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Psychological impact of post-migration spatial change on vulnerable groups

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Abstract

Context and relevance. Migration is a process that has many physical, social and psychological effects on the individual and societal level. Risk factors such as war, famine, education, economic inadequacies and natural disasters cause forced or voluntary migration. Various cultural, economic and spatial changes occur after migration. These changes have many individual, familial and social effects. The effects of spatial changes on individuals, especially after migration, are quite remarkable. Vulnerable groups consisting of women, children and elderly individuals are much more affected by spatial changes because they are sensitive and defenseless. The access of these groups to basic services such as shelter, nutrition, health and education is greatly restricted after migration. Factors such as uncertainties about the future, economic difficulties, cultural adaptation problems and social exclusion cause psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, eating disorders and depression to become widespread in these groups. Therefore, it is of great importance to determine the psychological effects of spatial changes after migration on vulnerable groups and to provide the necessary intervention and support. In this context, our study provides a literature summary to examine especially vulnerable groups after migration in this context.

Keywords: migration, spatial change, psychological impact, vulnerable groups

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Психологическое воздействие пространственных изменений после миграции на уязвимые группы населения

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Резюме

Контекст и актуальность. Миграция - это процесс, который оказывает большое физическое, социальное и психологическое воздействие на человека и общество в целом. Такие факторы риска, как война, голод, проблемы с образованием, экономическая нестабильность и стихийные бедствия, вызывают вынужденную или добровольную миграцию. После миграции происходят различные культурные, экономические и пространственные изменения. Эти изменения имеют множество индивидуальных, семейных и социальных последствий. Влияние пространственных изменений на людей, особенно после миграции, весьма заметно. Уязвимые группы населения, к которым относятся женщины, дети и пожилые люди, гораздо сильнее страдают от пространственных изменений, поскольку они чувствительны и беззащитны. После миграции доступ этих групп к базовым услугам, таким как жилье, питание, здравоохранение и образование, значительно ограничен. Такие факторы, как неопределенность в отношении будущего, экономические трудности, проблемы культурной адаптации и социальная изоляция, приводят к тому, что в этих группах широко распространены такие психологические проблемы, как стресс, тревога, расстройства пищевого поведения и депрессия. Поэтому очень важно определить психологическое воздействие пространственных изменений после миграции на уязвимые группы и обеспечить необходимое вмешательство и поддержку. В этом контексте в нашем исследовании приводится обзор литературы, в которой рассматриваются особенно уязвимые группы после миграции в этом контексте.

Ключевые слова: миграция, пространственные изменения, психологическое воздействие, уязвимые группы

Introduction

Migration is a relocation process that has occurred throughout human history due to economic, political, social, and environmental factors, producing significant consequences at both individual and societal levels (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018; Bimay, Çetin, 2023). This process can be temporary or permanent, occurring either domestically or internationally. Migration may occur voluntarily to improve educational opportunities and living standards or involuntarily due to war, natural disasters, drought, and economic deficiencies. The primary determinants of migration are the socio-economic and environmental conditions in which individuals live (Sarıtaş et al., 2016; Mcmanus, Irazábal, 2023). Migration is not merely a spatial relocation; it also entails transformations in individuals' economic situations and their adaptation to different cultural structures (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018; Hatipler, Daşkıran, 2021).

The migration process has multidimensional effects on individuals, families, and communities. Additionally, receiving regions also undergo economic, cultural, political, and social changes (Bains et al., 2021; Tuzcu, Bademli, 2014). Individuals who migrate due to war, natural disasters, and economic hardships are referred to as "migrants" (Erol, Ersever, 2014; Başcıllar et al., 2022). After migration, migrants often face problems related to language, health, education, and employment opportunities (Hatipler, Daşkıran, 2021; Arıca et al., 2023). The laws, culture, and social structure of the host region can hinder the integration of migrants (Hatipler, Daşkıran, 2021; Beşer, Tekkaş Kerman, 2017).

Issues such as discrimination, exclusion, and social incompatibility significantly affect the ability of individuals to establish a sense of belonging (Beşer, Tekkaş Kerman, 2017; Cantekin, Gençöz, 2017). When coupled with uncertainties and economic hardships, migrants face various psychosocial problems. As a result, fundamental social values and ways of life are disrupted, which can lead to psychological problems such as stress, anxiety, eating disorders, and sleep disturbances (Li, 2016; Miao et al., 2018).

The groups most affected by spatial changes after migration are those considered vulnerable in society. These include children, women, and the elderly—individuals who are in need of protection and more susceptible to the socio-economic and psychological difficulties posed by the migration process (Kurtuldu, Şahin, 2018; Eroğlu, 2020). These groups have comparatively limited access to shelter, security, economic resources, health, and education services, and their adaptation to post-migration life carries greater risks. Uncertainty, economic insecurity, social exclusion, and cultural incompatibility can negatively affect the physical and mental health of these individuals (Cantekin, Gençöz, 2017; Eroğlu, 2020).

Therefore, it is crucial to identify the impacts of post-migration spatial changes and implement supportive policies and interventions when necessary to mitigate the adverse effects of migration at both the individual and societal levels. In this regard, the present study aims to examine the

psychological effects of spatial changes following migration on vulnerable groups. It constitutes a comprehensive review of current findings and existing knowledge in the relevant literature.

1. Migration

Migration is an ancient phenomenon that occurs at individual, familial, or societal levels due to factors such as war, economic hardship, education, and natural disasters (Sever, 2022; Kara, Nazik, 2018). Various definitions of migration have been proposed. According to the Turkish Language Association (TDK), migration is defined as "the act of relocating from one country or settlement to another due to economic, social, or political reasons; relocation, emigration, immigration" (Türk Dil Kurumu, 2025). The International Organization for Migration (IOM) describes migration as "the movement of people across an international border or within a state, regardless of its length, composition, and causes" (Uluslararası Göç Örgütü, 2025).

Moreover, migration is a complex phenomenon that poses a significant burden due to the need for acceptance and adaptation at both individual and societal levels (Başcıllar et al., 2022; Doğan, Buz, 2022). These definitions reveal that migration is not limited to cross-country movements but also includes relocations within the same country, city, or neighborhood. Individuals migrate to areas that differ in cultural structure and lifestyle from their original locations. In recent years, increased migration movements have become processes that directly or indirectly impact individuals' physical, mental, and emotional lives. Depending on the destination and length of stay, individuals who migrate are referred to as "migrants," "immigrants," or "refugees" (Erol, Ersever, 2014; Ünal, 2012).

1.1. Reasons for migration

Migration is a complex phenomenon that arises from various causes. The main drivers of migration include economic factors, wars and violence, natural disasters, and social and political pressures (Kara, Nazik, 2018; Peker, Şanlı, 2022). These factors can independently trigger migration or interact with each other. For instance, economic problems can directly initiate migration or exacerbate social unrest and political instability, leading to conflict and violence. Therefore, identifying the root causes of migration is essential for an accurate analysis of the migration process.

1.1.1. Economic reasons

The economy plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to meet basic needs such as nutrition, shelter, security, and education, and in supporting overall societal development. Sustainable economic prosperity enhances the quality of life in a given region and increases the likelihood of individuals remaining there. However, economic problems are particularly prevalent in areas affected by war, conflict, natural disasters, and socio-economic underdevelopment (Mcmanus, Irazábal, 2023; Hatipler, Daşkıran, 2021). Additionally, factors such as insufficient employment opportunities and limited access to basic services and resources negatively impact living conditions in these regions, thereby triggering migration (Başcıllar et al., 2022). In this context, individuals and communities migrate to more economically developed regions to access better job opportunities and improve their living standards.

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1.1.2. War and violence

War refers to armed conflicts between states, groups, or communities due to political, economic, ethnic, or ideological reasons (Başcıllar et al., 2022). It severely restricts access to essential services such as security, shelter, education, and healthcare and disrupts these services significantly (Li, 2016; Miao et al., 2018). Individuals living in environments characterized by internal conflict and violence suffer both physically and psychologically. The deterioration of living conditions due to insecurity in conflict zones accelerates and intensifies migration at both individual and societal levels (Başcıllar et al., 2022) Consequently, individuals are often compelled to leave their regions in search of safer environments, better living conditions, or simply to escape from traumatic circumstances.

1.1.3. Environmental reasons

Environmental factors such as droughts, earthquakes, and the depletion of water resources resulting from natural disasters and climate change adversely affect both human populations and other living beings (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Erol, Ersever, 2014). The decline of natural resources, reduced agricultural productivity, and increasing population levels present significant risks in terms of shelter, nutrition, and health. Under such conditions, individuals who struggle to sustain their livelihoods are forced to migrate in search of more suitable and safer living environments.

1.1.4. Social reasons

People aspire to live freely in harmony with their surroundings, express themselves effectively, enjoy time with their families, receive quality education, and maintain a good economic status (Tuzcu, Bademli, 2014; Beşer, Tekkaş Kerman, 2017). Meeting these social needs enhances productivity, supports personal development, and facilitates healthier relationships with others. However, in some societies, regional conditions, economic challenges, natural disasters, and cultural dynamics make it difficult—sometimes impossible—for individuals to fulfill these needs (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Tuzcu, Bademli, 2014). Moreover, the trend toward individualism brought about by modernization has led to social transformations that can negatively affect family relationships and social perceptions (Erol, Ersever, 2014). This transformation has prompted individuals to migrate to areas where they feel freer and more autonomous. In this regard, individuals may be compelled to migrate either out of necessity or in pursuit of better living conditions at both individual and societal levels.

1.2. Types of migration

Migration types can generally be classified into two main categories: domestic (internal) and international migration. Depending on the circumstances of the migrants, these movements can be either temporary or permanent in nature.

1.2.1. Domestic (internal) migration

Domestic (internal) migration refers to the movement of individuals within the borders of their own country, either temporarily or permanently. This type of migration usually occurs from economically and socially underdeveloped regions to more urbanized and developed areas.

Seasonal labor, job transfers, natural disasters, and economic factors are among the primary causes of domestic (internal) migration (Tuzcu, Bademli, 2014; Başaran, 2021).

1.2.2. International migration

International migration is defined as the movement of individuals from one country to another due to reasons that may be temporary or permanent. Underlying causes include skilled migration (brain drain), labor migration, education, and conflicts such as war (Başaran, 2021). In recent times, the migration of highly skilled individuals has become more prominent compared to other types of migration.

2. Post-migration changes

After migration, individuals and societies undergo various transformations, which can be categorized as spatial, cultural, and economic changes.

2.1. Spatial change

Migration initiates a process in which individuals must adapt to a new environment after leaving their hometowns, neighborhoods, cultural settings, and homes (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018; Peker, Şanlı, 2022). Migrants relocate to new areas, a process that brings about socio-cultural, economic, and psychological transitions. During this phase, individuals experience an adaptation period in which they strive to fulfill basic needs such as shelter, food, security, healthcare, and education (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Kara, Nazik, 2018).

Migrants who face housing difficulties may temporarily or permanently reside in the homes of acquaintances, rental properties, shelters, tent cities, or even on the streets ((Başcıllar et al., 2022). Consequently, adjusting to a new space, ensuring survival, and securing a place within the community emerge as major challenges. Particularly among those who settle in inadequate and disorganized living areas such as tent camps, these difficulties can lead to psychological trauma. Disorders such as stress, insomnia, anxiety, eating disorders, behavioral issues, and depression are frequently observed (Eroğlu, 2020).

Moreover, migrants often attempt to integrate their own cultural values and lifestyles into their new environment, yet may experience mismatches with the norms, values, and lifestyles of the host community (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018; Motti-Stefanidi et al., 2012). These mismatches can evolve into social conflicts, resulting in socio-cultural and economic challenges for both migrants and host communities. Therefore, regulatory measures must be implemented to support migrants in adapting to new environments and fulfilling their basic needs.

2.2. Cultural change

Culture represents the shared identity of a society, encompassing language, beliefs, values, traditions, and customs (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Boruszak-Kiziukiewicz, Kmita, 2020). Post-migration transformation often leads to interaction between communities with different cultural backgrounds. Increased cultural diversity can produce both positive and negative effects on a society, primarily influenced by how successfully the two cultures integrate and whether the integration process is managed effectively.

However, increased cultural diversity can also lead to identity conflicts and adjustment issues (Schachner, 2019; Betancourt et al., 2017). Such challenges are frequently observed in areas such as interpersonal communication, education, access to healthcare services, and the use of public institutions (Başcıllar et al., 2022; Çakmak, 2018). Thus, integrating migrants into the new community, helping them understand the local culture and lifestyle, and ensuring they can meet their needs smoothly is of great significance.

2.3. Economic change

The economic impact of migration varies depending on the reasons behind it. In cases of forced migration, individuals typically relocate under economically disadvantaged conditions (Başcıllar et al., 2022). In contrast, voluntary migration such as skilled migration can have positive effects both on the migrants themselves and on the economy of the host country. For example, the settlement of migrants can increase labor force participation and productivity, enhance supply and demand, and bring in foreign currency (Başcıllar et al., 2022; Khatiwada et al., 2021).

Nevertheless, issues such as inadequate infrastructure, healthcare, and educational services, as well as increased pressure on public services, can lead to negative economic outcomes (Başcıllar et al., 2022). These changing economic conditions may hinder migrants' access to fundamental needs such as housing, employment, education, and healthcare (Başaran, 2021). Failure to meet these needs can give rise to psychological problems and outbreaks of infectious diseases. Therefore, effective planning of the migration process and the proper allocation of available resources are essential.

3. Effects of post-migration spatial change on individuals and society

The spatial change brought about by migration has profound effects on individuals, families, and society. The process of adapting to an unfamiliar environment—shaped by language, culture, and lifestyle—can become psychologically and socio-culturally challenging for migrants. Therefore, it is crucial to identify the effects of spatial change on individuals and implement necessary interventions to minimize potential negative outcomes.

3.1. Individual changes and their effects

Whether voluntary or forced, a change in one's environment results in various individual transformations. These changes include shifts in roles and responsibilities, alterations in economic circumstances, and the cultural adjustments that adaptation requires. The adaptation process begins as individuals encounter the realities of their new environment. While voluntary migrants typically experience fewer difficulties beyond language barriers, forced migrants often face significant challenges in housing, healthcare, education, and economic domains (Tuzcu, Ilgaz, 2015; Özdemir, Budak, 2017).

Negative effects on individuals include stress and anxiety, cultural shock, identity crises, eating disorders, depression, loneliness, and social isolation (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018; Tuzcu, Bademli, 2014). Early detection of these symptoms is essential to promote problem-solving skills, support social integration, and provide referrals to mental health professionals when needed (Bains et al., 2021; Khatiwada et al., 2021). This enables migrants to adapt more successfully by acquiring social skills and forming meaningful relationships (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018).

3.2. Changes in family dynamics and their effects

The family is an institution composed of individuals who possess different roles and responsibilities. The existence of strong emotional bonds, effective communication, and healthy relationships among family members is critical for maintaining the integrity of this institution (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018; Aykurt, 2020). Post-migration spatial changes affect these dynamics, impacting roles, parent-child relationships, and family communication. These shifts may result in a transformation from extended to nuclear family structures, sometimes leading to a rapid breakdown.

Maintaining strong familial bonds despite spatial change, along with good psychological well-being and stable economic conditions, can help mitigate these negative effects (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Aykurt, 2020). In contrast, when these factors are lacking, family communication deteriorates, identity confusion and feelings of detachment emerge, and conflict among family members may result in negative mental health outcomes (Sarıtaş et al., 2016; Tuzcu, Bademli, 2014). Thus, close monitoring of migrant families, the promotion of family cohesion, and ensuring access to social support mechanisms are vital for minimizing the negative consequences of altered family dynamics.

3.3. Societal changes and their effects

Post-migration spatial changes lead to substantial transformations in the social and cultural fabric of both the migrating and receiving societies. Individual and familial changes following migration often weaken interpersonal relationships, disrupt value systems, hinder social development, and reduce expectations for the future (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Hatipler, Daşkıran, 2021). This situation can damage the cultural integrity of migrant communities and even lead to identity loss.

In the post-migration period, the ability of migrants to preserve their language, culture, and values is an essential factor in coping with the effects of spatial change. As migrants interact with host communities, a process of adaptation unfolds. This adaptation is shaped by language acquisition, adjustment to new social conditions, and engagement with the host society (Erol, Ersever, 2014; Işkın, 2021). The process may take the form of cultural integration or assimilation (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Berry et al., 2012). If integration fails to occur, problems such as identity confusion, lack of belonging, and adaptation difficulties may arise, potentially resulting in psychological stress and trauma. Therefore, efforts must be made to encourage cultural preservation while promoting adaptation, supported by social acceptance mechanisms.

4. The effects of post-migration spatial change on vulnerable groups

Children, women, and the elderly are among the groups most affected by spatial changes resulting from migration. Defined as "vulnerable groups," these individuals are physically, socially, and psychologically more fragile, defenseless, and in need of support. Identifying their fundamental needs and psychological conditions is vital for preventing potential issues. Supporting their adaptation processes through scientifically based approaches and referring them to mental health professionals when necessary are critical steps toward minimizing the negative effects of post-migration spatial change.

The impact of post-migration spatial change varies significantly among different vulnerable groups, depending on their age, social roles, and levels of dependency. While there are some shared

psychological outcomes—such as stress, anxiety, and social isolation—each group experiences unique risk factors and requires tailored support mechanisms (Fazel et al., 2005; Silove et al., 2017).

The table below summarizes the specific risk factors, psychological effects, and support needs of three vulnerable populations affected by spatial change after migration: children, women, and the elderly (Table 1).

Table 1: Psychological impacts of post-migration spatial change on vulnerable groups

Vulnerable group	Specific risk factors	Psychological effects	Required support
Children	Exposure to trauma during developmental stages; separation from familiar environments; disrupted schooling	Insecurity, social withdrawal, behavioral problems, identity crisis, risk of substance use	Family support, school counseling, psychosocial therapy, peer support programs
Women	Gender-based inequalities, economic dependency, caregiving burdens, risk of violence and harassment	Anxiety, depression, body image issues, burnout	Women's support groups, economic empowerment programs, safe living conditions, psychotherapy
Elderly	Physical frailty, loss of social networks, language barriers, limited access to healthcare	Loneliness, isolation, depression, cognitive decline	Community centers, cultural orientation programs, healthcare access, social engagement activities

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual pathway through which post-migration spatial change generates psychosocial consequences among vulnerable groups. Starting with the disruption of routine and social roles caused by displacement, this cascade of stressors—such as economic hardship, cultural mismatch, and isolation—can result in significant mental health challenges. The diagram highlights how these outcomes manifest differently in children, women, and the elderly, and underscores the need for tailored support mechanisms to facilitate resilience and integration.

Figure 1. Conceptual Flow: Post-Migration Spatial Change and Psychosocial Impact
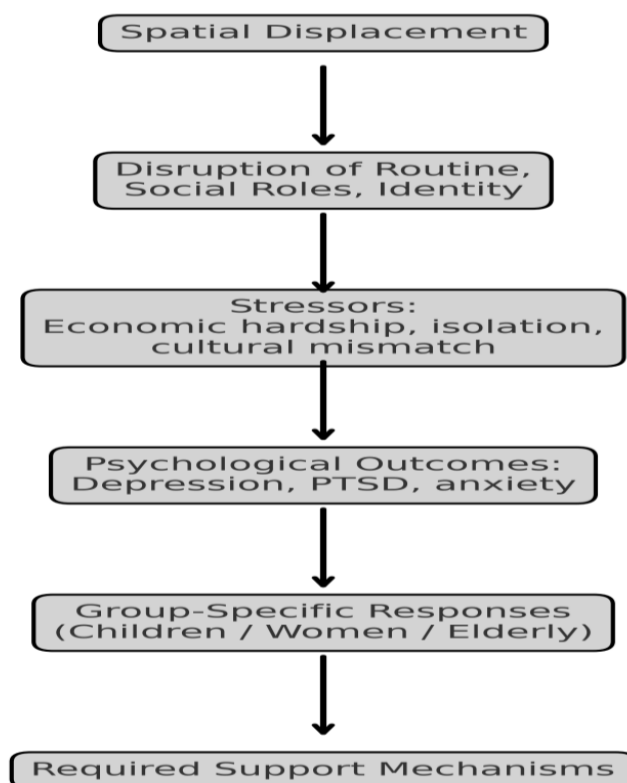
4.1. Psychological effects on children

The number of individuals forced to migrate due to war and violence is increasing daily (Düken, Kaplan, 2024). Among the most affected are children. Since they are in their developmental stages and dependent on their families to meet basic needs, the migration process has a heightened impact on them. As a result of migration, children must adapt to unfamiliar environments, separated from their familiar cities, neighborhoods, schools, and peer groups (Eroğlu, 2020; Schachner, 2019). Besides, from a developmental psychology perspective, especially through the lens of Bowlby's Attachment Theory, sudden separation from caregivers and the loss of familiar routines may lead to attachment disorders, emotional insecurity, and delays in identity formation (Bowlby, 2008).

Children encounter challenges such as changes in social surroundings, language and cultural barriers, and feelings of exclusion. Some are even forced to work in low-status, low-wage jobs due to their families' economic difficulties. These factors can cause trauma, foster feelings of insecurity, and negatively influence children's long-term psychological development (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018;

Başcıllar et al., 2022). Such traumatic experiences may lead to withdrawal, weakened communication with family, and aggressive behavior (Vos et al., 2021). Emotional alienation, rejection by society, and family issues may even result in substance abuse (Doğan, Buz, 2022; Düken, Kaplan, 2024).

Children who lose parents or close relatives due to war or natural disasters experience even deeper psychological trauma. Risk factors such as unmet basic needs—shelter, nutrition, safety, healthcare, and education—exacerbate psychological impacts (Başaran, 2021). Situations such as violence, exclusion, stigmatization, early forced marriages, and forced labor among boys are common (Sever, 2022; Düken, Kaplan, 2024). These burdens lead to serious behavioral and emotional issues. Problems like lack of belonging and identity crises emerge, deteriorating their quality of life (Işkın, 2021). Thus, post-migration spatial change is an overwhelming burden that can result in a wide range of psychological issues including eating disorders, PTSD, loneliness, social isolation, behavioral problems, anxiety, depression, and tendencies toward violence or crime.

Ensuring children's psychological well-being during this process is crucial. It is essential to provide environments where they can express themselves and continue developing healthily. Family support, social adaptation programs, and guidance services should be provided to support children's adjustment (Gülmez, Öztürk, 2018). Furthermore, steps must be taken to help children integrate while preserving their cultural identities. Due to the prevalence of violence and substance use among migrant children, preventive measures are needed Düken, Kaplan, 2024). Families, educators, mental health professionals, and social workers must collaborate. Safe spaces should be created where children can spend time with peers and engage in various activities (Çappar, Dönmez, 2024). Host community children should be educated on issues like exclusion and stigma. Educational and social opportunities, combined with proper guidance and support, can transform post-migration spatial change from trauma into opportunity.

4.2. Psychological effects on women

For women, migration is not merely a physical relocation—it also has significant social and psychological implications (Kurtuldu, Şahin, 2018). Women migrate due to forced conditions such as war, economic hardship, famine, and natural disasters, as well as voluntary reasons like education or as part of dependent migration with spouses (Başcıllar et al., 2022; Tuzcu, Ilgaz, 2015). Research shows a growing number of migrant women and the emergence of the concept of the "feminization of migration and war" (Kaplan, Düken, 2023). Women are emotionally more affected than men and experience higher rates of depression and anxiety (Tuzcu, Ilgaz, 2015; Çappar, Dönmez, 2024).

Women face difficulties in meeting basic needs such as shelter, nutrition, healthcare, and safety. Factors like uncertainty about their length of stay, language barriers, altered family dynamics, and economic challenges hinder their adaptation (Tuzcu, Ilgaz, 2015; Topak, Çamur, 2022). Economically disadvantaged women often end up in low-status, low-paid jobs and face discrimination, social exclusion, and gender-based inequality (Beşer, 2017; Kurtuldu, Şahin, 2018). Traumatic experiences such as violence, harassment, and trafficking are particularly common among forcibly displaced women.

Forced separation from family and community, encountering unfamiliar cultures, and losing a support network can lead to eating disorders, depression, stress, anxiety, and psychosomatic symptoms (Çappar, Dönmez, 2024; Topak, Çamur, 2022). As primary caregivers, women experience changing roles in host countries. Balancing economic contributions and family responsibilities often causes stress and burnout (Kurtuldu, Şahin, 2018; Li, 2022). Language barriers and lack of access to health services can complicate pregnancies, increasing risks like miscarriage, preterm birth, and congenital conditions (Çappar, Dönmez, 2024; Topak, Çamur, 2022). Social isolation may intensify due to a lack of support systems (Sever, 2022; Kara, Nazik, 2018).

In addition to facing general challenges associated with displacement, women often bear a dual burden in post-migration contexts: adapting to new socio-cultural environments while simultaneously fulfilling caregiving roles within the family. This duality intensifies emotional exhaustion and contributes to heightened vulnerability to mental health disorders such as anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress (Slewa-Younan et al., 2014). Moreover, the disruption of traditional gender roles, especially among women who were previously economically or socially dependent, may cause identity disorientation and interpersonal conflict within families (Guruge, Collins, 2008). Language barriers, limited access to reproductive health services, and culturally insensitive care models further restrict migrant women's ability to seek help (Bains et al., 2021). In such contexts, community-based psychosocial programs tailored to women's experiences, as well as culturally competent health services and vocational empowerment initiatives, are essential for promoting psychological well-being and social integration (Khatiwada et al., 2021; Kaplan, Düken, 2023).

The psychological and social challenges faced by migrant women affect both themselves and their families. Addressing these issues through appropriate interventions is vital. Opportunities should be created for women to build new experiences and develop coping strategies. Supportive interventions should empower women psychologically, ensure access to psychosocial services, and provide language training, financial assistance, and vocational training to help rebuild self-confidence. Social groups should be established to reduce isolation. Raising public awareness, preventing violence, and ensuring safety are crucial for facilitating women's integration.

4.3. Psychological effects on the elderly

Old age is a phase of life characterized by declining physiological and psychological strength, increasing health problems, and restricted daily activities (Aslan, Ulutaş, 2018). Physical ailments like muscle atrophy, cardiovascular disease, dementia, Alzheimer's, and cancer reduce mobility and increase the need for care (Aslan, Ulutaş, 2018; Yaylagül, Aslan, 2020). These conditions may also worsen economic hardship, increase dependency, and diminish independence in making decisions.

In addition to physical health, cognitive and psychological changes are observed during aging. Cognitive decline, fear of death, and social exclusion negatively impact psychosocial well-being (Yaylagül, Aslan, 2020). Thus, the elderly are among the most vulnerable during migration. Forced migration, in particular, detaches the elderly from cultural ties, social networks, and daily routines (Aslan, Ulutaş, 2018). Compared to younger individuals, older people tend to be more settled and attached to their environments, making adaptation more difficult (Doğan, Buz, 2022). Language

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barriers, loss of status and social networks, and reduced autonomy are major sources of stress (Bains et al., 2021; Jang, Tang, 2022).

Insufficient support from family and society post-migration exacerbates emotional challenges such as isolation, identity loss, and loneliness. These may lead to depression, sleep disturbances, eating disorders, and anxiety (Bimay, Çetin, 2023; Yaylagül, Aslan, 2020). Therefore, identifying the current status and problems of elderly migrants is essential for preventive care. Psychological effects of spatial change must be considered, and interventions should be developed to enhance emotional and social well-being.

Besides, older migrants often experience a profound sense of uprootedness, as migration disrupts long-established social ties, daily routines, and culturally embedded practices. Unlike younger individuals who may adapt more quickly, elderly people frequently struggle with changes in language, technology, and healthcare systems, which can exacerbate feelings of helplessness and dependence (Trevisan et al., 2019). The loss of autonomy and role within the family—such as being caregivers or decision-makers—can lead to diminished self-worth and depressive symptoms (Torres, 2015). Moreover, the perception of being a burden on their families or society may intensify social withdrawal and psychological distress (Yaylagül, Aslan, 2020). It is essential to design culturally appropriate interventions that include language education, intergenerational dialogue platforms, and age-friendly community centers to support emotional resilience, social belonging, and cognitive stimulation among elderly migrants (Jang, Tang, 2022).

Programs to help elderly individuals learn the host country's language and culture can support integration and reduce isolation. Social solidarity groups and cultural activities should be encouraged to strengthen their sense of belonging. Regular health checkups should be implemented to detect physical and psychological issues early.

5. Conclusion

Migration is not only a geographical transition but also a profound transformation that affects the psychological, cultural, and social fabric of individuals and societies. Post-migration spatial change, particularly for vulnerable groups, involves disruption of established routines, loss of familiar environments, and adaptation to often unfamiliar, and at times, unwelcoming contexts. Children, women, and the elderly face a compounded burden due to their heightened dependency and limited resilience in the face of rapid change.

For children, such transitions can disrupt developmental milestones, weaken secure attachments, and lead to psychological problems such as trauma, anxiety, and identity confusion. Women, often positioned at the intersection of economic burden and caregiving roles, face increased risks of social exclusion, gender-based violence, and depression. Elderly migrants, who are often deeply rooted in their social and physical environments, struggle with autonomy loss, isolation, and declines in physical and cognitive health, making integration significantly more difficult.

In light of these challenges, targeted and evidence-based interventions must be prioritized. Psychosocial support systems, culturally sensitive mental health services, and educational and community-based programs should be adapted to meet the needs of each vulnerable group. Policymakers and practitioners must adopt a rights-based, trauma-informed, and inclusive approach to migration policy that acknowledges the unique vulnerabilities caused by spatial dislocation.

Ultimately, ensuring that migration does not translate into lifelong psychological burden requires more than emergency responses—it demands proactive social inclusion, resilience-building mechanisms, and sustainable community integration efforts. If addressed with empathy and structured support, migration can become not just a disruption, but a transformative opportunity for both individuals and societies.

Limitations. This study is based on a review approach and does not include empirical data, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships.

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