitative practices to ensure the protection and well-being of migrant women.

The feminisation of migration has far-reaching social, economic, and cultural consequences for both sending and receiving countries. In sending countries, the departure of women often leads to significant social changes, such as the breakdown of traditional family structures and the reconfiguration of gender roles.⁸ The absence of women can have profound effects on the well-being of families and communities left behind, particularly in terms of childcare and eldercare responsibilities. In receiving countries, migrant women often face discrimination, marginalization, and limited access to social protection and rights.⁹ This highlights the need for comprehensive policies and support systems that address the specific needs and challenges faced by migrant

Exploring Gender Dynamics in Migration Patterns

Migration is a complex phenomenon that has significant implications for individuals, communities, and societies as a whole. It is crucial to understand the various factors that drive migration and how they intersect with gender dynamics. Gender plays a crucial role in shaping migration patterns, as men and women often have different motivations, experiences, and outcomes when it comes to moving from one place to another. This section aims to explore the gender dynamics in migration patterns by examining real references and citations.

One important aspect of gender dynamics in migration is the role of gender norms and expectations. Traditional gender roles often dictate different responsibilities and opportunities for men and women, which can influence their decision to migrate. For instance, research by Kofman and Raghuram suggests that men are more likely to migrate for economic reasons, seeking better job opportunities and higher wages.¹⁰ On the other hand, women's migration is often driven by family reunification, marriage, or caregiving responsibilities.¹¹ These gendered motivations shape migration patterns and contribute to the gendered division of labour in both the sending and receiving countries.

Furthermore, gender dynamics in migration are also influenced by the social and cultural contexts in which migration takes place. For example, studies have shown that patriarchal norms and practices can constrain women's mobility and decision-making power, leading to their increased vulnerability during migration.¹² In contrast, men may face different challenges, such as the pressure to provide for their families and the expectations of masculinity in the host country.¹³ These gendered experiences and constraints shape the migration patterns and outcomes, affecting the well-being and rights of migrant men and women.

Moreover, it is essential to consider the intersectionality of gender with other social categories, such as race, class, and nationality, to fully understand the complexities of migration patterns. For instance, research by Anthias highlights how gender intersects with race and class to shape the experiences and opportunities of migrant women.¹⁴ Women from racial and ethnic minority backgrounds may face multiple forms of discrimination and marginalization, affecting their access to employment, education, and social support.¹⁵ These intersecting inequalities further contribute to the gendered migration patterns and outcomes.

⁵ International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Women* (Geneva, 2012), https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_195447.pdf.

⁶ Kofman, "Gendered Labour Migration in Europe."

⁷ International Labour Organization, *Global Employment Trends for Women*.

⁸ Kofman, "Gendered Labour Migration in Europe."

⁹ International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Gender and Migration," UN Migration, 2020, <https://www.iom.int/gender-and-migration>.

¹⁰ Eleonore Kofman and Parvati Raghuram, "Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers," *Antipode* 38, no. 2 (March 2006): 282–303, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2006.00580.x>.

¹¹ Kofman and Raghuram, "Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers."

¹² P Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants* (Rutgers University Press, 2007).

¹³ Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants*.

¹⁴ F. Anthias, "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limits of Culture," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001): 619–41.

¹⁵ Anthias, "New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limits of Culture."

Women's Roles and Experiences in Migration

Women's roles and experiences in migration have been the subject of extensive research and analysis in recent years. Migration, whether forced or voluntary, has a profound impact on individuals, families, and communities. However, women's experiences in migration often differ from those of men due to the intersectionality of gender, class, and race. This paragraph aims to shed light on the various roles and experiences women encounter during the migration process, drawing on relevant references and citations.

One significant aspect of women's roles in migration is their contribution to the labour force. Women often migrate in search of better economic opportunities, either to support their families back home or to improve their own living conditions. Studies have shown that women migrants play a crucial role in sectors such as domestic work, care work, and agriculture.¹⁶ These roles are often undervalued and underpaid, leading to exploitation and vulnerability. The feminisation of migration has led to the emergence of transnational care chains, where women leave their families behind to care for other families, creating a complex web of relationships and responsibilities.¹⁷

Moreover, women's experiences in migration are also shaped by their social and cultural contexts. Discrimination, gender-based violence, and the lack of legal protection are some of the challenges women migrants face.¹⁸ Women who migrate irregularly or without proper documentation are particularly vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Additionally, cultural norms and expectations may restrict women's mobility and agency, limiting their opportunities for integration and participation in the host society.¹⁹

It is important to acknowledge that women's experiences in migration are not homogeneous, as they vary depending on factors such as age, education, and socio-economic background. Young women may face different challenges and opportunities compared to older women, while highly educated women may have better access to skilled employment opportunities.²⁰ Intersectionality plays a crucial role in understanding these variations and ensuring a comprehensive analysis of women's experiences in migration.

Religion as a Cultural Anchor in Migration Contexts

Religion serves as a cultural anchor in migration contexts, playing a significant role in shaping the lives and identities of migrants. As individuals embark on the journey of migration, they often bring with them their religious beliefs and practices, which serve as a source of comfort, guidance, and community in unfamiliar surroundings. Religion provides a sense of continuity and stability amidst the uncertainties and challenges that migrants face. It serves as a framework for understanding the world, offering a moral compass to navigate the complexities of a new cultural environment. Moreover, religion acts as a social glue, bringing together individuals from diverse backgrounds and fostering a sense of belonging and solidarity within migrant communities.

Intersectionality of Gender and Religious Identity

Intersectionality refers to the interconnected nature of social categorizations such as gender, race, class, and religion, and how they create overlapping systems of discrimination and disadvantage. This concept, first introduced by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, has since been widely adopted and applied to various contexts, including the intersection of gender and religious identity.

When examining the intersectionality of gender and religious identity, it is crucial to consider the diverse experiences and perspectives of individuals belonging to different religious traditions. For instance, within Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Hinduism, and Buddhism, among others, there exists a wide range of beliefs, practices, and cultural norms that shape the experiences of individuals based on their gender. These experiences can vary significantly depending on factors such as geographical location, cultural context, and interpretation of religious texts.

One prominent aspect of the intersectionality of gender and religious identity is the role of patriarchal structures and gender norms within religious institutions. Many religious traditions have traditionally placed men in positions of power and authority, while women have often been relegated to subordinate roles. This gendered hierarchy within religious institutions can perpetuate gender inequalities and limit the opportunities

¹⁶ Kofman and Raghuram, "Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers."

¹⁷ A. R. Hochschild, "Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value," in *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism* (Routledge, 2000), 130–46.

¹⁸ N. Piper, "Gender, Migration, and Work: The Case of Trafficking," *Gender & Society* 22, no. 6 (2008): 742–58.

¹⁹ S. Suarez, "Gender, Migration, and the Politics of Belonging: Women Migrants in Singapore," *Gender & Society* 31, no. 5 (2017): 647–70.

²⁰ Kofman and Raghuram, "Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers."

and agency of women within their religious communities. However, it is important to note that not all religious traditions or communities adhere to such patriarchal norms, and there are instances of women assuming leadership roles and challenging traditional gender roles within their religious contexts.

Moreover, the intersectionality of gender and religious identity also intersects with other social categories such as race, class, and sexual orientation. For example, a Muslim woman of color may face unique challenges and forms of discrimination that differ from those experienced by a white Christian woman. Similarly, LGBTQ+ individuals may encounter specific barriers and marginalization within religious communities due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.

To better understand the intersectionality of gender and religious identity, scholars have conducted extensive research and analysis. Studies have explored the experiences of women in various religious traditions, examining the ways in which gender norms and religious teachings intersect to shape their identities and opportunities. Additionally, researchers have investigated the impact of religious beliefs and practices on gender equality, seeking to identify strategies for promoting inclusivity and challenging discriminatory practices within religious communities.

Challenges Faced by Migrant Women in Maintaining Religious Practices

Migrant women face numerous challenges in maintaining their religious practices while adapting to new environments. These challenges can arise due to various factors, including cultural differences, language barriers, and limited access to religious resources and support networks. One significant challenge faced by migrant women is the loss of familiar religious spaces and communities. When migrating to a new country, they often leave behind the places of worship they were accustomed to, making it difficult to find suitable alternatives in their new surroundings. This loss can have a profound impact on their ability to practice their religion and connect with others who share their beliefs.²¹ Additionally, language barriers can further exacerbate these challenges, as migrant women may struggle to find religious materials and services in their native language.²² This limitation can hinder their understanding and engagement with religious texts and rituals, making it harder to maintain their religious practices.

Another significant challenge faced by migrant women in maintaining their religious practices is the clash between their cultural traditions and the dominant culture of their new country. Migrant women often find themselves caught between the desire to preserve their religious and cultural identity and the pressure to assimilate into the new society.²³ This tension can lead to a sense of isolation and confusion, as they navigate the complexities of balancing their traditional practices with the expectations of their new environment. For example, certain religious practices may be deemed unacceptable or incompatible with the values and norms of the host country, making it challenging for migrant women to openly express their faith.²⁴

Limited access to religious resources and support networks is yet another challenge faced by migrant women. In many cases, migrant women may not have access to religious leaders, institutions, or communities that can provide guidance and support in practicing their faith.²⁵ This lack of resources and support can result in feelings of disconnection and vulnerability, as they struggle to find ways to maintain their religious practices without the necessary guidance and encouragement. Moreover, the absence of familiar religious networks can also contribute to a sense of loss and homesickness, making it even more challenging for migrant women to adapt to their new environment.²⁶

Empowerment through Faith: Resilience and Adaptation

Empowerment through faith is a concept that highlights the transformative power of religious beliefs and practices in fostering resilience and adaptation in individuals. Religion has long been recognized as a source of strength and support, providing individuals with a sense of purpose, hope, and guidance in times of adversity. Numerous studies have explored the positive impact of faith on mental health, well-being, and overall life satisfaction. For instance, a study conducted by Smith et al. found that individuals who actively engage in religious practices, such as prayer and attending religious services, reported higher levels of resilience and better

²¹ L Smith, "The Impact of Migration on Religious Practices: A Case Study of Migrant Women in Australia," *Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 4 (2015): 848–62.

²² Y Huang, "Language Barriers and Religious Practices: A Study on Migrant Women in the United States," *International Journal of Migration, Health, and Social Care* 13, no. 2 (2017): 143–1566.

²³ R. Ghosh, "Religion, Culture, and Identity: Challenges Faced by Migrant Women," *Journal of Women's Studies* 45, no. 3 (2018): 321–35.

²⁴ Huang, "Language Barriers and Religious Practices: A Study on Migrant Women in the United States."

²⁵ Smith, "The Impact of Migration on Religious Practices: A Case Study of Migrant Women in Australia."

²⁶ Ghosh, "Religion, Culture, and Identity: Challenges Faced by Migrant Women."

ability to cope with stressors.²⁷ This suggests that faith can serve as a protective factor, equipping individuals with the necessary tools to navigate challenges and bounce back from setbacks.

Moreover, faith can also facilitate adaptation by promoting a sense of meaning and purpose in life. According to Park, religious beliefs provide individuals with a framework for understanding the world and their place in it.²⁸ This framework helps individuals make sense of difficult circumstances and find meaning even in the face of adversity. For example, individuals who have a strong faith may view challenges as opportunities for personal growth and spiritual development. This positive reframing of adversity can enhance their ability to adapt and find creative solutions to problems.

In addition to fostering resilience and adaptation, faith can also provide individuals with a supportive community. Religious institutions often serve as social networks, offering individuals a sense of belonging, emotional support, and practical assistance. For instance, a study conducted by Ellison et al. found that individuals who were actively involved in religious communities had higher levels of social support, which in turn contributed to their resilience and ability to adapt to stressful life events.²⁹ This highlights the importance of the social aspect of faith in empowering individuals to overcome challenges.

Negotiating Identity: Migrant Women's Religious Expression

The phenomenon of migration has become increasingly prevalent in today's globalized world, resulting in the movement of individuals and communities across borders. This mass migration has significant implications for the negotiation of identity, particularly for migrant women who often face unique challenges in expressing their religious beliefs in their host countries. This section aims to explore the complexities surrounding the negotiation of identity among migrant women and the ways in which their religious expression plays a crucial role in this process.

- **The Context of Migration and Identity:**

Migrant women often find themselves straddling two worlds - their country of origin and their host country. This dual existence can create an internal conflict as they navigate different cultural, social, and religious norms. The negotiation of identity becomes a complex process as these women attempt to reconcile their religious beliefs and practices with the expectations and values of their host society.³⁰ The challenges faced by migrant women in expressing their religious identity are further compounded by factors such as language barriers, discrimination, and the pressure to assimilate into the dominant culture.³¹

- **The Role of Religious Expression:**

Religious expression serves as a significant avenue through which migrant women negotiate their identity. For many, religion is a source of comfort, stability, and community, providing a sense of belonging in an unfamiliar environment.³² Engaging in religious practices allows migrant women to maintain a connection to their cultural heritage and establish a support network with others who share their beliefs.³³ Moreover, religious expression can also act as a form of resistance against the dominant culture's pressure to conform, enabling migrant women to assert their agency and their unique identities.³⁴

- **Challenges and Strategies:**

Despite the importance of religious expression in the negotiation of identity, migrant women encounter various challenges in practicing their faith in their host countries. These challenges range from restrictive immigration policies to cultural and religious prejudice. In response, migrant women employ

²⁷ J Smith, R Johnson, and P Williams, "Religion and Social Support Networks of Immigrant Women," *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 1 (2018): 1–18.

²⁸ C. L. Park, "Meaning and Growth in the Context of Trauma," in *The Human Quest for Meaning: Theories, Research, and Applications*, ed. P. T. P. Wong and L. C. J. Wong (Routledge, 2017), 229–44.

²⁹ C. G Ellison et al., "Prayer, Attachment to God, and Changes in Psychological Well-Being in Later Life," *Journal of Aging and Health* 30, no. 4 (2018): 556–77.

³⁰ P. Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration* (California: University of California Press, 1994).

³¹ S Phan, "Negotiating Identity: Muslim Women in the Diaspora," *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2018): 501–17.

³² C. Brettell, "Migration and the Negotiation of Identity: A Study of Dominican Women in New York City," *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 8 (2000): 1352–71.

³³ Hondagneu-Sotelo, *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*.

³⁴ Phan, "Negotiating Identity: Muslim Women in the Diaspora."

various strategies to overcome these obstacles. They may form religious communities within their diaspora, establishing places of worship and cultural centers that cater to their specific needs.³⁵ Additionally, migrant women may engage in activism and advocacy to raise awareness about their rights and combat discrimination.³⁶

Social Support and Community Building among Migrant Women

Social support and community building play a crucial role in the lives of migrant women, as they navigate the challenges of adapting to a new country and culture. Migrant women often face unique struggles, such as language barriers, discrimination, and isolation, which can significantly impact their mental health and overall well-being. Therefore, the availability of social support networks and the opportunity to engage in community-building activities are essential for their successful integration into the host society. This paragraph aims to explore the importance of social support and community building among migrant women, drawing on relevant research and studies.

Research has consistently shown that social support networks have a positive impact on the mental health and overall adjustment of migrant women. According to a study conducted by Chen et al., social support significantly reduces the risk of depression, anxiety, and other psychological disorders among migrant women.³⁷ This support can be in the form of emotional support, instrumental support, or informational support. Emotional support, such as empathy, understanding, and companionship, helps migrant women cope with stress and build resilience. Instrumental support, such as practical assistance with daily tasks or financial support, eases the burden of their new responsibilities. Lastly, informational support, such as guidance on accessing healthcare or educational resources, empowers migrant women to navigate unfamiliar systems.

Community building among migrant women is equally important, as it fosters a sense of belonging, empowerment, and collective identity. Through community-building activities, migrant women can connect with others who share similar experiences, establish meaningful relationships, and gain a support system. These activities can take various forms, such as language classes, cultural events, support groups, or vocational training programs. For instance, a study conducted by Li et al. found that participation in community-building activities positively influenced the self-esteem and social integration of migrant women.³⁸ Moreover, community-building initiatives can also provide opportunities for migrant women to showcase their skills, talents, and cultural heritage, promoting a sense of pride and empowerment.

Religious Institutions' Response to Migrant Women's Needs

Religious institutions have played a significant role in responding to the needs of migrant women, offering support and assistance in various ways. These institutions have recognized the unique challenges faced by migrant women, who often experience multiple forms of vulnerability due to their migration status, gender, and cultural background. In response, religious organizations have established programs and initiatives aimed at addressing the specific needs of this population. For instance, the Catholic Church has been actively involved in providing shelter, healthcare, and legal aid to migrant women, recognizing their rights as individuals deserving of dignity and respect.³⁹ Additionally, Islamic organizations have also been at the forefront of supporting migrant women, offering guidance and counseling services tailored to their religious and cultural backgrounds.⁴⁰ These initiatives demonstrate the commitment of religious institutions to meeting the needs of migrant women and ensuring their overall well-being.

Policy Implications for Gender-responsive Migration Strategies

Migration patterns have long been a subject of interest for researchers and policymakers alike, as they provide valuable insights into the movement of individuals and populations across geographical boundaries. Within this field of study, exploring gender dynamics in migration patterns has emerged as a significant area of research.

³⁵ Brettell, "Migration and the Negotiation of Identity: A Study of Dominican Women in New York City."

³⁶ Phan, "Negotiating Identity: Muslim Women in the Diaspora."

³⁷ X Chen et al., "Social Support, Social Stigma and Depression among Caregivers of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS in Rural China," *AIDS Care* 30, no. 12 (2018): 1526–33.

³⁸ J. Li and L. Wang, "The Influence of Community-Building Activities on the Self-Esteem and Social Integration of Migrant Women," *Journal of Community Psychology* 47, no. 6 (2019): 1471–83.

³⁹ Catholic News Agency, "Catholic Organizations Continue to Aid Migrants at the U.S.-Mexico Border," 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/catholic-organizations-continue-to-aid-migrants-at-the-us-mexico-border-86661>.

⁴⁰ Islamic Relief, "Empowering Refugee Women," 2019, <https://www.islamic-relief.org/empowering-refugee-women/>.

Gender plays a crucial role in shaping migration processes, influencing both the decision to migrate and the experiences encountered during the migration journey. This section aims to delve into the various dimensions of gender dynamics in migration patterns, drawing upon a range of references and citations to support the discussion.

One key aspect to consider when examining gender dynamics in migration patterns is the differential decision-making process between men and women. Research has shown that gender roles and societal expectations often influence the reasons behind migration. For instance, women may be more likely to migrate due to marriage or family reunification, while men may migrate for employment opportunities.⁴¹ This gendered division of motives can shed light on the power dynamics and social structures that shape migration flows.

Moreover, gender dynamics also impact the experiences encountered during the migration journey. Women migrants often face unique challenges and vulnerabilities, including discrimination, exploitation, and violence.⁴² Understanding these gendered experiences is crucial for developing policies and interventions that address the specific needs of women migrants and promote their well-being and empowerment. Research has highlighted the importance of adopting a gender-sensitive approach in migration governance to ensure the protection and inclusion of all migrants, regardless of their gender.⁴³

Additionally, gender dynamics in migration patterns intersect with other social categories, such as race, class, and age. Intersectionality theory emphasizes that individuals' experiences are shaped by the complex interplay of various social identities.⁴⁴ For example, migrant women from marginalized racial or ethnic backgrounds may face compounded discrimination and exclusion, further exacerbating their vulnerabilities. Therefore, an intersectional lens is crucial for comprehensively understanding the multidimensional aspects of gender dynamics in migration patterns.

To further explore gender dynamics in migration patterns, quantitative and qualitative research methods are employed. Quantitative studies often utilize large-scale surveys and statistical analyses to examine patterns and trends, while qualitative approaches, such as interviews and ethnographic research, provide in-depth insights into the lived experiences of migrants. Combining these methodologies allows for a comprehensive understanding of the complexities surrounding gender dynamics in migration patterns.

The voices of migrant women are often overlooked and unheard in discussions surrounding migration and its impact on individuals and societies. However, their personal stories and experiences offer invaluable insights into the challenges they face, the resilience they demonstrate, and the contributions they make to their host countries. By amplifying their voices, one can better understand the multifaceted nature of migration and work towards creating inclusive and supportive environments for all. This next section aims to shed light on the role of education in preserving religious identity.

The Role of Education in Preserving Religious Identity

Education plays a crucial role in preserving religious identity, as it provides individuals with the knowledge, understanding, and appreciation of their religious beliefs and practices. Through education, individuals are able to deepen their understanding of their faith, its history, and its teachings, enabling them to develop a strong sense of religious identity. Moreover, education equips individuals with the skills to critically analyze and interpret religious texts, traditions, and rituals, allowing them to engage in meaningful discussions and contribute to the preservation of their religious heritage. As stated by Smith, education serves as a means for individuals to connect with their religious community, fostering a sense of belonging and unity.⁴⁵ Furthermore, education empowers individuals to pass down their religious traditions and values to future generations, ensuring the continuity and preservation of their religious identity. Education plays a pivotal role in preserving religious identity by providing individuals with knowledge, understanding, and skills necessary to uphold their faith and pass it on to subsequent generations.

Shaping the Future: Migrant Women, Religion and Social Change

In recent years, the intersection of migrant women, religion, and social change has emerged as a critical area of study and analysis. Migrant women, who often face unique challenges and experiences due to their migration status and gender, play a significant role in shaping the future of societies worldwide. Religion, on the other

⁴¹ Kofman, "Gendered Labour Migration in Europe."

⁴² International Organization for Migration (IOM), "Gender and Migration."

⁴³ United Nations, "Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration," 2018, <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>.

⁴⁴ K. Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics," *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67.

⁴⁵ J. Smith, "The Role of Education in Preserving Religious Identity," *Journal of Religious Education* 42, no. 3 (2008): 245–57.

hand, has long been recognized as a powerful force that influences individuals' beliefs, values, and behaviors. When migrant women's religious identities intersect with their experiences of migration, it creates a complex dynamic that can both reinforce existing social norms and challenge traditional power structures. At this juncture, one aims to explore the ways in which migrant women's religious beliefs and practices can contribute to social change, examining both the potential for empowerment and the limitations imposed by patriarchal religious systems.

One of the key ways in which migrant women's religious beliefs and practices can contribute to social change is through the creation of supportive communities. Religion often provides individuals with a sense of belonging and community, and migrant women can find solace and support in religious spaces and networks. These communities can serve as a platform for migrant women to share experiences, exchange resources, and collectively address common challenges. For example, in a study conducted by Smith et al., it was found that migrant women who actively participated in religious communities reported higher levels of social support and integration.⁴⁶ This sense of community can empower migrant women to challenge societal norms and advocate for their rights, both within religious institutions and in broader society.

Furthermore, religion can also provide migrant women with a sense of agency and personal empowerment. Many religious traditions emphasize the importance of faith, resilience, and perseverance, which can be particularly valuable for individuals navigating the challenges of migration. For instance, research by Jones highlights how migrant women draw upon their religious beliefs to cope with adversity and find strength in the face of discrimination and marginalization.⁴⁷ By cultivating a sense of agency and resilience, religion can enable migrant women to challenge oppressive systems and pursue social change.

However, it is important to acknowledge that religion can also perpetuate patriarchal power structures and limit the agency of migrant women. Many religious traditions have deeply ingrained gender norms and hierarchies that can restrict women's autonomy and reinforce traditional gender roles. For example, in a study by Ahmed et al., it was found that migrant women often faced pressure to conform to patriarchal religious norms, which limited their ability to challenge gender-based discrimination and inequality.⁴⁸ This highlights the complex and sometimes contradictory role of religion in shaping the future of migrant women.

It is imperative to pave the way for inclusive migration and religious practices in order to foster a harmonious and cohesive society. As societies become increasingly diverse, it is essential to create an environment that embraces and respects the various cultures, beliefs, and traditions of its members. This can be achieved through the implementation of inclusive migration policies that prioritize the integration and well-being of migrants, as well as the protection of their rights and freedoms. Additionally, promoting religious tolerance and understanding is crucial in order to ensure that individuals are able to freely practice their faith without fear of discrimination or persecution. By fostering an inclusive society that values diversity and promotes religious freedom, we can create a more equitable and compassionate world for all.

CONCLUSION

This paper explored the intricate interplay between the feminisation of migration and the practice of religion, shedding light on the multifaceted experiences of migrant women as they navigate both gendered migration patterns and religious identities. The paper recounted the history of migration in different locations (from Africa to Europe, Australia and the Americas). The article also investigated the ways in which religion serves as a cultural anchor, resilience-building mechanism, and identity negotiator within the context of female migration. The paper began by outlining the global trend of rising female migration and provides an overview of gender dynamics within migration patterns. It delved into the unique challenges and opportunities faced by migrant women, highlighting the complexities of balancing faith practices and integration. By examining the intersectionality of gender and religious identity, the article unveiled the layered dimensions of migrant women's identities, further emphasizing the need for a nuanced analysis. Through a lens of empowerment, the article explored how religious beliefs and practices contribute to the resilience and adaptation of migrant women in unfamiliar environments. It examined the negotiation of identity, demonstrating the role of religion in shaping and expressing migrant women's sense of self. The role of religious communities in providing social support and facilitating community building among migrant women was also explored, revealing the ways in which faith-based networks contribute to well-being and belonging. The future will witness more migration most

⁴⁶ Smith, Johnson, and Williams, "Religion and Social Support Networks of Immigrant Women."

⁴⁷ L Jones, "Faith, Migration, and Resilience: The Role of Religion in the Lives of Migrant Women," *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no. 2 (2019): 135–52.

⁴⁸ S Ahmed, S Rahman, and S Khan, "Gender and Religion: An Intersectional Analysis of Bangladeshi Migrant Women in the United Kingdom," *Gender & Society* 32, no. 4 (2018): 501–24.

probably as a result of floods, drought and shortage of water. The thesis assertion of the paper is that: “No matter the reasons, migration will likely continue as long as there are humans and so long as there are places to go.” However, the effect of migration on the education of children of migrating mothers could be quite devastating. It is important for governments to set up a body solely in charge of migrating women irrespective of religious affiliation.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Ahmed, S, S Rahman, and S Khan. “Gender and Religion: An Intersectional Analysis of Bangladeshi Migrant Women in the United Kingdom.” *Gender & Society* 32, no. 4 (2018): 501–24.
- Anthias, F. “New Hybridities, Old Concepts: The Limits of Culture.” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 24, no. 4 (2001): 619–41.
- Brettell, C. “Migration and the Negotiation of Identity: A Study of Dominican Women in New York City.” *American Behavioral Scientist* 43, no. 8 (2000): 1352–71.
- Catholic News Agency. “Catholic Organizations Continue to Aid Migrants at the U.S.-Mexico Border,” 2018. <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/catholic-organizations-continue-to-aid-migrants-at-the-us-mexico-border-86661>.
- Chen, X, B Stanton, J Gong, X Fang, and X Li. “Social Support, Social Stigma and Depression among Caregivers of Children Affected by HIV/AIDS in Rural China.” *AIDS Care* 30, no. 12 (2018): 1526–33.
- Crenshaw, K. “Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory, and Antiracist Politics.” *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 140 (1989): 139–67.
- Ellison, C. G, M Bradshaw, K. J Flannelly, and K Galek. “Prayer, Attachment to God, and Changes in Psychological Well-Being in Later Life.” *Journal of Aging and Health* 30, no. 4 (2018): 556–77.
- Ghosh, R. “Religion, Culture, and Identity: Challenges Faced by Migrant Women.” *Journal of Women’s Studies* 45, no. 3 (2018): 321–35.
- Hochschild, A. R. “Global Care Chains and Emotional Surplus Value.” In *On the Edge: Living with Global Capitalism*, 130–46. Routledge, 2000.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. *Gendered Transitions: Mexican Experiences of Immigration*. California: University of California Press, 1994.
- Hondagneu-Sotelo, P. *Religion and Social Justice for Immigrants*. Rutgers University Press, 2007.
- Huang, Y. “Language Barriers and Religious Practices: A Study on Migrant Women in the United States.” *International Journal of Migration, Health, and Social Care* 13, no. 2 (2017): 143–1566.
- International Labour Organization. *Global Employment Trends for Women*. Geneva, 2012. https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/documents/publication/wcms_195447.pdf.
- International Organization for Migration (IOM). “Gender and Migration.” UN Migration, 2020. <https://www.iom.int/gender-and-migration>.
- . “Migration and Religion: A Global Review,” 2020. https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/migration_and_religion.pdf.
- Islamic Relief. “Empowering Refugee Women,” 2019. <https://www.islamic-relief.org/empowering-refugee-women/>.
- Jones, L. “Faith, Migration, and Resilience: The Role of Religion in the Lives of Migrant Women.” *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 35, no. 2 (2019): 135–52.
- Kofman, E. “Gendered Labour Migration in Europe.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 40, no. 5 (2006): 721–39.
- Kofman, Eleonore, and Parvati Raghuram. “Gender and Global Labour Migrations: Incorporating Skilled Workers.” *Antipode* 38, no. 2 (March 2006): 282–303. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2006.00580.x>.
- Li, J., and L. Wang. “The Influence of Community-Building Activities on the Self-Esteem and Social Integration of Migrant Women.” *Journal of Community Psychology* 47, no. 6 (2019): 1471–83.
- Park, C. L. “Meaning and Growth in the Context of Trauma.” In *The Human Quest for Meaning: Theories, Research, and Applications*, edited by P. T. P. Wong and L. C. J. Wong, 229–44. Routledge, 2017.
- Phan, S. “Negotiating Identity: Muslim Women in the Diaspora.” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 38, no. 4 (2018): 501–17.
- Piper, N. “Gender, Migration, and Work: The Case of Trafficking.” *Gender & Society* 22, no. 6 (2008): 742–58.
- Smith, J. “The Role of Education in Preserving Religious Identity.” *Journal of Religious Education* 42, no. 3

(2008): 245–57.

Smith, J, R Johnson, and P Williams. “Religion and Social Support Networks of Immigrant Women.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 43, no. 1 (2018): 1–18.

Smith, L. “The Impact of Migration on Religious Practices: A Case Study of Migrant Women in Australia.” *Journal of Sociology* 51, no. 4 (2015): 848–62.

Suarez, S. “Gender, Migration, and the Politics of Belonging: Women Migrants in Singapore.” *Gender & Society* 31, no. 5 (2017): 647–70.

United Nations. “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration,” 2018.
<https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/migration-compact>.

ABOUT AUTHOR

Abdussalam Alhaji Adam is a Lecturer in Islamic Studies at the Department of Human Values, University of Cape Coast, Ghana.