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RESEARCH ARTICLES

A study of social interactions between Qatari citizens and the descendants of Arab migrants to Qatar. Will the Permanent Residency Card have an Impact on the Social Life of the Descendants of Arab Migrants Born in Qatar?

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Abstract. This article focuses on the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar and the social interactions they have with Qatari citizens. Also, this article focuses on the political debates and public discourses after the *Permanent Residency law* was introduced by the Qatari government in 2018. Such debates bring to the fore questions about similarities and differences across the population of Qatar, as the nation moves into the future and natural resources diminish (McLachlan, 2015; Dargin, 2007). This article draws upon the first author's study on immigration in Qatar, utilising semi-structured interviews with non-citizen Arabs born in Qatar. This article will use the acronym (ABiQ) to refer to Arabs born in Qatar. Further, the article will gauge the extent of their social interactions with Qatari citizens and their sense of integration into society. The study found that, ABiQs tend to have greater opportunities to interact with Qatari citizens than non-Arab migrants due to their cultural closeness, related to shared language and history. As the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar, their cultural and religious background provides some 'privileges'.

Keywords: The descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar (ABiQs); Migrants; Social Interaction' Citizenship rights; Permanent residency; *Permanent Residency Law* (2018); Selective state building; *Mawatin*(مواطن) ; *Mawalid* (مواليد)

Introduction

Qatar is a Middle Eastern country situated on the northern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, sharing its only land border with Saudi Arabia and the rest of its territory surrounded by the Arabian Gulf Sea. Due to its richness in energy resources, especially Natural Gas, Qatar is a popular host destination for many international migrants (Morton, 2020). Qatar is a small country with a small population, but it plays significant roles worldwide and regionally due to its active diplomacy and the hosting of global events such as the 2022 FIFA World Cup. Qatar is a well-known destination of economic opportunities and is increasingly becoming a destination for students from neighbouring nations, seeking international education. For example, the city hosts

branch campuses from some of the top universities in the world, such as Weill Cornell and Georgetown (Romanowski et al, 2024).

The migrant population in Qatar is much higher in numbers than the local (Qatari) citizens (*Mawatinin* مواطنين) (Winckler, 2015). According to the Qatari Statistics Authority, the number of people in Qatar in August 2024 reached 3 million. The foreign migrants comprise around 90%, while only around 10% are Qatari citizens (Bel-Air, 2017). As shown in Table 1, the population of Qatar has increased dramatically since the 1990s, and, over the years, Qatari citizens have become a minority in their own country. As the ratio between citizens and migrants keeps widening, it becomes essential to explore the nuances of migrant experiences and their senses of place in Qatar. Further, considering the history and nature of migration and the demographics of the nations of the Gulf region, the importance of recognising and understanding migrant stories are evident; such stories provide insight into the societies, politics, and economies of the Gulf regions, as well as understanding of people's everyday lives (Kamrava, 2013).

The Migrant Population of Qatar

Year	Population	Migrant Total	National %	National Total
1990	467,000	369,397	20.9	97,603
1995	526,000	406,072	22.8	119,928
2000	617,000	470,771	23.7	146,229
2005	885,000	717,425	19.5	172,575
2010	1,508,000	1,304,420	13.5	203,580

(Table 1) Source: (Bel-Air, 2017)

For decades, migrant communities, especially Arab migrants, have formed one of the largest components of the Qatari population[1] and have shaped the social fabric of society. Migrants in Qatar are classified into three categories: skilled labourers, mostly Westerners; low skilled labour, mostly of Asian background; and, medium to high professions, which are mostly filled with people of Arab background (Babar, 2017).

As Hazal Elberni (2018) outlines, many Arab migrants have children born in Qatar, many who consider Qatar their permanent country of residence. The focus of this article is on the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar.[2] Another concentration of this article is the *Iqama Daama* إقامة دائمة(Permanent Residency) a law introduced in 2018 by the Qatari government. The card can be given to eligible candidates who meet specific criteria, such as having been a resident in the country for at least 20 years and having sufficient knowledge of the Arabic language

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[1] Historically, the Qatari population is composed of two groups, the Hadar (settled people) and the Bedouins (nomads), and both groups are tribally constructed and have distinct characteristics. Currently, these two groups constitute the Qatari citizens. All others are classified as migrants.

[2] Arab is an ethnic group formed by many races inhabiting the Arab world that includes 22 countries in Africa and Asia. The Arabic language and Islam are the main components of the Arabic culture. There are many definitions of Arabs, but, drawing on Shoup (2012), this research project focuses on the Arab people who embrace the Arabic language, Arabic culture, and Arab heritage, regardless of their country of origin.

(Ministry of Interior, 2018). The holders of the *Permanent Residency Card* have several privileges and rights, such as being able to open a business without a Qatari sponsor, owning property, and having access to free health care and free education (Ministry of Interior, 2018).

The Qatari government in 2019, set up a committee named the Permanent Residence Card Granting Committee, which has the duties to set the requirements and suggest further development of the *Permanent Residency Law*. For example, the Ministry of Interior in Qatar set a limit for only 100 people to be given permanent residency annually. However, according to Article 4 of Law No. (10) of 2018 on Permanent Residency, this number can be increased. Ali Younes (2018) suggested that such legislation can provide hope to ABiQ to have a sense of security as they can now gain permanent residency in Qatar. Such development of a Permanent Residency law can be expected as the Qatari government is preparing the nation for a new era/dawn of nation-building (Beaugrand, 2023). Such measures are of particular importance as the country is acknowledging the challenges of having a limited number of *mawatinin* مواطنين (Qatari citizens) and the fossil energy wealth will likely come to an end in the near future. Therefore, policymakers are selecting individuals from the country's migrants to increase the number of local citizens who will partake in taking the country 'into the future' (Mitchell, 2017).

Following Younes's argument, this study argues that such changes in law will likely change the social interactions between ABiQ and *mawatinin* مواطنين (Qatari citizens). The permanent residency law favours the ABiQ and people who are similarly categorised, such as the children of Qatari mothers, who need only be residents in the country for ten years to apply for the *Permanent Residency Card*. Arabs born outside Qatar need to wait for twenty years to apply. Furthermore, the Arabic language is ABiQs' mother tongue which does not apply to the majority of other migrants. The Ministry of Interior in Qatar has activated the Permanent Residency law through the E-government portal. Candidates who meet the requirements can register, apply online, and then wait for the Ministry of Interior's selection.

Furthermore, this article explores aspects of social interactions in Qatar between Qatari citizens and *Mawalid* مواليد (born) of Arab migrants in Qatar and argues that the ABiQ are more likely than migrants of non-Arab background to have more interactions with Qatari citizens because ABiQ has similar cultural and linguistic skills and access to opportunities not available to other migrants in Qatar. For example, ABiQs have been favoured by the Qatari labour law for being hired if there are no Qatari citizens applying for the job. Such preference applies particularly to the government sector. Hence, our interests are driven by the following two objectives: first, to explore the social interactions between Qatari citizens and ABiQ, particular in educational and workplace context. Second, the effects of the new permanent residency law on the interactions between citizens and ABiQ.

The following sections focus on some of the existing literature on the various social, cultural, economic, and political situations faced by migrants to Qatar, as well as Qatari citizens.

Brief History of Arab Migration to Qatar

To understand the political and social aspects associated with the Arab and non-Arab migration to Qatar it is important to understand the recent history of their migration. During the 1960s and 1970s, most of Qatar's migrants were Arabs (Babar, 2017). The main reason is the Qatari state had multiple agreements with Arab countries to help Qatar develop its newly built state. However, things changed dramatically in the late 1970s due to the Oil Boom and growing global discourses on, and the fear of, the spread of pan-Arabist ideology (De Bel-Air, 2014).

A figure released by the Ministry of Labour in Qatar in 2013 stated that around 13% of the workforce in Qatar are Arab migrants. However, almost half of the total Arab residents in Qatar are non-working dependants, such as students and housewives (Babar, 2017). One of the explanations for such a high number of non-working Arab residents is that Arabs tend to migrate to Qatar with their families, unlike Asian workers. The table below shows the top five Arab nationalities living in Qatar in 2017.

Arabs Living in Qatar (Per Percentage)

Nationality	*Percentage %*
Egyptian	49%
Syrian	12%
Sudanese	10%
Lebanese	7%
Jordanian	6%

(Table 2) Source: (Snoj, 2019).

Based on the historical context of the Qatari migration, nationality and ethnicity play big role in Qatar's migration patterns, as does the temporality and/or permanency of peoples aims and hopes behind migration. As mentioned before, Arabs fill medium to high paid jobs such as in the government sector, while most non-Arabs and mainly Asian migrants fill roles in construction sector. Hence, we can easily argue that language capacity and cultural/religious similarity and sameness impacts strongly on the prospects and accomplishments of migrants to Qatar (Seshan, 2012).

1- Social Interactions determined by similarity and affinity
One of the main objectives of this article is to explore the social interactions between *mawatinin* مواطنين (Qatari citizens) and ABiQs. The shared Arabic culture makes integration easy between ABiQ and Qataris in comparison to other migrants, especially non-Arabs. Elisabeth Longuenesse stresses this fact in her claim:

> [T]he real links forged by a common language and history may permit the integration
> of personal dimensions into the relations of a migrant and his *kafil*, or sponsor,
> helping the former to become integrated into the local society (1988: 3).

Geoff Harkness (2020) expanded on this idea, stating that 'Arabs align themselves with Qataris implying shared ethnicity and distance themselves from non-Arab foreigners' (p. 209). Furthermore, most ABiQ have lived the majority of their lives in Qatar, which can strengthen their knowledge of local Qatari communities and make them more likely to establish relationships with Qatari nationals than other migrants. Further, El Berni (2018) argues that an important topic of study regarding the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar, is the development and nature of their identity and the similarities and differences between them and Qatari citizens; identity and belonging. According to (Soudy, 2017), there are big differences between migrants who come to Qatar through work contracts and the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar who are born in Qatar, study in the country, and share many social values with Qatari citizens. However, as

claimed by Malik (2017), even though the children of Arab migrants were born and raised in Qatar and share many beliefs and traditions with Qatari citizens, many of them do question their uncertain and 'temporary'' status in the country. This is where the introduction of the Permanent Residency Law comes to attention.

2- Interaction, affinity, and the New Permanent Residency law

Most of the ABiQ in Qatar study, work, and live surrounded by family members and as revealed by the participants in this research consider Qatar as their permanent place of residency. However, a basic question remains: does the absence of citizenship prevent them from feeling that they belong in Qatar? As indicated by some authors (Longva, 2000; Fernandez, 2014; Mahdavi, 2011), migrants in the Gulf countries are surrounded by the sponsorship system, which can hinder them from feeling that they belong and to integrate into the host country.

In the case of ABiQ, their assimilation into Qatari culture can be labelled as *mawatinin* مواطنين (Qatari citizens) because their cultural similarities with Qatari citizens increase their possibilities of interaction with Qataris. However, state policies in some of the GCC countries have historically been geared towards preventing the granting of citizenship to Arabs because of political reasons, such as the fear of the spread of the Nasserist ideology[3] (Janiszewski, 2004). Therefore, the situation in Qatar is unique because it provides the option of Permanent Residency to selected residents, which means Qatar is following a different approach than most of the GCC countries (Karen, 2017). This process and approach – even if minor now – can impact the mutual interaction between Qatari citizens and ABiQ and influence the nation-building process.

Moreover, ABiQ and Qatari citizens in their mutual interaction can develop knowledge and interests in each other's everyday lives, as there are usually no big cultural gaps between ABiQ and Qataris in comparison with other non-Arabs migrants. In general, the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar and Qataris often have deep mutual interactions. Examples of these interactions and the subjective and ontological meanings for individuals will be outlined in the research findings sections below, focusing on both positive (sense of belonging and at home) and problematic aspects (lacking legal citizenship rights), in the context of the Permanent Residency Laws

3- Born in Qatar *Mawalid* (مواليد)

The term *Mawalid* مواليد refers to people born in Qatar – referred to here as ABiQ - and is usually associated with specific characteristics such as knowledge of the country and priority of hiring in the government sector, especially in the police and army (Mohammed, 2017). The *Mawalid* مواليد capital knowledge comes from the shared culture such as language, traditions, and religion. However, the actual meaning of the term Mawalid is 'born in a country', but it is used in the Qatari context for Arabs born in Qatar. The *Mawalid* مواليد term is associated with particular knowledge and follows specific attitudes and practices of the members of Qatari society. All those characteristics reflect *Mawalid* مواليد social interaction with the Qatari citizens (Yousef and Khattab, 2023).

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[3] Nasserism is an ideology influenced by socialist ideas and founded by the Egyptian president Jamal Abdul-Nasir. It focused on the ideas of Arab nationalism and anti-imperialism, and it reached its peak during the 1960s.

Methodology

This article draws on a number of semi-structured interviews, focusing on the social aspects of the relationship between Qatari citizens and Arabs born in Qatar. The objective of using a qualitative method is to examine and describe the Arabs born in Qatar, emphasizing the significance of their personal experiences in their mutual interaction with Qatari citizens.

This article is based on data obtained through semi-structured interviews conducted with 14 participants of different Arab nationalities; all were born and live in Qatar and most live in the capital Doha. The nationalities of the participants are the following, three Egyptians, three Sudanese, two Palestinians, two Lebanese, two Syrian, and two Yemenis. The participants range in age from 20 to 50 years old. Twelve of the participants are male, two are female. The small number of female participants can be explained by the fact that the researcher is male and cannot easily gain permission to talk to females who are not family (cultural barriers) (see background nationalities in the table below). The participants' education levels vary; some attended government schools and universities, while others studied at private or community schools in Qatar, and some studied outside Qatar in their countries of origin. Two of the interviewees hold master's degrees and two are pursuing one; the rest of them have a bachelor's degree and one of the women has a high-school qualification. Two of the interviewees attended the Qatar campuses of American universities. The participants' social and economic statuses vary as well. Four of the interviewees are married, six of them are working in highly paid jobs, and one has his own company. The majority of the interviewees work in the government sector in medium- to high-income jobs, such as policemen, teachers and doctors.

The fieldwork for this research was heavily affected by the Covid 19 pandemic. Qatar, like many countries around the world, went through lockdowns, which made initiating communication with prospective interviewees difficult. Despite these challenges, fourteen interviewees from the six most prevalent nationalities in terms of ABiQs in Qatar were recruited. They come from different economic and educational backgrounds, which can be to some extent seen as a sign of a fair representative sample of ABiQs.

The interview questions addressed participants' daily social interactions, including interactions in their neighbourhoods, at work, at their places of study, and interactions and relationships with Qatari citizens. Participants were also asked about their perspectives on being an Arab born in Qatar and their opinions on the *Iqama Daama* إقامة دائمة (Permanent Residency).

Discussion

Socio-economic Disparity and Differences.

As introduced above, the main objective of this article is to explore the social interactions between Qatari citizens and ABiQs. When asked about everyday social interaction with Qatari citizens, many interviewees brought up socio-economic disparity and lack of citizenship rights as obstacles when forming close social bonds with Qatari citizens. For example, some of the interviewees said economic differences create social barriers that make social interaction difficult.

"There are social and economic gaps between us غير قطري *[non-qataris] and them* قطري *[qataris]" was one statement made by a 37-year-old egyptian male teacher.*

Social classification and economic segregation - job options and geographical location/ing - of migrants based on nationality has evidently resulted in real and physical distancing and barrier making when it comes to social interaction across different groups in the GCC countries and in Qatar (Vora and Koch, 2015). Evidently, a migrant with a high income and professional/work status has more opportunities to interact with *Mawatinin* مواطن (citizen) than migrants who come from low-income/social status groups.

A 35-year-old male Palestinian research participant claimed that low-income migrants do not get the opportunity to interact with people of other nationalities, and especially not with Qatari citizens. This is not only because of cultural barriers but also due to financial reasons. He referred to the income disparity between low- and high-income migrants and Qataris. This research participant gave an example of 'going out', as to him socialising is all about going out rather than visiting people at home. In addition, following a similar argument, a 29-year-old Palestinian male IT engineer, said:

> *If you as a migrant or Qatari citizens, both from [the] high-income group, want to go out [to] a restaurant or a cafe-shop in a hotel, the people you know from [a] low-income [group] would not be able to afford such a place, which makes socialising with them difficult.*

So, we can argue that socio-economic diversity and opportunities do impact on everyday social interaction. Furthermore, we need to consider interaction might be determined by space, location, mobility, and opportunities to 'advance', particularly to do with people's workplaces.

The Workplace

This section is about the various professions of the research participants. Commonly, the original reason for migrating to Qatar is employment opportunities, therefore the nature of the work and workplace plays a significant role when determining a person's positions in Qatari society and the nature of their interaction with other members of society. When it comes to work-placed interactions, this research indicates that while interactions are undergoing some changes as Qatar – as a nation and society – meets environmental and economic challenges, the levels of social interactions might be undergoing change, while also being impacted by traditions and ancestry.

As indicated by Naithani and Jha (2009: 6) 'social interaction between *mawatinin* مواطنين (Qatari citizens) and expats in Qatar is limited to workplaces', and further that this social phenomenon is not only particular to Qatar but can be seen across all the GCC countries. Some participants in this research did agree to this claim, but some accounts challenge this statement. For example, a Sudanese female dentist with 48 years old stated:

> *Most of my interaction with Qataris are within the workplace or for professional reasons.*

One of the interviewees, a 41-year-old Sudanese businessman, often interacts with Qatari citizens due to the nature of his work, and most of these citizens are either property owners or looking for a property to lease, sell or buy. He said, *most of my interaction with Qataris are*

within the workplace or for professional reasons. However, he elaborated on such interactions with Qatari citizens by saying that

> *they are not really my friends compared with other friends from different nationalities because they do not come to my house and I do not go to their houses, so basically our relationships are shaped by business interests rather than social intimacy.*

A similar opinion was shared by a male Palestinian participant who said that he works as an IT engineer and most of his clients are Qataris, however, his relationship with them is limited mostly to the workplace; in other words, it is a professional, not a social relationship. He said that *they are clients, not my friends*. However, even if through professional interaction, he claims that through general conversations he has come to 'know' some Qatari citizens, and through them learnt some fundamental aspects of the local culture.

Still, the nature of the work of some of the interviewees has led them to have in-depth interactions with Qatari citizens. For example, some work in the police sector, and one of the interviewees, a 33-year-old Sudanese man, claimed that:

> *Before my work I rarely had contact with Qatari citizens, especially since I studied in Sudanese community schools, which have no Qatari students, and I live in a neighbourhood which limits Qatari citizens living in the area. However, my current police department is mostly staffed by Qataris, with whom I have established strong friendships.*

The interviewees were asked if they thought being an ABiQ helped them in their career. One of the participants, a 34-year-old Lebanese male engineer said:

> *I work in the energy sector in a company full of non-Arabs; when my company is dealing with another company full of Qatari citizens, they send me to do the talking.*

To this research participant, his employers selected him for this job because he is an Arab and can communicate better with other Arabs and especially قطريين Qataris. Further this fact is not only because of his knowledge of the Arabic language, it is also his knowledge of cultural etiquettes. Consequently, as an Arab employee among a company full of non-Arabs, he has been selected, something which he does feel as privilege. Furthermore, such 'privileges' can also be established through formal education.

Education

Education can play an interesting part in interactions between Qatari citizens and ABiQ. As some of the interviewees have lived their entire lives in Qatar, but they had not had the chance to interact with Qatari citizens properly until they joined university. For example, a 27-year-old Egyptian male accountant, said:

> *The university allowed me to encounter Qatari citizens closely for the first time [in] my life.*

Another example is that two of the interviewees did not have chance to interact with Qatari citizens when they were younger because they studied in community schools. [4]

The 29 years old Palestinian male engineer said, *studying in a community school is the reason my opportunities to interact with Qatari citizens have been hindered from an early age.* He explained further by saying:

> *I am originally a Palestinian, but I studied at a Jordanian school which had no Qatari students. I established strong relationships with my colleagues from the Jordanian school and I still keep in touch with them to this day.*

Another example shared by a Lebanese male engineer he said that he spent his elementary school days in a Lebanese school, while for high school he attended a government school which enrolled a majority of Qatari students. He explained by saying that:

> *This was a huge turn in my social life in Qatar and it was the first time I interacted with Qataris and established friendships with them. It also gave me a basic knowledge of Qatari local customs and norms.*

At a university level, one of the interviewees, a 31 Egyptian male, said*:*

> *I live in the city centre of Doha, which has almost no Qataris, but I had the chance to interact with them and establish strong relationships with some of them during my study time at Qatar University*5*.*

He said that *the Business College was full of Qatari students with whom I established long-lasting friendships*. He added that *'the university allowed me to encounter Qataris closely for the first time [in] my life even though I was born and lived my entire life in Qatar'.* Another participant Egyptian male participant studied in the same college at Qatar University and later opened his own company. He said that *'I benefited from connections with my former university colleagues as they became my clients. Besides business interests, I strengthened my relationships with some of them'.* It became apparent from information from most of the research participants that formal education – past and present – has and does impact on social interaction. Further, these interactions do change as the Qatari population grows and Qatar keeps venturing into the 21st century and increasingly multicultural population.

Nevertheless, some of the participants have limited contact with citizens, though they said they had chances to establish relationships with قطربين (Qataris) during their early years of education. As they said, during their studies in the government schools they had opportunities to interact with Qataris directly over a long period. For some of them, this was the time they learned about Qatari culture and found themselves engaging with Qatari local society.

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[4] Community Schools are very common in Qatar and throughout the GCC countries. They are schools which teach the curricula of foreign countries in Qatar, such as Indian, Jordanian, and Sudanese schools.

[5] A government university, and for many years until [mention education, city etc] it was the only university in Qatar, and until now it is the main provider of higher education in the country.

General reflection: socio-economic factors, workplace, and formal education.

For ABiQ who entered professional work, socio-economic aspects and issues such as the nature of the workplace, income differences and educational opportunities as outlined above, play significant roles in their social interactions with Qatari citizens. For example, workplaces can provide possibilities of mutual interaction among the two groups, especially when this involves white-collar expats and educated ABiQs. On the other hand, the income disparities are a clear example of social division, especially between Qataris and ABiQ from low-income backgrounds.

Still, as matters to do with education (qualification), workplace (relations), socio-economic factors, and place (space) of living, are of significant importance when it comes to studying and understanding the interactions between ABiQ and Qatari citizens, language, traditions, and culture is also of great importance.

Cultural Similarities: Language And Much More.

Cultural similarities play a big role for bringing together *mawatinin* مواطنين (Qatari citizens) and ABiQ because of the shared language and culture. Also, it is one of the main distinctions between ABiQ and other non-Arab migrants when it comes to their closeness with Qatari citizens. As an acknowledgment of such reality, most of the participants in the interviews said that being an Arab born in Qatar gives them many advantages such as communication advantages; besides the shared language, they have good knowledge about the local dialect. Such knowledge facilitates their interaction with Qatari citizens.

As a response to the question 'do you think you are privileged for being an Arab living in Qatar?', most of the responses from the participants indicated that the Qataris preferred dealing with Arabs than non-Arabs, and that language – confidence and knowledge of the local dialect - was the main reason for such a preference. Not all Qataris have good knowledge of the English language, which is the common language among foreigners in Qatar. However, most of the participants said being an Arab born in Qatar provides more opportunities to interact with Qataris than being an Arab (not speaking the local dialect) not born in Qatar does. For example, a 34-year-old Lebanese male engineer said:

'Language plays a strong role for me to feel privileged as an Arab in Qatar'.

As a response to the question *'do you feel more Qatari or more [your ancestral nationality]?'*, most of the participants replied that they feel more loyal and attached to Qatar than to their country of origin and that they consider Qatar as their permanent country of residence. The main reason for such a feeling is that they have lived their entire lives in Qatar. A 37-year-old Egyptian male teacher explained this by saying *'I originally came from Egypt, but I was born in Qatar and my family immigrated over 40 years ago to Qatar, thus I consider Qatar as my home'.*

It emerged from the interviews with Yemenis that they felt closer to interacting with Qatari citizens than other participants did. For example, two of the interviewees, a male and a female Yemeni, said that Qatari culture is closer to them than Yemeni culture, and they felt they were more like Qataris than Yemenis. They dealt with Qataris more easily than with Arabs. A 27-year-old man claimed the following:

My surrounding environment played a major role for making me embrace the local culture. It started in childhood, as I was raised in a neighbourhood inhabited mostly by Qataris and I studied in schools populated by them, so such social aspects have shaped my life since an early age. The same lifestyle continued in the later stages of his life.

A 25-year-old Yemeni woman gave similar responses, as she saw herself as interacting mainly with Qataris rather than with non-Qataris. She explained that by saying:

I speak the local dialect, wear the same clothes, and share the same culture. I have maintained strong relationships with Qatari females since school, and at work I have made more friendships.

The Yemeni woman works as a manager in a beauty salon and most of her customers are Qatari women, some of whom have become more than customers, as she has formed friendships with them. She said that *'I studied in schools dominated by Qatari females'* and in her work, she deals mostly with Qatari women *'so I have many Qatari friends rather than of other nationalities'*.

Hence, cultural similarities are much more than shared language and Arab identity. Many ABiQs, especially Yemenis look like Qataris, speak the same dialect and wear the national dress, which makes distinguishing them from the Qatari at a glance hard. This explains the special situation of ABiQ interviewees with a Yemeni background and their cultural proximity to Qatari citizens.

Citizenship Dilemma

In the context of this article, citizenship has two distinct aspects. The first comes from the State recognising that ABiQ has a culture similar to that of the Qatari citizens. The other is that recognition comes from local citizens accepting that any ABiQ who assimilates with their local culture should be part of them (Clarke et al., 2014: 25). For example, the second strategic population policy made by the permanent population committee advised the government to give priority to naturalising Arabs. The justification for a policy tailored to Arabs was the fact that they share a similar culture and language, which makes it easier for them to interact with Qatari citizens and into the Qatari local society (Permanent Population Committee, 2017).

The interviewees were asked if they considered themselves Qataris or of their original nationality; the answers varied. For example, most of the ABiQs said they were both Qataris and their original nationality and they replied as follows. First, they had spent their entire lives in Qatar, thus they were attached to it, rather than to their countries of origin. A Lebanese male participant explained this by saying, *I cannot live as a Lebanese, and I cannot live as a Qatari. I am both.* Second response was that they consider themselves as Qataris more than their own citizenship, as for example in the answers of the two Yemeni interviewees. As the Yemeni male participant said, *to me I am more Qatari than Yemeni.* As mentioned earlier, for the Yemeni interviewees' the claim was that many ABiQ from Yemeni backgrounds act like Qatari in terms of dialect, clothes, and appearance. In addition, inter-marriage between Qataris from Yemeni backgrounds and Yemenis is very common, especially among those from the same tribe. In general, most of the interviewees responded that they are more attached to Qatar than to their home country, but they

still say their status in the country is not different from that of other residents. On the other hand, some ABiQ are consider themselves more privileged than others.

Regarding *Iqama Daama* دائمة إقامة(Permanent Residency), the participants praised the new arrangement of giving a permanent residency card, which can guarantee their stay in Qatar forever. A Lebanese male engineer shared his opinion by saying that now I hope that if I acquire the Permanent Residency, I will stay in Qatar without the fear of returning to my original country at any time. An Egyptian male teacher said:

> My father came to Qatar half a century ago, but we need to renew our residency yearly as a *family. However*, if I have the PR, I will no longer need to do this process. A Sudanese lady said: I love Qatar, and I want to stay here forever; the PR can give me a sense of security for myself and my kids.

As indicated by Younes (2018), the permanent residency card provides a sense of security for Qatari residents, especially the second generation, because they can apply for it compared with other residents who do not meet the requirements set by the Qatari government.

Concluding Remarks

This article is driven by the following question: do the descendants of Arab migrants born in Qatar (ABiQ) interact more closely with Qatari citizens than other non-Arab migrants. Also, will a revised legal status and rights of ABiQ residents of Qatar impact on social harmony and claims to material and resources rights. The answers to both questions are likely 'yes' as demonstrated in this article. The non-citizen people of Arab backgrounds born in Qatar (ABiQ), share cultural and religious similarities with Qatari citizens which can allow for mutual interaction between both groups. However, there are barriers to full social interaction with the Qatari citizens community. For example, citizenship dilemma, socio-economic status, and income disparities.

The Qatari government's policies could hinder mutual interaction between Qataris and ABiQ due to the legal framework of citizenship, though this challenge can be overcome by granting greater number of Permanent Residency Card to ABiQ. In addition, ABiQ who have spent their entire lives in Qatar have a better chance of embracing the local culture and knowing more about the local communities. However, despite their cultural similarities and social closeness with Qatari citizens, they still face some challenges, such as their temporary status and feelings of insecurity.

Qatar is one of the GCC countries with an extreme demographic imbalance dilemma, due to its small number of citizens compared to migrants. Such circumstances can lead a country to seek means to increase its number of citizens, and, in this case selectively. As this study has revealed ABiQ are closer culturally to Qatari citizens and share many of their social values, hence granting ABiQ permanent residency status can be a way of mitigating the low perentie of Qatari citizens, likely filling employment gaps at government and higher levels, and boost interactions between ABiQ and Qatari citizens. In addition, loyalty might be seen as a vital point as ABiQ can be perceived as having more loyalty than non-native population. This is because ABiQ have lived their entire lives in Qatar and may continue living there for generations to come (El Berni, 2018: 486). The social interactions between Qatari & non-Qatari remain a challenge, and it is at most times limited to the workplace & and in some instances formal educational contexts. The central tension remains, the one of indefinite temporariness. More inclusive permanent residency policy may mean re-distribution of resources to include new residents. This article indicates that the Arab

culture is the common denominator for greater, and of higher quality, social interactions between the Qataris and the ABiQ, but also points to the need for awareness of the ABiQ temporary status, despite their construction of their Qatari identity at will.

To conclude, this topic needs further research, and more studies could reveal more of the situations ABiQ face in regard to government policies, especially those targeted at future generations in Qatar.

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Navigating Identity Discontinuity: Cultural and Identity Shifts in Migration after COVID-19

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Abstract. In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic causing identity rupture, migrants continued to stream into Europe. Coupled with identity performativity and assimilation issues from before, both migrants and hosts were now faced with the aspect of isolation driven by a pandemic. This study utilizes and develops Cover's (2021) assertion of COVID-19 causing "crisis and rupture" to view migration streams as case studies, highlighting new challenges in the migrant experience. We postulated it led to further crises in host populations due to reactionary behaviour, causing a chain reaction – one identity crisis leading to another. Our paper traces identity shifts amongst migrants and residents of host states during the pandemic. We utilized the cases of Syrians and Indians migrating to Germany and Italy, as they are established migrant streams. These migrants faced crises in the form of prior social identities clashing with the hosts' national identity, given the pandemic driven absence of assimilation mechanisms normally present. Migrants' reluctance to conform was met with hosts' frustration with alien communities. This exacerbated regular reactionary patterns, leading to locals further distancing themselves from refugees, gravitating towards right-wing politics. It initiated a new form of integrated identity discontinuity, causing social contradictions.

Keywords: post-covid; migration; refugee; identity; crisis; cultural identity; cultural rupture; normalcy; performativity; identity shift.

Introduction

In 2020, the world engaged in lockdown due to the rapid spread of COVID-19. The COVID-19 pandemic had global socio-cultural implications beyond its impact on health by reshaping perspectives on life, work and community, consequently having a direct impact on identity and culture (Redbird, Harbridge-Yong, and Mersey 2022). This impact was directly observed in migration, being a two-way transformation in both migrants and host communities (Bhugra and Becker 2005). While states grappled with the pandemic, they enacted many policies to minimize the physical social interaction of communities; increased migration control being primary (Koinova et al. 2022). This simply meant an uptick in illegal migration as legal pathways were being blocked, with the issue itself becoming highly politicized issue on the European continent (Karageorgiou and Noll 2022).

While migrations often prove advantageous for host economies and migrant individuals, large-scale migrations can present intricate identity dilemmas. As a two-way phenomenon, migration affects both newcomers and host communities; both populations continue to metamorphosize as

they learn from one another(Kutor, Raileanu, and Simandan 2021). While the economic future of Europe is in jeopardy due to an aging crisis(Demeny 2016), many states have turned to migration to combat it. Germany has accommodated thousands of Syrian refugees (Welker 2022), injecting young individuals into the working population (Rietig 2016). In fact, European countries that undertake more immigrants might be comparatively more economically secure: immigrants provide a larger tax-base for healthcare and pensions for the aging population (Harper 2016), while migrants coming from insecure origins benefit from security and stability (Dowling 2019).

The arrival of new peoples often challenges established socio-cultural norms, potentially causing security concerns for host populations. This could lead to the conflation of migrants with increased likelihood of security issues such as terrorism and far-right tendencies in their countries (Attinà 2018). Several host populations across Europe in Germany, the Netherlands, Poland, Hungary, Italy and Greece have considered a diversifying population dangerous for security (Poushter 2016). The argument is partly that migrant cultures are incompatible with host cultures, a conundrum as old as human society. The pandemic caused further fracture between such communities, worsening migrant perceptions. The concerns of host cultures lead to questions of inclusivity, cultural diversity and the redefinition of their own identities in the presence of newcomers; either fostering a sense of enrichment or a sense of threat. Therefore, as migration continues in the post-pandemic world, we delve into the dynamics of cultural ruptures and identity shifts, triggering cross-border identity chain reactions.

This paper thus addresses two fundamental questions concerning migration and identity to further understand identity transformations in this time. Firstly to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted existing identity performance, which is then applied onto migrants in particular. To answer these questions and consequently establish how one group's self-doubt and inability to conform can elicit a reaction by another group, this paper first defines the performance of identity and the factors impacting it, followed by the impact of the pandemic on selfhood.

Cover's works on Butler take the latter's gender performativity theory and adapt it to holistically to identity. Hence, Butler's own definition of identity as performance applies: "(gender) identity is performatively constituted by the very expressions that are said to be its results" (Butler 2011, 25). Consequently, through applying Butler's gender performativity theory on migrants one can argue migrants are often compelled to perform in new surroundings through the adoption of linguistic, cultural and behavioural norms as per the host society, creating a new identity for them. This performance is, of course, iterative: it occurs through institutional policy and social interaction, with the migrant either successfully embodying the host society's norms or subverting them through alternative identity performances (Hanfstingl et al. 2021). The latter outcome is seen in the concept of transnational identity and diasporic hybrid identities (Bhandari 2021). Meanwhile, assimilation becomes a performance of normalcy as defined by the locale. On the other hand, host populations construct themselves through opposition to the 'Other' i.e. migrants (Kutor, Raileanu, and Simandan 2021). Such performativity is shaped by nationalist discourses and social interaction.

As the pandemic raged on, the impact it had on such performativity mechanisms was debated. Rob Cover argued that "rupture itself has occurred for very large numbers of people in ways which fundamentally shift how identities of relationality and belonging are constituted, performed and articulated" (Cover 2021, 1); due to the inaccessibility to 'normalcy'. Such normalcy can include behaviours such as the mobility to travel, physical interaction with locales and conventional employment. Due to the pandemic, there was now a distinct lack of certain iterations

in performance, notably the physical aspects; this led to digital spaces becoming central as the stage of performativity.

This paper returns to Cover's assertions that built upon Butler's performativity theory, beginning with identification of factors that can trigger identity crises in migration patterns. This includes institutional policy social interaction, and media narratives, and how this might lead to certain narratives impacting migrant/host relations. It does so for both the host and migrant populations. Secondly, the impact of the pandemic on performativity is examined via a case study of Syrian and Indian migration to Europe. The cases of Syrians and Indians is chosen due to the expansive migration of the two populations to Europe affording the cases a rich history of past performativity for both. The two populations also constitute a large chunk of the total numbers of European immigrants. By identifying factors that led to worsening social relations between migrants and hosts, we argue the importance of certain policies in the process of 'assimilation' or formation of compatible identities.

Factors in Migrating Identities

Migration is a complex and fundamental human phenomenon. People migrate for many reasons: seeking education and livelihoods, escaping persecution, seeking refuge from natural disasters, preaching faith, or seeking adventure. Since movements of individuals and communities across geographies has social, economic and cultural implications, it also impacts identity (Bhugra 2004). The experience of border crossings leaves an impact on migrants, contributing to identity and security challenges (Wong 1989). Migrants find themselves in new cultural contexts. This clash between one's original identity and that of the new community presents an identity crisis. Migrants are unsure of which culture to identify with, and how much. As migrants undergo cultural discontinuity, they experience reshaping of identity on a physical level that may lead to individuals being ill at ease, or experience loss of self-esteem; it is a vulnerable state (Cover 2021). It is in this state that social norms might impact one's identity.

Mobility is key to interacting with the new locale. As movement across borders becomes difficult, so does the ability to interact with a community – a factor doubly applicable to illegal migrants. Greater mobility yields more interactions, providing more opportunity to perform one's identity (White and White 2004). Cheaper, publicly accessible transport options led to easier integration for migrant populations (Allen et al. 2021). Areas with greater mobility hence have greater cultural continuity, leading to a higher chance of migrant assimilating into existing communities (Liao et al. 2025). Hence, migrant populations with lower mobility options would have less interactions and face more difficulty finding a new identity to perform via iteration. Of similar importance is the presence of routine; as an individual performs repeatedly over structured timelines, their identity stabilizes further (Sharma 2013). For example, going to work at set times helps aid in the performance of one's role at work. Similarly, migrants reliant on informal employment such as the gig economy might not have consistent temporality, with the lack of structure hindering identity formation.

Key in the interaction of both abovementioned variables is rupture, which forces individuals to redefine their identities as crises occur. A prominent case is individuals with features similar to the cultural image of Muslims after 9/11 making a conscious attempt at performing differing behaviours to change their identities in order to avoid any harm (Tindongan 2011). As crises happen, routines and mobility are also impacted. This bodily insecurity leads to identity

insecurity, demanding a defensive reaction; individuals might be forced to pick polarized identities (Cover 2021).

Syrian & Indian Migration

Syrians are the most displaced population in the world, with 21.8 million people displaced both internally and externally across 124 countries (UNCHR 2023). This displacement is triggered by many factors, primarily security. Other factors include political, economic, social, and in the wake of COVID, psychological. Over the years of the Syrian refugee crisis, there have been many challenges faced by Syrians having to now assimilate into a culture alien to them without their express consent.

Identity crises in countries like Syria were catalysed by factors such as terrorism and the efforts to fight it, support for compliant governments, backing of proxy groups, creation of security concerns, humanitarian crises and food insecurity. The emergence of COVID exacerbated these issues, causing a collapse of the Syrian health network (Swed et al. 2022). Swed et al. (2023) discusses the impact of COVID in Syria, a country already grappling with long-standing conflicts and humanitarian crises. They explain the pandemic increased challenges to healthcare facilities, given limited vaccine availability and inadequate healthcare infrastructure. COVID exacerbated already dire conditions, with skyrocketing cases in both government-held and conflict-affected areas; overwhelming healthcare systems already dealing with outbreaks such as cholera, with women being the most affected due to violence and malnutrition (Qaddour 2021). Hence, there was cultural disruption at multiple levels.

Security and political turmoil in Syria along with COVID fuelled a sense of disruption in the identity of the population. The civil war rendered Syrians the world's largest refugee group. Under Bashar al-Assad's rule amid an ongoing proxy war, Syrians were compelled to seek refuge in foreign countries. The spread of terrorism, originating from Al-Qaeda, exacerbated security concerns across the Middle East and North Africa. This has been also responsible for creating more terrorist groups and factions in this region, including Daesh (Borum 2004). As a highly fracturing conflict, the Syrian civil war has led to great uncertainty regarding life and survival. With living conditions deteriorating during COVID, nationalistic fervour waned, especially in Syria (Abbara et al. 2022). However, potential Syrian migrants faced formidable barriers due to the civil war, including a lack of mobility, funds and security guarantees (Tobin and and Al Yakoub 2022). Previously open migration corridors were closed with the pandemic cited as a reason, such as the path through Turkey (Yücel 2021).

Although India does not face a humanitarian crisis, many Indians emigrate due to challenges they face due to their religion, caste, or gender identity. This includes women fleeing to urban centres (Khoo, Smith, and Fawcett 1984) and religious minorities such as Christians fleeing to Europe due to fears of persecution (Varghese 2022). For the former, it would immediately afford them greater mobility leading to an immediate identity shift. For those fleeing the caste system, an erasure of their cast status in a new land would afford them greater opportunities. In the case of Europe, Indian migrants either are generally of a higher-class background to afford it, or they access funding available to highly skilled individuals.

Many migrated due to the Indian government's response to the pandemic, as it ravaged the country. Initially, India managed to contain the number of cases in the immediate stages but soon faltered: the federal containment approach wasn't effective, with over 44 million cases in

addition to more than half a million deaths over the course of the pandemic (CSSEGISandData [2020] 2024). Certain groups experienced greater precarity than before as men were forced to stay home (Narasimhan, Chittem, and Purang 2021). Domestic violence increased (Verderber 2024), as lockdowns and unemployment hit the country (Krishnakumar and Verma 2021). The lack of bodily security in multiple dimensions led to a marked increase in migration to the EU (Raghuram 2022).

In the wake of the pandemic, a large migrant population entered the continent, and experienced great vulnerability with regards to identity amongst other factors. Syrians and Indians both have established reasons for such migration, in addition to prior communities of their respective national origins existing in host countries. They provide two differing scenarios: (a) Syrians entering as refugees forcibly displaced, and (b) Indians wishing for a different life. This leads to differing motivations in the new aspirant homeland, directly impacting such peoples' identity performances.

Chain Action in Identity Performance

As migrants move to other states to reconceptualise their ruptured identity, host communities face certain difficulties. With migrations comes a sense of otherness for both the migrants and the host populations. For the hosts, migration triggers reactionary concerns that impact their identity. This influx of refugees is not a novelty – Germany has been host to large Syrian migrant populations since the refugee crisis began (Vollmer and Karakayali 2018), while Italy has been an entry-point for many migrants coming to Europe (Blangiardo and Ortensi 2019). Such points of entry are the beginning of the area of migration, becoming a liminal space for refugees. Upon entering the new environments, their wounded pride and damaged identities are further challenged. Hence these groups establish strong communities in host states. Such strong communities lead to a lack of interaction with local communities, entrenching potential alternative identities that may not perfectly cohabitate. The alien socio-cultural norms of the host state require adaptive steps to ease the transition for the newcomers (Adamson 2006). Locals perceive this as a rejection of their values and norms, threatening marginalisation of their own identity vis-à-vis the foreign groups (Sasaki and Baba 2024). Consequently, they intensify their commitment to their own identity as a defensive measure against perceived threats (Häberlen 2022). This was observed when Syrian refugees created communities in host states, leading to ghettoization as opposed to assimilation.

In a bid to preserve their identity, right-wing parties politicise threats to local culture calling for antiimmigrant policies (Monshipouri, Ellis, and Yip 2020). About 35% of people in Germany consider immigrants to be a burden and about 54% of Italians hold the same opinion; where 58% of Germans and 61% of Italians believe the immigrants do not wish to adapt to the customs of the host country. The number of hate and xenophobic crimes increased since 2014 (Connor 2019). In 2022, the German police recorded more than 10,000 xenophobic crimes, 610 of them were Islamophobic and 1,139 included violence ("Overview of Hate Crimes: Case Number Trends" 2022). This indicates the threat to cultural identity the Germans feel from the immigrants.

Syrians entering Europe are asylum seekers and may range from highly skilled to unskilled: they are dependent on state welfare, naturalisation, and economic opportunities to re-establish themselves (Etzel 2022). Emigrating Indians are not refugees escaping from large scale humanitarian crisis; they belong to different classes, and many have sound social and economic

backgrounds coming through the legal and formal procedure for purposes such as study or work (Gautam 2013). Secondly, Germany and Italy and other West-European nations are experiencing a rise in anti-migrant Islamophobia (Perocco 2018) which affects the migrating Syrians.

The Indian community's case is different: it is a large population that has been migrating to all corners of the globe since global travel became possible (Oonk 2007) and Germany has remained a key destination for them. The number of Indians migrating to Germany increased from 31,877 in 1990 to 89,704 in 2019 right before the pandemic (ICMPD 2020). With the cultural diplomacy of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government, the Indian diaspora in Europe underwent an identity change with Hindus and upper-caste individuals leaning towards government messaging, as minorities shied away from identifying with modern India (Srinivas 2019). Indian migrants belong to different classes and experience different forms of migrant life, aiding them in settling within European society better (Goel 2008). This was exacerbated due to the COVID's economic impact, with a certain class being able emigrate to Global North, not being limited to closer regions in Asia (Gupta and Bapuji 2024). Due to these occupational differences, the general outlook towards Indian migrants is varied, with disparities in skilled and unskilled migrants (Indelicato and Martín 2024). Despite many German people disapproving of many other migrants (Hartmann 2016), there seems to be no disapproval of the Indian immigrants. Due to lack of perceived threat, Indian migrants' presence in Germany is not securitized or politicised at all, even during elections.

Chain Reaction

The pandemic led to great changes in the experiences of immigrants and host nations. It led to discontinuity of normalcy, with job losses and health crises. This caused anxiety and frustration at the government response, in addition to a lockdown where mobility and social interaction were limited despite migration continuing. Far-right groups pounced upon this influx of migrants despite their lack of mobility, citing the presence of such migrants as a reason for loss of 'cultural values' among host nations (Zavershinskaia 2024). The sense of damaged identity due to economic concerns is prevalent in European societies. Davis and Deole (2017) linked the rise of right-wing politics to the migrant influx in European society. Increased loyalty for right-wing parties have been seen in both Germany and Italy, especially after COVID (Mudde 2024). Right-wing rhetoric has led to increased violence against the Asian community both in Europe and North America (Wenger, Lantz, and Gallardo 2022). In Italy, hate crimes were specifically observed in areas of unemployment (de Groot 2021).

Migrants entering host countries during the pandemic's unemployment crisis cannot successfully join the labour markets immediately due to low labour demand (Falkenhain et al. 2021). Due to lockdowns, their mobility was reduced, and they were forced to stay in communities where they were discriminated against, whether due to COVID related sentiments or otherwise (Dollmann and Kogan 2021). Those that worked could not experience cultural social norms due to limited interaction with the locals in wake of COVID health concerns. Thus, they were alienated further than if the pandemic had not occurred, worsening differences between them and the host population (Bogoeski 2022). This results in discrimination as strong migrant communities form, separate from the locals. The hosts also have different reactions to this ruptured identity. In the case of developed nations like Germany and Italy, the state has resources to help migrants assimilate better – but during the pandemic, the immediate concern was containment of the virus

and maintenance of economic activity. Institutional aids such as welfare and community initiatives were severely handicapped, with attempts to maintain them drawing ire from host populations considering it to be surplus expenditure (Ebbinghaus, Lehner, and Naumann 2022).

Immediately following a return to normalcy post-pandemic, host societies experience a sudden unexpected perceived increase in physical migrant performativity. Based off pandemic-era narratives causing identity entrenchment, this would have led to a stark incapacity to adapt for either side, leading to such communities being further fractured. This disintegration of society becomes part of a vicious identity cycle, as individuals and groups shunned would be placed in yet another crisis demanding polarized identity change.

As established by Cover's (2021) elaboration on Butler's (2011) performativity mechanisms, the COVID-19 pandemic is unique in the sense that it was a crisis of global proportions. The impact on such migrant and host communities was immediately apparent. We argue that the political realities post-pandemic is largely due to many missteps during the earlier years of the pandemic. These lapses necessitated policymaking changes to accelerate policies helping communities integrate to attempt offsetting the deceleration (and entrenchment) of identity formation; yet, they were left unaddressed.

Conclusion

The arrival of the other who maintain a strong connection to their cultural identity within the host country can catalyse a complex and multifaceted chain reaction of security and identity related challenges among the host population. This phenomenon often manifests as a sense of displacement and loss of cultural identity. As a result, segments of the host society may challenge the perceived threat to their identity, hostility against minority groups and newcomers, and an increased support for right-wing ideologies and nationalistic politics. COVID-19 was an event that changed material and social realities for many. As they found themselves in new surroundings, their identities were challenged – as were the identities of the host nations. This intricate interplay underscores the importance of fostering inclusive dialogue, understanding, and policies that address the concerns and fears associated with cultural change, promoting a more harmonious coexistence within diverse societies.

Identity is important element of a nation's integrity. The post-COVID world brought not only economic, political and security challenges to the world but also intensified the identity dilemmas among the populations across the globe. This paper shows that introducing turmoil and uncertainty of any kind causes disruption in normalcy, forcing a change in performativity to adapt. This leads to identity shifts. This rupture of identity caused by COVID took the form of a chain reaction, moving across boundaries to host nations. Upon entering host communities, refugees held onto their original identity causing a chain reaction of identity threat and rupture among the host nations. These nations lean to right-wing politics and hostility to fight this threat and uphold their collective identity. It causes cultural discontinuity, leading to social disorder. This idea can further be researched to understand its circular repetitive nature. Questions like whether and how this identity crisis makes it the moral obligation of host nations to participate in the politics of refugee states can be answered upon further research. It can also be used to identify ways in which this expansion of identity crisis can be reduced, to ensure a peaceful international environment and promote peace, harmony, and inclusivity among all nations.

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From Dollars to Domination: Shiʿite Political Remittances, Diaspora Capital, and Elite Formation in Lebanon since the 1970s

Hucen SLEIMAN

Abstract. This article examines how Lebanese Shiʿite emigrants have transformed economic remittances into political influence since the 1970s. Migration is often described as a source of household support or as a developmental lifeline, yet remittances can also operate as political resources that reshape institutions, elites, and sectarian governance. Focusing on the mechanisms through which emigrant wealth was mobilized to finance schools, clinics, religious centers, and reconstruction projects, the study shows how these initiatives sustained local communities while consolidating partisan authority. The trajectories of Musa al-Sadr's Amal Movement and Hizbullah reveal how financial transfers from abroad were converted into social recognition, symbolic prestige, and durable political power. Historical evidence from the 1970s to the present demonstrates that diaspora capital has institutionalized sectarian welfare, enabled elite reproduction, and compensated for weak state provision. While remittances empowered a marginalized community, they also reinforced Lebanon's sectarian political economy. By situating Lebanon within comparative contexts in Latin America and Africa, the article highlights the dual nature of diaspora remittances as engines of empowerment and instruments of inequality, contributing to broader debates on migration, capital conversion, and political authority in weak and divided states.

Keywords: Lebanon; Shiʿite diaspora; political remittances; transnationalism; migration and elites; sectarian politics; diaspora capital

Introduction

Migration is often narrated as an economic lifeline: a source of remittances that sustain households, reduce poverty, and supplement fragile economies in the Global South. Yet such a framing risks overlooking a more profound reality: remittances, especially when mobilized at scale, are not merely private flows of money but forms of political capital.[1] They shape institutions, restructure elites, and redefine authority within migrant-sending societies. The Lebanese Shiʿite community offers a particularly revealing case. Since the 1970s, emigrants—especially in West Africa, the Gulf, and the Americas—have converted their earnings into political remittances, financing schools, clinics, religious centers, and reconstruction projects that transformed a marginalized sect into a powerful political force.[2]

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[1] Grabel, Ilene. "Remittances: Political Economy and Developmental Implications." *International Journal of Political Economy* 38, no. 4 (2009): 86–106. https://doi.org/10.2753/IJP0891-1916380405

[2] Labaki, Boutros. "The Role of Transnational Communities in Fostering Development in Countries of Origin: The Case of Lebanon." Paper presented at the UN Expert Group Meeting on International Migration and Development in the Arab Region, Beirut, 15–17 May 2006.

Such political remittances are not limited to financial transfers but also encompass the circulation of political ideas, loyalties, and practices through transnational networks. [3] These flows actively reproduce or reshape power structures in the homeland, embedding migrants within the political life of their country of origin. The Lebanese diaspora has similarly functioned as a transnational public sphere where cultural, economic, and political engagements intersect, making migration a long-standing and constitutive dimension of Lebanon's modern political order. [4]

This article asks a central question: how have Lebanese Shiʿite emigrants transformed economic remittances into political influence since the 1970s? In addressing this question, it engages with two strands of scholarship. First is Peggy Levitt's concept of *social remittances*, which highlights the transfer of ideas, practices, and identities alongside money.[5] While Levitt and others emphasized the cultural and normative aspects of these flows, less attention has been given to *political remittances*—financial and institutional resources intentionally mobilized to shape homeland politics.[6] Second is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion, which illuminates how economic capital can be transformed into social recognition, symbolic prestige, and ultimately political authority.[7] These perspectives together provide a framework for analyzing how diaspora wealth was systematically rechanneled into communal institutions and elite consolidation.

The Lebanese Shiʿite case demonstrates that remittances can serve as a form of *diaspora capital*, deliberately routed through sectarian infrastructures that bind welfare to loyalty and reproduce clientelist systems.[8] By examining the trajectories of Musa al-Sadr's Amal Movement and Hizbullah, this study shows how emigrant transfers became the economic foundation of institutional capacity, enabling Shiʿite parties to provide welfare, claim legitimacy, and entrench themselves within Lebanon's sectarian political economy.[9] The contribution here is twofold. Empirically, the article traces four decades of remittance-based institution building, from the early mobilization of emigrant wealth in the 1970s to contemporary practices of digital transfers

[3] Tabar, Paul. "Political Remittances: The Case of Lebanese Expatriates Voting in National Elections." *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 35, no. 4 (2014): 442–460. https://doi.org/10.1080/07256868.2014.913015.

[4] Tabar, Paul, and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss. *Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora.* Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2010.

[5] Levitt, Peggy. "Social Remittances: Migration-Driven Local-Level Forms of Cultural Diffusion." In *The Urban Sociology Reader,* edited by Jan Lin and Christopher Mele, 2nd ed., 334–342. London: Routledge, 2005. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203103333-44

[6] Pérez-Armendáriz, Clarisa, and David Crow. "Do Migrants Remit Democracy? International Migration, Political Beliefs, and Behavior in Mexico." *Comparative Political Studies* 43, no. 1 (2010): 119–148. https://doi.org/10.1177/0010414009331733 ; Koinova, Maria. "Diaspora Mobilisation for Conflict and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Contextual and Comparative Dimensions." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 44, no. 8 (2018): 1251–1269. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2017.1354152

[7] Bourdieu, Pierre. "The Forms of Capital." In *Readings in Economic Sociology,* edited by Nicole Woolsey Biggart, 280–291. Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 2002. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470755679.ch15

[8] Saksela-Bergholm, Sanna, Mari Toivanen, and Östen Wahlbeck. "Migrant Capital as a Resource for Migrant Communities." *Social Inclusion* 7, no. 4 (2019): 164–170. https://doi.org/10.17645/si.v7i4.2658

[9] Ajami, Fouad. *The Vanished Imam: Musa al Sadr and the Shiʿa of Lebanon.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986; Cammett, Melani C. *Compassionate Communalism: Welfare and Sectarianism in Lebanon.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2014. https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801470332 ; Leenders, Reinoud. *Spoils of Truce: Corruption and State-Building in Postwar Lebanon.* Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2012. https://doi.org/10.7591/9780801465871

and reconstruction. Theoretically, it reframes remittances as *convertible political capital*, demonstrating the mechanisms through which diaspora contributions consolidate elites in weak and divided states.[10] While comparative scholarship often celebrates remittances as vehicles of democratization,[11] the Lebanese experience underscores their ambivalence: they empower marginalized communities but also entrench sectarian divisions and weaken public institutions.[12]

By situating Lebanon within comparative contexts from Latin America and Africa, the article expands the study of migration and politics beyond Euro-American cases. It argues that in settings marked by weak state capacity and identity-based patronage, diaspora capital is rarely neutral—it becomes a decisive resource in shaping political orders.[13]

Theoretical Framework

In migration studies, remittances are usually portrayed as economic resources—lifelines that sustain households and represent one of the most reliable inflows for developing economies. Yet since the late 1990s, scholars have emphasized that migration produces effects beyond the financial. Peggy Levitt's influential notion of *social remittances* underscored that migrants transmit ideas, practices, and social norms alongside money.[14] These flows reshape households and communities, diffusing expectations of gender roles, civic participation, and organizational practices. Later work highlighted the multidirectionality of such exchanges, showing that they circulate not only from host to home but across diasporic networks and even back to receiving states.[15] Building on this insight, scholars have identified a more explicitly political dimension: *political remittances*. These involve the deliberate mobilization of migrant resources—financial, institutional, or ideational—to influence homeland politics.[16] Political remittances can be understood as multidirectional and processual, encompassing the generation, transmission, and impact of migrants' political engagement across transnational spaces. [17] Rather than functioning merely as financial transfers, these exchanges involve the reproduction and transformation of homeland politics through discursive, institutional, and material channels. This understanding aligns with the broader view that the Lebanese diaspora operates as a transnational public sphere in which culture, economics, and politics are mutually constitutive. [18] Long-standing migratory

[10] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital*; Grabel, "Remittances".

[11] Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, "Do Migrants Remit Democracy?"

[12] Hirt, Nicole. "The Eritrean Diaspora and Its Impact on Regime Stability: Responses to UN Sanctions." *African Affairs 114*, no. 454 (2015): 115–135. https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/adu061 ; Salloukh, Bassel F. "Taif and the Lebanese State: The Political Economy of a Very Sectarian Public Sector." *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics* 25, no. 1 (2019): 43–60. https://doi.org/10.1080/13537113.2019.1565177

[13] Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation"; Fawaz, Mona. "Planning and the Refugee Crisis: Informality as a Framework of Analysis and Reflection." *Planning Theory* 16, no. 1 (2017): 99–115. https://doi.org/10.1177/1473095216647722

[14] Levitt, "Social Remittances"

[15] Levitt, Peggy, and Deepak Lamba-Nieves. "Social Remittances Revisited." *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 37, no. 1 (2011): 1–22. https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2011.521361

[16] Burgess, Katrina. "States or Parties? Emigrant Outreach and Transnational Engagement." *International Political Science Review* 39, no. 3 (2018): 369–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/0192512118758154 ; Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[17] Tabar, Paul. "Political Remittances".

[18] Tabar, Paul, and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss. *Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora.*

circuits have thus produced forms of social and political remittance that predate contemporary globalization, making Lebanese migration a structural feature of the country's modernity rather than a recent response to crisis.

In some settings, such as Mexico, migrant funding has supported civic associations and opposition parties, thereby widening democratic competition.[19] In others, as in Eritrea, remittances have sustained authoritarian regimes.[20] The Lebanese case illustrates a third possibility: in a sectarian political system, political remittances reinforce communal elites rather than national institutions. This perspective challenges the developmentalist assumption that remittances are inherently democratizing or neutral.[21]

To analyze this process, Pierre Bourdieu's theory of capital provides a valuable framework. Bourdieu distinguished between economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital and emphasized their convertibility.[22] Wealth acquired abroad can be reinvested in community institutions—schools, clinics, mosques—that generate social recognition and symbolic legitimacy, which in turn yield political authority. Migrants thus operate as political entrepreneurs, strategically converting resources across fields. This dynamic is especially salient in Lebanon, where communal institutions mediate access to welfare and representation.[23]

The concept of *migrant capital* extends Bourdieu's insights to transnational contexts, capturing the accumulation of financial resources, networks, and reputational assets across borders.[24] In Lebanon, Shiʿite emigrants who achieved success in West Africa or the Gulf often reinvested in their home regions, enhancing both prestige and authority.[25]

These acts were not neutral philanthropy but deliberate investments in status and influence. Over time, repeated contributions accumulated into durable structures—welfare offices, religious centers, and political movements—that bound emigrants to homeland parties and reshaped elite trajectories.[26]

By combining political remittances with capital conversion, this framework clarifies the mechanisms by which remittances become political power. It also highlights the importance of institutional context. Where states are strong, remittances may bolster public provision; where states are weak and politics is mediated by identity-based elites, remittances reinforce those elites. Lebanon exemplifies the latter pattern: diaspora resources were systematically routed through sectarian parties, producing empowerment within the community but deepening fragmentation at the national level.[27]

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[19] Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, "Do Migrants Remit Democracy?"

[20] Hirt, "Eritrean Diaspora"

[21] Grabel, "Remittances"; Labaki, "Role of Transnational Communities".

[22] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[23] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

[24] Saksela-Bergholm et al., "Migrant Capital as a Resource"

[25] Leichtman, Mara A. "The Legacy of Transnational Lives: Beyond the First Generation of Lebanese in Senegal." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 4 (2005): 663–686. https://doi.org/10.1080/13569320500092794

[26] Ajami, *Vanished Imam*; Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

[27] Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

Historical Background

The political emergence of Lebanon's Shiʿites is inseparable from a longer history of marginalization and migration. Until the mid-twentieth century, most Shiʿites lived in the rural South, the Beqaa, and the southern suburbs of Beirut—areas marked by weak infrastructure and limited state investment. The 1943 National Pact entrenched their subordinate position by privileging Maronite and Sunni elites, leaving Shiʿites underrepresented and economically disadvantaged.[28] Out-migration became a central strategy of survival, creating transnational circuits that later became political lifelines.[29]

By the 1950s–1970s, three migration destinations were especially significant. West Africa, where Lebanese traders and entrepreneurs had long been present, provided commercial profits that financed land, education, and conspicuous housing at home. The Gulf oil boom opened new opportunities for professionals and workers, whose remittances underwrote household budgets and communal projects. Smaller flows reached the Americas, often channelled into philanthropic giving and religious ventures.[30] The state largely treated migration as a "safety valve," externalizing socio-economic pressures while neglecting rural development.[31]

These flows gradually altered communal status. Emigrant wealth materialized in new villas and public donations, producing what Bourdieu would call the conversion of economic into symbolic capital.[32] Successful emigrant families became proto-elites, admired and resented in equal measure, whose influence often exceeded that of state officials in peripheral regions.

A decisive moment came with Imam Musa al-Sadr's arrival in 1959. Combining clerical legitimacy with modern political vision, al-Sadr reframed emigrant wealth as a communal trust.[33] Through the Higher Islamic Shiʿite Council (1969), he urged emigrants to pool resources for schools, clinics, and welfare associations.[34] Scattered hometown philanthropy was thus institutionalized, transforming remittances into the infrastructure of collective empowerment.

The outbreak of civil war in 1975 intensified these dynamics. Remittances became indispensable for household survival, while militia politics incentivized their partisan channeling. Amal, founded by al-Sadr and later led by Nabih Berri, relied heavily on diaspora support from West Africa and the Gulf to finance relief, schools, and armed mobilization.[35] Conspicuous "remittance houses" proliferated, both as symbols of diaspora success and as bases of local authority aligned with partisan politics.[36]

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[28] Idem.

[29] Labaki, "Role of Transnational Communities"; Leichtman, "Legacy of Transnational Lives".

[30] Gualtieri, Sarah M. A. *Between Arab and White: Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009. https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520943469

[31] Hourani, Guita G., Elie Sensenig-Dabbous, and Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration. *Insecurity, Migration and Return: The Case of Lebanon Following the Summer 2006 War.* Florence: European University Institute, 2007

[32] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[33] Ajami, *Vanished Imam;* Halawi, Majed, and Robert B. Betts. "[Review of *A Lebanon Defied: Musa al-Sadr and the Shiʿa Community*]." Middle East Policy* 5, no. 4 (1998): 206–208.

[34] Ajami, *Vanished Imam;* Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*.

[35] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*; Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[36] Deeb, Lara. *An Enchanted Modern: Gender and Public Piety in Shiʿi Lebanon.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006.

By the 1980s, a second vector emerged with Hizbullah's rise. While Iranian backing was foundational, diaspora transfers from the Gulf, West Africa, and the Americas were crucial to building schools, clinics, and reconstruction programs that functioned as a parallel welfare state.[37] In both Amal and Hizbullah, emigrant wealth was systematically converted into social and symbolic capital, which in turn consolidated political authority.[38]

Thus, what began as an economic safety valve became the structural basis for political transformation. Migration produced not only remittances but new elites, institutions, and identities. The Shiʿite case illustrates how diaspora capital, once institutionalized, could reposition a marginalized community at the center of Lebanon's sectarian order.[39]

Amal, Musa al-Sadr, and Diaspora Funding

The transformation of Shiʿite remittances into political influence was crystallized through the leadership of Imam Musa al-Sadr and the institutionalization of the Amal Movement in the 1970s. Al-Sadr, who arrived in Lebanon in 1959 from Qom and Najaf, combined theological authority with a modern political idiom. He reframed emigration not as an escape but as a collective resource: diaspora wealth, he argued, should be invested in communal welfare and political empowerment.[40]

This vision materialized through the Higher Islamic Shiʿite Council (1969), which gave Shiʿites an official institutional voice. Its schools, clinics, and welfare offices were largely financed by emigrants in West Africa and the Gulf.[41] Al-Sadr's innovation lay in channeling dispersed philanthropic giving into coordinated, institutionalized projects. What had been fragmented acts of hometown charity became part of a structured political project of community uplift.[42]

The founding of *Harakat al-Mahrumin* (Movement of the Deprived), later known as Amal, in 1974 marked the political consolidation of these efforts. Amal depended heavily on diaspora networks, especially in West Africa, where traders and entrepreneurs pooled funds for welfare and mobilization.[43] As civil war erupted in 1975, remittances became even more critical. Amal's schools, relief programs, and armed units were sustained by emigrant support, transforming diaspora wealth into the basis of political authority.[44]

The social landscape also bore the imprint of migration. Large villas—popularly known as "remittance houses"—sprouted across the South and the Beqaa. While often critiqued for their aesthetics, they symbolized emigrant success and conveyed prestige.[45] Many of their owners

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[37] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism;* Al-Harithy, Howayda, ed. *Urban Recovery: Intersecting Displacement with Post-War Reconstruction.* London: Routledge, 2022. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003091707

[38] Deeb, *Enchanted Modern;* Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

[39] Ajami, *Vanished Imam;* Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

[40] Ajami, *Vanished Imam*, 115-20.

[41] Labaki, "Role of Transnational Communities"; Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*, 72-74.

[42] Ajami, *Vanished Imam*, 132-35.

[43] Ajami, *Vanished Imam*, 142-47.

[44] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*, 75-77; Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[45] Deeb, *Enchanted Modern, 55-59;* Fawaz, Mona. "The Politics of Property in Planning: Hezbollah's Reconstruction of Haret Hreik (Beirut, Lebanon) as Case Study." *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38, no. 3 (2014): 922–934. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468

became notables aligned with Amal, leveraging diaspora resources into local influence. Here, remittances exemplified capital conversion: economic capital was reconfigured into symbolic recognition and then into political standing.[46]

After al-Sadr's disappearance in Libya in 1978, Nabih Berri assumed Amal's leadership. He maintained strong links with emigrant financiers, particularly in West Africa, and institutionalized diaspora funding as a key resource for sustaining welfare programs and militias during the war years.[47] This dynamic reflected a broader logic of Lebanon's sectarian system: elites monopolize external resources—whether aid, patronage, or remittances—to consolidate authority.[48]

Amal's reliance on diaspora capital thus reveals the ambivalence of political remittances. On one hand, they financed services that improved livelihoods and gave Shiʿites a stronger collective voice. On the other, they entrenched sectarian clientelism by binding welfare and protection to partisan loyalty. The case shows how emigrant wealth, once organized through institutions, could serve simultaneously as an instrument of empowerment and as a mechanism of elite reproduction.[49]

Hizbullah, Remittances, and Institutionalization

If Imam Musa al-Sadr and the Amal Movement marked the first politicization of Shiʿite remittances, the rise of Hizbullah in the 1980s brought their full institutionalization. Born out of the Israeli invasion of 1982, inspired by the Iranian revolution, and embedded in Lebanon's sectarian field, Hizbullah's leaders understood from the outset that legitimacy required more than armed resistance. For a historically marginalized community, survival depended on welfare, education, healthcare, and reconstruction. To deliver these goods, the party developed a diversified financial base: steady subsidies from Iran, religious tithes collected through clerical networks, and crucially, diaspora remittances from Shiʿite emigrants across the Gulf, West Africa, Europe, and the Americas.[50] What distinguished Hizbullah was not simply access to money but the organizational form through which resources were captured, moralized, and institutionalized. In Bourdieu's terms, diaspora economic capital was transformed into social and symbolic capital—reciprocity, prestige, and legitimacy—which could then be converted into durable political authority.[51]

Hizbullah's genius lay in routinizing this process, creating a remittance–welfare–authority chain that embedded emigrant wealth into the very fabric of Shiʿite communal life. From the mid-1980s onward, the party cultivated multiple remittance pathways. Emigrants who had long remitted to families were encouraged—through clerical guidance, party-aligned charities, and hometown associations—to allocate a share to institutions linked with Hizbullah's social wing. [52]These funds financed a dense welfare infrastructure: schools, clinics, hospitals, and social assistance programs that, by the 1990s, often outperformed the Lebanese state in efficiency and

[46] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[47] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism;* Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

[48] Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State"; Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[49] Deeb, *Enchanted Modern;* Ajami, *Vanished Imam.*

[50] Norton, Augustus Richard. *Hezbollah: A Short History.* Updated and expanded 3rd ed. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018.

[51] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[52] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism, 84-85;* Deeb, *Enchanted Modern.*

reach.[53] Religious obligation was a key mechanism. Shiʿite jurisprudence requires the payment of *khums* (a one-fifth religious tithe), a portion of which can be directed toward clerically sanctioned projects. Hizbullah-aligned clerics and institutions positioned themselves as legitimate recipients, transforming devotional giving into predictable revenue streams.[54] Because emigrants abroad remained connected to clerical authorities through mosques, religious centers, and visiting scholars, these obligations were globalized, enabling the party to institutionalize diaspora transfers as regular, morally weighted flows.[55] Professional and business networks also became important channels. In the Gulf, Shiʿite professionals and workers remitted portions of their earnings to institutions in their home villages, often under clerical or party guidance. In West Africa, established business communities—especially in Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, and Senegal—provided venues for fundraising campaigns, religious events, and philanthropic projects tied to Hizbullah.[56] Associations in the Americas similarly channeled donations toward schools, clinics, and welfare funds in Lebanon. In each case, what might appear as philanthropy was simultaneously a political act: emigrants tied their giving to communal belonging, partisan loyalty, and ideological affirmation.[57]

By the late 1980s and early 1990s, Hizbullah had created a parallel welfare state. Its institutions offered education, health, and social services at lower costs and higher efficiency than public provision.[58] For emigrants, donating to these institutions allowed them to materialize belonging at home, inscribing themselves in the physical and moral fabric of their villages and neighborhoods. For recipients, these services generated deep loyalty and trust. In Bourdieu's language, economic capital was converted into social capital (reciprocity and networks) and symbolic capital (piety, modernity, protection).[59] This in turn consolidated political capital, expressed in votes, mobilization, and legitimacy. One emblematic institution was *Jihad al-Binaa* (literally "the struggle for reconstruction"), Hizbullah's development arm. Established in 1985, it became the channel through which diaspora and external resources were invested in rebuilding homes, roads, and utilities.[60] Such projects were highly visible markers of care and efficiency, contrasting sharply with state neglect. They not only met material needs but also reinforced the moral authority of the party as protector and provider. For emigrants, contributing to these projects allowed them to inscribe themselves in the landscape, financing schools, mosques, and clinics that bore their names or the party's.[61]

The 2006 war provided a striking illustration of this process. Israeli bombardment devastated southern Lebanon and Beirut's southern suburbs. Within weeks, Hizbullah—through *Jihad al-Binaa* and allied charities—distributed cash compensation and launched rapid

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[53] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce, 117-22.*

[54] Deeb, *Enchanted Modern.*

[55] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism, 93-96;* Leichtman, Mara A. *Shiʿi Cosmopolitanisms in Africa: Lebanese Migration and Religious Conversion in Senegal*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2015.

[56] Leichtman, *Shiʿi Cosmopolitanisms in Africa*; Labaki, "Role of Transnational Communities".

[57] Deeb, Lara, and Mona Harb. *Leisurely Islam: Negotiating Geography and Morality in Shiʿite South Beirut.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2013.

[58] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism;* Norton, *Hezbollah: A Short History.*

[59] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital;* Deeb*, Enchanted modern.*

[60] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[61] Al-Harithy, *Urban Recovery.*

repairs. While Iranian funds were substantial, diaspora contributions—channeled through mosque campaigns, hometown committees, and party-aligned NGOs in Europe, North America, and West Africa—bridged gaps and financed local projects.[62] The speed and visibility of reconstruction contrasted with the Lebanese state's sluggish response, reinforcing Hizbullah's legitimacy and underscoring the political potency of diaspora-backed institutional capacity.[63]

Hizbullah's success depended not only on the services it provided but on the symbolic registers attached to diaspora capital. Remittance-funded schools and clinics were framed as embodiments of *pious modernity*—Islamic ethics fused with technocratic efficiency.[64] Diaspora contributions were sacralized through religious discourse, presented not as donations but as obligations to community and faith. In this way, emigrant wealth carried moral weight that stabilized flows and legitimized their political use. The aesthetics of diaspora capital reinforced this dynamic. Emigrant-financed houses, mosques, and community centers were visible markers of success and belonging. Though sometimes critiqued for their ostentation, they signaled prestige and authority.[65] For Hizbullah, such projects functioned as symbolic capital that could be mobilized electorally and organizationally. They materialized the convertibility of money into status and of status into power.[66]

The Lebanese case complicates dominant narratives of political remittances. In Mexico, migrants remitted funds and democratic norms that empowered opposition parties and civic associations.[67] In Eritrea, by contrast, emigrants' contributions sustained an authoritarian regime, embedding them in surveillance and coercion.[68] Hizbullah's model illustrates a third trajectory: diaspora capital empowered a marginalized community but did so by entrenching sectarian patronage rather than cross-sectarian reform. Comparative insights underscore the importance of institutional context. Where states are strong, remittances may bolster public provision; where states are weak and sectarian brokers dominate, remittances reinforce those brokers.[69] Lebanon exemplifies the latter pattern. Hizbullah's capacity to institutionalize diaspora giving allowed it to weather sanctions, wars, and economic collapse. Its remittance ecology became global, extending across religious, business, and philanthropic networks that were difficult to regulate or sanction.[70]

The institutionalization of diaspora remittances through Hizbullah has been both empowering and constraining. On one hand, it allowed Shiʿites—long excluded from state power—to build schools, clinics, and infrastructures that improved material life and conferred dignity. On the other hand, by tying welfare and protection to partisan institutions, it entrenched sectarian dependency and weakened national institutions. As Bassel Salloukh notes, Lebanon's political economy is sustained by the monopolization of external rents by sectarian elites.[71] Remittances fit this logic perfectly: they became external rents captured and institutionalized by

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[62] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce;* Fawaz, "Politics of Property".

[63] Fawaz, "Politics of Property".

[64] Deeb*, Enchanted modern, 111-15;* Deeb and Harb, *Leisurely Islam.*

[65] Fawaz, "Politics of Property"; Deeb*, Enchanted modern.*

[66] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[67] Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, "Do Migrants Remit Democracy?"

[68] Hirt, "Eritrean Diaspora".

[69] Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[70] Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, "Social Remittances Revisited".

[71] Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State"

Hizbullah.[72] The broader implication is that diaspora capital, often celebrated as developmental, can serve as a mechanism of elite reproduction. Migrants' intentions—to help families and communities—are refracted through institutional contexts that transform their contributions into political authority.[73] This does not negate the empowerment achieved, but it cautions against uncritical celebrations of remittances as neutral or inherently democratizing.

Hizbullah's rise therefore demonstrates the institutionalization of political remittances at scale. What began as family support evolved into a globalized financial ecology that sustained a parallel welfare state, provided rapid reconstruction, and entrenched partisan authority. Through clerical sanction, organizational discipline, and symbolic labor, emigrants' transfers were converted into political capital with remarkable durability. This trajectory underscores the theoretical contribution of integrating political remittances with capital conversion. It specifies how diaspora capital becomes authority:

- money
- institutions
- loyalty
- legitimacy
- political power.[74]

It also highlights the ambivalence of migration's political effects: empowering the marginalized while hardening sectarian divisions. In weak and divided states, diaspora remittances are rarely neutral—they are constitutive of political orders.[75]

Continuities and New Patterns, 2000s–Present

The early 2000s did not fundamentally alter the dynamic through which Shiʿite emigrants converted economic remittances into political influence. Rather, the logic of capital conversion—remittances into services, services into loyalty, and loyalty into authority—was consolidated and adapted to new conditions of conflict, reconstruction, financial crisis, and digital connectivity. Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 elevated Hizbullah's standing as the uncontested steward of the "resistance," generating new expectations for service delivery and reconstruction. Meeting these expectations required substantial resources. Iranian subsidies remained central, but diaspora remittances from the Gulf, West Africa, and the Americas became indispensable complementary streams that sustained schools, clinics, religious centers, and development initiatives.[76] These flows reinforced Hizbullah's dual identity as both resistance movement and welfare provider and entrenched the systematic conversion of emigrant wealth into political authority.

The July–August 2006 war starkly revealed the political stakes of remittances. Israeli bombardment displaced hundreds of thousands and destroyed housing and infrastructure across the South and the southern suburbs of Beirut. Hizbullah, through *Jihad al-Binaa* and affiliated charities, responded rapidly with cash compensation and visible repairs.[77] While Iranian funds

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[72] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[73] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism;* Deeb*, Enchanted modern.*

[74] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital;* Grabel, "Remittances".

[75] Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[76] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce, 117-22;* Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism, 102-107.*

[77] Fawaz, "Politics of Property"; Al-Harithy, *Urban Recovery.*

underwrote major expenditures, diaspora contributions—wired through family channels, hometown committees, mosques, and party-aligned NGOs—bridged gaps and financed local reconstruction. The speed of this diaspora-backed recovery magnified Hizbullah's legitimacy, contrasting sharply with the Lebanese state's slow and fragmented response.[78] Reconstruction thus became a visible medium of capital conversion: emigrant money materialized as rebuilt homes, renewed livelihoods, and enduring political loyalty.

Beyond episodic crises, everyday remittances continued to underpin communal institutions and household survival. Throughout the 2010s, remittances consistently accounted for more than 12 percent of Lebanon's GDP, ranking the country among the most remittance-dependent globally.[79] In Shiʿite-majority regions, these flows sustained schools, clinics, mosques, and welfare offices affiliated with Amal and Hizbullah. By capturing and steering a portion of these resources, sectarian parties maintained their role as indispensable brokers, translating external money into domestic votes and loyalty.[80] This dynamic exemplified sectarian clientelism mediated by external rents: households depended on diaspora remittances, but their access to services was structured by partisan institutions.

Syrian war that began in 2011 introduced both fiscal pressures and reputational costs for Hizbullah, which deployed fighters to support the Assad regime while trying to preserve its welfare commitments at home. Diaspora transfers cushioned these pressures, helping fund assistance to fighters' families and displaced persons.[81] The ability to redeploy emigrant wealth for both conflict-related and social purposes illustrated the flexibility of political remittances, showing how diaspora capital could sustain support even during periods of domestic controversy.

At the same time, new technologies reshaped remittance channels and political communication. Alongside banks and exchange houses, mobile transfers, *hawala* networks, and even cryptocurrency enabled faster and sometimes less regulated flows.[82] These innovations made it easier for emigrants to bypass restrictive banking systems, particularly during crises. Social remittances circulated simultaneously, as diaspora communities engaged via social media, livestreamed sermons, and online fundraising campaigns.[83] The immediacy of these digital interactions reinforced narratives of sacrifice, service, and communal duty, knitting emigrants more tightly into partisan projects at home.

Lebanon's financial collapse after 2019 further magnified the political salience of remittances. As banks froze deposits and the currency collapsed, remittances became among the only stable sources of foreign currency. Families relied on emigrants to keep households afloat, while party-affiliated networks often intermediated flows, tightening partisan control over access to aid.[84] Emigrants increased transfers through informal channels, bypassing the formal banking

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[78] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[79] Ratha, Dilip, Christian Eigen-Zucchi, and Sonia Plaza. *Migration and Remittances Factbook 2016.* 3rd ed. Washington, DC: World Bank Publications, 2016. https://doi.org/10.1596/978-1-4648-0319-2

[80] Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State"; Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism, 132-135.*

[81] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism;* Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[82] Vari-Lavoisier, Isabelle. "The Economic Side of Social Remittances: How Money and Ideas Circulate Between Paris, Dakar, and New York." *Comparative Migration Studies* 4, no. 1 (2016): 20. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40878-016-0039-6

[83] Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, "Social Remittances Revisited".

[84] Ratha et al., *Migration and Remittances Factbook.*

sector, which had lost public trust. Hizbullah and Amal were able to convert these inflows into targeted welfare, strengthening their role as indispensable brokers. In this context, the legitimacy of sectarian parties became more closely tied than ever to their capacity to mobilize and channel diaspora wealth.

The 2024–2025 conflict between Lebanon and Israel once again underscored the political centrality of diaspora remittances. The renewed bombardment of southern Lebanon, the Bekaa, and the southern suburbs of Beirut displaced tens of thousands and destroyed large sections of civilian infrastructure. As in 2006, rapid diaspora mobilization through digital fundraising platforms, clerical networks, and local NGOs provided crucial relief and reconstruction funds. Shiʿite emigrants in the Gulf, West Africa, and the Americas organized transnational aid campaigns that financed housing repairs, medical supplies, and emergency welfare for displaced families. These remittance flows not only mitigated humanitarian suffering but also reaffirmed the authority of Hizbullah's welfare institutions, whose capacity to distribute assistance swiftly contrasted with the paralysis of the Lebanese state. The war thus reactivated the established remittance–authority nexus under new technological and geopolitical conditions, demonstrating how diaspora capital remains embedded in Lebanon's cycles of destruction and recovery.

The symbolic dimension of diaspora capital also persisted. Emigrant-funded houses and religious or educational complexes continued to mark rural and urban landscapes, signaling prestige, belonging, and partisan alignment. Their aesthetics remained contested—celebrated by some as resilience, critiqued by others as excess—but their political function was unmistakable.[85] They materialized the conversion of emigrant economic success into symbolic authority that could be leveraged electorally and organizationally.

Taken together, these developments underscore the resilience and adaptability of the remittance–politics nexus. Across war, sanctions, financial collapse, and technological change, emigrant wealth continued to be systematically transformed into political capital. The mechanisms were consistent—family remittances diverted into communal institutions, clerical sanction of religious giving, visible reconstruction projects—but the modalities evolved, incorporating digital technologies and informal transfer systems. The 2024–2025 conflict confirmed the durability of this system: even amid renewed warfare and economic collapse, diaspora capital continued to flow, sustaining partisan infrastructures and reaffirming the link between transnational solidarity and sectarian authority. The effect was to preserve Shiʿite parties' centrality even amid systemic crisis.

Theoretically, this trajectory reinforces a context-contingent view of political remittances. Where states are strong, diaspora transfers may be absorbed into national institutions; where states are weak and sectarian brokers mediate welfare, remittances reinforce those brokers.[86] In Lebanon, emigrants empowered their community but also deepened sectarian segmentation and undermined state authority. The events of 2024–2025 illustrate that this pattern remains unchanged: remittances continue to operate as both instruments of survival and mechanisms of political reproduction. What enabled Amal and Hizbullah to weather sanctions and crises was precisely their capacity to institutionalize diaspora wealth into durable welfare infrastructures and political authority.[87]

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[85] Deeb, *Enchanted modern*; Fawaz, "Politics of Property".

[86] Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[87] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism*; Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

Discussion

The trajectory from Shiʿite marginalization to political empowerment in Lebanon demonstrates how diaspora remittances function as political resources through the mechanism of capital conversion. What began as household support gradually became the financial foundation of institutions, movements, and elites. The rise of Musa al-Sadr's Amal in the 1970s, the consolidation of Hizbullah in the 1980s and 1990s, and the resilience of Shiʿite parties through the crises of the 2000s and 2010s all reveal a consistent pattern: emigrants' economic transfers were transformed into social trust, symbolic prestige, and political authority.[88] The most recent conflict of 2024–2025 between Lebanon and Israel has once again confirmed this continuity, as diaspora mobilization and rapid transnational fundraising became central to post-conflict relief and reconstruction, reaffirming the capacity of remittance networks to sustain political authority during periods of acute crisis. The Lebanese case therefore unsettles narrow developmentalist framings of remittances as economic lifelines or poverty-reduction tools. It shows instead that remittances can perform overtly political work, binding welfare to loyalty, shaping elite formation, and redefining communal hierarchies.

In this sense, the Lebanese experience enriches and complicates the literature on migration and remittances. Peggy Levitt's notion of social remittances emphasized the diffusion of ideas, norms, and practices across borders.[89] This perspective highlighted the non-economic dimensions of migration but often assumed that flows of ideas and resources contribute to democratization and civic participation. By contrast, the concept of political remittances clarifies the intentional mobilization of migrant wealth and networks for political projects.[90] Political remittances extend far beyond financial transfers, encompassing the circulation of political ideas, loyalties, and practices through transnational networks.[91] These flows actively reproduce or reshape power structures in the homeland, linking migrants to domestic institutions in enduring ways. The Lebanese diaspora has long operated as a transnational public sphere in which cultural, economic, and political engagements intersect, making migration a structural and continuous component of Lebanon's political life.[92]

In Mexico, for instance, migrant funding has supported opposition parties and civic organizations, thereby widening pluralism.[93] In Eritrea, however, remittances have been monopolized by the ruling regime, sustaining authoritarian control.[94] Lebanon illustrates a third trajectory: diaspora capital empowered a marginalized community but simultaneously entrenched sectarian clientelism and weakened national institutions.[95]

Bourdieu's theory of capital conversion provides the conceptual key to understanding these outcomes. Economic resources accumulated abroad were reinvested in communal institutions such as schools, clinics, and religious centers. These, in turn, generated social capital through reciprocity and networks, symbolic capital through prestige and piety, and eventually

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[88] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism,* 76-83*;* Ajami*, vanished imam,* 132-35.

[89] Levitt, "Social Remittances".

[90] Burgess, "States or Parties?"; Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[91] Tabar, Paul. "Political Remittances".

[92] Tabar, Paul, and Jennifer Skulte-Ouaiss. *Politics, Culture and the Lebanese Diaspora.*

[93] Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, "Do Migrants Remit Democracy?".

[94] Hirt, "Eritrean Diaspora".

[95] Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation" ; Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

political capital through votes, mobilization, and leadership.[96] This process explains the durability of Shiʿite political movements: institutions established with emigrant funding in the 1970s and 1980s continue to anchor loyalty and legitimacy decades later. Welfare infrastructures financed by emigrants became self-reinforcing political structures that outlasted wars, sanctions, and financial collapse.[97]

The Lebanese case also underscores the context-contingent nature of remittance politics. In states with strong institutions, diaspora transfers may bolster public provision or pluralist politics. In weak states with fragmented authority, they are more likely to be captured by sectarian or partisan brokers.[98] The institutional context of Lebanon—marked by sectarian segmentation and state fragility—shaped remittances into communal rather than national resources. This pattern echoes findings from comparative cases, where diaspora mobilization often reproduces rather than transcends homeland cleavages.[99] The contribution here is to specify the mechanism: remittances are not automatically democratizing or authoritarian, but their effects depend on who captures them and how they are institutionalized.

The symbolic politics of remittances further illustrates their ambivalence. Emigrant-financed houses, religious complexes, and philanthropic projects were not only material investments but also visible markers of status, belonging, and political alignment.[100] They signaled prestige for families abroad and legitimacy for parties at home. Hizbullah's welfare institutions, for example, embodied what Lara Deeb has called a form of "pious modernity," fusing Islamic ethics with technocratic efficiency.[101] These symbols reinforced the convertibility of diaspora capital: money became prestige, and prestige became political authority.

Adaptability has been another hallmark of diaspora capital in Lebanon. Emigrants and political parties adjusted to shifting conditions, from wartime reconstruction to digital remittance platforms during the financial collapse of the 2010s.[102] The persistence of the remittance–welfare–authority chain through these shocks underscores its institutionalization. Even as formal banking channels collapsed, emigrants rerouted funds through informal systems and digital transfers, sustaining households and party-linked institutions.[103] The ability of Shiʿite parties to capture and redirect these flows preserved their role as indispensable brokers, deepening their entrenchment in communal life.

These dynamics raise normative questions about the celebrated role of remittances in global development discourse. International organizations often highlight remittances as engines of resilience, foreign exchange, and poverty alleviation.[104] While these claims are partly valid, the Lebanese case shows that remittances can also reinforce inequality and clientelism. Diaspora capital empowered a marginalized community, providing dignity and services where the state

[96] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[97] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce.*

[98] Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

[99] Koinova, "Diaspora Mobilisation".

[100] Leichtman, "Legacy of Transnational Lives".

[101] Deeb, *Enchanted modern*, 111-15.

[102] Vari-Lavoisier, "Economic Side of Social Remittances"; Levitt and Lamba-Nieves, "Social Remittances Revisited.

[103] Ratha et al., *Migration and Remittances Factbook,* 141-44.

[104] World Bank data summarized in Ratha et al., *Migration and Remittances Factbook.*

failed. But this empowerment was channeled through sectarian parties that entrenched dependency and fragmented national politics.[105] The duality of empowerment and entrenchment is central: remittances reduce poverty at the household level while simultaneously reproducing systemic inequality at the political level.

The geopolitics of remittances adds yet another layer. Western governments have long scrutinized Hizbullah's global funding networks, alleging illicit financial activities in Latin America and West Africa.[106] Whether or not such allegations are politicized, they point to the deep insertion of diaspora capital into transnational circuits of commerce, philanthropy, and identity. From the perspective of political remittances, the critical point is not the legality of any given stream but the convertibility of diverse streams into durable political power. Hizbullah's resilience in the face of sanctions illustrates the difficulty of disrupting a financial ecology that is both global and community-based.[107] The 2024–2025 conflict further highlighted this point: despite international sanctions and surveillance, diaspora remittances continued to flow through alternative channels, revealing the depth and flexibility of these transnational networks.

In sum, the Lebanese Shiʿite case demonstrates that remittances are deeply political resources. They are not neutral economic flows but forms of capital that, once institutionalized, shape authority and elite formation. The trajectory from Musa al-Sadr to Hizbullah reveals how emigrant wealth was systematically converted into social trust, symbolic prestige, and political authority, enabling a marginalized community to achieve empowerment while simultaneously entrenching sectarianism.[108] Theoretically, this case advances migration studies by integrating political remittances with capital conversion, specifying the mechanisms through which money becomes power.[109] Empirically, it documents the transformation of a community through diaspora capital over five decades. Normatively, it cautions that remittances, though celebrated as developmental, can reproduce structures that sustain fragmentation and clientelism. The latest conflict of 2024–2025 reaffirms these conclusions: even amid renewed war, financial collapse, and state paralysis, diaspora capital continues to function as both a lifeline and a political instrument, ensuring the persistence of Lebanon's sectarian order. In weak and divided states, diaspora remittances are not peripheral—they are constitutive of the political order.

Conclusion

The trajectory of the Lebanese Shiʿite community since the 1970s illustrates how migration and remittances have been central to political transformation. What began as an economic strategy of survival in the face of poverty and marginalization became, over time, the financial foundation for institution building, elite formation, and partisan authority. The cases of Musa al-Sadr's Amal Movement, Hizbullah's welfare complex, and the ongoing reliance on diaspora transfers during Lebanon's financial collapse all demonstrate that remittances are not neutral economic flows. They are political remittances, resources mobilized and institutionalized

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[105] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

[106] Levitt, Matthew. *Hezbollah: The Global Footprint of Lebanon's Party of God.* Updated ed. London: Hurst & Co., 2024.

[107] Leenders, *Spoils of Truce;* Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

[108] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism;* Deeb, *Enchanted modern.*

[109] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital;* Grabel, "Remittances".

in ways that directly shape power relations, social hierarchies, and governance.[110] The 2024–2025 conflict between Lebanon and Israel has once again reaffirmed this dynamic: amid destruction and displacement, diaspora contributions flowed rapidly through digital fundraising campaigns, clerical networks, and NGOs, underscoring that emigrant wealth remains an essential pillar of both communal survival and political legitimacy.

The continuity of this process over five decades underscores its structural character. In the 1970s, West African and Gulf emigrants financed the Higher Islamic Shiʿite Council, Amal's schools, and welfare projects.[111] In the 1980s and 1990s, Hizbullah institutionalized diaspora contributions into clinics, reconstruction agencies, and social programs that rivaled state provision.[112] In the aftermath of the 2006 war, emigrants wired funds that enabled swift rebuilding while the state faltered.[113] During the financial collapse of 2019 and after, remittances became one of the few stable sources of foreign currency, sustaining households and communal institutions alike.[114] These continuities reveal that diaspora capital has long served as the backbone of Shiʿite institutional capacity and political resilience.

Adaptability has been equally striking. As conditions shifted—from Israeli invasions to digital connectivity—emigrants and parties innovated new modalities of transfer and mobilization. Clerical sanction globalized religious giving; NGOs and hometown associations professionalized philanthropy; mobile technologies and *hawala* networks bypassed failing banks.[115] Each adaptation preserved the central chain of conversion: money into services, services into loyalty, loyalty into authority. This flexibility explains how Shiʿite parties have weathered wars, sanctions, and financial collapse while retaining community legitimacy.

The Lebanese case also reveals the ambivalence of diaspora capital. On one hand, it enabled a marginalized community to overcome exclusion, building schools, clinics, and welfare programs that improved material life and gave Shiʿites a stronger political voice. On the other hand, because resources flowed through sectarian parties, empowerment came at the price of deepened dependency and fragmentation. Remittances strengthened Amal and Hizbullah but simultaneously weakened the Lebanese state by privatizing welfare and entrenching clientelism.[116] This paradox reflects a broader lesson: remittances can empower communities while constraining prospects for systemic reform.

Comparative insights help situate Lebanon's experience. In Mexico, emigrants remitted funds and democratic norms that expanded pluralism.[117] In Eritrea, contributions sustained authoritarian rule.[118] Lebanon falls between these poles: diaspora wealth enabled upward mobility and resilience but was captured by sectarian institutions. The political consequences of remittances are therefore context-dependent, shaped by state capacity, institutional

[110] Levitt, *Hezbollah: Global Footprint,* 147-61.

[111] Ajami, *Vanished imam*, 132-35.

[112] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

[113] Al-Harithy, *Urban Recovery.*

[114] Ratha et al., *Migration and Remittances Factbook.*

[115] Vari-Lavoisier, "Economic Side of Social Remittances".

[116] Salloukh, "Taif and the Lebanese State".

[117] Pérez-Armendáriz and Crow, "Do Migrants Remit Democracy?".

[118] Hirt, "Eritrean Diaspora".

arrangements, and elite strategies. Where state institutions are weak, diaspora capital becomes a resource for identity-based brokers.

Symbolic politics further illuminates this process. Remittance houses, mosques, and philanthropic complexes served not only as material investments but as visible markers of prestige, belonging, and alignment.[119] They exemplify Bourdieu's principle of capital conversion, in which economic capital becomes symbolic recognition and ultimately political authority. Hizbullah's welfare institutions, celebrated for their efficiency and piety, demonstrate how diaspora contributions acquired moral legitimacy that reinforced political claims.[120] These symbols remind us that remittances are not only financial transfers but cultural and political acts that reorder local hierarchies.

Taken together, these dynamics advance theoretical debates on migration and politics. By integrating the concept of political remittances with Bourdieu's framework of capital conversion, the Lebanese case specifies the mechanisms by which diaspora wealth becomes authority.[121] It moves beyond abstract claims about the "effects" of remittances to show concretely how resources are mobilized, sacralized, and institutionalized. The case demonstrates that in weak and divided states, diaspora remittances are not peripheral; they are constitutive of political orders. The renewed cycle of conflict and reconstruction in 2024–2025 further confirms this: diaspora capital continues to function as both a humanitarian lifeline and a political instrument, blurring the boundaries between solidarity and sovereignty.

Normatively, the findings caution against uncritical celebrations of remittances as developmental panaceas. International organizations often highlight their role in poverty reduction and resilience.[122] Yet Lebanon shows that remittances can entrench sectarian elites, privatize welfare, and weaken public institutions. For policymakers, this suggests that the impact of remittances cannot be assessed solely at the household level; attention must also be paid to the political channels through which they flow. For emigrants, the dilemma is acute: their support sustains families and communities but also reinforces structures that limit systemic reform. This tension is unlikely to be resolved, but recognizing it is a necessary step toward more realistic assessments of migration's consequences.

In conclusion, diaspora remittances in Lebanon have been engines of both empowerment and inequality. They lifted a marginalized community to political centrality but did so by entrenching a sectarian system that remains fragile and fragmented. The lesson is not that remittances are inherently democratizing or authoritarian but that their political effects are mediated by institutional context. In Lebanon, they became the foundation of sectarian authority. The experience of 2024–2025 serves as the most recent demonstration of this enduring pattern: even in the midst of renewed warfare and national collapse, transnational networks of remittance and reconstruction continue to define the contours of power. As migration continues and remittances remain vital to Lebanon's survival, this trajectory offers broader insights into how diaspora capital reshapes politics in migrant-sending societies across the Global South.[123]

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[119] Leichtman, "Legacy of Transnational Lives".

[120] Deeb, *Enchanted modern*.

[121] Bourdieu, *Forms of Capital.*

[122] Ratha et al., *Migration and Remittances Factbook.*

[123] Cammett, *Compassionate Communalism.*

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"I now see operation after operation…. and they never asked me what I want". Caesarean section fear, anxiety and mental wellbeing among Somali migrants in Johannesburg, South Africa.

Tackson MAKANDWA

Abstract. There is a close relationship between maternal health and psychological health. Pregnancy can accentuate the vulnerability migrants and refugee women often experience in the host society impacting their mental health. However not many studies have sort to establish the relationship between reproductive health and mental health. Drawing from qualitative in-depth interviews conducted with Somali migrant community on their experiences of undergoing Cesarean section in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa, findings point that separation from the traditional and familiar environment complicates the unde rstanding and acceptance of Cesarean birth. It is worth highlighting that maternal health, particularly caesarean birth, is always contested, always infested with both healthcare providers' influence and emotive forces.

Keywords: C-section; mental health; refugees; asylum seekers; Somalis; Johannesburg; South Africa.

Introduction

Migration flows are increasing globally (Agunwamba et al., 2022; Pineteh, 2017) and migrants contribute substantially to the total number of births in host countries. Refugee women, who account for nearly 47 percent of all those displaced across borders (UNHCR, 2020; Yeo et al., 2023), are particularly at higher risk during pregnancy and childbirth. According to Yeo et al (2023) on a global scale refugee women continue to face higher maternity-related risks from preventable complications during pregnancy and childbirth, to some extent due to high health care costs, unfamiliarity with the healthcare system, language barriers, and discrimination. Migrants' health is often compartmentalized, and, in this paper, I will look at how events in reproductive health impact on mental health. Migrant and refugee pregnant women constitute a highly vulnerable group to mental disorders (Iliadou et al., 2019). The rates of mental illness of migrants and refugees are higher than those of host populations, with migrant women being more likely to suffer from prenatal depression (Iliadou et al., 2019). Drawing from research conducted as part of a larger multi-sited project (including Johannesburg and Nairobi), which explores the relationship between displacement, gendered violence, and mental ill-health for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and asylum seekers who face multiple barriers to accessing healthcare (see also Walker et al 2023). This paper focuses on Somali migrant community on their experiences of undergoing Cesarean section in the city of Johannesburg, South Africa. I argue that fear and anxiety provide a mechanism, in understanding mental conditions anchored in a sense of disempowerment and limited voice or choice, by which migrant women manage and encounter childbirth. Childbirth through cesarean section has been outstanding in the narratives of the

Somali migrants both women and men as a topical issue that is discussed within the community and as a cause of worry and mental stress. In this paper the aspect of cesarean birth is viewed as both a trigger of mental ill health and lens to understanding perpetual psychological stress among Somali women post child delivery and that affects future reproductive hope and confidence.

In several studies cesarean birth has been recognized as central in understanding of fear and anxiety among pregnant women, which includes feelings of worry or fear over things that might happen. These lived stressors impact on the psychological well-being and preparedness of migrant women during pregnancy and the process of childbirth. Such feelings might either be imagined or real encounters with medical procedures during childbirth (Sinatra & Feitell, 1985; Wrześniewski & Sosnowski, 1987; Latendresse, 2009; Makandwa & Vearey, 2017; Lowe, 2019). In this paper, I will use the terms migrants, refuges and asylum seekers indistinctively. I highlight that there is a close relationship between maternal health and psychological health in the context of lack of reproductive rights. Refugee mental wellbeing can be further and better understood through focusing on the psychological perspectives on maternal health specifically the child delivery process and postpartum period. In this case how Somalis feel and express they have control and feel satisfied on their encounters with the health care providers.

Insights into Cesarean birth

Somali culture can be broadly described as pronatal, that is, they commonly desire frequent childbearing and large families (Gee et al., 2019; Lowe, 2019). Somalia has one of the highest fertility rates in the world, and although religion plays an intrinsic role in shaping reproductive beliefs and practices, it is by no means the only factor. In the context of Somalis in Dadaab refugee camp in Kenya, Gee et al (2019) note that having more children is a source of pride and prestige as women will receive more praise and respect from the community. In Eastleigh in the same context of Kenya Lowe (2019) found out that producing many children was described as a religious requirement, a symbol of wealth, and a continuation of the patrilineal clan and extension of the Somali nation. This responsibility to reproduce the nation physically and socially was felt acutely by the women and men coming from what was often perceived as a "failed state." Early and frequent motherhood was praised, while contraceptives were publicly rejected on cultural and religious grounds, although secretly used by many women, and abortion was rarely spoken of, except to condemn it (Lowe, 2019). In South Africa Pursell (2005) notes that Somali women have diverse health needs. Some of these needs are like those of the local citizens. But they also encounter distinct reproductive health challenges. Pursell (2005) argued that firstly, they originate from a nation where family planning is not widely practiced. This ultimately hints that many women have children in quick succession which place a strain upon their bodies. Also, stronger gender relations means that many Somali women are unable to negotiate or control sexual relations with their partners - thus to many Somali women when to fall pregnant is rarely a choice. It is also important to point that Somalia is a country where female genital mutilation (FGM) is widely practiced. As a result of this, many women are unable to have a natural birth. Often times, delivery is more complex than that of South African women (Pursell, 2005).

Maternal and child health is a key public health concerns in South Africa (Solanki et al., 2020). Yet there is an ever increasing local and global concern over the appropriateness and safety of the increasing numbers of Cesarean section births (Solanki et al., 2020). According to the World Health Organization (WHO) (2015) caesarean section refers to the surgical procedure

used to deliver babies through an opening in the mother's lower abdomen rather than through the vaginal canal. Some pregnant women choose to have the procedure done but many caesareans happen because of complications during pregnancy or labour (Sung & Mahdy, 2023). WHO (2015) points that C-sections can be lifesaving in cases where vaginal birth would be dangerous for mother and child or should be done when there are medically stated reasons such as there being signs of distress that necessitate a quick birth or in circumstances where vaginal birth is improbable (WHO 2015).

In some studies, conducted worldwide about C-section point to refusal or fear in some cases by Somali mothers to embrace cesarean delivery. For example, Borkan (2010) studied Somali resistance of c-section in Ohio, United State of America (USA), in Kenya, Lowe (2019) notes that rejecting cesarean delivery among Somali women is an avenue to protect their future reproductive capacities. She argues that in a context of displacement and insecurity, women's reproductive bodies can be crucial to their security and strategies for onward migration (Lowe, 2019), and Brown et al (2010) researched on Somali women's fears of obstetrical intervention in the USA. The refusal of Cesarean section is not only a Somalis phenomenon several studies globally have indicated that there is resistance to this biomedical procedure of child delivery. However not many studies have sort to establish the relationship between reproductive health in this case the experience of C-section and mental health, which this study seeks to do. Based on the interviews conducted with Somalis in the city of Johannesburg I argue that separation from the traditional and familiar environment complicates the understanding and acceptance of Cesarean birth.

Mental health in South Africa

South Africa is widely regarded as a sick society and there is urgent need to fully understand the social determinants of health and the need for mental health services (South African College of Applied Psychology (SACAP), 2019; Pillay, 2019). Pillay (2019) points that there is a lack of prioritization of mental health globally and in South Africa in particular. Reflecting on the bad mental health situation of South Africa, SACAP (2019) noted that in 2018, one in six South Africans suffer from anxiety, depression, or substance-use disorders, 41% of pregnant women are depressed and only 27% of South Africans with severe mental disorders receive treatment. The prevalence of anxiety disorders among South African pregnant women is 23% (Brown et al., 2020). The post-apartheid socioeconomic and xenophobic context, combined with the 30% HIV prevalence in pregnant women, high prevalence of food insecurity and an increasing burden in non-communicable diseases such as high blood pressure and diabetes, increases the risk of poor mental health (Jack et al., 2014). This state of the mental health situation in South Africa is troubling and require urgent action (Pillay, 2019).

South African government's attention in terms of government investment and development assistance for mental health remain very low. The South Africa Human Rights Commission (2019) and Pillay (2019) points to neglect, mismanagement, as well as under-funding of mental health services in South Africa. The lack of political will has left the public health system severely compromised in its ability to respond to the needs of citizens and non-citizens in South Africa (Walker & Vearey, 2022). Consequently, those struggling with mental health problems are not only left without support but living in contexts in which these issues are exposed and further amplified (Walker, 2021; Walker et al., 2023). In most cases women carry the huge burden of

mental illness in society (Iliadou et al., 2019). Lliadou et al (2019) point that when a mother experiences depression, anxiety, or stress during pregnancy, she may expose both herself and her infant to multiple psychological risks, including impaired bonding with the fetus and the newborn, increased risk of poor psychological postnatal adjustment and postnatal depression. Anderson et al (2017) identified the risk factors for depression in migrant pregnant women as lack of social support, lack of marital support, time in host country, socioeconomic difficulty, stress, low acculturation level, not working or attending school in pregnancy and precarious legal status. Drawing from the findings, themes of high costs of maternity services, language and miscommunication, limited decision power and lack of acceptance of the services were outstanding.

Methodology

Mayfair, the context of this study in the City of Johannesburg, is known as the heart of Somalis living in South Africa and is popularly referred to as the 'Little Mogadishu' (Jhazbhay & Mahomed, 2020). This presented a relevant site for this research. The fieldwork for this research was conducted between 2020 and 2022, which also coincided with the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic (See also Walker et al, 2023). The Research was conducted as part of a larger multi-sited project (including Johannesburg and Nairobi), which explores the relationship between displacement, gendered violence, and mental ill-health for internally displaced persons (IDPs), refugees, and asylum seekers who face multiple barriers to accessing healthcare. Although the focus of the project was not intended to delve into pregnancy and giving birth, this thematic area was continuously raised as a stressor and became a topic of interest.

The focus on Somali refugees and asylum-seekers was aimed at better understanding the interrelationship of migration and health, including mental health as determined by the broader context of xenophobic violence.

Interviews were conducted both online and through face-to-face. The realities of the COVID-19 lockdown restriction forced the fieldwork to be conducted largely online through platforms such as Zoom and WhatsApp calls and when the lockdown restriction were relaxed, I then shifted to face-to-face physical interviews with the participants. The face-to-face interviews gave room to interactions with the community and observing the local environment. They also opened an avenue to observe and have a better feel of the emotional component of the topic under research by observing the changes in expression from the participants. A subsample of interviews relevant for this paper was drawn from a total of 40 interviews which were conducted with adults from the Somali community in Mayfair (25 males and 15 females). Snowballing was very crucial as the researcher was referred to other Somali members in the community.

Most of the interviews were conducted through the assistance of a translator from the Somali community who helped to translate from English to Somali language and from Somali back to English language. Transcription of the interviews was done through the services of professional transcribers, and data analysis was done through thematic content analysis. During the interviews most women expressed fear and anxiety of giving birth as Muslim migrants in the city, fearing the encounter and pressure of delivering through cesarean section, so often perceived by the same community to be done among Somalis more than among any other communities. Based on data on fear and anxieties it was also emphasized by the community leaders that it's an issue always under discussion among the community.

Findings and Discussion
Demand for maternity fees and identity documents

Access to healthcare is a fundamental right to everyone at a global context. In the South African context migrants are regarded as a drain to the healthcare system (Makandwa & Vearey, 2017; Vanyoro, 2019). Narratives from the Somali refugee community highlights serious barriers in accessing maternal care. In the context of this study the demand for different maternal charges and identity documents (refugee status permits and asylum papers) are major concerns reflected upon. In the context of South Africa maternal health remains a widespread and growing concern among migrant communities. Pointing to the challenge Mother J who has been residing in Mayfair for the past six years and still using an asylum paper has this to say:

"Ja. Ja I have been having a thyroid problem, and they take the blood sample [......] they said I cannot get a baby because of that diagnosis. Now when I went to the public hospital, they said I am supposed to pay forty thousand rand (Zar 40,000.00) if I want to have a baby and it was supposed to be C-section, I immediately felt it's a big stab with a sharp weapon in my mind (….), I was having a problem of the thyroid, they removed it. (Mother J, interviewed, Oct 2021)

The mental health shocks among migrants in the city of Johannesburg can be read through maternal health. The narration by Mother J provides a window to the understanding of the weight imposed by health costs on mental wellbeing. Although detailing her struggles with thyroid problem the main worry for Mother J was the news of her delivering that was going to be through caesarean section. The feelings of being stabbed by a "sharp weapon" accurately captures the degree of the pain and harsh psychological struggles thereafter, which impacts on the mental wellbeing and the same time is a vivid metaphor for the actual operation.

The pain of isolation and loneliness after giving birth in the city is also one of the mental challenges that exacerbate the fragile situation of the Somali migrant women. Somali women described life in South Africa as scary and stressful, thus life in the city of Johannesburg brought in a host of new fears and anxieties in contrast to the war and violence in Somali. Amiya a 28-year-old undocumented Somali migrant, staying with her husband, and has been in the city of Johannesburg since 2019 details the fears and struggles in the following exchange:

"The people are fearing to deliver in a public hospital because of the money, and putting birth through caesarean section, it's a matter of life and death and if you survive it, the pain and stress of recovering alone without anyone taking care of you, it's very depressing, when I think of all this, I miss my people home especially my mom and sisters". (Amiya, interviewed, Oct 2021)

This rich exchange with Amiya highlights major concerns with serious psychological consequences on the mental state of migrants linked to giving birth. The monetary component generates fear as most of the Somali refugees are self-employed and work informally as shop keepers in Spazza shops (these are small informal stores in townships, often run from a private home) and this does not generate enough revenue to cater for extra medical costs. These Spaza shops exposes Somali operators to violent attacks from the local communities in South Africa.

However intimately linked to the costs involved in accessing healthcare is the possibility of having a Caesarean delivery, which on its own besides attracting higher costs, is viewed as a "matter of life and death", which reflects chances of survival being at stake. Recovering from the scars of caesarean birth is pictured in the exchange as associated with huge mental stress and depression. Moreover, what is critical in all this is the separation from support which is made a reality by migration and being a refugee as Amiya reflects on being lonely and missing her mother and sisters in Somalia.

Other participants like Asha gave a different impression about the medical costs of caesarean birth in public hospitals, as she narrates her daily struggles with fear and the stress of being constantly reminded of putting to birth through the procedure:

> *"I was always fearful and stressed they always told me you, you are going to give birth through c-section,……. If I could have money I prefer to go to the private hospital….. the other day when I was admitted at coronation hospital they cut my skin to remove the drip it was painful the nurse was fighting with me, from there now I just go to private hospital especially when pregnant". (Asha, Somali Woman, interviewed, Oct 2021)*

Limited by funds, the sentiments by Asha portray her desire to seek private care. She backed her claim by digging deeper into the abuse that she experienced at one of the public hospitals. The findings highlight how public healthcare spaces are viewed as both spaces of mental and physical pain and they generate fear and ressentiment. The level of poor relations with healthcare providers especially nurses in public healthcare facilities is a cause of concern here. Jewkes et al (1998) and Kruger and Schoombe (2010) note that although nursing discourse usually emphasises "caring" and giving hope in times of need, nursing practice in some public healthcare facilities in South Africa is often quite different and may be characterised by humiliation of patients and physical abuse as reflected by Asha in her narration.

Most of the participants in this study shared accounts of a perceived loss of hope and power to access proper healthcare during pregnancy and child delivery due to lack of proper documentation. For undocumented migrants they survived in perpetual fear as Hawa reflects on how this compromise health and wellbeing:

> *"The other thing is sometimes they say if somebody doesn't have a permit here at the moment, she can't deliver at the hospitals because she doesn't have medical aid, it's so confusing and it always make us live in fear always and think of home, and when it's about delivering through C-section it becomes hell you can even think of delivering secretly". (Hawa, Somali women, Interviewed Nov 2021)*

Detailing the nightmares of not being only a migrant but an undocumented migrant complicates life and feelings of not belonging becomes amplified. Studie have reflected on how migrants in South Africa are perceived and highlights dishonest especially regarding documentation (Vanyoro, 2019; Makandwa 2022). The most significant obstacle for the respondents was the issue of documentation in accessing maternal health services, and it affected confidence regarding access to healthcare. The confusion and fear have a great impact on mental

stability of the migrants in the host community. Living with this perpetual confusion and fear and the potential of giving birth through Caesarean section which requires specialized care becomes a torment.

Forced against their wishes

Somali women that I interviewed shared their sentiments on how caesarean delivery has become fashionable and they feel its forced on them against their desires. The moment of giving birth connects healthcare providers with women of different ethnic backgrounds who bring along with them heterogeneous cultural and religious beliefs into the maternity and child delivery spaces. Resultantly the women's expectations are not met, and this negatively affect future healthcare seeking (Mantula et al., 2023) and gave rise to bad memories of giving birth. One participant recounts her past experiences with giving birth in Somali before she moved to South Africa points:

"Before my kids were normal deliveries… I delivered normally last time, and it was very nice at that time. But nowadays everything has changed. And it was one thing that we always discuss in our community… that here in South Africa it is not good that when you get into labour some of the people start, starting straight take you for 'Caesar', we were three we were sharing the information. People are discussing about it………". (Mama, Somali woman, interviewed Oct, 2020)

These sentiments expressed by Mama hinted on sudden change in practice towards giving birth and this issue was of great concern among the Somali community. The expression highlights shock on the unprecedent change on birth practices and the increasing practices of delivering women through C-section in the city of Johannesburg.

Some women in this study were adamant that the experience of childbirth and motherhood in South Africa have changed considerably from previous experiences in Somalia, largely because of the loss of traditional community support during pregnancy, childbirth and post-delivery. Cawo in her narrative below was convinced that:

"There is a big difference. There in Somalia, there are people who can wait for you for almost three days, four days, five days until your labour comes but here, they said you are alone, after two hours, three hours they say no you can sign here then you are going to get the caesar. There in Somalia is very nice to deliver. People are always making you happy, speaking with you in your language, speaking to you about normal and good things. Until you deliver normally, but here it is very difficult". (Cawo, Somali woman, interviewed October 2021)

It is interesting to note the recounting of how in South Africa the Somali women are shocked by the limited patience in waiting for women to experience the process of natural labour, waiting even taking several days for the baby to come. However, in South Africa few hours of waiting are not afforded, as the process is rushed. This can be attributed to the over reliance on technological interventions on giving birth which results in negative encounters with the process of birth and motherhood. It also hints the real reason behind negative encounter as in her narrative she pointed to the issue of language, and failure to speak to the women giving birth in their

language complicates the whole encounter, hinting to how communication can smoothen or complicates the entire process. Implying midwives' lack of cultural sensitivity in their provision of care (Mantula et al., 2023). Cultural sensitivity is a set of skills that allow understanding and learning about people whose cultural background is different from one's own, and the ability to modify behavior to accommodate other people's cultural beliefs (Hamidzay, 2018). In this study this is perceived as a total lack of cultural sensitivity and has been captured by Tesa as she said:

"Yeah, actually there is something going on within our community, they [Somali leaders] are also in a meeting of, all the community leaders and Muslim elders, they meet them [government officials] once, they said they want a hospital that we find only women who are there are Muslim women, but we never got it". (Tesa, Somali woman, interviewed Nov 2021)

Most Somali women I interviewed in this study have delivered through C-section either because of their compromised health as mothers or because of the underdevelopment on the part of the child to be born. Caesarean birth became a motif of maternity among most of the participants in this study. It's depth and magnitude equated to the fear and anxiety it generated among women. Some women devised strategies to avoid the procedure and its associated nightmares by trying to push for normal delivery. Here, the clash between biomedical knowledge, or the knowledge of experts, with women's own understanding and wishes, became a point of debate:

"The things that we never had in Somalia is that inside the womb the child's water is finished…….and the baby is tired, we never had that back home, something like that. Then they say sign it you are going to get the caesar. That is the things we have here in South Africa". (Tesa, Somali woman, interviewed Nov 2021)

From Tesa's sentiments above there is a general feeling that the issue of giving birth is going against the Somali religion and they feel powerless to voice their concern. This was further expressed by Hawy a Somali man below:

" …and still it's very difficult for us, to interfere with the Government things…and we are all proposing that it's very wrong what they're doing for the women, Muslim's women….we have never seen a lot of women in Somalia who have Caesar, it's like twenty women delivering, half of it is through a Caesar here in South Africa, and then, in Somalia, you see a hundred of them you going to see one Caesar only, so it's very difficult. Some of them they're scared of getting babies here." (Hawy, Somali man, interviewed Nov 2021)

Comparing the experience of womanhood and giving birth in Somali and in South Africa with figures paints a picture of how bad the situation is in the host nation of South Africa. This also is a captured as a big trigger of mental stress and fear as explained by Fatima below:

"If I think of giving birth here in South Africa I became stressed and very fearful because you know you need someone you trust, and for me the closest friend I

have are men, so when I am sick as a woman I can't explain that to a man, and I feel stressed and depressed because I need a female figure to share with my problem…..if you tell a man that I have menstrual problems they laugh at you, and if you deliver through operation you need a female figure to help you during the healing process you see…." (Fatima, Somali woman, interviewed Oct 2021)

This quotation from Fatima details how the uprooting of migrants from familiar environment to a new environment is a recipe for a chain of psychological challenges as most women encounter the lack of familiar support structures mostly to do with their reproductive health needs. Finding themselves in a male dominated environment without women who share similar cultural background according to Fatima above is a big source of stress and depression, was the concern that if as a woman one delivers through C-section this requires a female figure to assist during the healing and recovery process, yet in most cases they are left to battle it as lonely figures. This lack of support and family structures impacts the physical healing and the psychological adjustments associated with childbirth.

Fatty, a Somali man interviewed in Mayfair expressed how Caesarian birth generates frustration and worry even among men in families among the Somali migrants. For him it's a direct attack on Somali masculinity and their desire for big families as he says:

"I am worried because of my wife here she has given birth through operation, but in Somalia she had given birth normally, I am very worried because this Caesarian may limit the number of kids as the doctors recommended, but it's against our tradition as Somali people we are always for big families". (Fatty Somali Man, Interviewed Oct 2021)

The reality of limiting the number of deliveries a woman who put to birth through the procedure is described here as a direct slap on the traditional dictates of having big families.

The narration by Fundi however shades light to the genesis of the root cause of the problem of caesarean delivery among the Somali migrants, which emanates from the traditional Somali cultural practices as he says:

"This problem of the Cesarean birth its caused by the Somali traditional practices done to women, which is believed as a way to protect them again sexual practices were they had to seal the female vagina through sawing the area and leaving a small opening for them to pass urine and the husband on marriage has to cut and open that and some of the men they don't know or do that hence when it comes to deliver the women will have problems and here automatically it's a caesarean delivery".

The illustration above debunks the myth among the Somali refugee community interviewed in this study that the South African maternal healthcare system is infested with Cesarean deliveries because of some underlying agendas against the Muslim community. It is interesting how he fingers the causes to be associated with the Somali traditional practices of female circumcision (see Pursell 2005), in which external flesh, including the labia minora and

majora and the clitoris, are removed and the remaining skin is sewn together, and how the modern Somali men lack knowledge on how to help their woman with their sexuality and reproductive health when they get married. This is believed to have a direct contribution to delivering through the procedure. Cultural insensitivity is intimately linked to the aspect of language and communication theme and the attitudes it potential generates. Some of the women I discussed with highlights that women born in the 90s and before were frequently than now subjected to the more severe form of circumcision and they have problems when it comes to childbirth, and it must be through C-section. With some also having challenges even during menstrual period.

Interpersonal miscommunication

What follows are excerpts of stories shared by the Somali migrants on what effects interpersonal miscommunication has on their relationships with the healthcare providers and their eventual satisfaction with the services rendered. The centrality of language in healthcare provision has adverse effects on treatment that is language-insensitive and unaware (Peled, 2018). Most of the participants were never educated and could only speak Somali language, surprisingly those who speak English claim to have learnt it on their own either at their small shops through interacting with customers or at the clinics as they interact with the nurses and other healthcare users, however some have learnt and perfected their English through watching movies or through attending English language classes. Most believed that language was used as a tool to block them from understanding what was being shared among the nurses which created uncertainty and confusion among most migrant users. In this case building negative feelings as healthcare was not dialogical or based on mutual understanding, and this created fear, hesitation, uncertainty and ultimately silences the patients' voices (Parry, 2008; Prosen & Tavčar Krajnc, 2013). Hani a 36-year-old who never went to school and was staying with her family in Mayfair since 2009, said:

"I never learned English in my home country; I have a problem with both my kids here in South Africa. I married here, then I became pregnant. They took me to the hospital, but they refused to let my husband go inside with me. The first doctor I saw told me that I am going to deliver normal, I showed signs to deliver normally, I became very happy. So, another nurse came to me and gave me an injection when the doctor left......When she left, she dropped that injection next to the bin, and then we took that injection with those bottles, everything, and wait for the next nurse to come and showed those things. They said, what is this? This means that somebody gave you this injection and you will not deliver normally. You are going to get a cesarean..........I did not understand that person, then I called my husband. They would not allow my husband to come inside. So, the next person came, and I showed that person the things and then the lady said, after six hours they will make a cesarean of my first baby. If the doctor were Somali, then we could understand each other, that time I felt lonely in this country, I am not happy. They just gave me a cesarean without any consent from my husband or myself." (Hani, Somali woman, interview Nov 2021)

This emotive response exposes how language is a pre-requisite in healthcare provision, source of happiness and confidence in meaning making. It contributes to certainty or uncertainty

in the management of health conditions and illnesses. This interview points to the expanding multilingual landscape of inner-city Johannesburg and how healthcare encounters can be comforting or stressful to both healthcare providers and healthcare users due to the inability to engage and understand each other.

Asha a woman in her late twenties who was working as a community health worker in Mayfair, described her feeling of marginalization, exclusion, and loneliness because of language complication – with the experience being horrible from even her days of attending antenatal care (ANC).

> *"ANC was very horrible it was not good they were talking in their language and I could not get help most of the time….at the hospital it was very bad I started swelling all over the body and the nurses could not help and I was very young, I was 19 years by then, I delivered through C-section, If the doctor was Somali or nurse Somali, we could have understood each other…." (Asha Somali woman, interviewed Oct 2021)*

As the above quote suggests, language has the potential to alienate and exclude the migrant healthcare user from accessing care. Linguistic proficiency here can be argued as a determinant of health (Zhang et al., 2021; Pandey et al., 2021) as it results in medical isolation and mental stress and feelings of loneliness. Zhang et al (2021) points to how language isolation during critical health seeking moments is known to be associated with adverse health outcomes. Asha here even feels disappointed that the doctor was not Somali or any of the nurses as this could have served her situation and improved understanding, which eventually resulted in her delivering through C-section.

Bravo points to the lack of proper communication and the barrier posed by lack of English proficiency on the trust on healthcare provision:

> *"What I know in Somalia If there is going to be Casear, they were going inform the mother of the pregnant woman, the mother of the child, the father then everybody is prepared that, this time is Caesar time, but these people they do not understand English, they know their Arabic language I remember, two weeks ago, they said they let somebody call to say your wife is supposed to go to theatre for, a Caesar, and they did reach that guy. But when he went, they were already there doing it……………Caesar, Caesar, Caesar, too many Caesars, too little babies". (Bravo, Somali elder, interviewed Nov 2021)*

The sentiments by Bravo a Somali elder points on how Improving communication and allowing migrant women to preserve some of their traditions may increase their mental wellbeing and positive feelings (Fassaert et al., 2011).

Limited decision power/Consent
"I now see operation after operation….and they never asked me what I want."
(Amigos, Somali woman, interviewed Nov 2021)

This study highlights how caesarean births have become rife and fashionable in recent years. Chadwick and Foster (2013) views C-section as resulting from biomedical construction of risk in the medical setting, which views the pregnant body as vulnerable. This led Amigos to argue that she is now a victim of forced caesarean birth, as this was done on her without her consenting to it. When I posed the question to Somali migrant women about their fears in the city of Johannesburg, most of them constantly raised the fear of Caesarean birth and its associated risks. Timo and Amiya both in their late twenties cited how they have limited consent on what happens to their bodies during delivery as their narratives detail:

> *"What they do nowadays, before even you are going to see much of your labour and the coming out of the baby, you have just to go straight to see Caesar, I cannot trust them, they are just talking about Caesar. I never consented to the Caesar, I just signed……because of the language barrier…" (Timo, interview Somali woman Oct 2021)*

> *"We deliver without consent, because these people they use their languages, we do not understand any of their languages, same as our husbands, before these people, they said okay, come with your husband inside until you deliver, but nowadays, you go there alone, they only ask your husband to bring the documents and go back until the baby is delivered and then without consent, everything they can do it. They give us injections for family planning, and they give us Caesar without our consent". (Amiya, Interview Somali woman, Oct 2021)*

Language and lack of consent are portrayed as inseparable siemens twins that Somali migrants in this study grapple with, in the maternity spaces. What is very distinctive about Timo's and Amiya's narratives is the illustration on lack of consent and how they feel powerless. A lack of voice and choice in deciding on caesarean birth was always emphasized by most of the participants who gave birth through C-section. This confirms the analysis by Panda et al (2018), that Obstetricians and midwives are directly involved in decisions to perform Caesarean sections, hence they exercise medical power and knowledge over human life (Solanki et al., 2020). The narratives delve deeper into the heart of anxieties around Caesarean sections in the city. They point to a lack of communication in the maternity ward, where everything goes by paperwork and language complexity silences them.

The practicalities of a caesarean birth generate substantial fear among pregnant women. This could be either when biomedical caesarean procedure went haywire, and for some participants like Kamiler, the scariest part was the possibility of something going wrong during delivery, which could possibly result in death. She had always been frightened by the thought of a caesarean birth, which had often given her sleepless nights as she explains:

> *"Stress comes from anywhere here in South Africa, I fear for my life because of giving birth, you know here they like C-section always and C-section is a problem, it's an issue of life and death and they just inject you for family planning without asking if you agree to that, it's just a big scandal." (Kamiler, interview Somali woman, Nov 2021)*

The challenge of facing death amplify mental health problems, to her the whole process of giving birth has been scandalized because of the lack of consent. This instead of lessening anxiety (Barker, 2012) and improving satisfaction with birth experience (Konheim-Kalkstein et al., 2018) proves otherwise as it painted with more danger and uncertainty. The characterization of South Africa as a host nation where "stress comes from anywhere" by Kamiler above effectively renders it as an unsafe place to be.

In another similar context Amigos listed a chain of daily stressors which adds to the challenge of giving birth:

"As Somali women giving birth and most of us through forced C-sections, it's like every person who is here, everything needs money, delivery, medication, rent, food etc. And if you are not working, you become stressed, so we have identical problems of stress and depression……" (Amigos, Interview Somali woman, Nov 2021)

Amigos' response highlights how migrant women evaluate birth as presenting identical challenges of stress and depression. Borrowing from Konheim-Kalkstein et al (2018)'s position that birth stories provide an intimate glimpse into women's birth experiences in their own words, I argue here that Amigos' views and those of other participants in this study eventually leads us to the understanding of the emotions attached to the process of giving birth and post-delivery phase far away from home and home being Somalia.

Conclusion

This paper has demonstrated how migrant mental health and wellbeing in the city of Johannesburg can be read, using a maternal lens through the discourse of fear and anxiety. These are central in the lived stressors that impact on the psychological well-being and preparedness of the migrant women during childbirth period. These fears and anxieties might be imagined or real encounters with C-section delivery in the lives of the women. Understanding and making sense of Caesarean birth - based on data on fears and anxieties - presents the health landscape of the greater Johannesburg city as incomplete without the psychological component. Through the narrative from the Somali community lastly, it is worth to keep in mind that the subject (about maternal health particularly caesarean birth) is always political and contested. Always infested with both institutional influence and emotive forces.

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Attitude and political support in European intercultural communication and dialogue

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Abstract: This study presents a structured analysis of intercultural dialogue, by connecting cultural studies, education and policy making decisions in contemporary Europe. Political influence plays a significant role in defining and establishing intercultural dynamics, including the way individuals from different cultures interact and communicate with each other Political support in intercultural communication refers to the ways in which ideologies, policies or movements influence interactions between people from different cultural backgrounds. Immigration policies and international relations dictate the movement of people across borders, which influences intercultural exchanges. Countries with more inclusive immigration policies use have citizens who are more open and adaptable to intercultural communication, while countries with more restrictive policies may have individuals who are less experienced or less open to interacting with people from other cultures. Political leaders and governments use intercultural communication to foster diplomatic relations between countries and a very important aspect is that cultural exchange programs, educational partnerships and international summits are examples of how political support can promote mutual understanding across cultures. All these activities may help reduce prejudices and stereotypes, allowing a more effective communication between individuals or nations

Keywords: concept of dialogue; inclusive immigration; intercultural dialogue; political support; migration policies

Methodological framework

Our research aims to assess how European institutions, including the European Union, the Council of Europe and national governments, foster and contribute to intercultural dialogue across Europe. Given the increasing importance of intercultural understanding in a diverse European landscape, this paper will explore the role that these institutions play in promoting dialogue through policies, initiatives and support for cultural exchange.

To effectively analyze how European institutions contribute to intercultural dialogue, this study will employ a mixed-methods approach. A qualitative analysis will be used to examine EU and Council of Europe policy documents, intercultural programs and government initiatives, and the research will additionally examine EU-level initiatives, such as the *Intercultural Cities* project (Council of Europe), *European Year of Intercultural Dialogue* (European Commission) or *Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme* and *Horizon Europe 2021-2027* (European Commission). The study will also include national-level policies in selected EU member states, focusing on their role in promoting intercultural exchange. Strategic policy reports and documents from the European Union, the Council of Europe and national governments will be analyzed to evaluate the scope and intent of intercultural dialogue initiatives.

This methodological approach allows a thorough analysis of European institutional efforts to foster intercultural dialogue, by combining policy explorations, which will provide a nuanced view of how effectively these institutions are contributing to a more interconnected and culturally inclusive Europe. The goal is for findings to provide a broader perspective and to offer valuable insights for policymakers and cultural leaders seeking to enhance intercultural dialogue across the continent, at the end of our study suggesting proposals for improving mostly European educational policies.

Ancient and modern concepts of intercultural dialogue

Dialogue as a concept, in its ancient context, was not exclusively a conversation or exchange of words, as it is often understood today, but it expressed a deeper idea of meaning and understanding arising through the interaction of reason or speech between individuals or within a group, implying a dynamic process where ideas were examined and clarified through thoughtful exchange, often with the aim of uncovering truth or reaching a higher understanding.

The term comes from the Greek *dialogos*, deriving from the word *dialegethai* which means to become involved in a conversation with another. The parts of Dialegethai are *dia* meaning *through, across* and *legein,* in English - to speak. Philosophers such as Plato used the term dialogue to describe a method of inquiry and teaching. Plato's works take the form of dialogues where Socrates engages with others to explore philosophical questions. The dialogues of Socrates, as recreated by Xenophon and Plato, are the best-known representations of such conversations, but Plato's dialogues in particular depict Socrates participating in an extant intellectual culture[1]. These were not just conversations but structured explorations of ideas, aiming to reach a clearer understanding of concepts like justice, virtue or knowledge. Originating from the works of Plato, it involves a method of cooperative argumentative discussion to stimulate critical thinking and illuminate ideas.

Later on, the meaning of this concept was considered, according to J. Tarnowski, as a social attitude, technique and practice of mutual understanding and cooperation. Dialogue is considered a social relation not so much a specific communicative form of question and answer, 'but at heart a kind of social relation that engages its participants which entails certain virtues and emotions such as concern, trust, respect, appreciation, affection and hope[2]. So, dialogue is considered as a rational conversation between two or more individuals.

For Burbules, who emphasizes a Platonic rational argumentative (true justified belief) model of dialogue, the assertion of belief involves an obligation to provide evidence or statement of reasons. All understanding takes place in language; all understanding is interpretative and implies the active translation between the familiar and the strange. We can also use Gadamer's notion to describe the dialogical structure of understanding, which "is a process of two people understanding each other. Thus it is a characteristic of every true conversation that each opens himself to the other person, truly accepts his point of view as worthy of consideration and gets inside the other to such an extent that he understands not a particular individual, but what he says.

[1] James, Jesse (2024), "Indicting the Athenians in the Melian dialogue", in *The Journal of Hellenic Studies*, 144, p. 178

[2] Burbules, N. C. (1993), *Dialogue in Teaching. Theory and practice*, New York: Teachers College Press.

The thing that has to be grasped is the objective rightness or otherwise of his opinion, so that they can agree with each other on a subject"[3].

Dialogue is about a diverse group of people finding a common sense or understanding about things. This leads to moving forward together in a common direction, each understanding their part in what is being done, and contributing to what may be needed in a willing and intelligent way. Individual and collective identity is formed and maintained by the stories people tell repeatedly about themselves, about each other and about the organisation in which they live or work. As these stories change, the identity changes, too. Stories authored in isolation fragment the identity and lead to a divisive culture, whilst co-authored stories integrate the identity. Dialogue enables people to talk and think together that reveals the inter-dependent needs and interests of people, and these co-authored stories integrate the identity[4].

Intercultural dialogue refers to the process of open and respectful exchange between individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds and its purpose is to promote mutual understanding, reduce cultural biases and foster peaceful coexistence in increasingly diverse societies. This type of dialogue often involves sharing ideas, values, traditions and experiences to bridge cultural divides and find common ground. Or, as Amartya Kumar Sen (an Indian philosopher who made significant scholarly contributions to social choice theory and to well-being of countries) defines it: The person has multiple and significant attachment with other groups and associations including with religion, ethnicity and culture. The illusion of singularity undermines and hides the common plight and situation of persons. [...] The illusion of singularity that relates person only with one group membership and category obliterating other multiple attachments and associations cultivate and promote the violence[5].

Among many thinkers who have contributed to the field of intercultural dialogue, each offering different definitions and unique perspectives, we would also mention Edward Wadie Said (a Palestinian-American academic, literary critic and political activist), best known for his book, *Orientalism* (1978), a landmark work that examines and critiques the cultural stereotypes underpinning Orientalism, the way the Western world views and represents the East. Said examined how Western societies have historically represented the East as exotic or inferior[6], mainly through a lens of power dynamics, his work urging for an incisive exploration and reciprocal intercultural dialogue, where the voices of those historically marginalized are acknowledged and understood on their own terms. Thus, it can be concluded that intercultural competence cannot be achieved by an individual alone, as interaction is a shared process co-constructed by all participants, but at the core of every intercultural encounter lies this idea of co-creation, where each participant contributes to shaping the dynamics of the exchange

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[3] Gadamer, H.G. (1960), *Wahrheit und methode*, Tűbingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck); trans. *Truth and method* (2nd ed.), J. Weinsheimer and D.G. Marshall, 1989; Bloomsbury Academic, 2004.

[4] Garrett, Peter (2025), "Theory of Dialogue", in *Prison Dialogue*, available at https://www.prisondialogue.org/theory-of-dialogue

[5] Sen, Amartya Kumar (2006), *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny*, Penguin Books, London, pp. 261-262

[6] Said, Edward Wadie (1978), *Orientalism*, Vintage Books. A Division of Random House, New York p. 20

Core aspects of intercultural dialogue

The participants in a dialogue must respect each other's cultural identities and engage with an open mind, showing respect and openness. Dialogue seeks to deepen understanding of differing worldviews, cultural practices and values, thus creating mutual understanding. Individuals aim to understand others' perspectives and experiences emotionally and intellectually, empathy being a fundamental ability to understand and share the feelings of another. The Article 151 of the EU Treaty states that: "…the Union shall contribute to the flowering of the cultures of the Member States, while respecting their national and regional diversity and at the same time bringing the common cultural heritage to the fore" and that "action by the Community shall be aimed at encouraging cooperation between Member States".

Therefore, in order to help construct a European cultural space, based on a common cultural heritage as well as on national and regional diversity, the EU develops special programmes which support many cultural actions and projects. It is worth noticing that the Commission pays special attention to safeguarding the position of Europe's small cultures and less-widely spoken languages. So, all voices are considered equally important, regardless of cultural or social standing and the process involves not just speaking but also deeply and actively listening to understand others[7].

When does a person become intercultural? A man or a woman become intercultural when they develop the ability to interact effectively and respectfully with individuals from different cultural backgrounds. This transformation involves not just exposure to other cultures but also the acquisition of certain attitudes, skills and knowledge. In this respect, we will present in a structurally schematic overview, some fundamental aspects of becoming intercultural:

-recognizing that cultural norms, values and practices vary widely;
-understanding that one's own culture is not universal;
-reflecting on one's own cultural identity and how it influences behavior and perceptions;
-identifying potential biases or ethnocentric tendencies;
-demonstrating curiosity and a willingness to learn from others;
-respecting and valuing diverse perspectives without judgment;
-adjusting communication styles, behaviors, and expectations to fit different cultural contexts;
-being comfortable navigating ambiguity and complexity in cross-cultural interactions;
-using verbal and nonverbal communication effectively across cultures;
-understanding cultural nuances and avoiding stereotypes;
-learning about the history, traditions, values, and practices of other cultures;
-recognizing global interconnectedness and its impact on local cultures;
-seeing oneself as part of a larger, interconnected world;
-balancing appreciation for cultural diversity with the recognition of shared human experiences.

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[7] Wilk-Woś, Zofia (2010), "The Role of Intercultural Dialogue in the EU Policy", in *Journal of Intercultural Management,* vol. 2, No. 1, March 2010, p.79

This is the way, a person becomes universal or multicultural.

As phrased by UNESCO, the complication is that one person in an interaction cannot be interculturally competent alone, because interaction is a process co-constructed jointly by all participants. If together participants manage well, then together they are interculturally competent. If not, then it is simply inaccurate to say one of them was competent and the other incompetent. This notion of co-construction, of jointly making our interactions with others, rests at the heart of any intercultural encounter. Each encounter is about making something, creating something, jointly with at least one other person, and so the process of interaction must serve as focus. In any case, intercultural dialogue is the first step to taking advantage of different cultural traditions and histories to expand the list of possible solutions to common problems. Intercultural dialogue is thus an essential tool in the effort to resolve intercultural conflicts peacefully, and a precondition for cultivating a culture of peace[8].

It has been said that intercultural dialogues have been taking place between scholars, officials of non-government organizations and social, religious and political leaders. Generally, these dialogues revolve around the following topics: discussion of the meaning, possibility or impossibility of dialogue, the analysis of cases of dialogues, the clarification of issues related to dialogue, and finally the role intercultural dialogue plays in reducing international violence and promoting economic development[9].

The purpose of intercultural communication and dialogue is to foster understanding, respect and cooperation among individuals and groups from different cultural backgrounds. It is also to learn and to want to live together peacefully and constructively in a multicultural world and to develop a sense of community and belonging. Intercultural dialogue can also be a tool for the prevention and resolution of conflicts by enhancing the respect for human rights, democracy and the rule of law. In this respect, we present a set of objectives that should be taken into consideration in order to have a respectful exchange of views between individuals:

- encourage people to learn about and appreciate the values, beliefs and traditions of others, breaking down stereotypes and misconceptions;
- build bridges between diverse communities to create more inclusive societies where everyone feels valued and respected;
- identify similarities and differences between different cultural traditions and perceptions;
- facilitate joint efforts in addressing common challenges, such as social inequality, discrimination and conflict;
- share visions of the world, to understand and learn from those that do not see the world with the same perspective we do;
- reduce tensions and conflicts by promoting empathy, dialogue and shared solutions, especially in multicultural or divided societies;
- bridge the divide between those who perceive diversity as a threat and those who view it as an enrichment;
- share best practices particularly in the areas of intercultural dialogue, the democratic management of social diversity and the promotion of social cohesion;

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[8] E-Platform on Intercultural Dialogue, https://en.unesco.org/interculturaldialogue/core-concepts

[9] Doron, Aviva, "Towards a Definition of Intercultural Dialogues", in *Peace, Literature, and Art,* vol. II, Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS), United Nations, Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization, p. 5, available at https://www.eolss.net/sample-chapters/c04/e1-39a-30.pdf

-equip individuals and organizations with the skills to interact effectively and respectfully with those from different cultural contexts;
-recognize and embrace cultural diversity as a source of enrichment and creativity instead of division;
-develop jointly new projects.

Accordingly to the principles mentioned above, we can conclude that encouraging individuals to appreciate the values and traditions of others, helps break down stereotypes and misconceptions that often fuel division. More than just a way of exchanging ideas, intercultural dialogue nurtures empathy, promotes inclusive societies and encourages collaborative efforts in solving global issues, and ultimately, equips individuals and organizations with the necessary skills to interact with respect and contribute to shared projects, leading to a more harmonious and innovative world.

European institutions initiatives in implementing intercultural policies

The challenge of fostering equity and cohesion in culturally diverse societies has become more acute. While people of diverse national, ethnic, linguistic and faith backgrounds have immensely contributed to post-war prosperity, inequalities related to origin, culture and skin colour persist, and anxiety about pluralism, identity and shared values is often politically instrumentalised. The Intercultural Cities program (Council of Europe) assists cities and regions in evaluating and adjusting their policies with an intercultural perspective, while also helping to develop inclusive strategies that leverage diversity as a benefit for society as a whole. It also serves as a global platform, bringing together cities and leaders to form a network where initiatives and practices from one city are analyzed and shared to inspire others[10]. At present, The Intercultural Cities programme is being implemented by over 130 cities in Europe and beyond, include Australia, Canada, Japan, Israel, Mexico, Morocco and the United States. The ICC program provides robust methodologies to assist cities in developing their strategies for managing diversity and integration, along with a community for exchanging best practices, and the participation of cities in international networks can have a great impact on local dynamics of governance and on public policy[11].

It also offers a variety of tools for policy development and evaluation. An example of such methodologies is the Anti-rumours strategy, which focuses on eliminating the root causes of discrimination. It involves mapping and dismantling diversity-related prejudice and rumours that lay the foundations of discriminatory and racist attitudes. To support the process of intercultural strategy development, implementation and evaluation, the Intercultural Cities programme provides methodological support and offers extensive city profiles, a database of good practices, a Step-by-step guide, as well as manuals, handbooks and policy briefs related to specific policy areas.

The ICC INDEX tracks the efforts of cities to promote participation, interaction, equal opportunities and the integration of interculturalism and diversity as strategic advantages. Based

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[10] Council Of Europe, *About Intercultural Cities,* available at https://www.coe.int/en/web/interculturalcities/about
[11] White, Bob W. (2021), "City-Based Inclusion Networks In A Post-Multicultural World: The Intercultural Cities Programme Of The Council Of Europe", in *Local Government Studies*, volume 48, 2022 - issue 6*: City Network Activism And The Governance Of Migration,* Routledge

on this assessment, the Council of Europe provides a detailed report, offering recommendations and sharing examples of best practices from other cities. In the next phase, an expert visit takes place, involving independent experts and a Council of Europe representative. This visit engages city officials and a broad range of local stakeholders to evaluate their policies from an intercultural perspective. Local stakeholders are then supported in the development (or revision) of a comprehensive intercultural strategy to manage diversity effectively and harness its potential as an advantage.

Study visits, thematic events and the transfer of innovation, expose a range of policy-makers, practitioners and advocates from each city to reflections and discussions with peers from across the world.

In the Council of Europe, intercultural dialogue is defined as an "open and respectful exchange of views between individuals and groups from diverse ethnic, cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds, based on mutual understanding and respect". It takes place at all levels within societies, between European societies and between Europe and the broader world (White Paper on Intercultural Dialogue, 2008). The awareness and understanding fostered by intercultural dialogue are viewed as tools for promoting reconciliation and tolerance, preventing conflicts and ensuring both integration and social cohesion.

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue aimed to enhance the visibility, effectiveness and coherence of European programs and actions that promote intercultural dialogue, such as the *Europe for Citizens 2007-13* initiative and the *Culture* program. Additionally, it seeked to integrate intercultural dialogue into other European policies, actions and programs wherever possible. The general objectives of the Year focused on promoting intercultural dialogue, highlighting the opportunities intercultural dialogue provide for a diverse society and raising awareness of the value of active citizenship. The Year prioritized the following types of activities: European-level actions, including information and promotional campaigns, surveys and studies and consultations with important stakeholders; symbolic European-level actions designed to raise awareness, mainly among young people, about the Year's objectives, with eligibility for European grants covering up to 80% of the total cost; national-level actions that emphasize a strong European dimension, qualifying for European support of up to 50% of the total cost.

The European Year of Intercultural Dialogue, even though officially celebrated in 2008, remains relevant today for several reasons. As societies become more interconnected, intercultural dialogue is essential to fostering understanding, cooperation and peaceful coexistence among different populations. Then, many European cities and countries are experiencing increased cultural and ethnic diversity due to migration, refugee and global mobility, which makes intercultural dialogue crucial for promoting integration and social cohesion. In today's world, where populism and nationalism are on the rise, intercultural dialogue serves as a countermeasure to racism and intolerance, encouraging mutual respect and understanding. As regional and global tensions persist, intercultural dialogue continues to play a decissive role in preventing conflicts by fostering communication between different groups and reducing misunderstandings. And last but not least, from educational perspective, intercultural dialogue helps promote lifelong learning and education about different cultures, fostering empathy and curiosity among individuals, paticularly young people. Therefore, considering all these aspects,

we state that the European Year of Intercultural Dialogue remains foundational for building inclusive and tolerant societies in the face of ongoing social and political challenges.

Horizon 2020 was the EU's ambitious research and innovation funding programme from 2014-2020, which has been succeeded by *Horizon Europe*, 2021-2027. The programme facilitates collaboration and strengthens the impact of research and innovation in developing and implementing EU policies while tackling global challenges and supports creating and better dispersing of excellent knowledge and technologies. It generates employment, fully taps into the EU's talent pool, drives economic growth, enhances industrial competitiveness and maximizes the impact of investments within a more robust European Research Area.

Horizon Europe offers opportunities to researchers and innovators from all over the world, albeit with the possibility of restrictions where necessary. Under Pillar I researchers can apply for Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowships to come to work in European research groups or for European Research Council grants to establish a research group in Europe. They can participate as partners in research consortia submitting collaborative proposals under Pillar II. Additionally, if they intend to launch a start-up or a Small or Medium-sized Enterprise (SME) in Europe, they are eligible to apply for funding from the European Innovation Council under Pillar III[12]. The EU supports bilateral cooperation through Science and Technology Agreements with countries worldwide, as well as through Regional Dialogues to enhance partnerships and by associating with the Horizon Europe framework program, non-EU countries can contribute to its budget, allowing their researchers to participate on equal terms with those from EU Member States.

On 16 July 2025, the European Commission submitted its proposal for the Horizon Europe Framework Programme (2028–2034), and will boost Europe's productivity and competitiveness, while also improving the well-being of millions of people across the continent.

Horizon Europe (2028-2034) will build upon the successes of previous programs, expanding successful initiatives, streamlining processes where feasible and directing investment to areas where Europe's needs are greatest and it will be closely aligned with the European Competitiveness Fund.

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations, its purpose being to contribute to peace and security by promoting international collaboration through education, science, culture and communication. UNESCO and the European Union share the same values and goals, namely the promotion of peace and mutual understanding, and the recognition of human rights and fundamental freedoms as cornerstones of international cooperation and development.

As provided in Article I - *Purposes and functions,* in the Constitution of the UNESCO*: "*The purpose of the Organization is to contribute to peace and security by promoting collaboration among the nations through education, science and culture in order to further universal respect for justice, for the rule of law and for the human rights and fundamental freedoms which are affirmed for the peoples of the world, without distinction of race, sex, language or religion, by the Charter

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[12] European Commission, *International cooperation*, available at https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa. eu/strategy/strategy-research-and-innovation/europe-world/international-cooperation_en

of the United Nations"[13]. UNESCO collaborates with its 194 Member States worldwide on different initiatives, including protecting biodiversity, addressing the challenges of artificial intelligence, advancing quality education, preserving cultural heritage and ensuring access to reliable information.

UNESCO's Intergovernmental Council of the Management of social transformation Programme adopted the 2022-2029 MOST Strategy, guided by the UNESCO Programme and Budget 2022-2025 (41 C/5). It contributes to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and to the priorities set the UNSG report on "Our Common Agenda," which calls for strong action against inequalities, the rebuilding of the social contract, and the strengthening of analytical capacities in governments, particularly through foresight, big data, computational social sciences and complex systems approaches. Additionally, it aligns with the African Union Agenda 2063[14]. The new strategy emphasizes addressing inequality and exclusion, the coordinated development of population, environmental change and society, governance of regional and global commons and the impact of digital transformations and societal disruption. It advocates for more effective, data-driven policy frameworks that prioritize multi-dimensional well-being and inclusive development.

In examining the initiatives of European institutions in implementing intercultural policies, it is clear that these efforts play a pivotal role in creating a more inclusive and harmonious Europe. Through programs like those mentioned above and through other policy frameworks we have explored, European institutions have made significant strides in promoting intercultural dialogue and addressing the challenges of a diverse society. However, the analysis also highlights that while considerable progress has been made, there are ongoing challenges, particularly in ensuring the effective integration of cultural diversity across all levels of society.

Looking ahead, the continued success of these initiatives will depend on the ability of European institutions to adapt to new socio-political realities, harness the full potential of digital transformations,and prioritize the well-being of all citizens, and by reinforcing the principles of mutual understanding and respect, European institutions can help build a future where diversity is not only accepted but celebrated as a strength.

Discussions, conclusions and perspectives

As an essential component of human communication activities, intercultural communication is indispensable among individuals, groups and nations. Intercultural communication helps maintain the balance within social structures and systems[15], fostering the development and evolution of human culture. Specifically, based on the nature of human cultural exchanges, intercultural communication refers to the information exchange activities among social

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[13] Constitution of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Article I-Purposes and functions, Adopted in London on 16 November 1945 and amended by the General Conference in several sessions, available at https://www.unesco.org/en/legal-affairs/constitution?hub=171411

[14] United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Sustainable devepolment, UNESCO, available at https://sdgs.un.org/un-system-sdg-implementation/united-nations-educational-scientific-and-cultural-organization-1

[15] Yingchun Sun, Yi Shi (2024), "Knowledge Strategies For Indigenous Studies On Intercultural Communication In Non-Western Countries in The Global Power Structure", in *Journalism And Media*, vol.5, issue 3, 1057-1070

members from different cultural backgrounds and involves the diffusion and transformation of various cultural elements globally[16].

The political and socio-cultural context within which the White Paper emerged in Europe was characterized by rising levels of anti-migrant feelings, perceived lack of integration of minorities and more salient security threats brought about through the so-called global war on terror . The intercultural idea aims to address a number of critical questions about how people relate to one another and how these interactions are framed, shaped and enacted in everyday situations. More substantively, other key relevant questions relate to how individuals and groups of people from different cultures interact with one another; how they live well together despite differences pertaining to language, culture, religion, ethnicity and other socio-cultural orientations; how they resolve conflicts arising from cross-cultural misunderstandings; and how their daily encounter with diversity shapes their attitudes, behaviours and experiences[17].

Beyond any description or explanation the real aim of intercultural dialogue is considered to be the reduction of international violence: terrorism and war. Intercultural dialogue challenges harmful stereotypes and misconceptions about different cultures, religions and communities, which are often exploited by extremist ideologies and by engaging in dialogue, people come to see members of other cultures as individuals with shared human values and concerns, reducing the likelihood of seeing them as enemies.

Dialogue creates a platform for discussing grievances that might otherwise fuel radicalization or resentment and this can help address the root causes of terrorism. Encouraging diverse voices counters extremist propaganda, offering alternative narratives that promote coexistence and peace, and further more joint cultural, educational and community-building programs obviously foster relationships between groups that might otherwise remain isolated. Facilitating direct communication between conflicting parties can reduce misunderstandings, build trust, and lead to peaceful negotiations. According to the researchers, understanding and accepting others requires respecting one's own culture, being confident in its valuable and positive meaning, and engaging more often with others[18].

However, intercultural dialogue implies an understanding that leads to praxis. Therefore, dialogue cannot be accomplished merely by holding conferences, but should be built into the very structure of the cultures of the world, and dialogue, in this respect, is a rational conversation between two parties in an atmosphere of freedom, respect, equality, trust and commitment to truth.

Intercultural dialogue does not exclusively deal with social and political issues. It also considers the importance of dialogue in the relationship between religion and science due to the diverse religious conflicts around the world caused by a lack of knowledge of the other's culture. In other words, a lack of a worldview.

Pope John Paul II asserted that the church and the scientific community will inevitably interact; their options do not include isolation. Science can purify religion from error and

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[16] *Ibidem.*

[17] *Ibidem,* p. 492

[18] Ivlev, Vitaly Yu (2020),"Intercultural Communication and Dialogue of Ethnic Cultures in the Context of Digitalization of Society", in *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, volume 507, Proceedings of the 7th International Conference on Education, Language, Art and Inter-cultural Communication (ICELAIC 2020), p.322

superstition. Religion can purify science from idolatry and false absolutes. Each can draw the other into a wider world, a world in which both can flourish. According to his attitude, we need each other to be what we must be, what we are called to be (this was according to Pope John Paul II, Letter to Director of the Vatican Observatory, 1.6.1988, in Papal Addresses 9, p. 300).

Political support plays a critical role in promoting and sustaining these efforts and there are essential ways by which political actors and institutions can support intercultural communication and dialogue. One of them is to enact and enforce legislation, through anti-discrimination laws, that protects against racial and cultural discrimination to ensure equal opportunities and respect for diversity. Then, to develop policies that encourage the integration of minority groups while respecting and preserving their cultural identities, by promoting cultural integration policies. Promoting language access laws the political system will ensure access to government services in multiple languages to promote inclusion and effective communication. Integrate cultural studies and language programs into school curricula to promote understanding and appreciation of diverse cultures from a young age means to provide intercultural education and meanwhile to launch initiatives, within public awareness campaigns, to educate the public about the benefits of diversity and the importance of intercultural dialogue. Providing funds for programs that bring together people from different cultural backgrounds, such as cultural festivals and community centers could become parts of the community projects and invest in research to understand the challenges and opportunities in intercultural communication, and use data to inform policies, could develop research and data collection. Cultural exchange could also support international exchange programs that allow individuals to experience and learn from different cultures. Different leadership categories should promote diversity in political representation to ensure that all cultural groups have a voice in decision-making processes. Peacebuilding initiatives should supply with programs that use intercultural dialogue as a tool for conflict prevention and resolution. By organizing cultural holidays and events, diverse cultural holidays and traditions could be recognized and celebrated at national level, as well.

While political support can significantly enhance intercultural communication and dialogue, it must be inclusive, which means to avoid tokenism and ensure that all cultural groups feel genuinely represented and valued. This support must also be sustained with long-term commitment as necessary to create lasting impact. Then it should also be adaptable, with policies and initiatives that should evolve in response to changing demographics and societal needs. The role of the media in shaping political discourse also affects intercultural communication. Political parties and governments often use media to influence public opinion about cultural issues, but through campaigns or social media, politicians can either promote or diminish intercultural understanding, influencing how different cultural groups communicate and relate to each other. Political support for certain languages, through language policies, can impact intercultural communication. For example, some countries may promote the use of a national language while downplaying the use of minority languages and this can either facilitate communication between different cultural groups or create barriers if individuals are not fluent in the dominant language.

Migration policies play a significant role in intercultural dialogue, as they determine how different cultural groups are integrated into society and how they interact with one another. Effective migration policies can promote positive intercultural dialogue by fostering respect, shared values and collaboration and they should include integration measures aimed at helping migrants adjust to their new country. These programs may include language courses, cultural orientation,

civic education, all of which can contribute to a smoother integration process. Integration policies that prioritize intercultural exchange encourage migrants to share their cultural practices and learn from the host culture, fostering mutual respect. Immigration policies that actively address discrimination and racism are essential for ensuring that migrants feel welcomed and valued in their new environment. Laws that protect against discrimination based on ethnicity, religion or cultural background can reduce tensions and promote positive intercultural dialogue by ensuring that all groups have equal opportunities for participation in society. The inclusion of intercultural dialogue in educational curricula can help young people of both migrant and host backgrounds to understand each other better[19].

Migration policies that emphasize intercultural education in schools can help build bridges between different communities, reduce stereotypes and promote mutual understanding. Many migrants succeed in establishing themselves in their new communities, but others, those at the centre of our attention, face difficulties. They may lose the links with their families and communities[20].

Outside their traditional support systems, they often are unable to access health and social services that respect their basic needs and dignity. Migration policies that facilitate migrants' access to employment opportunities can contribute to both their economic integration and social inclusion. When migrants can access stable jobs, they are more likely to establish connections with local communities and participate actively in social life, leading to more open and constructive dialogues between different cultural groups.

Summing up we will emphasize the idea that political support can significantly contribute to intercultural communication by influencing perceptions, creating frameworks for interaction and facilitating or hindering dialogue between cultural groups, and the intersection of politics and culture is crucial for fostering mutual understanding, reducing conflict and promoting collaboration in a globalized world. By prioritizing these strategies, political leaders could foster a culture of mutual respect and collaboration, paving the way for more harmonious and equitable societies.

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Healthcare Professionals and Integration: Supporting a Sustainable Swedish Society

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Abstract. This essay examines the essential role of healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, in supporting the integration of immigrants and refugees into Swedish society. In response to global displacement caused by conflict, persecution, and climate crises, Sweden has welcomed large numbers of asylum seekers, prompting the need for sustainable integration strategies. The essay argues that health is foundational to integration, enabling individuals to participate in education, employment, and community life. It highlights the mental health challenges faced by newcomers, including trauma, depression, and social isolation, and emphasizes the importance of culturally sensitive, trauma-informed care. Nurses are uniquely positioned to act as caregivers, educators, advocates, and cultural mediators, helping bridge gaps between individuals and healthcare systems. Their work aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, particularly those related to health, education, and reduced inequalities. The essay also addresses systemic barriers such as resource constraints, institutional inertia, and gaps in professional training that hinder effective integration. It calls for a shared societal responsibility across healthcare, education, and policy sectors to foster inclusive environments. By embedding sustainability and cultural competence into nursing education and practice, Sweden can strengthen its capacity to support displaced populations and build a more equitable, resilient, and cohesive society for all.

Keywords: immigrants; integration; nurses; nursing; refugees; social participation

According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2020), approximately eighty million individuals globally had been forcibly displaced due to armed conflict and persecution as of 2020, with nearly 30 million recognized as refugees. The Russian Federation's invasion of Ukraine in early 2022 further exacerbated this trend, resulting in the displacement of nearly six million individuals within the first four months of the conflict, many of whom sought refuge in neighboring European countries (UNHCR 2022c).

In light of ongoing armed conflicts, humanitarian crises, and climate-related disasters, it is increasingly evident that a significant number of states will need to adapt to the reality of hosting large populations of forcibly displaced persons (UNHCR 2022a). A substantial proportion of these individuals are unlikely to return to their countries of origin and will require sustained support to integrate and rebuild their lives in host societies (UNHCR 2022b).

In recent years, Sweden has stood at the forefront of humanitarian commitment, welcoming thousands of individuals fleeing conflict and persecution. From the Syrian civil war in 2015 to the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, these events have tested Sweden's infrastructure and prompted critical reflection on how best to support those seeking refuge. As we continue to

strive for an inclusive and sustainable society, the role of healthcare professionals and especially nurses plays a critical role.

In the Swedish context, the number of asylum applications has varied considerably over the past two decades. While the early 2000s saw an average of approximately 30,000 asylum applications annually, this figure surged to around 163,000 in 2015, largely in response to the Syrian civil war and other regional conflicts. More recently, Sweden received 16,825 asylum applications in 2022 and 12,644 in 2023 (SCB 2024).

The arrival of over 160,000 asylum seekers in 2015 (SCB 2024) placed considerable strain on Sweden's health, housing, education, and employment systems. The question remains: How can we better equip our systems and professionals to support integration?

Health as a Foundation for Integration

Good health is a fundamental prerequisite for individual development and the ability to engage effectively in daily life activities (CSDH 2008). This is particularly true for newly arrived immigrants, for whom physical and mental well-being are critical to navigating the challenges of resettlement. Maintaining good health facilitates their active participation in integration processes, including education, employment, and social engagement, thereby enhancing their prospects for successful establishment in the host country (IOM 2004).

From a broader perspective, the integration of newly arrived migrants is closely aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by member states in 2015. Specifically, it intersects with several key goals, including SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities). Effective integration policies and practices contribute not only to the well-being and social inclusion of migrants but also to the overall resilience and sustainability of host societies. By addressing the social, economic, and health-related needs of new arrivals, countries can advance equitable development and uphold the global commitment to "leave no one behind" (UN 2015).

Navigating Complexity: The Immigrant Experience

Newly arrived immigrants often face a complex process of adjustment upon settling in a new country. This transition involves navigating a range of challenges, including cultural differences, social integration, economic instability, health care access, and language barriers. These multifaceted needs require comprehensive support systems to facilitate successful adaptation (Ekstrand et al. 2022; Hägg-Martinell et al. 2021; Hägg-Martinell et al. 2025; Larsen, Eriksson, and Hagg Martinell 2021; Schuster et al. 2022; Weiss and Gren 2021). These studies underscore the importance of targeted interventions and inclusive policies to support immigrants during their initial settlement phase.

Many newly arrived individuals encounter mental health concerns. Their circumstances are often complicated by the trauma of displacement, separation from family, and the anxiety of rebuilding life in a new cultural context (Ekstrand et al. 2022). Additional research indicates that the most commonly reported mental health conditions among newly arrived immigrants and refugees are depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and anxiety disorders (Leiler et al. 2019; Solberg et al. 2020).

In a Swedish study, Tinghög et al. (2017) found that approximately one in three recently resettled Syrian refugees exhibited significant symptoms of depression and anxiety. Additionally, 30% of participants demonstrated symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and over 60% reported experiencing low levels of social support. These findings underscore the considerable mental health challenges faced by this population. Similarly, research by Sigvardsdotter et al. (2016) highlights that individuals who have fled their home countries frequently endure acute traumatic experiences, rendering them particularly vulnerable to a range of health-related issues. Further evidence from a population-based study conducted in Sweden and Finland among Iranian and Iraqi refugees who had been subjected to torture revealed that such experiences had a profoundly negative impact on both their health status and social conditions (Garoff et al. 2021).

Trauma experienced before migration or during the relocation process introduces an additional layer of stress that can significantly hinder resettlement, affecting individuals physically, psychologically, and socially even when support systems are in place (Tinghog et al. 2017).

Despite efforts, organizational responses have often fallen short in meeting the diverse needs of this population. Civil servants and volunteers frequently find themselves unprepared to address the health-related and existential needs of new arrivals. Yet these stakeholders agree that integration cannot be viewed through a narrow lens of employment or language proficiency alone. Instead, a broader, more holistic view is needed one that considers identity, agency, and the right to participate fully in society (Schuster et al. 2022).

Yildirim et al. (2020) highlighted that Syrian refugees residing in Turkey commonly experience feelings of hopelessness, diminished motivation, and a lack of social support. Enhancing their social support networks could foster greater hope for the future.

Social Participation as a Foundation for Health

Integration begins with meaningful social participation. It is not merely about structural support, but also about giving people the tools to reclaim autonomy, build social networks, and take part in everyday life (Hägg-Martinell et al. 2021).

Previous research has demonstrated that social participation exerts a beneficial influence on health outcomes. Active engagement in community life and the presence of close interpersonal relationships are critical factors that contribute to both physical and mental well-being, serving as protective elements against adverse psychological health outcomes (Hägg-Martinell et al. 2021; Larsen, Eriksson, and Hagg Martinell 2021; Niemi et al. 2019; Webber and Fendt-Newlin 2017).

In addition, when immigrants are involved in setting their own goals and are met with understanding and motivation, their ability to integrate both socially and professionally increases (Hägg-Martinell et al. 2025).

Key factors and priorities that promote social participation include the development of culturally sensitive healthcare, and organized, structured ways of gathering relevant knowledge on the health and particular risk factors of the refugee population (Larsen, Eriksson, and Hagg Martinell 2021).

Although social participation is widely recognized as a key determinant of health, some may contend that structural factors such as employment and housing should take precedence in integration policies. While these are undeniably critical, research increasingly shows that social connectedness and a sense of belonging are foundational to long-term well-being and successful

integration and should therefore be addressed in parallel. The healthcare sector, which touches almost every life at one point or another, offers a unique entry point for promoting this type of inclusion. Nurses, in particular, can play an integral role in building bridges between individuals and the systems that support them.

Nurses as Advocates and Educators

Nurses are uniquely positioned to support integration, not only through clinical care but also as educators, advocates, and cultural mediators.

In an increasingly interconnected world, it is essential for nurses to possess a comprehensive understanding of global health issues and their implications at the local level. This includes an awareness of health disparities that persist not only in low- and middle-income countries but also within their own communities. Such knowledge enables nurses to deliver culturally competent care, advocate for health equity, and contribute meaningfully to addressing systemic inequalities in healthcare delivery (Cesario 2017).

Nurses represent the largest segment of the healthcare workforce and are employed across a wide range of settings, including primary care, hospitals, and home-based care. Their professional role positions them uniquely to promote health and well-being at the individual, familial, and community levels. In addition, nurses deliver a broad spectrum of healthcare services, encompassing preventive, curative, and rehabilitative care for individuals across all age groups and life stages. They play a pivotal role in disease prevention, the promotion of healthy behaviors, and the management of chronic health conditions, thereby contributing significantly to the overall health and well-being of the populations they serve (ICN 2021; WHO 2021).

As some of the first points of contact for newly arrived immigrants, nurses occupy a uniquely influential position that extends far beyond the boundaries of traditional clinical care. Their role encompasses not only the provision of medical services but also the critical functions of advocacy, education, and empowerment. In many cases, nurses are the first professionals to listen to the stories of individuals who have experienced displacement, trauma, and uncertainty. This initial interaction can set the tone for how welcomed and supported newcomers feel in their new environment.

Through advocacy, nurses help ensure that immigrants receive the care and services they are entitled to, often acting as intermediaries between patients and complex healthcare or social systems. They can identify gaps in access, speak up for vulnerable individuals, and push for more inclusive policies and practices. As educators, nurses provide essential information about health, hygiene, nutrition, and navigating the healthcare system knowledge that is often unfamiliar to those coming from different cultural or systemic backgrounds.

Perhaps most importantly, nurses empower individuals by fostering a sense of agency and self-worth. By treating patients with dignity, respecting their cultural values, and encouraging active participation in their own care, nurses help build confidence and resilience. This empowerment is a cornerstone of successful integration, as it enables individuals to take control of their health and well-being, engage with their communities, and begin to rebuild their lives with hope and purpose.

There is a recognized need for nurses within organizations that support newly arrived immigrants, as their professional expertise is essential for accurately identifying and addressing the specific health and psychosocial needs of this population (Ekstrand et al. 2022). Providing

culturally sensitive care is essential. This means understanding not just medical symptoms, but also cultural practices, fears, and expectations around health and wellness (ICN 2021; WHO 2021). Moreover, nurses can support individuals in navigating the healthcare system, understanding their rights, and accessing the services they need (Larsen, Eriksson, and Hagg Martinell 2021).

During times of crisis, such as war or forced displacement, nurses have a critical role in alleviating suffering and fostering resilience (Holmgren 2017; Sullivan-Marx and McCauley 2017). However, to do this effectively, they require the right education and training.

Building Sustainable Knowledge in Nursing Education

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development outlines seventeen goals, many of which are linked to the social and environmental determinants of health (UNDP n.y.). Yet research has shown that nursing students often lack sufficient exposure to these frameworks. By integrating the SDGs into nursing curricula—through workshops, simulations, and collaborative projects, future professionals can develop the competencies they need to support sustainable and equitable care (Hägg Martinell 2025).

The implementation of sustainable practices within nursing education is hindered by a variety of interrelated barriers. These range from individual-level factors such as limited awareness, insufficient motivation, and misconceptions about sustainability to broader systemic challenges, including curricular gaps, institutional inertia, and a lack of supportive educational policies and resources (Aronsson et al. 2022; Cugini, Velez, and Gomez 2024; Chen and Price 2020; Novieastari et al. 2022; Okenwa-Emegwa and Eriksson 2020).

There may be concerns that integrating the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) into nursing education could dilute the focus on clinical competencies. However, the SDGs are not intended to replace core medical training but to enrich it by providing a broader understanding of the social and environmental determinants of health knowledge that is increasingly essential in today's interconnected world.

Toward a Shared Responsibility

Creating a society where everyone feels included, supported, and empowered is not the responsibility of a single group it is a collective effort that must be embraced by all sectors of society. Healthcare professionals, educators, social workers, policymakers, and community organizations each have a vital role to play in fostering environments where integration is not only possible but actively encouraged. This shared responsibility requires open communication, mutual respect, and a willingness to collaborate across traditional boundaries.

Health care professionals should implement preventive strategies that target the risk factors contributing to hopelessness among newly arrived immigrants and refugees. Additionally, it is important to consider the perspectives of both experts and service providers, as well as those of the recipients, when discussing social participation in health services (Larsen, Eriksson, and Hagg Martinell 2021).

Sustainability in nursing underpins enduring systemic transformation by fostering healthcare environments that preserve and promote health equity and access for both current and future populations (Anåker and Elf 2014).

Integrating Immigrants Into The Society

Successfully integrating immigrants into Swedish society requires shared responsibility. Civil society, public institutions, and healthcare professionals must work together to remove barriers, provide holistic support, and foster a sense of belonging.

For society, this means:

Promoting social participation through inclusive community initiatives.

Offering comprehensive services that address housing, education, and economic stability.

Developing policies that prioritize accessibility, equity, and long-term well-being.

For nurses and healthcare professionals, this means:

Delivering culturally attuned care that respects everyone's background and story.

Advocating for patients navigating unfamiliar systems and championing inclusive practices.

Engaging in continuous learning to adapt to the evolving needs of immigrant communities.

Sweden has both the capacity and the compassion to support those seeking refuge within its borders. By reinforcing our healthcare systems with knowledge, empathy, and sustainability, we can ensure that integration becomes more than a goal it becomes a shared reality. Although this debate article focuses on the inclusion of refugees and immigrants in Sweden, the result may be applicable to other countries.

Acknowledging Implementation Challenges

While the vision of healthcare professionals playing a central role in integration is both inspiring and necessary, it is important to recognize the real-world challenges that can hinder its implementation. Many healthcare systems are already under significant pressure, facing shortages of staff, limited financial resources, and increasing demands on services. These constraints can make it difficult to allocate the time and attention needed to provide personalized, culturally sensitive care to newly arrived indivaiduals.

In addition to resource limitations, there are often institutional barriers that slow the adoption of new practices. Change can be difficult in large organizations, especially when it involves rethinking established routines or introducing new forms of collaboration. Efforts to integrate more inclusive and trauma-informed approaches may be met with resistance, not out of unwillingness, but due to a lack of time, training, or support.

Another challenge lies in the preparation and education of healthcare professionals. Many may not feel adequately equipped to address the complex needs of diverse populations, particularly when it comes to mental health, cultural differences, or the long-term effects of trauma. Without ongoing training and professional development, even the most dedicated practitioners may struggle to provide the level of care that integration efforts require.

Despite these obstacles, the potential for meaningful change remains strong. By acknowledging these challenges openly and working together to address them, healthcare systems can become more responsive, inclusive, and effective. This requires investment not only in resources but also in people in their education, their well-being, and their capacity to lead change. Only through such a comprehensive approach can we ensure that the promise of integration becomes a reality for all.

Concluding Reflection

The integration of immigrants into Swedish society is not merely a policy challenge it is a profound societal endeavor that calls for empathy, collaboration, and sustained commitment. This essay has illuminated the pivotal role healthcare professionals, particularly nurses, play in fostering inclusive and sustainable communities. Their unique position at the intersection of health, education, and advocacy enables them to act as both caregivers and catalysts for social change. By addressing the physical and mental health needs of newly arrived individuals, nurses lay the groundwork for broader social participation and long-term integration.

However, the path to effective integration is complex and fraught with challenges. Structural limitations, such as resource constraints and institutional inertia, can hinder the implementation of inclusive practices. Moreover, healthcare professionals often face gaps in training and support, which can limit their ability to respond to the diverse needs of immigrant populations. Recognizing these barriers is essential not to discourage action, but to inform more realistic and resilient strategies.

Ultimately, integration must be viewed as a shared responsibility. It requires the collective efforts of healthcare providers, educators, policymakers, and civil society to create environments where all individuals feel valued and empowered. By embedding sustainability and cultural competence into nursing education and practice, Sweden can strengthen its capacity to support those seeking refuge and contribute to a more equitable and cohesive society.

This reflection underscores that integration is not a destination but an ongoing process one that thrives on compassion, inclusivity, and the unwavering belief in human dignity. As Sweden continues to navigate the complexities of global migration, the healthcare sector stands as a beacon of hope and a cornerstone of sustainable societal development.

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FOCUS

Acculturation and its psychological determinants- how individual differences impact migrant adaptation

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Abstract. Migrant adaptation is a multi-faceted phenomenon, that can prove extremely challenging to the individuals involved. Acculturation in the 21st century is an established area of study which impacts individual behaviours, cognitions, attitudes and social relationships in multi-cultural societies. This study tested the relationship between acculturation, social connectedness, motivational persistence, career satisfaction and well-being, in a convenience sample of first-, second and third-generation migrants who reside in the UK. A correlational design based on data gathered using a cross-sectional survey on 450 migrant respondents yielded conflicting results. Structural Equation Modelling and regression analyses results are discussed in light of the current literature in cross-cultural psychology, with implications for future studies.

Keywords: acculturation, well-being, motivational persistence, adult migrants, United Kingdom.

Introduction

The relations between host communities and immigrants have long been a topic of research in multi-cultural societies. The past decade brought displacement due to wars, such as in Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and more recently in Ukraine, with extensive movement of people fleeing war but also of sojourners in search for a better life (Newman, 2023).

According to figures from the European Commission, in 2022, 5.1 million immigrants arrived in the European Union from non-EU countries, compared to 2.4 million in 2021 (Eurostat, 2024). According to the same report, "in 2022, 1.5 million people moved from one EU country to another. This is an increase of 7% compared with 2021" (p. 1). Data from the OECD, cited by Oxford University's Migration Observatory, regarding the foreign-born population in countries such as the UK or the USA was at 15% of the total population in 2023 (Sumption et al., 2024). Referring directly to the UK, net migration (i.e. more people leave than arrive in the country in any given year) to the UK reached a peak of 906,000 by June 2023, figures which decreased to 728,000 in the year ending June 2024 (Sumption et al., 2024, p. 6).

The quality of life that migrants perceive is extremely important, and unhappiness can signify several things, such as exclusion, inability to adjust and acculturate to the new environment, lack of social support, poor health, mental health needs, a culture clash and others. Public policies and

programmes that are designed to support immigrants rely on empirical studies to give guidance and offer practical solutions. Bourhis et al. noted that "immigrants […] may trigger a redefinition of the collective identity of the dominant host society", and as a consequence, "can compel a reassessment of the role of the state in defining and promoting the collective identity of the dominant host society" (1997, p. 372).

However, the connection between a migrant's mental health and personality variables, individual skills and cultural acculturation "may not be adequately explained by investigating a direct relationship on a single dimension", as mediating variables will impact it (Yoon et al., 2008, p. 247). Broadly, the objectives of this study are to examine the association between the degree of acculturation and psychosocial variables, and outcome measures; to identify the relationships between independent, dependent and potential moderating and mediating variables; to further test the English version of the Motivational Persistence scale and analyse it withing a broader empirical context.

Acculturation – conceptual evolution in intercultural studies

Acculturation refers to changes that happen as a result of interactions between dissimilar people or groups of individuals, in a cultural setting (Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Schwartz et al., 2010). Acculturation is studied both for immigrant groups who live in a foreign country, such as sojourners or refugees, but also for those who are subjected to the effects of globalisation, phenomenon labelled *remote acculturation*. The concept has great importance for both academia and for practice, in the counselling and education sectors, in advocacy and policy-making, as it pertains to the lives of immigrants/refugees and racial/ethnic minorities (Yoon et al., 2020).

Berry (1980) changed the view about the concept from unidirectional to bi-directional, and developed an acculturation model with four possible acculturative styles, namely integration, assimilation, separation and marginalisation. The bi-directional model covers immigrants' orientation towards one of the four acculturative styles, with elements from the *mainstream* (or host/ residency) environment and from the *heritage* (home/ native) culture.

A recent systematic review that looked at the results from 52 articles (Andronic & Constantin, 2024) confirms Berry's theoretical approach that *integration* is the most prominent acculturation strategy, as identification with both cultures contribute to higher well-being in immigrants and participation in the host/mainstream culture correlates with well-being (Berry, 2005). The same review found that culturally integrated employees report higher job satisfaction and that integration mediates the path from mainstream acculturation conditions to work success (Andronic & Constantin, 2024).

But there is a distinction to be made between first- and second-generation migrants. First generation migrants are those who migrate during adulthood, when they are independent individuals and can make this decision on their own. They leave their home countries due to a wide variety of reason but can end up facing challenges that can affect their mental health (Toth-Bos et al., 2020). First generation migrants can "experience higher levels of anxious and depressive symptoms and higher levels of acculturative stress compared to second-generation due to the way they internalise acculturating challenges" (Rogers-Sirin et al., 2014, p. 22) or end up feeling "alienated and insecure with diminished levels of support, face challenges of identity management and perceived discrimination" (Sharma & Sharma, 2010, p. 317).

Furthermore, second-generation immigrants, understood as children of immigrants who were born in the mainstream country or have immigrated at a young age, have a different experience

in regards to acculturation (Schwartz et al., 2010). Their daily lives include simultaneous acculturation to both cultures, as they mature and develop competencies from "at least two cultures: the culture of their parents (i.e., the heritage culture) and the culture of their host country (i.e., the mainstream culture)" (Schwartz & Pfammatter, 2024, p. 2). Biculturalism, or the ability to integrate two cultures, can lead to improved social adaptation and higher psychological adjustment (Berry et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2008). Third generation immigrants, who are born in the mainstream country (same as their second-generation parents), and have at least one grandparent of migrant origin, exhibit even less influences from the first generation's native cultural background.

A systematic review found that a migrant's gender, ethnicity, educational level, occupational adjustment and length of residence in the host country can assert moderating effects on the relationship between acculturation and well-being. The same study identified mediators of the relationship between WB and acculturation, such as social connectedness, acculturative stress, experiences of discrimination (Andronic & Constantin, 2024). Acculturation is linked to variables such as aspects of the heritage culture, to characteristics of migrants themselves, to their status, level of education before migration, the languages they speak, to the particularities of the receiving culture (Crockett & Zamboanga, 2009).

More research is needed, as pointed out by researchers, because a wide majority of studies are USA-based, therefor the current number of localised European studies are insufficient to generate "conclusions on the role of the societal context on acculturation" (Schwartz & Pfammatter, 2024, p. 4). As pointed out by Berry (2005), further research is essential, because in the "absence of conceptual clarity and empirical foundations", the social and psychological costs of multiculturalism can be high and might outweigh the benefits (p. 711). Diversity is part of our lives and migration will continue or even intensify in the future, therefor cultural diversity elements and variables should be integrated in this type of research.

Acculturation and its connection to Life and Work satisfaction

Well-being is a complex, multi-faceted construct, which combines cognitive, affective and somatic elements (Toth-Bos et al., 2020). There are two similar concepts, namely subjective well-being and psychological well-being. SWB refers to positive or negative affective and cognitive evaluations that people make about their lives (Diener, 2000, p.34), and PWB is "the state of a series of positive conditions an individual is experiencing" (Ruelas, 2019, p. 10).

Acculturation and well-being have been studied together extensively in numerous studies (Choy et al., 2021; Lopez-Class et al., 2011; Toth-Bos et al., 2020; Ward & Szabo, 2023), due to the increased interest in the mental health outcomes that migrant adaptation can generate, and mediating and moderating variables have been identified as having an impact on this causal relationship (Andronic & Constantin, 2024). Personality factors (such as self-esteem or positive affect), income (socio-economic status), demographic aspects (age, gender, ethnicity, religiosity), or social factors (such as environmental mastery, social integration), can impact the process of acculturation.

Literature on the relationship between acculturation and other concepts, such as migrants' socioeconomic status (SES), length of stay in a host country, mainstream language proficiency, and their effects on well-being have been found to generate discrepant results (Wilczewska, 2023). The same author notes that acculturation can be regarded as a "broad concept, with multiple possible indicators", therefor it is possible that "a pattern of relationships between some indicators of acculturation and indicators of SES exist in addition to their associations with well-being" (Wilczewska, 2023, p. 1339).

As Ramos et al., (2014) noted, "the relationship between acculturation preferences and well-being might be more complex than initially hypothesized by Berry and colleagues" (2014, p. 9).

In epidemiological research, studies often show inconsistencies in operationalization and measurement of the concept of acculturation, exhibiting unclear outcomes, and generating a lack of comparability, generalizability and transferability of the results (Schumann et al., 2020). In social and cross-cultural psychology, studies have theorised that potential moderators of the relation between acculturation and/or enculturation ("retention of or cultural socialization to one's culture of origin", Yoon et al., 2013, p. 16) and well-being can be classed in three main groups: 1. sample characteristics (race, gender, age), 2. researchers' conceptualization and operationalization of acculturation (e.g., linearity, dimensionality) or 3. contextual influence of research location and time (Yoon et al., 2013, p. 17).

Diener has emphasised that a strong predictor of happiness is the fulfilment or absence of basic psychological needs (Diener et al., 2018). Out of the three factors of the basic psychological needs theory, the sense of relatedness could be affected by the inability of migrants to connect with the host culture (Ryan & Deci, 2017).

Acculturation & Motivational persistence

Persistence is the tendency to remain engaged in specific goal-related activities, despite difficulties, obstacles, fatigue, low feasibility or frustration (Constantin et al., 2011). Persistence entails, on one hand, sustained involvement in an activity, intensification of effort when one is facing obstacles, and on the other hand, a renewal of commitment to achieve desired goals.

Berry's acculturation framework proposed that migrants are confronted with the process of acculturation, a balance of will, of persistence and involvement which will decide how much of their native culture and values to retain, and how many elements of the new culture will be assimilated (Berry, 1980; Bourhis et al., 1997). More recent research described acculturation as a motivated process for those who migrate, and the motivation to both acculturate to a host country and to also preserve one's heritage values and culture are uniquely associated with the respective means of doing so (Vishkin et al., 2021, p. 1). This theory of Goal Constructs which looks at the differences between migrants' motivations and means, alongside Recker et al.'s (2018) theoretical model of motivations for cultural maintenance and host culture exploration have all generated mixed results. Therefor, there is scope for a deeper analysis of the way acculturation and motivation are connected.

Acculturation & Social connectedness

Connectedness is one of the needs that evolve and develop as people live their lives and have diverse experiences and social interactions, basically establishing a sense of comfort in social contexts and being able to identify with others alike (Lee & Robbins, 1995). When we feel disconnected or distant and we have difficulties connecting and forming meaningful social relationships, the negative outcomes such as frustration, isolation, rejection appear. The impact on an individual's life can be significant, as "frustrations along any aspect in the development of belongingness may impair the person's ability to effectively function in life" (1995, p. 233).

Yoon et al. (2008; 2012) studied social connectedness as a mediator, researching whether "highly acculturated individuals would feel more connected to and accepted in mainstream society, whereas highly enculturated individuals would feel the same way in the ethnic community" (2012, p. 87). Results showed that connectedness to mainstream society partially mediated the link of

acculturation and subjective well-being in immigrant populations, suggesting that further research is needed, to incorporate additional variables in the relationship. A meta-analysis study confirmed that social connectedness has been identified as a mediating variable in the relationship between acculturation and subjective well-being in several other empirical research articles (Andronic & Constantin, 2024).

Acculturation & Language proficiency and Length of Stay

The past decade brought an improvement in empirical research designs, as earlier studies looked at the direct connection between acculturation and outcome variables, such as mental health or career development variables (Yoon et al., 2012). Research has shown that various variables, such as demographic variables (age, gender), religiosity, education level, or length of stay in a foreign country, can all impact a person's acculturation journey (Andronic & Constantin, 2024).

Language proficiency in the national tongue of a host country is often used in empirical studies as an indicator of acculturation (Rudmin, 2009). The relationship between the two variables is complex, with "language proficiency and use (behaviors) are often used to measure acculturation orientations, but they can also be seen as outcomes of the acculturation process" (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006b, p. 15).

Similar to host country language proficiency, used as one of the most employed single indicator proxy measures for migrant integration, another variable is the *length of stay* or duration of living in a new country since immigration occurred (Schumann et al., 2020). The general belief is that "the more time immigrants spend in the new place, the more they become familiar with and adjust to it", leading to a more acculturated individual (Wilczewska, 2023, p. 1341). Length of stay and language proficiency of the host country are usually correlated, but "the two variables are conceptually quite distinct and their causal order is clear" (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006b, p. 14).

Aims of the current research

Empirical literature published in the last decades presents divergent findings and mostly contradictory results, especially in the case of studies on European migrant populations. Acculturation has a special place in cross-cultural research, as empirical studies analyse it either as an independent, a dependent or a moderating variable. Different research designs look at acculturation in very different manners, and often the results are not in unison with each other. There is also a gap in quantitative acculturation-related research in the United Kingdom, hence the importance of addressing it by including the concept of migrant acculturation in our design.

The goals of the present study are two-fold: *a)* to test a path model to identify if acculturation (home vs. host and as a stand-alone concept) impacts the relationship between personality variables and specific outcomes (life and work satisfaction); and *b)* to test the influence of social variables (social connectedness, social status) and psychological variables (motivational persistence) in relation to UK migrants' well-being.

Regarding the first objective, we want to understand how acculturation relates to other variables in our model and to see if it is connected to migrants' motivation, their willingness to become socially connected with others in their host country, and their self-reported satisfaction with life and work satisfaction. A secondary research objective is to introduce variables that connect to social and psychological needs and test their relationship with our main research variables (acculturation and life and work satisfaction). We are not aware of any other empirical study which has analysed all these

variables together, as usually empirical research looks at them taken separately or two-by-two, with specific moderating and mediating variables. More detailed summaries of such relationships can be found in several recent systematic reviews (Andronic & Constantin, 2024; Choi et al., 2021; Ward & Szabo, 2023).

Variables and study hypotheses are as follows:

H1: There is a positive correlation between acculturation, demographic variables (gender, age) and well-being.

H2: Length of residence in the UK is an indicator of acculturation and positively correlates to demographic indicators of integration (work status, relationship status, income, language skills).

H3: There is a positive relation between acculturation and socio-demographic variables (income, English level, time spent in the UK) in the sense that acculturation in the UK (host country) impacts a migrant's adaptive skills.

2. Method

2.1. Participants

Following institutional approval from the University Research Ethics Committee (no. 1544 from the 22nd of July 2022), a total number of 527 participants were recruited to take part in the study. All study participants took part in the study by completing the online Google docs form, and the consent form that preceded the instruments offered respondents all the necessary information regarding their participation.

Demographic information. The convenience sample is composed of UK residents, out of which 77 identified as British- born UK natives (14.6% of the total convenience sample) and the remaining 450 respondents (85.4%) identified as 1st generation migrants (430 respondents), 2nd and 3rd generation migrants (18 and 2 respondents, respectively). For the purpose of the current study, we will only analyse data from respondents who are not British natives and have a migrant background, therefor our final sample is 450. Our aim was to have a large enough sample to be able to run covariance analyses and get accurate results, and as structural equation models are usually sensitive to sample sizes, we planned on having more than the "critical sample size" of 200 respondents and obtain a level of predictive power based on the complexity of our model (Garver and Mentzer, 1999, apud. Collier, 2020).

Participants' *age* ranged from 18 years old to 78 (M=36; SD= 11.22). A complete breakdown of means, standard deviations, skewness and kurtosis levels for the research variables and demographic items can be found in Table 2.

In terms of *gender*, 244 respondents were female (54.2%), 198 males (44%) and 8 who selected Other or prefer not to say (1.8%). For length of time lived in the UK, 26 respondents selected Below 1 year (5.7%), 99 respondents have been in the UK between 1 and 5 years (22%), 102 over 5 years (22.6%), 203 respondents who lived in the UK for longer than 10 years (45.1%), and 20 UK only, who have never lived anywhere else (4.4%).

The respondents' *English level*, self-reported during the survey, ranged from Pre-entry (1 person, .2% of the sample), Beginner (1 person, .2%), Intermediate (95 respondents, 21.1%), Advanced (287, 63.7%), and English proficient or native speaker (66, 14.6%).

In terms of *current work status*, 77 respondents reported they are not in work (17.1%), 260 are working full-time (57.7%), and 113 are working part-time (25.1%).

The study participants' self-reported *relationship status* ranged from Single (158 respondents, 35.1%), Cohabitation (72, 16%), Married (185, 41.1%), Separated (11, 2.4%), Divorced (20, 4.4%), Widowed (3, .6%), Other (1, .2%).

The *education level* (highest level achieved to date) ranged from Primary education (2 respondents, .4%), Lower secondary (7, 1.5%), Upper secondary (30, 6.6%), Post secondary (77, 17.1%), Tertiary education (36, 8%), Diploma (128, 28.4%), Master or PhD level (170, 37.7%).

In terms of *annual income*, respondents reported the following: No income (22, 4.8%), Under £12.5k (65, 14.4%), between 12.5k to 30k (128, 28.4%), over 30k (102, 22.6%), over 50k (104, 23.1%), over 100k (29, 6.4%).

Out of those self-reporting being migrants to the country, the *reason* stated for their decision to migrate to or settle in the UK was split into several categories, labelled Entirely my decision (204, 45.3%), Partially my idea (42, 9.3%), Both myself and my family or partner (111, 24.6%), Mostly my family or partner (35, 7.7%), Entirely their decision (48, 10.6%), and prefer not to say (10, 2.2%).

2.2. Procedure

Online-only questionnaires were administered in English, and data was collected over the course of several months, from September 2022 to May 2023, using various social media outlets, such as LinkedIn, Facebook migrant groups, student groups, and by sharing the Google forms link with both London-based and UK charities, educational institutions and third-sector organisations. All instruments used in this research were self-report measures.

2.2.1. Motivational Persistence scale (EMP)

The Evaluation of the Motivational Persistence questionnaire, the English version of the Romanian scale designed to measure facets of motivational persistence (MPS, Constantin et al., 2011). EMP has 30 items and 6 factors (ambition, determination, planning, implementation, recurrence, self-discipline). Respondents selected their response on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from *Very Little Extent* to *Very Large Extent*.

For the first factor, Ambition, examples of items include "I am an ambitious person"; "I always expect more from myself and from my future". For Determination, items include "I continue to invest time and effort into projects that require months of patience and hard work"; "I don't like to pursue goals that require months or years of effort". Items for the factor named Planning are "I use an agenda and make lists to plan what I have to do every day"; "I plan in detail what I have to do the next day". For the fourth factor, Implementation, examples of items are "Some days, I deviate from my planned activities"; "When I plan to do something, I don't give up until I get it done". For Self-discipline, "I am a disciplined individual in anything I do"; "I honour my commitments, even when I lose or am at a disadvantage". Recurrence of unattained purposes displays items such as "I still think about the goals I gave up on, even though they don't matter anymore"; "I always think back at my unrealized projects".

The original version (MPS) of the scale was designed to evaluate three main facets of persistence, namely *current purpose pursuit*, which refers to persistence for short-term behaviours; *long-term purpose pursuit*, meaning the sustainment of actions over long periods of time; and *recurrence of unattained purposes*, the mental reactivation of past goals or postponed actions. It has since been tested on larger convenience samples and developed into a 30-item and six factor more

stable measure (Constantin & Nicuță, 2025). The Romanian version was translated into English in 2021, adapted and validated in a preliminary study on UK respondents (Andronic & Constantin, 2025) and will be used for the purpose of the current research project to assess its construct validity and reliability and to measure its association with acculturation.

This measure is multi-dimensional and has adequate reliability and validity across racial groups (i.e., Cronbach's alpha for EMP is .83). a detailed breakdown of Cronback's Alpha internal consistency scores for each factor can be found in *Table 1.* As noted by Collier (2020), Cronbach's alpha "measures the degree to which responses are consistent across the items within a construct" (p. 26), with higher values representing a more reliable scale. As far as we know, the concept of motivational persistence has never been studied empirically alongside acculturation, therefor it is our aim to test the two variables together in the same study.

2.2.2. Vancouver Index of Acculturation scale (VIA)

Following recommendations from studies evaluating methods used to study acculturation, this concept was measured using the 20-item Vancouver Index of Acculturation (VIA) scale (Ryder et al., 2000; Paulhus, 2013). The questionnaire assesses how much migrants relate to and identify with their a) *host* (mainstream culture, British, in this case) and b) *home* (native, heritage) cultures. Respondents selected their response on a 9-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 9 (strongly agree). Each of the two subscales is comprised of 10 items, and each refer to one culture- the native/ heritage and the host/mainstream cultures.

Some items from the Host culture are "I often participate in mainstream British cultural traditions"; "I am comfortable interacting with typical British people". Items from the Heritage culture include "I often participate in my heritage cultural traditions"; "I believe in the values of my heritage culture".

This measure was chosen for several reasons. Firstly, the instrument is in line with current views of acculturation as a bidimensional process, and VIA is comprised of two subscales, namely the heritage and mainstream acculturation facets. As per researchers' conceptualization of the variable, linearity and dimensionality have to be addressed empirically, to help "detect the beneficial effects of mainstream culture" and "separate the process of acquiring mainstream culture from the process of distancing from culture of origin" (Yoon et al., 2013, p. 17). We chose to measure the construct of acculturation directly, and not by proxy measures, such as educational, occupational or generational status, which "may not be effective, as it does not provide the level of detail that is needed for an adequate understanding" (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006a, p. 147). This scale is useful in assessing multiple elements of acculturation, such as values, traditions, people's adhesion to cultural norms, social relations, et. (Schwartz & Pfammatter, 2024).

Secondly, VIA can also be used on all ethnic groups, which is relevant for the current research, where data was collected from migrants from 83 countries who reside in the UK and also from English natives (both white British and of second and third generation migrant descendent naturalised UK nationals). According to a meta-analysis study, VIA is the most used bilinear and multi-dimensional instrument which is calibrated to be used on multi-ethnic migratory populations (Yoon et al., 2020). As pointed out by Schwartz and Pfammatter (2024), VIA has good psychometric properties and has been used for other two European studies (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2013; Testa et al., 2019). Our results show a Cronbach's alpha value at .92 for the overall scale, with .91 for the acculturation Host factor and .92 for the acculturation Native country factor *(Table 1)*.

2.2.3. Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS)

Subjective well-being, operationalized as a migrant's satisfaction with life, was measured using the five-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener et al., 1985). Study participants selected their response on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 7 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Examples of items include "The conditions of my life are excellent" and "If I could live my life over again, I would change almost nothing". Cronbach's alpha internal consistency value for this scale stands at .90 *(Table 1)*.

2.2.4. Career satisfaction Scale (CSS)

Work satisfaction was measured using the 5-item scale developed by Greenhaus et al., (1990). Respondents selected their response on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Examples of items include "I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for advancement"; "I am satisfied with the progress I have made towards meeting my goals for the development of new skills". Cronbach's alpha value is .94 *(Table 1)*.

2.2.5. Social Connectedness Scale (SCS)

Social Connectedness was measured using the 8-item scale developed by Lee and Robbins (1995). Respondents selected their response on a 6-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 6 (strongly disagree). It is a scale that measures aspects related to social relationships, social inclusion, safety, diversity. Examples of items include "I feel disconnected from the world around me"; "Even around people I know, I don't feel that I really belong". Cronbach's alpha for the social connectedness scale is .95 *(Table 1)*.

Table 1. Cronbach's Alpha for the study variables

Scale	N	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha
Acculturation (VIA)		20	.926
Acculturation Host country	450	10	.916
Acculturation Native country		10	.928
Motivational Persistence (EMP)		30	.833
Ambition		5	.509
Determination		5	.744
Planning	450	5	.873
Implementation		5	.682
Recurrence		5	.816
Self-Discipline		5	.655
Social Connectedness (SCS)	450	8	.953
Well-being (SWLS)	450	5	.90
Career Satisfaction (CSS)	450	5	.942

To conclude, we can see that Cronbach's alpha levels for both Acculturation factors, for Social Connectedness, Well-being and Career Satisfaction exhibit excellent internal consistency levels. Motivational persistence has a good Cronbach's alpha coefficient overall, but we can see that Ambition has the lowest internal consistency of all the six factors, followed closely by Self-Discipline and Implementation. Suggestions on corrections will follow in the discussions section.

3. Results

Analyses were conducted using SPSS Version 26 and AMOS 20.

3.1. Descriptive statistics

Table 2 displays the means, standard deviations, and the skewness and kurtosis levels for the variables included in the current research. Preliminary analysis shows that the levels of skewness and kurtosis for all variables, except for generation level, are within the recommended levels.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics- Means, Standard Deviation, Skewness and Kurtosis*

	M	SD	Skew	Kurtosis
age	36.01	11.221	0.651	0.121
english_level	3.92	0.618	-0.237	0.767
gender	1.55	0.498	-0.21	-1.965
years_uk	3.2	1.02	-0.494	-0.702
work_status	2.41	0.765	-0.838	-0.797
relationship_status	2.27	1.14	0.556	-0.002
education_level	5.67	1.414	-0.862	-0.257
income	2.64	1.29	-0.081	-0.727
reason_movingUK	2.28	1.395	0.649	-0.867
generation	1.05	0.236	5.181	29.001
Acculturation	123.4044	28.27909	-0.817	0.612
Acculturation Native Country	6.3304	1.76065	-0.75	0.049
Acculturation Host Country	6.01	1.5996	-0.557	-0.037
Social Connectedness	32.9711	10.89539	-0.321	-0.9
Wellbeing	22.1556	7.05895	-0.432	-0.643
Career Satisfaction	15.7222	5.25397	-0.378	-0.679
Ambition	11.1333	2.38779	-0.41	-0.225
Determination	17.0578	3.53553	-0.082	-0.337
Planning	14.5489	4.95805	0.014	-0.652
Implementation	15.92	3.31532	-0.005	0.022
Recurrence	14.5444	4.42749	-0.121	-0.558
Self-discipline	13.9222	2.99602	-0.245	-0.15

Note: N= 450. Std. Error of Skewness =.115. Std. Error of Kurtosis = .230.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1 *age*	1																					
2 *english_level*	-.133**	1																				
3 *gender*	0.04	0.045	1																			
4 *years_UK*	.310**	.283**	0.043	1																		
5 *work_status*	0.07	.093*	-0.091	.182**	1																	
6 *relationship_status*	.606**	-.132**	.106*	.175**	0.051	1																
7 *education_level*	0.078	0.061	0.039	-0.03	.285**	.097*	1															
8 *income*	.227**	0.027	-.104*	.296**	.537**	.200**	.344**	1														
9 *reason_moving UK*	-.160**	.264**	.099*	.275**	-.202**	-0.023	-.133**	-.137**	1													
10 *generation*	-.099*	.362**	0.027	.366**	-0.024	-.132**	-0.059	-0.059	.397**	1												
11 Acculturation	0.003	.147**	0.016	0.04	0.005	-0.071	-0.038	0.024	0.031	0.086	1											
12 Acculturation Native Country	-0.035	0.09	0.05	-0.061	-0.063	-0.075	-0.068	-0.074	0.065	0.068	.857**	1										
13 Acculturation Host Country	0.044	.160**	-0.026	.138**	0.078	-0.042	0.007	.123**	-0.018	0.078	.824**	.415**	1									
14 Social Connectedness	0.084	.152**	0.06	0.083	.144**	0.052	.101*	.193**	-0.013	0.058	.178**	.135**	.167**	1								
15 Wellbeing	0.04	0.062	.129**	.093*	.140**	0.083	.149**	.176**	-0.011	0.036	0.07	0.013	.110*	.456**	1							
16 Basic Psychological Needs	-0.056	0.075	0.025	-0.011	-0.037	0.006	-0.059	-.105*	.147**	0.066	.213**	.168**	.191**	-.214**	-0.024	1						
17 Career Satisfaction	-0.001	.133**	0.068	.092*	.228**	0.055	.116*	.216**	0.023	0.083	.093*	0.028	.135**	.418**	.515**	-0.029	1					
18 Ambition	-.211**	0.054	-0.025	-0.068	0.06	-0.046	0.038	-0.01	0.037	-0.02	.156**	0.073	.196**	.174**	.095*	.292**	.245**	1				
19 Determination	-0.023	0.043	0.038	0.025	.095*	0.017	.171**	.097*	-0.048	-0.019	0.056	-0.029	.131**	.315**	.252**	-0.015	.410**	.548**	1			
20 Planning	0.081	0.048	.177**	0.012	0.063	0.088	.134**	.108*	-0.055	0.006	0.073	0.046	0.078	.194**	.176**	0.091	.282**	.364**	.412**	1		
21 Implementation	0.07	0.026	.142**	0.069	.119*	0.083	0.075	0.09	-.120*	0.051	0.06	0.004	.102*	.375**	.329**	-.208**	.383**	.225**	.471**	.312**	1	
22 Recurrence	-0.048	-0.004	-.141**	-.135**	-.154**	-0.013	-.121**	-.142**	.094*	-0.028	0.056	0.085	0.005	-.296**	-.301**	.393**	-.258**	.166**	-.133**	0.074	-.368**	1
23 Self-discipline	0.021	0.01	.120*	0.025	0.089	0.082	.117*	0.09	-0.088	0.031	.111*	0.047	.145**	.315**	.319**	0.085	.358**	.445**	.553**	.501**	.575**	-0.033

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

3.3. Exploration of the covariance matrix

We used AMOS version 20 to conduct our confirmatory factor analyses and to further explore the data and test our hypotheses.

3.3.1. Structural modelling of the complete theorical research design

Annex 1, at *Figure 1* represents the complete AMOS measurement model analysis. The output tab, under Estimates, offers information on our correlations and covariances. This section helps establish if our model presents a possible multicollinearity issue (Collier, 2020, p. 79). Looking at the P-values for the first table, where the unstandardized regression weights are displayed, we can see that except for one item, namely the first item from the Motivational Persistence Scale (under the factor labelled Ambition), all the rest of the indicators significantly loaded on the specified unobservable construct.

Under Model Fit, we are presented with the list of model fit indices. Our model has 134 number of parameters, which signifies a complex analysis (NPAR on the first column), and the value of chi-square (CMIN) is 5421.12, with 1577 degrees of freedom (DF) at a $p < 0.001$. The large number of degrees of freedom give us an over-identified model, which is the desired option to have, meaning that we have "more observations than parameters that need to be estimated" (Colliers, 2020, p. 30). The relative chi-square fit test is 3.4, with an acceptable fit. The comparative fit indices from the Baseline comparison table, namely CFI (Comparative Fit Index), TLI (Tucker Lewis Index), IFI (Incremental Fit Index) and NFI (Normed Fit Index) are all below .90, meaning that the model does not fit the data. Looking at the RMSEA value of .074, a higher value than the ideal .05, which represents an admissible but not good fit. Finally, looking at the confidence intervals for the RMSEA, the lower bound (LO) is .072 and the upper bound is .076, showing a small confidence interval around our estimate and delivering a fairly precise reading of our model.

3.3.2. Additional analyses to improve the existing model

Annex 2, *Figure 2* represents the amended AMOS measurement model analysis, in which we changed covariances between variables and removed five out of six factors of the Motivational Persistence variable and kept *Determination*, as it is the factors with the highest reliability. In the output, under the section called Estimates, all of the P-values are significant at a .001 value, which means that, compared to the previous model, they significantly loaded on the specified unobservable construct.

Under Model Fit, we analyse the model fit indices, and see that our model has 96 number of parameters, and the value of chi-square (CMIN) is 1003.9, with 465 degrees of freedom (DF) at a $p < .001$. As previously explained, the degrees of freedom give us an over-identified model, which is the desired option. The relative chi-square fit test is 2.1, with an acceptable fit. The comparative fit indices, namely CFI (Comparative Fit Index) is .95, TLI (Tucker Lewis Index) is .94, IFI (Incremental Fit Index) is .95 and NFI (Normed Fit Index) is .91. All the baseline indicators are above .90, meaning that the model fits the data and our indicators measure the concepts appropriately. Additional evidence that our model fits the data comes from the RMSEA value of .051, which represents an adequate fit. Looking at the confidence intervals for the RMSEA, the lower bound (LO) is .046 and the upper bound is .055, a small confidence interval around our estimate which delivers a valid reading of our model.

Annex 3, *Figure 3* represents the same corrected model we discussed in this section, but from Motivational Persistence we only introduced *Ambition*. Being the factors with the lowest reliability, we wanted to compare its influence on the overall model. In the output, under Estimates, all of the P-values are significant at a .001 value, except for non-significant P-value for items 1 and 13 from the MPS. These two items have been identified to be the root cause of the .50 Cronbach's alpha for Ambition. Under Model Fit, our model has 96 number of parameters, and a chi-square (CMIN) of 1122.8, with 465 degrees of freedom (DF) at a p < .001, and a relative chi-square fit test is 2.4, with an acceptable fit. The comparative fit indices are all above .90, meaning that the model fits the data and our indicators measure the concepts. The RMSEA value of .056, with a lower bound (LO) of .052 and an upper bound of .060, a higher root-mean square error of approximation compared to the previous analysis. The results clearly show an improvement in data analysed as part of figure 2., compared to the first model which followed the theoretical design more closely.

ANOVA analysis.

We wanted to test the effect of acculturation (host and home country) on well-being/ life satisfaction and career satisfaction.

An initial statistical analysis was run using an 2x2 design (low vs. high native country acculturation and low vs. high host country acculturation). The descriptive statistics figures can be viewed in *table 4*. Our results show that migrants' acculturation towards the host country- UK has a significant effect over life satisfaction ($F_{(1, 118)}$ = 5.38, p = .022), with a small size effect (η^2 = .048). The effect of acculturation towards the home country does not exhibit a significant effect over life satisfaction ($F_{(1, 118)}$ = 1.06, p = .305). The interaction effect of the two acculturation facets is not significant ($F_{(1, 118)}$ =1.53, p = .219*)* and therefor does not exert an effect over life satisfaction. We can conclude that acculturation towards the UK has a positive influence over life satisfaction, as the more acculturated migrants feel they are, the more satisfied with their lives they report being. The post-hoc tests (Bonferroni) did not show significant differences between groups.

Group	M	SD	N
Low Native + Low UK	4.00	1.41	10
Low Native + High UK	4.64	.95	18
High Native + Low UK	4.12	1.12	26
High Native + High UK	4.66	1.05	68

Table 4. Descriptive statistics for ANOVA

The 2x2 design (low vs. high native country acculturation and low vs. high UK acculturation) was used with the dependent variable being career satisfaction. The descriptive statistics figures can be viewed in *table 5.* Our results show that migrants' acculturation towards the host country- UK has no a significant effect over professional satisfaction $F_{(1, 434)}$ = 0.024, p = .876, and acculturation towards the native country of our participants did not exhibit a significant effect, $F_{(1, 434)}$ = 2.245, p = .135. With R^2 = 0.009, the model explains less than 1% in the variance in work satisfaction.

Group	M	SD
Low UK + Low native acculturation	15.87	5.07
High UK + Low native acculturation	16.44	4.05
Low UK + High Native acculturation	14.82	5.05
High UK + High Native acculturation	15.55	5.40

Table 5. Descriptive statistics for ANOVA

4. Discussion

In this study, we attempted to address the question surrounding the relationships between our research variables, motivational persistence, acculturation, life and work satisfaction, and how they are impacted by other mediating and moderating variables, such as individual resources and social connectedness.

Despite various empirical studies and literature reviews which looked at the relation between acculturation and well-being in migratory populations (Choy et al., 2021; Lopez-Class et al., 2011; Toth-Bos et al., 2020; Ward & Szabo, 2023; Yoon et al., 2008), and the discrepancies in research findings with equivocal results (Wilczewska, 2023), there is still a gap in the literature for European-based migratory populations. We wanted to address the literature gap with a UK-based study, and to include variables that have been previously identified as having a moderating (host country length of residence, gender, age) and mediating (social connectedness) effect (Andronic & Constantin, 2024).

There are several topics of debate to be discussed here, regarding the data and convenience sample characteristics.

Firstly, referring to the construct validity of the Evaluation of Motivational Persistence Questionnaire, we recommend further testing of the scale on larger samples, and even a re-phrasing of the items which exhibited smaller internal consistency. The EPM scale can be translated and adapted into other languages spoken by migratory populations, and we recommend further psychometric analyses of scale reliability and factorial structure.

An important aspect of the current research was to measure acculturation using a previously validated and trustworthy instrument (VIA), rather than a proxy measure or a single-item question. Single items exhibit "low content validity (construct coverage) " and low reliability, therefor "it is difficult to see how the multifaceted complexities of acculturation can be captured in a one-item measure" (Arends-Tóth & Van de Vijver, 2006b, p. 17).

This is important, because "variations in how acculturation is measured, as well as inadequate measurement, have been named as other potential reasons for the discrepancies in research findings" (Wilczewska, 2023, p. 1338). For example, proxy or alternative measures of acculturation, such as "generational status, age at migration, place of birth, and place of education" might give the impression that acculturation "can be approximated by the amount of exposure that individuals have to a dominant culture" (Lopez-Class et al., 2011, p. 1558).

Discussion related to sample characteristics and data collection.

Firstly, data was collected using a survey and all items and empirical instruments were self-report measures. Also, the respondents were reached via different means, such as social media, through UK-based charitable organisations, a London-based University, therefor data was collected via a convenience sample. The demographic items asked questions around generation

(1st, 2nd and 3rd generation migrants and UK natives), reason for moving to the UK, length of time spent in the UK since moving here. At the data analysis, we noticed a discrepancy between the number of respondents who did not complete the non-mandatory Acculturation scale, as the Generation item was present at the beginning and also at the end of the survey, in order to filter respondents and direct them to certain scale (i.e. native English people did not complete the Acculturation questionnaire, only people who identified as migrants or from a distanced migrant background had to fill it in). 77 respondents did not complete the Acculturation scale, when at Reason for moving to the UK, 6 respondents did not answer. At the generation item, only 74 identified as a native at the end-of-questionnaire item, when in the beginning, the same question yielded 77 native UK responses. We can only assume that people who initially identified as UK natives reconsidered their status after completing the entire questionnaire, which made them reflect on their heritage and ethnic background. This is a factor that should be taken into consideration in future studies.

Secondly, looking at the demographic data, our convenience sample was diverse from the standpoint of ethnicities and languages spoken, but it was also comprised of a majority of people who self-reported high levels of spoken English and of educational levels, which could impact the generalisability of data. Language proficiency can be regarded as a double-edge sword, because respondents should master the language on a good enough level for them to adequately comprehend the items and the meaning of each statistical instrument, yet this reduces greatly the ability of migrants with lower language skills to take part in such studies.

Thirdly, it is important to draw conclusions with caution, depending on the groups of migrants and on the environmental context. Namely, researchers should closely "assess the behavioral patterns of acculturation in atypical groups or individuals" or of those in so-called ethnic enclaves, because "some immigrants may adapt differently based on their unique environmental experiences, cultural orientation or the political upheaval occurring in their country of origin" (Lopez-Class et al., 2011, p. 1559). Context is an important factor that might even moderate the impact on acculturation for some groups of migrants, with acculturative changes being influenced by facets of the social context, such as the location in which individuals live, daily interactions with their social networks and with local institutions (Lopez-Class et al., 2011, p. 1558). Not only that, but academics have pointed out that certain minorities are "not always free to follow their own preferences", as "receiving societies have the power to impose restraints that unilaterally determine how relations are managed" (Ramos et al., 2014, p. 1).

Overall, our findings add to the existing literature in cross-cultural psychology, on the topic of acculturation studies on migratory populations in Europe. We looked at the pattern of relations between the main research variables (motivational persistence, acculturation, life and work satisfaction), and the impact mediating and moderating variables (individual resources and social connectedness) have on this complex association.

5. Limitations and suggestions for future research

The findings of the current study should be regarded in consideration of several limitations. Firstly, this study used a convenience sample of respondents who voluntarily took part in the research, therefor suggesting they might possess higher levels of motivational persistence as a personality trait, compared to the general population. Secondly, the study had access to a limited number of migrant respondents (N=450), and this can have an impact on the

generalisability of results on a larger scale or on sub-groups of immigrant populations. Our conclusions and data interpretation are delivered with caution, because we wish to avoid a "one size fits all" explanatory approach (Schwartz et al., 2010), as our sample consisted of a majority of first-generation migrants and fewer second and third-generation, which impacted our ability to compare groups. Thirdly, the study might have excluded high-risk populations of migrants, such as refugees or asylum seeker, especially those who are not online or who are unable to read and understand English fluently.

Fourthly, the use of self-report measures, that brings numerous limitations to self-report instruments (Paulhus, 1991), such as a vulnerability to the social desirability bias. Only 14.6% of our respondents identified themselves as native or fluent English speakers, and the rest of our study participants were non-native English speakers on different levels of proficiency (first, second and third generation migrants), which could have impacted on their understanding of the survey items. Another limitation for this cross-sectional study is the use of correlation analyses from which causal inferences cannot be drawn, and further research should be conducted using either experiments or longitudinal studies. Finally, our research dataset originates in the UK, mainly London, a multi-cultural place, therefor it remains to be seen if other studies in similarly heterogenous environments would generate similar results.

Future studies should test the multidimensionality of our model, and help generate specific interventions and practical applications of the current conceptual framework. Our findings also require additional re-examination with larger samples from a variety of geographical locations and on different sub-groups of immigrant populations. Some researchers might consider translating the survey items into the native languages of their respondents, in order to aide their understanding of each instrument, but also to open up participation to wider migratory populations, who might not be fluent in English. Longitudinal designs could help widen and expand on the snapshot perspective of our research and aide to explain the dynamic model of migrant integration. Finally, future empirical studies should try to capture additional variables which have been shown to impact the relation between acculturation and well-being, such as acculturative stress, experiences of discrimination, cultural distance and other mediating concepts (Andronic & Constantin, 2024). The current survey design that has been used for this study utilised a limited set of items to try and measure the independent, dependent, moderating and mediating variables, as not to place an excessive strain on respondents and not to exceed a 30-minutes survey completion time.

Despite the aforementioned limitations, the present study contributes to the development of the current understanding of migrant adaptation and its consequences in the UK, especially in the context of Brexit, recent wars, refugee influxes and post-pandemic migration. With respect to public policies, both in the UK, where our research is based, but also in similarly developed European countries, we encourage policy-makers and NGOs to focus on policies that support integration (such as language courses and social interaction), policies that can reduce acculturative stress and foster a better collaboration with natives.

Conclusions

In a world with increased population displacement due to a wide variety of causes, and where globalisation plays an important role in how people acquire inter-cultural skills, norms, values and practices, where human interaction is diverse, we must rely on empirical findings from

studies and research to base our understanding of cultural groups and their behaviours. Such informed conclusions are essential in supporting local, regional and national authorities to implement and adequately develop policies and support structures to better integrate migrants, to support adaptation and to remove cross-cultural barriers. In our research, we wanted to add to the understanding of factors that support immigrant acculturation, which variables lead to an increase in well-being, in the context of migration in western Europe. Our research provides an overview of the issues faced by first generation migrant populations in the UK, and offers solid recommendations for future studies.

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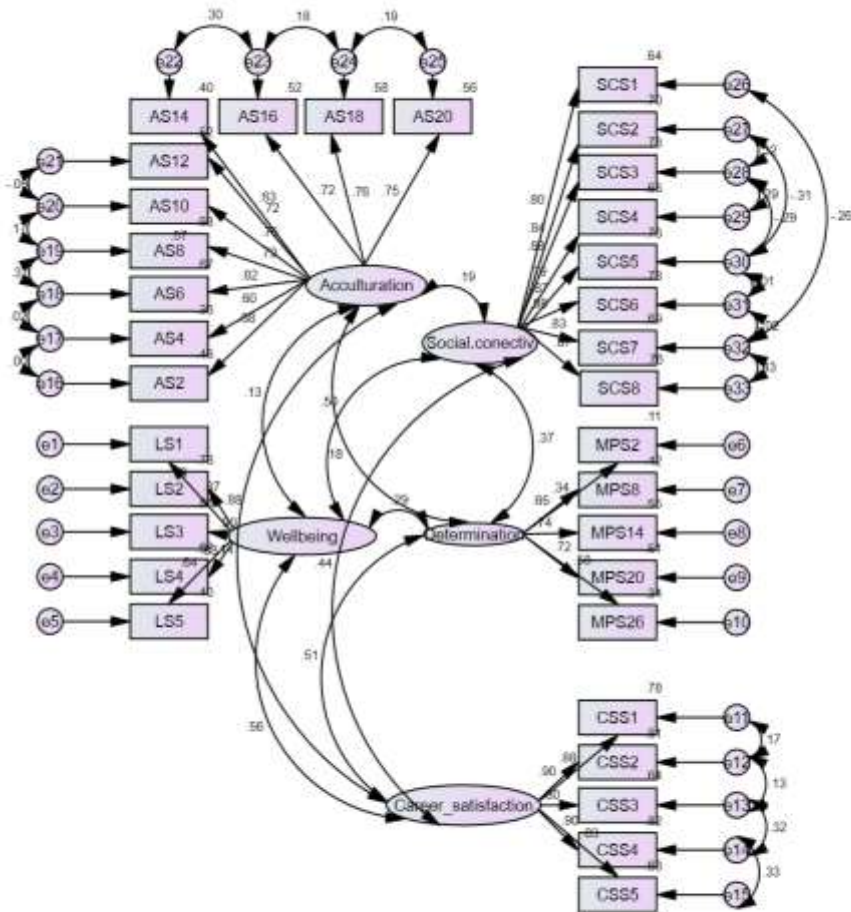
Annex 1

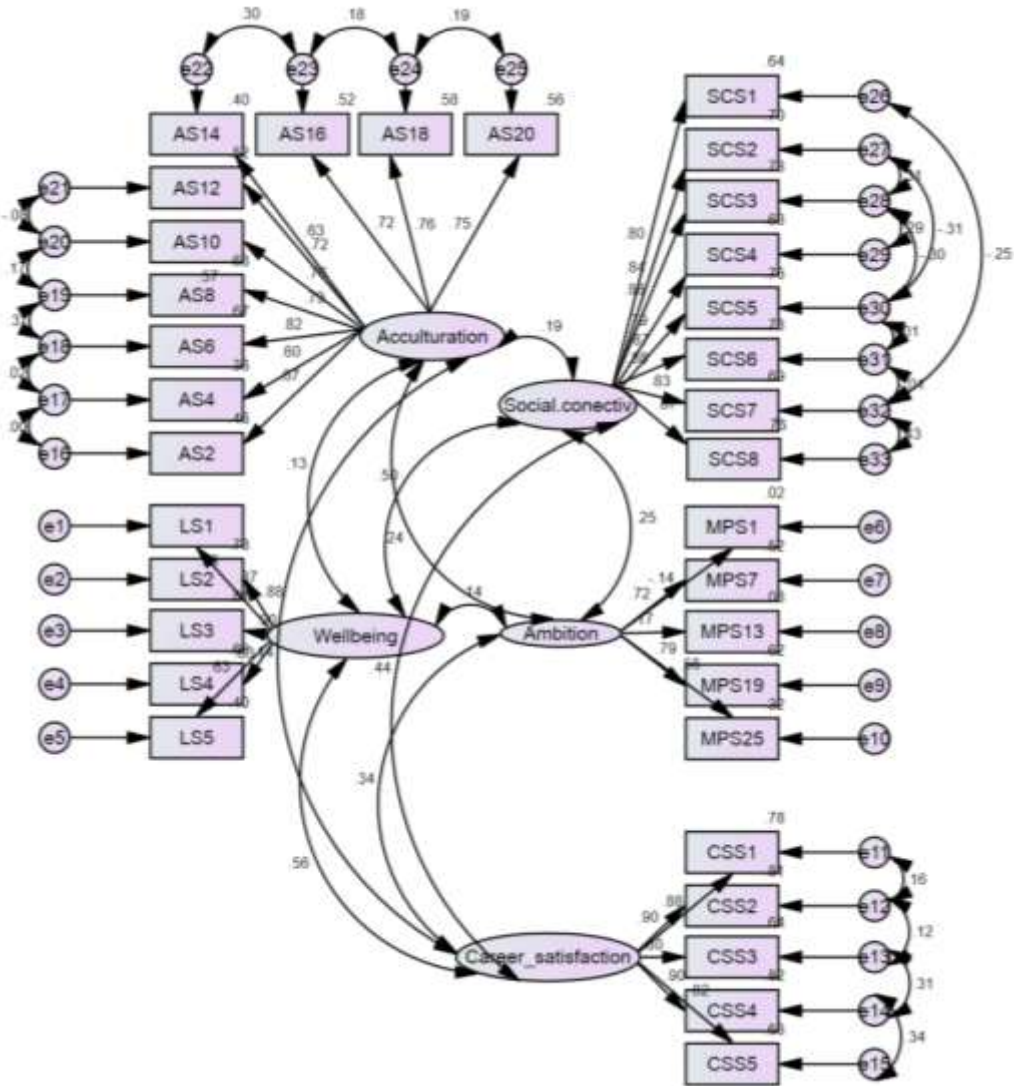**Figure 1.** AMOS model of analysis (theoretical research design with all six factors of MPS)
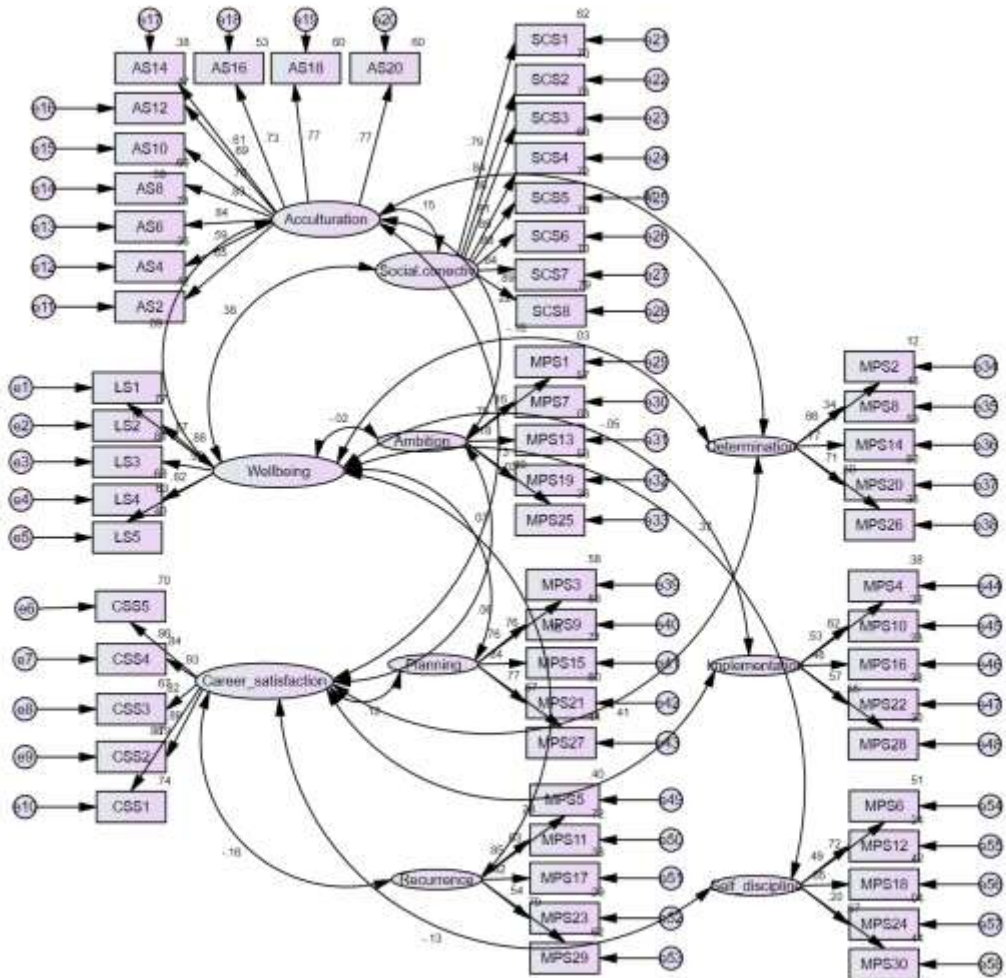
Annex 2
Figure 2. AMOS model of analysis (with the Determination factor of MPS)

Annex 3
Figure 3. AMOS model of analysis (Ambition factor of MPS)

BOOK REVIEWS

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Michael Hughes's book titled *Feliks Volkhovskii: A Revolutionary Life* offers a carefully researched and judiciously argued biography of one of the more neglected, yet consistently active figures, in the Russian revolutionary movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Feliks Volkhovskii was born in Poltava, Ukraine, on July 1846, and died in London on 2 August 1914, at the age of sixty-eight. In his book, Hughes proposes that, although Feliks Volkhovskii never attained the fame of Lenin or Trotsky, his long career - spanning prison, Siberian exile, emigration in London, and renewed political activity within Russia - serves as a revealing prism for the intellectual, cultural, and organizational development of the anti-tsarist opposition from the 1860s through the eve of the First World War. The book situates Volkhovskii not as a leading actor, but rather as a representative actor: a figure whose wanderings between the political milieus, literary activity, and practical activism illuminate the heterogeneous and contingent character of the Russian radicalism. Hughes's central contention is that biography - meticulously grounded in archival evidence - can recover the texture of revolutionary practice and the motives of participants who did not leave grand ideological manifestos, but did sustain the movement in myriad, often prosaic ways.

The book comprises six chapters (*The Making of a Revolutionary; Prison, Poetry and Exile; Selling Revolution; Spies and Trials; Returning to the Revolutionary Fray; Final Years*), besides the *Introduction* and *Conclusion*, developed along 356 pages. While Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 examine Volkhovskii's life in Russia before his flight to the West, "tracing the genesis of his radical views", Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 explore Volkhovskii's time in Britain in the 1890s, arguing that "while he played an important role in mobilizing international support for the victims of tsarist oppression, he also remained a significant figure in the broader revolutionary emigration through his role in the production and distribution of propaganda"; Chapter 6 and Chapter 7 discuss the last fifteen years of Volkhovskii's life, "when he once again firmly established himself within the ambit of the Russian revolutionary movement" (p. 14).

Hughes bases his book on an impressive range of primary sources – found on archives in the United Kingdom, the United States, and Europe, as well as memoirs, contemporary newspapers and journals, but also a consistent bibliography composed of secondary sources and PhD theses (pp. x–xiv; pp. 291–326). Historiographically, Hughes argues for the intellectual and practical importance of figures like Volkhovskii, whose labor in mediating, translating, and

broadcasting the grievances of the Russian society contributed substantively to transnational awareness and to the infrastructure of revolutionary politics (pp. 3–8). Methodologically, the book combines political biography with cultural and literary analysis, with the argument that Volkhovskii's literary production furnishes a rib of evidence for understanding how revolutionaries sought to mobilize moral sentiment and cultural affinities for political ends (pp. 72–104).

From the very beginning, Hughes describes Volkhovskii as guided by "two instincts, rather than highly articulated principles" that underpinned his ideas and actions for half a century: his little interest in dogma and his loathing of the tsarist social and political order and his commitment to ending the exploitation of the Russian *narod*, the 'ordinary' Russian people (p. 8). Then, could Volkhovskii be considered a representative of the Russian *intelligentsia*? But a *narodnik* (populist)? Or was he really a *revolutionary*? To these questions, the answers given by Hughes are as follows: yes, "Volkhovskii was in many ways a 'typical' representative of the Russian *intelligentsia*, who came to maturity in the 1860s, and dedicated the rest of his life to undermining the tsarist state and the social and economic order it symbolized and protected" (p. 10); no, "he was not really a *narodnik* in the sense suggested by Richard Pipes, who argued (...) that the term should be limited to a small number of radicals who believed that they should seek to learn from the *narod*, rather than lead them 'in the name of abstract, bookish, imported ideas'" (p. 11); but his ideas and actions clearly place him within the network of individuals and groups that are conventionally assumed to fall within the broad framework of *narodnichestvo*, the Russian *intelligentsia* of the second half of the nineteenth century believing that "there was a moral imperative on all those who recognized the wretched condition of the Russian *narod* to do everything in their power to ameliorate it" (p. 12); yes, he was a *revolutionary*, even if he was criticized for showing "ideological flexibility and readiness to work with all those seeking to bring about change in Russia" and even if, when writing for a Western audience, he typically emphasized how "revolution represented a natural choice in the face of repression, rather than a commitment to radical social and economic change" (p. 12).

From an historical and biographical perspective, Hughes traces Volkhovskii's origins in Poltava (then part of the Russian Empire; modern-day Ukraine), his formative years in a mixed cultural environment, and the personal tragedies that shaped his commitments (pp. 17–31). Born into a family of modestly ranked nobility, Volkhovskii grew up on the borderlands of Ukrainian and Russian cultures, in Novograd-Volynskii. But, in 1853, Volkhovskii and his mother moved at his paternal grandfather's estate at Moisevka (p. 23). His early encounters with peasant poverty and the paternal bureaucracy informed a moral outrage that would later orient his revolutionary sympathies (pp. 25–26). Hughes convincingly stresses the formative role of the 1860s *intelligentsia* and the new wave of radical thought — nihilism and populist currents — that produced a generation predisposed to challenge autocracy and social inequality (pp. 31-63).

Hughes places special emphasis on education, as a crucible of political awakening. Volkhovskii attended gymnasium in St. Petersburg and Odessa and, than, he studied law at Moscow University, where he was exposed to the liberal and radical debates unleashed by the Great Reforms of Alexander II (p. 29). The milieu of the 1860s *intelligentsia*—animated by figures such as Chernyshevsky and Dobrolyubov—provided the intellectual vocabulary of materialism, utilitarian ethics, and service to the people that Volkhovskii would later translate into practical activism (pp. 28–31). Russian youth came to view, accordingly, knowledge as an instrument of social transformation. Volkhovskii's early participation in student circles reflected this ethos of

"conscious service" (*soznatel'noe sluzhenie*) - a term Hughes uses to describe the blend of moral duty and social activism characteristic of the 1860s generation (pp. 28–33).

Volkhovskii's transition from intellectual engagement to organizational activism focuses on his participation in local populist circles (*kruzhki*) that sought to bring education and enlightenment to the peasantry (pp. 35–53). These circles, influenced by the populist (*narodnik*) ethos, emphasized moral education, reading rooms, and rural outreach as vehicles for social transformation. Volkhovskii's activism in this milieu brought him into contact with several figures who would later become prominent revolutionaries. Hughes identifies his involvement with the Chaikovtsy circle, one of the early organized populist groups devoted to moral self-improvement and direct communication with the people (pp. 37–63).

Volkhovskii's arrest and imprisonment (in the Peter and Paul Fortress) during the crackdown on populist circles in the early 1870s, was the result of Volkhovskii's involvement in distributing banned literature and for alleged connections with revolutionary agitators (pp. 39–52). The experience of repression did not break Volkhovskii's idealism; rather, it recast it into endurance and organizational realism. Volkhovskii's reflections from prison - cited by Hughes - reveal a man struggling to reconcile personal suffering with collective purpose. He came to view the revolutionary vocation as a form of moral witness: the individual's sacrifice as proof of truth's power (pp. 47–54). This fusion of personal ethics and political mission would define his later activism.

Following his conviction, Volkhovskii was exiled to Siberia, where he spent nearly a decade (pp. 54–63). Hughes treats exile not as a narrative interlude, but as a formative environment that shaped the intellectual and moral architecture of the revolutionary movement. Siberia became a paradoxical space—both punishment and university. In this harsh environment, Volkhovskii resumed his pedagogical activities, teaching literacy to local settlers and composing literary sketches that reflected on the resilience of the human spirit pp. 56–59). Hughes interprets these writings as embryonic expressions of a "literary populism"—the effort to merge moral didacticism with narrative art (p. 58).

Volkhovskii's trajectory through imprisonment, Siberian exile, and eventual flight to the West constitutes the narrative spine of the book. Hughes recounts Volkhovskii's multiple arrests and sentences, his decade-long Siberian exile, and the ways in which this long period of enforced marginality shaped his later capacities as organizer, writer, and émigré publicist (pp. 65–104). The exile years are interpreted not merely as a biographical obstacle, but as a formative crucible: a period in which Volkhovskii's literary impulses, his network-building capacities, and his appetite for practical propaganda matured (pp. 65–72).

The book's most arresting episodes concern Volkhovskii's London years from 1890 onward, during which he became an important node in the transnational networks that linked Russian revolutionaries with sympathetic publics in Britain, North America, and Europe more broadly (pp. 105–148). Hughes details Volkhovskii's activities with the *Free Russia* and the *Society of Friends of Russian Freedom* (SFRF), documenting how he cultivated relationships with British intellectuals, journalists, and literary figures to channel moral and material support back to the revolutionary milieu in Russia (pp. 105–120). Crucially, the book is not treating Volkhovskii simply as an émigré propagandist; instead Hughes situates him as a mediator whose strategies combined public agitation, the distribution of clandestine literature, and the exploitation of Western liberal sympathies for tactical ends (pp. 120–130).

In the final phase of his life Volkhovskii becomes increasingly embedded in the organizational life of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), editing party publications and participating in the Foreign Committee that supported insurrectionary activities in Russia (pp. 191–230). Hughes chronicles this late-career turn to explicit party politics with care, emphasizing that Volkhovskii's gradual pivot toward endorsing forceful measures reflects both his personal radicalization and the broader shifts within Russian radicalism at the turn of the century (pp. 191–205). Hughes concludes the biographical narrative with Volkhovskii's death in London in August 1914 - timed in the book as an emblematic endpoint to a life spent opposing militarism and autocracy (pp. 231–275).

Two dimensions that the Volkhovskii's biography also develops, and mentioned above, are that as a representative of the Russian *intelligentsia*, and the other one – that of a *revolutionary* personality. Themes as populism, exile, transnational networks, literature and identity are becoming relevant in presenting Volkhovskii's personality and activity.

The first chapter of the book – *The Making of a Revolutionary* – showed that Volkhovskii's later international activism and political adaptability were not products of opportunism, but of a coherent moral-political evolution beginning in his youth. Through careful reconstruction of family background, education, repression, and exile, Hughes presents the making of a revolutionary as a human process grounded in ethics, resilience, and the pursuit of justice. So, by the chapter's close, Volkhovskii stands fully formed as a type: the ethical revolutionary-intellectual, whose conviction in moral duty transcends ideology and whose endurance prefigures the durability of Russia's broader revolutionary tradition.

In the second chapter of the book - *Prison, Poetry and Exile* - Michael Hughes offers a nuanced and absorbing account of the two decades that transformed Feliks Volkhovskii from a provincial radical into a cosmopolitan revolutionary and cultural mediator. This period focuses on his enforced exile in Siberia following imprisonment in the 1870s.

At the end of 1875, Volkhovskii was transferred from the Peter and Paul Fortress to the House of Preliminary Detention - where the discipline was more relaxed, providing more opportunities for communication between prisoners (pp. 67-75). During the 1860s and 1870s, much of the prose and poetry Volkhovskii wrote was didactic in character; therefore, he composed a series of didactic tales, reflections, and translations, fragments of which survive in periodicals and archives (pp. 67-73).

Following the Trial of the 193 (1877-1878), Volkhovskii was sent to Siberia (pp. 75-80), where he lived with his second wife and the three daughters in Tiukalinsk and Tomsk (pp. 82-103), moving, after the wife's and one daughter's deaths, to Irkutsk. Hughes's central thesis is that exile (from 1878) - often portrayed as a hiatus in revolutionary activity – was, in Volkhovskii's case, a creative crucible. It was in these years that he developed the skills, networks, and ideological flexibility that would later define his transnational activism. In Tomsk, he worked at *Sibirskaia gazeta* till its closure (pp. 90-103).

The third chapter - *Selling Revolution* – begins with Volkhovskii's flight from Siberia to North America, in 1889. In the eight months he spent in Canada, Volkhovskii was "extraordinarily energetic in campaigning to raise sympathy for the victims of tsarist oppression" (p. 107); he was giving lectures about the harsh treatment of prisoners by the Russian government and numerous local newspapers published interviews with him about his experiences in Russia (p. 108). Volkhovskii arrived in London, from Canada, in the summer of 1890 (p. 110). London, for years,

had provided a refuge for political exiles fleeing tsarist Russia. The city housed various radical circles - anarchists, populists, Marxists - each competing for limited resources and attention.

The Society of Friends of Russian Freedom (SFRF) was created by Sergei Stepniak with the hope that it would shape the attitudes of a section of the British establishment towards Russia. Volkhovskii collaborated with the *Society of Friends of Russian Freedom* – by lecturing on behalf of the SFRF, and contributed to *Free Russia* (pp. 115-124), a bilingual periodical dedicated to exposing Tsarist autocracy. *Free Russia* blended reports of repression - executions, censorship, exile - with broader reflections on liberty, justice, and education. Volkhovskii's editorials balanced factual reporting with emotive appeal. Hughes notes that he avoided the shrill tone of revolutionary manifestos, preferring a measured rhetoric designed to win sympathy rather than fear (p. 121).

Volkhovskii's lectures also served an educational function. He sought to inform British audiences about the structure of Russian society - the bureaucracy, censorship, and rural poverty - while linking these realities to universal principles of justice. Volkhovskii also contributed essays to British and American journals, addressing topics such as Russian education, censorship, and the condition of women (pp. 105-148). In addition, Volkhovskii translated Russian literature and revolutionary documents into English, introducing them to Western audiences. Hughes regards this activity as a form of soft propaganda, subtly linking Russian moral idealism with Western humanitarianism.

Hughes's account underscores his skill in translating Russian suffering into a moral narrative comprehensible to British sensibilities. Exile and emigration had transformed Volkhovskii from a moral populist into an international advocate of liberty, a cosmopolitan revolutionary - no longer confined by Russian frontiers, but embedded in the global circuits of dissent. Volkhovskii's ethical populism - his belief in service, empathy, and education - remained intact. What changed was his understanding of scale: revolution was no longer only a Russian enterprise but part of a broader struggle against despotism and inequality. Volkhovskii's cosmopolitanism, however, was tempered by realism; he understood the limits of Western sympathy and the risk of dependency on foreign patronage.

Through writing, translation, and public lecturing, for Volkhovskii communication was revolution: persuasion, empathy, and cross-cultural education constituted the groundwork without which direct action would remain isolated. Therefore, Volkhovskii became a revolutionary who transformed exile into advocacy and suffering into solidarity.

In the fourth chapter - *Spies and Trials,* Hughes shifts the narrative focus from émigré publicity and cultural mediation to the darker choreography of state repression and counter-subversion. The chapter examines how the *Okhrana* (the tsarist secret police) and related security organs attempted to neutralize revolutionary networks through surveillance, infiltration, and judicial spectacle, and how revolutionaries - including Volkhovskii and his circle - responded tactically and rhetorically. Hughes frames trials and police operations as arenas in which political legitimacy was contested: the state sought to demonstrate the criminality and danger of radical dissent, while revolutionaries tried to turn legal proceedings into platforms for propaganda and moral vindication (pp. 150–155).

Hughes describes the institutional growth and methods of the Okhrana in the 1880s–1890s. He documents how the security services expanded their operations at home and abroad - employing informants, postal intercepts, undercover agents, and the increasingly professionalized practice of dossier-keeping - to map émigré networks, smuggling routes for pamphlets, and

clandestine financing (pp. 152–158). The author emphasizes the international dimension of policing: the Okhrana cultivated contacts with foreign police forces and used diplomatic channels to seek extradition or to pressure host governments, complicating the relative safety of exile that earlier chapters had described (pp. 154–157).

Volkhovskii's personal experience of surveillance comprises episodes in which his correspondence was monitored, in which courier networks were compromised, and in which trusted acquaintances were revealed as agents or *agents provocateurs* (pp. 152–162). The psychological effect of this pervasive monitoring - paranoia, tactical suspicion, and the constant need for vetting - becomes a thematic focus: surveillance altered the social relations of the revolutionary movement, undermining trust while pushing activists toward more clandestine, compartmentalized structures (pp. 159–163).

Volkhovskii's own role in these dynamics is double: he was both a target of infiltration and, in exile, an actor who had to respond to the consequences - restructuring networks, tightening communications, and deploying counter-intelligence practices where possible (pp. 166–170).

The public trials were political instruments used by both state and opposition. Hughes reconstructs several notable prosecutions - some involving fellow revolutionaries, some implicating networks connected to Volkhovskii's circles - and shows how trials served at least three functions: for the state, they were instruments of deterrence and moral condemnation; for the movement, they could be opportunities for propaganda, martyrdom, and mobilization (pp. 172–176). Volkhovskii's contributions here were often indirect, but meaningful: as an émigré publicist he coordinated press campaigns to draw attention to specific cases, provided background materials to counsel, and helped to drum up international pressure when trials threatened to result in execution or harsh sentences (pp. 180–183).

Volkhovskii's posture in the debates over political violence, as Hughes presents it, was complex and somewhat ambivalent. He recognized the moral pitfalls of violent tactics, but also grasped their political logic in certain contexts; his own public statements sought to balance moral sensitivity with a pragmatic understanding of repression's force, attempting to preserve international sympathy while not alienating militant constituencies (pp. 185–189).

In this chapter, Hughes demonstrates that the Okhrana's methods and the judicial spectacles it produced were central to the political landscape in which Volkhovskii and his contemporaries operated. The result is a textured account of how law, policecraft, and publicity together shaped the dilemmas, tactics, and ethical debates of Russian revolutionary actors in the late nineteenth century (pp. 149–189).

The fifth chapter - *Returning to the Revolutionary Fray* – represents a turning-point chapter in the biography of Feliks Volkhovskii. It marks the moment when the long-exiled revolutionary, shaped by imprisonment, Siberian deportation, and the moral culture of the Russian *intelligentsia*, reenters organized political activism after years in which survival, personal integrity, and moral witness had defined his role more than direct political engagement.

The creation of the Agrarian-Socialist League, at the beginning of 1900, included a number of former fundists, Volkhovskii being one of its founding members (p. 199). The principal focus of the Agrarian-Socialist League was on developing propaganda for circulation in Russia, and its aim was to broaden 'the revolutionary movement in general and the workers' movement in particular, by attracting the working masses of the countryside' (p. 200). The objective was 'the removal of the tsarist government - as the principal obstacle to the freedom of the *narod* and the

handing over of the land to the working people' (p. 202). The League's intention was to give a good deal of attention to relations with the *Socialist Revolutionary (SR) Party* in Russia, while Volkhovskii believed that the League should maintain its non-party character (pp. 202-203). But the League and the SR Party started to cooperate closely in the spring of 1902, and a more formal federation took place a few months later (p. 203). Volkhovskii helped contributed to the editing of the *Narodnoe delo*, which appeared irregularly in 1902-04 as a publication of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, a publication targeting the 'urban and rural workers' (pp. 207-208), and where he published short stories, poems and fables (pp. 208-212). Volkhovskii's contribution to the neo-*narodnik* revival before 1905 was not limited to journalism and propaganda, as he also became involved in procuring false passports for individuals wanting to travel to and from Russia illegally (p. 212). Therefore, Volkhovskii, although he welcomed *Socialist Revolutionary* (SR) *Party's* defense of peasant interests and moralized socialism, he remained uneasy about systematic violence and clandestine organization.

Hughes mentioned that Volkhovskii continued to contribute to the *SR Party*'s propaganda work during 1905, although his activities were constrained also by his poor health. The 1905 Revolution in Russia re-legitimized the exiles morally - they were suddenly relevant again - but it also revealed their obsolescence. Younger militants operating inside Russia viewed émigré moralism as sentimental and politically ineffectual.

In the opening part of the sixth chapter - *Final Years* – Hughes presents Volkhovskii's beliefs that, during the 1905 Revolution in Russia, both workers and peasants had 'shown splendid capacities, in solidarity, in organising, in self-sacrifice for an ideal'; that he was confident that what he called 'autobureaucracy' was dead, and that while the regime might seek to fight to regain its lost power, 'it will be unable to establish its rule with any steadiness again'; and that the old peasant demands for 'Land and freedom through a good Tzar' had been replaced by a desire for 'Land and freedom through democratic self-government and nationalisation of land' (p. 232).

When Volkhovskii returned to Russia in 1906, despite his age and poor health, he edited publications aimed at soldiers and sailors (*Soldatskaia gazeta / The Soldier's Gazette*) and he was active in the SR Party's Military - Organisation Bureau, created in the summer of 1906 (pp. 234-238). As the *SR Party* recognized that the government would try to use the army and navy to put down any mass uprising so and that the agitation among soldiers and sailors should have a revolutionary non-party character that focused on broad issues, rather than demanding full commitment to the SR program, at his return in London, in spring 1907, Volkhovskii became the principal editor of a new newspaper targeted at readers in the army and navy, *Za narod* (*For the People*), which was smuggled back into Russia (pp. 236-237). *Za narod,* like *Soldatskaia gazeta,* was printing information about what was taking place across Russia and included a significant amount of literary material, poems and short stories (p. 240). On one side, Volkhovskii has focused on promoting revolutionary sentiment within the tsarist army and navy, and on the other, he was increasingly concerned about the rise of ,militarism' across Europe (p. 242). In the following years, *Za narod* continued to take a ,non-party' revolutionary line, carrying reports of disturbances across Russia, and printing letters from revolutionaries of all political colours (p. 249), while Volkhovskii continued to publish poetry and short stories. In the same time, Volkhovskii was also involved in the production of several numbers of *Narodnoe delo: sbornik,* that was published irregularly by the *SR* press between 1909 and 1912 (p. 250).

On the occasion of signing of the *Anglo-Russian Convention* in August 1907, designed to reduce imperial tensions between the two countries in central Asia, establishing clear spheres of influence (p. 254), Hughes focuses on presenting both the opposition (as *SFRF* and *Free Russia*) and the supporters of the improvement of Britain's relationship with Russia. *Free Russia* continued to print numerous articles reporting abuses committed by the tsarist government, as well as condemning its neglect of the welfare of the people (p. 257). Volkhovskii wrote numerous articles in which he accused the Tsar for being "the effective head of the Black Hundreds regarding the bands of thugs who carried out anti-Jewish pogroms across European Russia" (p. 257), so he concluded that "Russia was an unsuitable diplomatic partner for Britain given the despotic character of its government" (pp. 258-259). Volkhovskii continued his campaign against closer Anglo-Russian political and economic relations, in the last years of his life (pp. 271-272).

Between 1912 and 1914, Volkhovskii's health deteriorated rapidly. His last essays, published in small émigré journals, combined memoir with reflection on ethical endurance (pp. 264-270). Volkhovskii died in London in 1914, "the day after Berlin declared war on Russia and two days before Britain declared war on Germany" (p. 275), attended by a few close friends and members of the Society of Friends of Russian Freedom. Hughes reconstructs the funeral - modest, yet dignified - as a ritual of moral solidarity that gathered British liberals, Russian exiles, and younger revolutionaries, all acknowledging in him a link between two epochs.

After his death, three distinct memorial trajectories are presented: among the liberal émigré community, Volkhovskii became an emblem of moral steadfastness, while obituaries in *Free Russia* and *The Times* portrayed him as the conscience of the Russian revolution - a man who had suffered without hatred; the Soviet cultural historians selectively reintegrated Volkhovskii into their narrative of revolutionary lineage, in the following decades, but they sanitized his biography, downplaying his London years and pacifism, while emphasizing his early Siberian martyrdom; in the West, interest in Volkhovskii waned until the late twentieth century, when historians seeking to reconstruct transnational networks of dissent rediscovered his writings. Hughes situates his own work within this rediscovery, aiming to recover not only factual biography, but the emotional and ethical vocabulary of nineteenth-century radicalism (pp. 274-277).

Hughes's synthetic interpretation of Volkhovskii's legacy illustrates that Volkhovskii's life demonstrates that the revolutionary's ultimate task was not conquest, but testimony; unable to secure political triumph, he preserved moral coherence, proving that endurance could itself be a historical force. By studying figures like Volkhovskii helps us to understand how moral vocabularies migrate across political systems - how the language of conscience forged in Siberian exile could, generations later, animate international law and human-rights discourse. Volkhovskii's life - stretching from the populist ferment of the 1860s, through the birth of global modernity - illustrates the transformation of radicalism from national rebellion into transnational ethics.

Through his final synthesis (pp. 278-288), Hughes closes not only a biography, but a moral epoch. The narrative that began with youthful rebellion against autocracy ends with serene fidelity to conscience - an evolution that mirrors the trajectory of Russian ethical radicalism itself. Volkhovskii's legacy, then, lies in transforming revolution into remembrance, politics into pedagogy, and suffering into solidarity. Last, but not least, Volkhovskii's life story can be placed in the nineteenth-century *intelligentsia's* moral experiment, an effort to align private conscience with social responsibility, and ethical integrity with political necessity.

In conclusion, from the perspective of the themes (populism, exile, transnational networks, literature, identity) that can be considered relevant in presenting Volkhovskii's personality and activity, Volkhovskii can be placed, firstly, within the long and varied tradition of Russian populism (*narodnichestvo*). But his commitment to the *narod* was moral and pragmatic, and his primary loyalty was to the amelioration of peasant suffering, rather than to a fixed ideological program. Secondly, exile was both a condition and a resource, as it became an analytic frame for understanding how revolutionaries adapted tactics to audience expectations, while continuing to pursue insurgent ends. Thirdly, as regards the transnational networks, the book documents the interactions between the Russian émigrés, the British philanthropists and intellectuals, the American journalists, and other European radicals; these networks functioned as channels for funds, printed materials, and moral support, and they created a discursive space in which Russian grievances could be made legible to Western publics; therefore, this transnational activism was not merely supplementary, but central to sustaining revolutionary energies inside the empire. Fourthly, Volkhovskii's literary production - poems, stories, criticism – was a tool of social persuasion, a means to cultivate sympathy for victims of tsarist repression, and a vehicle to theorize political change in forms acceptable to different publics. Fifthly, referring to Volkhovskii's political identity, it is more pragmatic than doctrinal; rather than belonging to one fixed ideological camp, Volkhovskii's commitments were shaped by personal experience, moral disgust at social injustice, and a willingness to adapt tactics to the exigencies of repression and exile. Volkhovskii's late-life alignment with the Socialist Revolutionary Party should not be read as a doctrinal conversion, but as the culmination of long-standing inclinations: an emphasis on the peasantry, a belief in direct action, and a practical focus on building institutional mechanisms (publications, committees) that could support insurrectionary activity. Last but not least, the way in which Volkhovskii cultivated Western public opinion was not an end in itself, but a means to secure concrete resources - funds for relief, channels for smuggling literature, and diplomatic pressure that might constrain tsarist repression.

Michael Hughes's *Feliks Volkhovskii: A Revolutionary Life* is an important corrective to histories that privilege only the most famous revolutionaries or that view émigré activity as peripheral to the story of Russian radicalism. Hughes demonstrates that figures like Volkhovskii - through a lifetime of imprisonment, exile, publication, and organizational labour - helped to sustain the ideological and practical infrastructure of opposition to tsarism. The book's combination of archival richness, interpretive modesty, and thematic breadth (populism, exile, transnationalism, literature, and identity) makes it a valuable contribution to the historiography of pre-1917 Russia. As a consequence, the book represents an important tool not only for the researchers and students interested in the Russian history, but also for those interested in social movements and transnational politics, as Hughes's work illustrates the practical mechanics of diaspora activism and the politics of sympathy at the end of XIXth and the beginning of the XXth century.

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