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Access to Labor Market and Integration of Moroccan Women in Andalusia: The Two Sides of the Coin

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Abstract: Given the multifactorial nature of the integration processes of migrants, this article analyzes the correlation between inclusion in the labor market and the integration of Moroccan women residing in Andalusia. An intersectional approach is used, addressing three key variables: youth, gender, and ethnicity. To this end, a qualitative methodology has been developed based on conducting twenty-nine in-depth interviews with Moroccan women residing in Andalusia. Non-probabilistic intentional sampling has been used through the snowball technique. The results have shown the ambivalence that insertion in the labor market implies for these women, being, on the one hand, an area of oppression, rejection, and discrimination, and on the other, one of the essential factors to achieve the full integration of the protagonists, granting them agency and resistance. It concludes by highlighting the importance of favoring the successful transition and inclusion in the labor market of these women, being fundamental to the development of strategies and political proposals aimed at reducing, even eliminating, the structural violence that continues to prevail in this area.

Keywords: female migration; Morocco; Andalusia; labor insertion; gender; integration



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1. Introduction

According to the latest data presented by the [Servicio Público de Empleo Estatal del Ministerio de Trabajo y Economía Social de España \(2023\)](#), corresponding to June 2023, the total number of people who are unemployed in Spain is 2,688,842, with 39.59% represented by men compared to 60.41% by women. The age group with the highest number of unemployed is that of 45 to 59 years, specifically making up 41.5% of total unemployment. The second largest group corresponds to 28.3% of the unemployed and refers to the group whose age is between 30 and 44 years. Furthermore, should be noted that, according to the latest figures published by the [OECD \(2023\)](#), of its members, Spain continues to be the country with the highest unemployment.

If we look at the case of the migrant population, considering that it constitutes 11.6% of the Spanish population ([National Institute of Statistics 2022](#)), we see how they have a higher unemployment rate. According to the most recent results from the National Institute of Statistics corresponding to the second quarter of 2023, the unemployment rate of the foreign population is 17.25% compared to 10.64% for people with Spanish nationality. If analyzed considering sex, it is observed how migrant women are the ones with the highest unemployment rate, specifically 19.64% compared to 15.04% for foreign men. However, this high rate is not simply due to sex, since in the case of women with Spanish nationality, the percentage is much lower, specifically 12.05%. These data highlight the risk that exists in the Spanish labor panorama and especially in certain sectors of the population such as migrant women.

In this article we will address this contextual framework focusing on a specific reality: Moroccan women living in Andalusia. Specifically, the results obtained in the qualitative study developed from the implementation of twenty-nine in-depth interviews with young

Moroccan women living in the Andalusian autonomous community will be analyzed. To perform this analysis, according to existing literary recommendations, it would be advisable to fundamentally analyze three variables: social class, gender, and ethnicity, since they allow us to analyze and understand the inequalities and vulnerabilities that non-EU women may suffer in the labor market (IOM 2015). However, in this research we have considered it necessary to modify the social class by a stage of the life cycle, specifically youth, as it has a significant influence on the job insertion process (Valdez and Tapia 2020). Furthermore, the migrant status itself places them in a disadvantaged situation as it is a central element at the intersection of class inequality (Pizarro et al. 2016; Jiménez and Trpin 2021) and a stratifying element (Castles and Kosack 1972), therefore, it has not been considered as the main key unit to take social class into account for the research.

Based on this, the three key units of analysis that will be considered will be: youth, gender, and ethnicity. It is essential to attend to these three elements given the great impact they have on the transition process towards labor insertion, as demonstrated below.

1.1. Labor Insertion and Variables of Analysis: Youth, Gender, and Ethnicity

With respect to the first, youth, there are various studies that have highlighted the difficulties that the young Spanish population has in entering the labor market and achieving optimal working conditions (Verd et al. 2019; Hernández 2022; García-Fuentes 2023). The question we ask ourselves is what is meant by the young population when we refer to the labor market. According to the Youth Institute (Injuve 2023), which is the public body attached to the Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030 of the Government of Spain, when they refer to the young population, they refer to people whose age is between 16 and 29 years, coinciding with the parameters established by Eurostat (2023).

However, we consider that this approach is too rigid and deterministic, since youth does not refer to a natural phase of human development, but is a social construction following Western culture and industrial societies (Grob 1998). Given the vertiginous changes that have occurred in recent decades with respect to industrial development, the labor market, and Information and Communication Technologies, we consider it necessary not to restrict the concept of youth to biological parameters, such as age. This would be an analytical fallacy that would make it difficult to understand this transition period by restricting it to a single variable, such as age, without considering other dimensions that are even more relevant, such as class, gender, and cultural ethnicities (Elbaum 2000).

Therefore, in this article, we consider youth as that period of transition between physical maturity and social maturity, varying this stage significantly between different cultures and social sectors (Zarzuri 2018), as well as from one individual to another, depending on their life stories.

With respect to the second variable, gender, there are various investigation studies that demonstrate how a gender gap continues to exist when we refer to the labor market (Quinto et al. 2020; Lariau and Qian 2022; Conde-Ruiz and Marra 2016).

Recently Anghel et al. (2019) have carried out a study in Spain in which different indicators were analyzed, such as type of contract, salary, representation of women in companies, among others, and have concluded by stating that, in most indicators, women are treated worse than men. Furthermore, it must be taken into account that the gender gap is accentuated when they have children under 16 years of age. That is, a woman with a child is more likely to be unemployed, have temporary contracts, or have a part-time job than a man (Hupkau and Ruiz-Valenzuela 2022).

This is essential to consider because it has an impact, not only on women, in whom the clear negative effect of precarious jobs in different areas and especially in mentally has already been evidenced (Koseoglu et al. 2022), but also in the development of companies and the country in general since, in the long term, it will be detrimental to economic growth (Ferrant and Kolev 2016).

Attending the last variable, ethnicity, it is a relevant aspect to take into account to understand the object of study in question. The nationality and origin of a person can

be a key condition when accessing the labor market, with the gap that exists in labor market insertion between natives and immigrants being evident (Berthoud 2000; Heath and Cheung 2007). This is caused, in a way, by the socially held concept of a “migrant” (Brahic and Lallement 2020; Pesquera et al. 2022), which represents a structural disadvantage that they must face (Fellini and Guetto 2019).

In addition, it is not only important to consider whether they are foreign or not, but also the origin to which they belong. Thus, for example, Suso et al. (2020) assure that certain groups such as the Maghrebi or sub-Saharan Africans encounter more barriers to inserting themselves in certain sectors. These data coincide with the study carried out by Domingo et al. (2022) who, after analyzing the Active Population Survey in Spain from 1999 to the first quarter of 2022, assure that African natives have more difficulties accessing the labor market, not only with respect to the native Spaniards, but with other migrants from European or even Latin American countries. Thus, in the first quarter of 2022 it was observed that there were 12% more unemployed people from North Africa than from Latin Americans.

Due to this differentiation and specific difficulties, it is considered necessary in this research to establish the Moroccan population, specifically, women, as the object of study. To do this, we will analyze how these three variables (youth, gender, and ethnicity) influence in the process of inclusion in the labor market, being essential to apply an intersectional perspective (Crenshaw 1991, 2017; Seng 2012; Hellgren and Gabrielli 2021).

1.2. Moroccan Women in Andalusia: Their Inclusion in the Labor Market

People from Morocco are the most present foreign population in Andalusia (National Institute of Statistics 2023). If we focus on the case of women, the latest data from the Report on “Women in the Andalusian Labour Market 2021” (Junta de Andalucía 2022) observed how in 2021, 19.28% of foreign women residing in Andalusia come from Morocco, being the most representative female foreign group, followed by the United Kingdom (12.38%) and Romania (11.38%). This justifies that the present study focuses on Moroccan women and not on migrant women from other countries.

Regarding labor activity, of the 8.02% of foreign population that is unemployed in Andalusia, 28.09% is represented by Moroccans, being again the most representative group. However, if we look at the percentage of foreign women most hired, we observe how, in this occasion, they are not Moroccan women (24.4%), even though they are the most present population, but rather women of Romanian origin (28.9%).

Despite everything, these data must be questioned since there are many women who are in an irregular administrative situation (Orozco et al. 2023) and, therefore, are not registered in these figures. Likewise, there are others who, although they are in a regularized situation in Spain, have not been registered in the Social Security as workers, carrying out their profession illegally in the underground economy (Instituto de la Mujer 2015).

Considering the labor sector, the main employment niches of Moroccan women residing in Andalusia are mainly agriculture and care (Morcillo-Martínez 2022), as well as catering (Mohatar 2009; Ruiz-Román and Rascón 2017). This demonstrates the segmentation of the existing labor market, contributing to the creation and reproduction of new axes of inequality (Ezquerro 2010; Fajardo et al. 2022).

These job niches are characterized by great job insecurity and little recognition of the rights that correspond to them as workers. With respect to agriculture, given the globalized world in which we find ourselves immersed, employers increasingly want to lower production costs, generating a negative effect on employees, in this case, Moroccan women, who are exposed to greater vulnerability, with temporary, part-time, and informal jobs, characterized by uncertainty, insecurity, and vulnerability (Bedoya and Maca 2020; Caro and Cárdenas 2022).

In relation to care work, it is necessary to highlight the great vulnerability that it implies for women, for various reasons. Firstly, due to the perpetuation it entails of the reproductive role that has been socially assigned to women (Cárdenas-Rodríguez and Ortega-de-Mora

2019). Secondly, due to the invisibility of this sector, where all work is under the privacy of the home (Martínez 2010). Third and last, due to the great precariousness, not only of the conditions, but also of the salary (Anderson 2000; Amrith 2021).

Considering their insertion in the restaurant sector, it is again characterized as a precarious sector, where temporary employment and low salaries are significant (Actis et al. 2000). Furthermore, according to recently carried out studies, it is a sector where there are significant gender differences (Ons et al. 2020), exposing migrant women to a situation of greater vulnerability.

This situation of precariousness is very frequent, not only in the case of Moroccan migrant women, but also in the female migrant population. As Rebolledo and Rodríguez (2023) rightly state, due to issues of gender and origin, migrant women usually hold jobs located in undervalued and low paid job segments. Brain waste is very common due not only to institutional aspects, but also to inherent sociocultural norms (Elo et al. 2020), making the process of insertion into the labor market difficult.

However, there are differentiating elements, as indicated above, with respect to Moroccan women who enter the labor market compared to other migrant women. In general, the scientific literature tends to unify the African population. Based on this, it has been shown how greater racism and rejection is exerted on Arab women and those of black skin color, especially when it refers to care work (Círez and Cuesta 2021). However, if it is analyzed from a temporal and holistic approach, where inclusion in the labor market is not exclusively considered, but also other variables such as “the joint process between legal and employment integration; the selection into employment and its effect on wages, and; the importance of the previous employment history” (Rodríguez-Planas and Vegas 2014, p. 326) are apparent, it is observed how the situation of the Moroccan population is as good or even better than other migrants from countries such as Ecuador or Romania.

This disparity in approach and results demonstrates the scarcity of studies and the need to investigate this reality. Therefore, in this article, we consider it necessary to give more visibility to Moroccan women residing in Andalusia and the work they do (Arab 2020) in order to address this phenomenon, since the work they do is essential to ensure the development of the region and the Andalusian economy (Permanent Andalusian Observatory of Migrations 2018). Although we are aware of this reality, there is still a duality between the need we have for this labor force and the control we want to exercise over it, to avoid issues such as rising labor prices (Pumares and González-Martín 2022).

1.3. Labor Market and Integration Process: Bidirectional Analysis

The concept of integration is complex to define given the different positions and approaches that exist (González-Rábago 2014). The International Organization for Migration (2019) defines it as the mutual adaptation between migrants and those who make up the destination society, posing it as a bidirectional process where all actors are involved. This process involves the incorporation of migrants in different areas of society, such as: social, cultural, economic, and political. Attending to this multifactorial vision of integration (Marques et al. 2019; Platt et al. 2022), it is important to consider how the employment situation of migrants influences their integration process.

The lack of work or precariousness in work performance, something very common in the case of migrants, represents a barrier in the integration process (Zhang et al. 2022). Therefore, it is a relevant research topic, although it is little studied (Borjas 2003; Wright and Clibborn 2019). This is due, in a way, to the impact that the lack of optimal conditions at work has on the agency of migrants, limiting not only their actions but also their rights, and, as De Lucas (2001) states, the right to have rights is the basis of integration. A fruitful integration of migrants into the labor market would imply, among other factors, promoting equal treatment between the migrant population and local workers (Long and Shen 2022), improving the counseling process for newcomers, facilitating the process of validation of degrees by promoting insertion into qualified environments (Terrón-Caro et al. 2022), and ensuring an improvement in working conditions (salary, length of the working day, etc.).

Taking into account the analysis previously carried out, in this article, the confluence between labor insertion and the process of integration of Moroccan women in Andalusia is studied. Although there are studies that analyze this relationship, there are few investigations that carry out a holistic study in which they confront the positive and negative elements of the labor insertion of Moroccan women residing in Andalusia and how this influences their integration process. To respond to this research gap, this study addresses, from an intersectional approach, the ambivalent character that characterizes the processes of labor insertion, identifying not only the benefits, but also the harms caused and how these interact with each other and affect the process of integration of Moroccans in Andalusia. At all times, the capacity for agency and the great heterogeneity that characterizes the group are considered.

The main research questions posed are: (1) What benefits and harms does the labor integration of Moroccan women in Andalusia cause? (2) Taking into account the intersectional approach and considering the system of oppression that may exist in the labor insertion of migrant women, does labor insertion favor their integration process in Andalusia?

To answer these questions, the following will be analyzed: (A) the difficulties they have encountered in the process of insertion into the labor market and how this has influenced their integration process, and (B) how inclusion in the labor market has benefited their integration process.

2. Materials and Methods

In the present research, being aware of the importance of listening to the voices and involving the protagonists of the study (Daiute et al. 2021), the in-depth interview has been used as the main research technique. This technique is qualitative; therefore, it allows one to restore the humanity of the object of study (Ruíz 2015), favoring the understanding and analysis of the analyzed reality. The in-depth interview allows one to know the perspective that other people have on a specific circumstance or event, knowing new meanings about the phenomenon in question (Mears 2012).

In this case, we want to know the perspective that a group of Moroccan women have about their inclusion process in Andalusia. For this, an interview script has been developed and organized in 9 dimensions/categories of analysis, being made up of a total of 108 questions. Although this article focuses on studying the inclusion of the protagonists in the labor market, the objective of the research is broader, as it is developed within the framework of the FPU19/04072 research and the FEDER operational project (UPO-1380907). Therefore, the dimensions analyzed in the interviews are: Sociodemographic profile; Migratory path; Arrival in Spain; Educational circumstances; Work circumstances; Personal transformations and gender roles; Social relations; Family situation; and projection. The approach that has articulated and structured the study has been intersectionality (Crenshaw 1991), considering the influence and intersection that is created between certain factors (gender, youth, and ethnicity) generating situations of inequalities or oppression. This intersectional analysis allows us to highlight the mechanisms that place female migrations in certain economic, political, social, and cultural positions (Magliano 2015; Mahler et al. 2015; LaFleur and Romero 2018). In the case of this article, we consider how ethnicity, youth, and gender are factors that influence the inclusion process of Moroccan migrant women residing in Andalusia, considering the different forms of hierarchization to which, in certain ways, they are subjected (Oso and Ribas-Mateos 2013).

According to the research instrument, it should be noted that, although this study has been nourished by other interview scripts already used in the field of research on female migration, certain elements that were considered key to ensure the achievement of the objectives of this research have been reformulated and included. Given this rethinking with respect to the existing scripts, the instrument has been validated by different experts working on the theme of migration, gender, and human rights. Likewise, being an instrument whose application has involved the involvement of Human Beings, it was conducted in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki, and the protocol was evaluated and approved

by the Ethics Commission for Research with Human Beings (CEIH) of the Pablo de Olavide University (code 21/8-5).

The fieldwork was carried out from February 2022 to March 2023, in two stages. In the first, Andalusian non-governmental entities that work with Moroccan women were contacted to facilitate, if they agreed with the research, the contact of women to interview. In the second stage, the sample was contacted, and the snowball method was used. Both stages developed in parallel.

The sample reached, until saturation of the speech, was 29 women. The only selection criteria that were established were: women, Moroccans, residents in Andalusia, and of those of legal age. Although the heterogeneity of the sample could be considered a limitation, it is considered a strength since the purpose of the research is not to achieve the representativeness of the universe, but to know the different realities that exist in it. Thus, intentional non-probability sampling was used. All interviews were conducted in Spanish (in some cases, it was necessary to have the collaboration of interpreters) and lasted approximately 60 min.

To ensure the quality of the interview, data collection, and analysis, the women interviewed were recorded, with prior informed consent. The audios were transcribed by the researchers and analyzed using the Atlas.ti.8 software (Scientific Software Development GmbH, Berlin, Germany). To this end, a code book was designed that has allowed the analysis of the relevant variables for achieving the objectives.

3. Results

3.1. Employment Situation of the Women Interviewed and Difficulties Identified

From the 29 in-depth interviews carried out with Moroccan women, significant results have been obtained regarding their employment insertion development, as well as their integration process in Andalusia. Below is a summary table highlighting some relevant elements for the study (Table 1).

Table 1. Labor insertion of Moroccan women in Spain.

E	Time in Spain	Education Level	Work in Spain		Type(s) of Work(s) Performed	Type of Contract
			Before	Now		
01	24 years	Up to 2nd/3rd grade	Yes	No	Field	Continuous
02	4 years	One year of school	Yes	Yes	Field	Temporary
03	8 years	Up to 3rd grade	Yes	Yes	Field	Temporary
04	5 years	Studying 2nd year of Bachelor	Yes	Yes	Caregiver/Cook/Restaurant	Temporary
05	16 years	Academic	Yes	Yes	Commercial/Intercultural mediator and team coordinator	Continuous
06	30 years	Academic (did not finish)	Yes	No	Cleaner/Public Relations/Waitress/Arabic classes in associations	Temporary
07	20 years	Bachelor	Yes	Yes	Caregiver/Telemarketer/Monitor	Continued
08	16 years	Job training	Yes	Yes	Teaching language/Assistant (Geriatrics)/Founder and President of the association	Continued
09	1 year	Without education	Yes	Yes	Cleaning/Waitress	Temporary
10	1 year	Bachelor. Currently high school (Spain)	No	No	-	-
11	18 years	High school	Yes	No	Field/Caregiver	Temporary
12	4 years	High school	Yes	Yes	Field	Temporary

Table 1. Cont.

E	Time in Spain	Education Level	Work in Spain		Type(s) of Work(s) Performed	Type of Contract
			Before	Now		
13	2 years	School (several years)	Yes	No	Field	Temporary
14	17 years	School	Yes	No	Field/Warehouses	Temporary
15	6 years	Academic	Yes	No	Restaurant/Caregiver	Temporary
16	4 years	5th grade	Yes	Yes	Dishwasher/cook	Continued
17	5 years	Academic	Yes	No	Dishwasher/Waitress/Cook/Warehouses	Temporary
18	8 years	Bachelor	Yes	Yes	Caregiver/Sweeper (town hall)/Camareera/Cleaner	Temporary
19	20 years	Up to 3rd high school	Yes	No	Warehouses/Greenhouses	Temporary
20	5 years	Several years at school	Yes	Yes	Dishwasher/Camareera/Caregiver	Temporary
21	17 years	Academic	Yes	Yes	Caregiver/Hospitality	Continued
22	1 year	Without education	Yes	No	Restaurant/Caregiver	Temporary
23	1 year	Without education	Yes (Ceuta)	No	Cleaning/Caregiver	Temporary
24	3 years	Without education	Yes	No	Strawberry Picking	Temporary
25	7 years	Academic	Yes	Yes	Kitchen DJ/Interpreter in a foundation	Temporary
26	3 years	6th grade	Yes	Yes	Field	Temporary
27	3 years	6th grade	Yes	No	Field	Temporary
28	5 years	School	Yes	Yes	Field	Temporary
29	3 years	Without education	Yes	Yes	Field/Hospitality	Temporary

Source: Authors' owns.

As can be seen in Table 1, all the women interviewed, except E_10, have entered the Spanish labor market at some point in their lives. However, only 17 were working at the time of the interview. Despite this, all the testimonies were very enriching to understand the labor insertion and the barriers they encountered during the process. Below are the difficulties most mentioned by the women interviewed.

3.1.1. Irregular Administrative Situation: Labor Exploitation and Abuse

Firstly, one of the most prominent issues has been the lack of a regularized situation. Some of them came with an original contract or with an administrative situation that allowed them to work temporarily. However, once the permit ended, they remained in an irregular administrative situation, posing great difficulty when looking for work. This is how E_20 narrated it, *“But now I’m working, I have the papers. Before I couldn’t work because I didn’t have the papers [. . .] when people called me to work, they told me you need the papers.”* In this line, E_23 stated that *“I cannot work until I get my work papers”*. E_24 stated that *“what has made me feel sadder and what I have felt more pain for has been what I have gone through this year with the issue of work, nobody wanted to give me work”*. She considers that the main reason is that *“the businessmen knew that they did not have papers and preferred to leave me for another occasion”* (E_24). In this sense, E_13 also claimed to have many difficulties finding work and thinks that the reason is not the lack of knowledge of Spanish, but *“the issue of papers”*. She certifies that *“she is having a very bad time because of the issue of work. Not having a job. . . , that uncertainty of the subject of the report. . . Not having the papers. . . It’s an accumulation of things. . .”* (E_13).

Despite these testimonies, some of the people interviewed considered that, although not having a regularized situation meant a difficulty in entering the labor market, it was not impossible:

“In the greenhouse there is work. There is always work. All people can work. If you have paper or not, if you speak or not, if you have language or not. . . You work. If they see how you work, you have no problem finding work in the greenhouses”. (E_18)

In addition, the fact of not having a regularized situation has an impact on women's working conditions. For example, it has been common for many of the women to work without a contract. This conditions the demands that are exercised towards the employees, because they themselves have the perception that *“you are illegal, and you are obliged to do what they want”* (E_17) since many are afraid to complain about the possible consequences that this may have. Others do not complain because they do not know how they should proceed: *“I did not report it or anything, it was my first job here and I did not know what I should do”* (E_17). This coincides with the testimony of E_20 who claims to have received inappropriate treatment from her boss and *“I do not know if because she is from another country or because she does not have papers. I think they think, “That's it, it's not going to do anything.” Then they take advantage”*.

This situation has resulted in many of the women interviewed being victims of labor exploitation. Such is the case of E_11 who highlights how, on certain occasions, they forced her to perform more tasks than those assigned to her when hiring her *“I have not talked to you about having to do those things when you hired me [. . .] You start doing them a favor and then they force you to do it, you know?”*.

Along these lines, the interviewee E_18 pointed out *“I have no schedule. They will call you at night—tomorrow at this time I wait for you, okay?—That's it. You do not know, you do not have schedules, or days. . . We worked on Sunday too. All week. [. . .] 8, 10. . ., up to 10 h. Maximum 10”*. In this case she complained because she did not even have a schedule that allowed her to organize. Likewise, E_20 considers that *“I have found enough people who wanted to take advantage of my [. . .] You work a lot and get paid little for not having the papers”*. Even E_22 claims that on certain occasions *“they did not pay me; they did not pay me, and they treated me badly [. . .] I was out of contract”*.

3.1.2. Job Insecurity and Difficulties in Accessing Qualified Jobs

As seen in Table 1, most of the women interviewed have developed an unskilled job in Spain, characterized by job insecurity and temporary employment. All the women interviewed who, at some points, have worked in the field have affirmed that *“it is very, very hard, the truth”* (E_11), in fact, E_27 is currently *“picking strawberries, but I would like to change jobs because the strawberry is very hard, very hard”*.

Despite this reality, it is observed how it is common for women to move up in the company itself as time goes by, especially in jobs related to catering. For example, E_16 is a *“cook, but I started washing dishes”*. The same thing happened to E_20, among others, that *“at first I washed only dishes and in the end, I ended up being a waitress”*. In addition to this improvement within the company itself, it is observed how they themselves are looking for better working conditions that allow them, little by little, to improve their situation in Spain. For example, E_21, after working for many years as a live-in caregiver, realized that *“I was missing something, I lacked freedom. So, the other option I had was to work in hospitality”*.

It is significant to observe how only three of the women interviewed (E_05, 07, and 08) developed qualified jobs, since E_06 and 25 give language classes and interpret because of their knowledge of Arabic as a native language, not because they have developed specific training in the subject. These data do not mean that the remaining 27 women do not have higher education, but that even if they do, they have not been able to access qualified jobs. That is the case with E_06, 15, 17, 21, and 25.

This has a great impact on some of them. For example, E_17 assured that *“it has been a very hard change. Going from journalism to a warehouse or waitress is hard”*. For their part, E_21 ensures that:

"I remember, for example, the first year when I was with the family, look it was a loving family [...] But then, every time I picked up the mop or did some cleaning. . . I cried and cried, and came to cry, and come to cry and come to cry because I said, my mother, so many years of studies were for nothing. What am I doing?"

3.1.3. Difficulties in Reconciling Professional and Personal Life

Another aspect where women identify more barriers is in the difficulty they encounter in reconciling their personal and professional lives. Two areas stand out in particular: family and training. Regarding the family member, some of the women interviewed do not have sufficiently strong social networks that allow them to share the care responsibilities they have with their children. Furthermore, they do not have sufficient financial resources to hire someone who can take care of the minors. Therefore, they emphasize having great difficulties when looking for work since, although:

"Sometimes I've been called for a job, I've had to turn it down because of scheduling problems. The schedule is very bad, I can not work on holidays or weekends or boarding nights. . . I cannot with the children". (E_15)

Faced with this situation, they try to look for jobs *"that have good schedules and that allow me to take and pick up the children from school. I am looking for some cleaning, for example"* (E_19).

Additionally, as an alternative, some of the women interviewed have had to attend work with their children to achieve this conciliation. Such is the case of E_18 which ensures that:

"When they call me to work at night, 2 h or 3, I always accept, but I always tell them that my daughters come with me. I ask them if I can take my daughters who are small, and I can't leave them alone".

Regarding the training field, it is observed how, on certain occasions, working is a great impediment to starting or continuing studying and increasing their training level. For example, E_10 states that *"if I work, I cannot study"*. In addition, E_20 says *"I don't know if I'll be able to study again while I work. If not, I'm going to keep working and that's it"*. On the other hand, some of the interviewees planned to continue training when they arrived in Spain, however, due to the events that occurred during the migratory and integration process in Andalusia, they had to reject that option. Such is the case of E_11, who arrived in Spain with a contract in origin, therefore, *"although I wanted to study, you have to work. I had a contract to work in the fields and I had to work in the fields"*.

3.1.4. Cultural and Religious Barriers

Finally, another of the difficulties identified by women regarding their labor insertion has been the cultural, religious, and traditional differences between their country of origin and the society of destination. They have highlighted two aspects. On the one hand, certain religious practices such as Ramadan. One of the women interviewed has alluded to the difficulties she encounters when she must work on an empty stomach, as they feel that during the month of Ramadan there is no more flexible schedule that adapts to the circumstances. She affirms that *"Ramadan tires me, a long time, I can't take it. It is a very difficult month for me"* (E_28). This idea is not shared by E_26 who assures that *"without Ramadan I finish between 3 and 5 to pick fruit, but in Ramadan I finish at 12"*, demonstrating that there is some adaptation on the part of the contracting company.

The other aspect that has been addressed, and this time by more than one of the women interviewed, is the use of the veil. The protagonists who have addressed the issue consider that the veil is a great barrier to insertion in the labor market, especially in certain sectors. For example, E_04 assured that *"My greatest difficulty is the veil because they do not accept many people who work with veils and who are not foreigners because. . . They don't want a lot of foreign people to work, you know"*. This barrier causes her to assign herself a specific niche of work:

“As a waitress I can not because I wear a veil and that is expensive to the public, I can not [...] Without studies, I believe that the only places where I can work is in the fields, cleaning, as a caregiver. . . very, very basic and normal jobs”. (E_04)

This opinion is shared by other women such as E_05 who states that:

“If you wear a handkerchief and you start with the barrier that working in front of the public you have it very sucky. That is why I have always discarded jobs in the Mercadona, in other entities facing the public, I practically discard it because I have seen how my profile is discarded.”

In this line, E_25 states that:

“I don’t wear a headscarf, but women who wear them can only work in some jobs that are not in front of the client, because here is not a Muslim country, it is not normal for women to wear the headscarf. So, as these clashes of different cultures, of different religions, form barriers to the social integration and also the labor integration of these women, yes.”

3.2. Benefits of the Workplace to Promote Integration

Despite the difficulties identified in the previous section, the Moroccan women interviewed also raised the great benefits of insertion in the labor market to promote their integration in Spain. Below are some of the most identified elements.

3.2.1. Reason for Migration and Regularization of Women and Their Families

Some of the women interviewed (E_01, 03, 11, 12, 13, 24, 27, and 29) came with contracts originally; therefore, their labor insertion facilitated their trip and arrival in Spain, especially in legal matters. For example, E_11, referring to customs control, said that *“Of course, I came with my work visa to work in the fields, I came to work, you know? Then they can’t tell you anything. . . it was all good”*.

In addition to facilitating their immigration processes, on many occasions, their employment contract has allowed them to regularize their administrative situation, as stated by E_07 who said, *“I have obtained my visa and my nationality thanks to the work”*. This extends to their family nucleus. Some of the women interviewed have managed to get their partners and descendants to come to Spain thanks to the employment contracts they have accessed. Specifically, E_11 spoke with her employer, an elderly lady whom she cared for, to make her a contract with certain requirements to be able to get her partner to come to Spain for family reunification, and stated that *“then he has made me the payroll that and 9 months approximately so that he (her husband) could finally come”*.

3.2.2. Support and Socialization Network

The labor insertion of many of the migrant women interviewed facilitated their creation of a support network in the destination city. This element has been key for some of them since they had traveled alone to Spain and did not have any support. This is how E_01 narrated it: *“I had no one [...] But I felt supported by people who worked in the same company”*. E_25 said *“the only friend I have here”* is a co-worker she met when she started her first job as a waitress. The same happened to E_26 who said that *“the friends I have are the ones I met during the time I was working”*.

On the other hand, some of the women interviewed in the workplace not only made good friends, but it was also the place where they found their partners with whom they have formed the family they have today. Such is the case of E_01 who claimed that her husband, then a co-worker, was the impulse that motivated her to decide to stay in Spain, since this woman came with a contract in origin, and therefore, she had to return to Morocco once the contract ended. She related it as follows:

“I didn’t like this (referring to the life and situation I had in Spain), and I wanted to go back to Morocco. And, in the end, I met my husband in the company and stayed for him [...]. I felt very supported by him”. (E_01)

Along these lines, E_05 affirmed, with respect to her current partner with whom she is engaged, *“in fact it is what brought me closer to him, the world of work. We met professionally and realized that there was a feeling. So, we decided to make our relationship official”*.

3.2.3. Promote Training and Knowledge of the Language

Although in previous sections it has been observed how labor insertion on certain occasions has impeded the training development of some of the women interviewed, on other occasions, labor development has favored that they have wanted to continue training in different areas. For example, the interviewee E_25 said that *“when I started working as an interpreter with a foundation with immigrant minors, I really liked the social. I gained a lot of experience, and I started thinking about doing a higher degree of social integration, or some mediator”*. The same thing happened to the interviewee E_07: *“I started to see that I liked this sector (referring to the social sphere), so I studied sign language. I thought it was a good option to be able to insert myself in this labor sector”*. Based on these discourses, the importance that the women interviewed attach to training is observed. In fact, the interviewee E_05 considers that she is *“a clear example. I am a girl with training and other doors have been opened to me different from those who have no training”*. She has a degree in Social Work from a Spanish public university and currently works as an intercultural mediator, being the coordinator of her work team.

On the other hand, the women interviewed have highlighted the great impact that their labor insertion has had on their training and improvement of Spanish. For example, the E_11 says that her work *“has also helped her speak Spanish”*. They emphasize that knowledge of the language is one of the fundamental elements to be included in any society:

“you have to know the language because it helps you a lot and when they come without knowing how to speak Spanish, that’s the end. And I think that the language does a lot because it helps you integrate, it helps you look for work, it helps you understand what until you reach your destination”. (E_06)

In this sense, the interviewee E_07 considers that knowledge of the language has been one of the key elements that have allowed her to face and deconstruct the social stigmas that continue to exist towards the migrant population and that negatively condition when looking for a job. Specifically, she said she had difficulty finding work:

“Because of my origin, at first. Of course, because they do not talk to you at first, they just see your name. When they talk to you and see and hear that you speak Spanish perfectly, then they are back down. And the perspective is beginning to change little by little...”. (E_07)

Based on these testimonies, it is identified how the lack of knowledge of Spanish is a barrier when it comes to inserting oneself in the labor market (E_06, 20, and 25).

3.2.4. Learning and Personal Growth

As evidenced at the beginning, the concept of integration is multifactorial; therefore, it is important to also consider the emotional well-being that their insertion into the labor market implies for migrants, since it has a significant impact on the rest of the areas. In the case of the women interviewed, all of them show the well-being they have felt when they have been working, since they feel fulfilled. A clear example of this is E_25 who stated *“The truth is that I like it a lot and it fills me up, it fills me up a lot as a person. Not just to work and earn money”*.

Furthermore, for some of them, their labor insertion has meant an apprenticeship *“I learned a lot. I learned a lot from life. I learned that money is not easy”* (E_17). Even E_01 took advantage of the interview to thank, for everything that has meant a lot to her in her life, the decision to come, with a contract in origin, to work in Spain:

“I want to thank the company, the owner who brought me [...] And thank you to the company that has brought me to the moment I am in today. . . And in life, he taught me many things.”

In general, the great emotional benefits that labor insertion has meant for them are observed. In fact, it could be summarized using the testimony of E_26, who concludes by stating:

“For me, working is everything. First, for me it is health, it is being able to go out, it is being outside, because being at home makes you sick. Second, you meet people, you have friends, acquaintances, and it is also good. Third, you earn money, realize yourself, and then help your mother and family. That’s why it’s very important.”

4. Discussion and Conclusions

This article analyzes the confluence that exists between inclusion in the labor market and the integration process of Moroccan women residing in Andalusia, as they are considered a group with certain difficulties to achieve their professional development. From the beginning, the importance of analyzing how three key variables intersect in this analysis has been highlighted: youth, understood from a holistic and multifactorial approach, gender, and ethnicity. This has allowed us to approach the object of study from an intersectional and gender approach.

According to the first research question of this study, about the harms and benefits caused by job placement, the results have demonstrated the existing duality, being an area of rejection and discrimination, but at the same time, being the gateway to integration. This idea coincides with the approach made by [Granda and Soriano-Miras \(2023\)](#), who consider that labor insertion is ambivalent when we refer to migrant women, since structural violence and exclusion dynamics are simultaneously reproduced, as well as becoming the ideal context for them to develop their actions as agents, showing their resistance to the prevailing system.

In relation to the first aspect, the reproduction of exclusion and structural violence, the data obtained in the interviews analyzed have been diverse. They have highlighted the barriers that Moroccan women have encountered to enter the labor market, making it necessary to highlight the segmentation and existing precariousness. The jobs performed by most of the women interviewed have been linked to agricultural work, care, and hospitality, coinciding with the studies carried out by [Ruiz-Román and Rascón \(2017\)](#).

One of the main problems of this type of employment is not only the hardness of the work, as narrated by the women interviewed and other research has shown ([Castillero 2020](#)), but also the precariousness that characterizes them. In the results obtained, on certain occasions, the protagonists claimed to have a low salary, few days of rest, and even some did not have weekly planning, working, instead, at the request of the employer. This coincides with multiple investigations that ensure that the working conditions of the migrant population and of women, tend to be quite negative ([Benach et al. 2011](#); [Ronda et al. 2012, 2016](#); [Morcillo et al. 2018](#)).

It is common for migrant women to have to face different types of violence, such as non-compliance with hours and activities agreed upon with the employer or absence of vacation ([Granda and Soriano-Miras 2023](#)). Likewise, sometimes they are exposed to harassment and aggression in different forms: physical, verbal, sexual ([Castillero 2021](#)). Faced with this reality, there are authors who have called the work done by migrants 3D, as it is a type of work which is “dirty, dangerous, difficult” ([Gil 2005](#)).

As has been demonstrated in interviews, this precariousness has a series of consequences on migrant women and their self-perception, exposing them to a situation of greater vulnerability ([De Rose et al. 2021](#)). [Zanfrini and Giuliani \(2023\)](#) have conducted a study in Italy with young migrant women and have observed how women have a sense of loneliness, isolation, and a feeling of strangeness with respect to the country of destination. The feeling of social isolation, in a way, is conditioned by the development of precarious work ([Gangoli et al. 2020](#)), where women are made invisible ([Erazo 2022](#); [Orozco et al. 2023](#)). This, far from favoring inclusion, hinders social participation, and therefore, full integration into the destination society ([Morcillo et al. 2018](#)). Likewise, on many occasions, the fact of performing unskilled jobs, with a lower level of training than what they have,

generates great discomfort in migrant women. Therefore, when analyzing this reality, it is important to consider the educational profile of the protagonists and how this can influence their job placement and skill development ([Kubiciel-Lodzińska and Maj 2021](#)).

On the other hand, in the results obtained, it has been made evident how this invisibility and difficulty of integration is also conditioned by the lack of a regularized situation, both administratively and in labor. These results coincide with the approach of [Morcillo-Martínez \(2022\)](#) who highlights the high number of Moroccan women in Andalusia who are in this situation and the impact it has on the access of the protagonists to the Welfare State. This makes it difficult to address the rights of migrant women ([Orozco et al. 2023](#)).

Another of the main barriers identified is the lack of conciliation, both at the family and cultural level. Some of the protagonists with sons and/or daughters have had to turn down various job offers due to the lack of a solid support network to help them care for the children while they are working. This is in line with the approach of [Spierings \(2018\)](#). Likewise, [Llorent-Bedmar et al. \(2023\)](#) highlight the significant role that women continue to play in caring for the home, which makes conciliation and their insertion in the labor market difficult.

Regarding the cultural field, it has been observed in the results how it has represented a handicap when looking for work and developing certain types of work. Two points have been made. On the one hand, Ramadan. It has already been demonstrated in other studies on topics such as labor insertion, that on certain occasions, insertion is incompatible with the cultural and religious identity of the protagonists, since sometimes there is a lack of adaptation on the part of the labor market ([Pesquera et al. 2022](#)).

On the other hand, the use of the veil has been pointed out by the women interviewed as one of the main difficulties that not only hinders their insertion into the labor market, but also relegates them to certain labor sectors that do not involve direct contact with the public, being in most cases, jobs less qualified than their educational level ([Bertran Tarrés et al. 2016](#)).

It is important to be cautious when addressing these issues because, although there are studies that have shown how changes occur with respect to the relationship that migrant women have with Islam as they are inserted into the societies of destination and adapt to this reality ([Mendoza et al. 2021](#)), there are other studies that highlight the importance of faith in the resilience that migrant women develop. An example of this is the analysis carried out by [Gianesini \(2018\)](#), which, although it focused on the case of migrant women in Italy in a situation of special vulnerability, trafficking, we consider that, according to the results obtained in this research, it could be extended to this reality.

The barriers identified show how the difficulties encountered by migrant women are, in most cases, determined by the structural violence that conditions and hinders their transition and insertion into the labor market. Therefore, and coinciding with the contributions made by [Granda and Soriano-Miras \(2023\)](#), it is important to carry out the analysis from an intersectional perspective, which allows us to understand the systems of oppression to which women protagonists are subjected, considering how some of the elements previously analyzed, for example, gender and ethnicity, influence the reality to which they are exposed. However, this perspective also makes it possible to favor the identification of the strategies and agency of migrant women, in this case, Moroccans residing in Andalusia.

As has been shown in the results that insertion into the labor market is also an opportunity to promote the process of the integration of Moroccan women into the host society. As stated by [Manzanera et al. \(2013\)](#), the processes they experience and the strategies they develop demonstrate their capacity for self-decision and their abilities to resist systems of oppression. This allows for the victimization of the protagonists to be avoided, granting them the role of agents that truly corresponds to them. These benefits generated by labor insertion answer the second research question. The results obtained in the study show how, despite the difficulties that Moroccan women face in entering the Andalusian labor market, once they obtain employment, it has a significant impact on their

integration process for different reasons: it favors the regularization of their administrative situation, helps them create a support and socialization network, improves their educational level and knowledge of the language, and, therefore, it also allows them to grow personally.

Although it is difficult for migrant women to ascend to another labor niche with better conditions (Oso and Parella 2012), the benefits that labor insertion brings can be the gateway to improving their labor conditions in the medium and long term, since, as Emilsson and Mozetič (2021) suggest, when we refer to the labor market, it influences not only the structural limitations that may exist in the host country, but also the interaction of the resources and individual decisions of migrants.

Therefore, and coinciding with Morcillo-Martínez (2022), we consider it necessary to continue advancing towards a holistic and integral vision of the socio-labor inclusion of Moroccan migrant women in Andalusia. This will allow the ambivalence, previously mentioned, which involves labor insertion, to be continuously oriented towards the positive pole (as an engine of change and social integration) and not towards the negative (as an element of exclusion and social marginalization).

With this research it has been possible to make the problem visible, identifying the benefits and harms caused by the labor inclusion process of Moroccan women residing in Andalusia and how this influences their integration process. In addition, based on the intersectional approach used, the study has served, once again, to show the existing structural violence towards the collective, regardless of the variables (age, length of stay, educational level, etc.) that are considered.

As future lines of work, it is proposed to develop a study that focuses exclusively on the issue of insertion in the labor market, in which the different actors involved are considered in the sample, knowing the reality not only of the employees, but also of the employers. Likewise, based on the results obtained in this research and the line of work that is being developed by the author, the creation of practical and applicable proposals that improve inclusion in the labor market and the professional development of migrant women are considered as a future proposal.

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