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WOMEN'S MIGRATION EXPERIENCES

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**The experiences of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria in the Netherlands in
light of the Dutch immigration policies**

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A gendered perspective with an intersectional approach

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Abstract

This research paper aims to understand the differences between Syrian and Ukrainian women's migration experiences and utilizes an intersectional approach to unpack these differences. The overall support for migrant women in the Netherlands lacks an intersectional approach in which women from all ethnocultural backgrounds are equally supported. Instead, gender narratives are reinforced by Dutch policies, restricting migrant women's agency. Ukrainian migrants fall under the temporary protection directive, which enables them to integrate more easily into the labor market and Dutch society. In comparison, Syrian migrants must fulfill the standard Dutch integration procedures, which are time-consuming and prevent quick integration. Migrant women are often affected by taking on employment below their credentials or becoming financially dependent on the state. These resulting consequences for migrant women, owed to the immigration policies, can influence society's perception toward migrant groups, enforcing stigmatization and discrimination, resulting in inequalities and reduced life satisfaction in the Netherlands. Specifically, migrant women from Syria tend to experience greater prejudice due to the generalized attitude towards Muslim migrants, whereas Ukrainian women seem to be perceived as similar to Western European countries. Therefore, governmental regulations reinforce the overall societal perception of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria, which creates invisible power dynamics and establishes distinct intersectional inequalities that impact and shape their migration experiences in the Netherlands.

Keywords: Migrant women, Syria, Ukraine, Dutch immigration policies, stigmatization, inequalities, gendered migration, intersectionality

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Introduction

Migration Experiences

Migration experiences differ according to determinants such as gender, cultural background, and migration policies in the receiving country. This paper focuses on migrant women from two different regional and cultural areas, Ukraine and Syria, who have resettled in the Netherlands. Both regions are currently in a conflict, unrelated to each other, but impacting each country's societal and economic well-being. The warfare in Ukraine, initiated by the invasion of Russia, has displaced more than eight million people across Europe (UNHCR The UN Refugee Agency, 2023). Due to military obligations, most men aged 18 to 60 must stay in the country and serve (Storf, 2022). Thus, most migrants settling in the receiving countries are women and children (Moore & Talarico, 2015; Storf, 2022).

On the contrary, the Syrian conflict started in 2011, leading more than twelve million people to flee the country (Laub, 2021). In Syria, all men between the ages of 18 and 45 are obligated to serve in the military, and in emergency cases, all men are required to participate. However, most simply reject, and thus most migrants from Syria are with their families, including men, to settle for a better life in another country.

Even though both cases affect the well-being of people, the integration processes into a new country, into the Netherlands, differs due to the categorization and stigmatization of a group of people. According to Goffman (2016), stigmatization is defined by the marking of a group of people as different due to socially distinct features that this group shares, which is different from the ingroup, and the dehumanization and devaluation of the people sharing these enforced stigmas (Dovidio et al., 2010; Goffman, 2016; Ozkaleli, 2018).

Historical events such as 9/11 or the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo van Gogh in 2004 have led to Muslim migrants being characterized as dangerous, internal others (van Meeteren & van Oostendorp, 2019). Because the terrorist events were often executed by

extremist Muslims, the perception of migrants from Middle Eastern countries was increasingly generalized (Janssens, 2015; van Meeteren & van Oostendorp, 2019). Therefore, migration policies in the Netherlands became stricter to ensure controlled integration and assimilation (Janssens, 2015). However, the influence of the government by aggravating the policies and by creating the image of the enemy inside influences the public's perception of migrants and leads to stigmatization and discrimination of minority groups (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Moufakkir, 2020). Western countries, like the Netherlands, might feel threatened about their well-established Dutch-European values, such as gender equality (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016). Thus, the stigmatization around Muslim women migrating to the Netherlands is also very much based on depicting a specific image of the Muslim community in which women are superior. However, it is important to stress that there are still issues of gender inequality in the Netherlands (Castellano & Rocca, 2019). Though governmental policies aim to reduce these challenges, there is still a difference in sectors such as employment between men and women (OECD, 2018). Therefore, judging the gender values of Muslim migrants seems subjective and from an ingroup perspective.

Ukrainian migrants seem to be less negatively stigmatized by Western societies as they are described as more similar to European countries, including visual affinities, norms, and values (Dovidio et al., 2010; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). This superficial perspective supports the opposite attitude towards Syrian migrants, who seem different and create a less welcoming environment in the receiving country.

However, not only on a social level, the integration processes differ amongst women from Ukraine and Syria, but also the immigration policies in the Netherlands for these two groups contrast and might enforce particular gender and cultural narratives that influence integration processes (Ruis, 2019). Most refugees and migrants will receive a temporary residence permit of 5 years when entering the Netherlands (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Only

after this period and under the condition of completing certain integration conditions will a permanent residence permit be granted. On the contrary, Ukrainian refugees fall under the temporary protection directive, which the EU implements in case of unprecedented circumstances of migration flows (European Commission, 2022c). This mechanism offers collective protection to displaced people and reduces the burden on the national asylum systems of EU countries. This enables Ukrainian refugees to move freely within EU countries with a biometric passport after being recognized in the area for 90 days, including access to healthcare, education, and the possibility to work.

Research Aim and Objective

Previous research has touched upon gender migration experiences but shows scarcity in comparing women from these two cultural backgrounds. Therefore, this paper aims to identify the experiences of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria resettling in the Netherlands, considering the current Dutch migration policies and their impact on the experience and opportunities of women from the two countries. Furthermore, this study aims to detect possible limitations in public and private support provided in the Netherlands. The report aims to answer this question by taking a gender perspective with an intersectional approach to analyze the differences in migration and integration experiences in the Netherlands.

First, this paper will elaborate on the theoretical concepts used for the scope of the report as well as the methodological approach. Then, through three chapters, this paper will first uncover the current immigration policies in the Netherlands and their impacts on enforcing gender narratives. Secondly, identify the opportunities and challenges of integration for migrant women from Ukraine and Syria. Lastly, the paper will reveal the

different dimensions of inequalities regarding Ukrainian and Syrian migrant women due to societal and political influences. Finally, the report will conclude the main findings and propose a list of policy recommendations.

Literature Review

Gendered Migration

Mainstream migration studies have mainly focused on migrant men migrating due to labor opportunities, whereas the women followed for family reunification (Timmerman et al., 2018). However, recent results have shown that migrant women account for an increasing share of national and international migration flows (Fleury, 2016; UNSW, 2017). Reasons for relocating are not primarily due to family reunification anymore but also for commercial purposes, such as refugee, marriage migration, or in forms of labor migration (Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Llácer et al., 2007). Therefore, the increase in migrating women has shown clear patterns of relations between migration and gender. Migration and gender impact each other at micro, meso, and macro levels (Llácer et al., 2007; Timmerman et al., 2018). On micro level, individual migration intentions are influenced by gender roles and opportunities given in the home as well as the receiving country. The meso level refers to the variety of networks men and women might hold to support their relocation processes, which can lead to divergent migration experiences. On a macro level, traditional gender narratives that penetrate all domains of society have led to an ideology of established gender relations and norms that can lead to stigmatization and discrimination of the individual and impact their migration experience (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017; Timmerman et al., 2018)

Intersectionality in Gendered Migration

The growing acknowledgment of different migration experiences seems to reshape gender relations and has established new gender narratives (Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Timmerman et al., 2018). Thus, the link between gender and migration changes and influences each other. Not only is gender a crucial determinant for perceived experiences of migration processes, specifically when it comes to equal opportunities and integration, but also the country of origin determines the possibilities to migrate and to integrate into the receiving country (Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). Therefore, this paper does not only take a gender approach but also aims to apply an intersectional approach to uncover the relations of power through immigration policies and its influence on society's perception of migrants and the perceived experiences of migrants through structural discrimination and stigmatization in the Netherlands from a gendered perspective (Christoffersen, 2021; Cleton & Meier, 2023). Furthermore, an intersectional approach can capture how these policies impact individuals from different cultural backgrounds depending on their social status in the receiving country (Yuval-Davis, 2017).

Migration regimes and policies categorize people based on different characteristics, which can enforce stereotypes and prejudice (Dovidio et al., 2010). This can then lead to discriminatory behavior expressed by the host country, primarily based on visual and cultural belonging to a different social group, marked by gender, ethnicity, and class (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017). Bias held by society can complicate the integration processes in a private, social, and professional context (Ruis, 2019; Shaver et al., 2017). Due to the historical development of migration, women are often categorized by relation to men (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). This dependency is usually determined by their home country's social class, cultural norms, and governmental policies. For instance, women migrating to the Netherlands who obtained their residency

permit through their married partner depend on their husband's legal status and might lose their residency through a divorce (Government of the Netherlands, 2022).

Theoretical Frameworks

For the scope of this paper, the concepts of gendered migration and intersectionality are being applied. Therefore, all findings on the experience of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria migrating to the Netherlands will be viewed from a gendered perspective with an intersectional approach.

Migration and Gender

Before, migration theories were primarily applied to men, referred to as 'migrants and families', in which women were classified not as independent individuals but as part of the family. In the 1990s, gendered migration became essential in migration processes (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Therefore, gender is deeply rooted in establishing migration movements, on what determinants these are decided upon, and how that might impact the resultant futures of migrant women. Determinants, such as family relationships, status, labor opportunities, social rights, and migration policies in the home and host country, define the possibility of movement and social, political, and economic integration (Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Ruis, 2019). According to the conceptual framework of gender and migration by Carling, there is a causal connection between gender and migration (Carling, 2005). He suggested that the relationship between gender and migration influences the quantity, location, and composition of migration movements, as well as the experience of migrants.

Carling explained that the framework of a gendered perspective of migration could support understanding the broader social effects of migration. Additionally, according to him,

migration processes can affect gender relations within a family. Therefore, it is crucial to view migration dynamics from a gender-sensitive perspective.

Nonetheless, previous literature has stressed the possible overemphasis on gendered migration related to women, which could lead to the victimization of migrant women and the neglect of male migrants' experiences (Timmerman et al., 2018). Thus, even though a gendered approach is crucial, gender equality should be considered both ways. Furthermore, the term gender is also considered a social construct in which the values of masculinity and femininity vary across time and space (Amelina & Lutz, 2019; Timmerman et al., 2018). Hence, generalizing gender perspectives regarding migration can be a limitation. All dimensions, from the country of origin, social status, and political rights, must be considered as they continuously influence the relationship between migration and gender (Amelina & Lutz, 2019).

Intersectionality in Migration

In connection with the gendered migration approach stands the concept of intersectionality. The term intersectionality was first mentioned by the American scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw in 1989 and originated in Black feminist activism (Amelina & Lutz, 2019; Crenshaw, 1990). Crenshaw defines intersectionality as "*a metaphor to understand the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage sometimes compound themselves and creates obstacles that are not understood among conventional ways of thinking*" (Crenshaw, 2016). Crenshaw primarily referred to cases in which women would only be able to raise legal claims on either racial or sexual discrimination, but not on the consequences of both. This idea of multilayered dimensions and systems that can create inequalities has been adapted and applied across different academic disciplines. Today, several definitions of intersectionality apply that expand the focus of race and gender to

include intersections between multiple social categories (Christoffersen, 2021). For the scope of this paper, it is essential to understand some aspects of intersectionality, by which individuals are categorized and formed by their shared membership of various interconnected social categories (Amelina & Lutz, 2019; Carling, 2005). These social categories underlie concepts of power structures that can enforce inequalities and social narratives. The outcomes are structural inequalities through the interaction between social classes, power structures, and context, which can harm the individual's experience and life satisfaction (Amelina & Lutz, 2019). The application of the concept of intersectionality for this paper will help to understand the invisible power relations of migrant women from Ukraine, migrant women from Syria, Dutch migration politics, and Dutch society. As well as identify how these multiple dimensions interact, enforce inequalities, and shape the experience of these migrant women in the Netherlands.

Methodology

Initially, this research project was intended to take a qualitative ethnographic approach by conducting approximately 10 to 12 semi-structured interviews with migrant women from Ukraine and Syria who have relocated to the Netherlands. However, due to the short time frame and the limited access to the field, the methodological approach of this thesis has changed to a desk research approach, conducting an extensive literature review. Potential participants expressed uncertainty or discomfort about taking part in this study due to traumatic experiences or language barriers. Furthermore, there was a general lack of responses, which created limited access to the field. Therefore, the project changed to desk research with the same aim to identify the experience of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria resettling in the Netherlands from a gendered perspective with an intersectional approach. By reviewing academic articles, secondary literature, and policy reports, an

understanding of their experiences in the Netherlands will be identified. Future research can be conducted according to the initial approach to support the findings of this review.

For this paper's scope and the topic's sensitivity, it is important to reflect on the author's positionality. As the author, I identify as a white cis-gendered European woman from a middle socioeconomic and non-academic background in the Global North. I am currently in my bachelor's study at a respected University in the Netherlands. I know that my positionality and the environment I grew up in can influence how I experience my surroundings. I am aware that I cannot evaluate the experience of migrant women firsthand, but I try to identify the perceived experiences from an academic perspective by reflecting on the governmental regulations.

Chapter 1: Immigration Policies in the Netherlands

Introduction

The Netherlands developed its first integration strategy in the 1980s to facilitate the integration of guest workers living in the Netherlands (European Commission, 2022b). This strategy was closely followed by the Dutch two-track and later three-track policy concerning migration, social and economic integration, and support for identity and development. Today, Dutch immigration and integration policies are constantly developing and adjusting to migration flows (European Commission, 2022c, 2022b). The Netherlands has always had a great immigration inflow, precisely due to opportunities in the Dutch labor market and family reunification (Ruis, 2019).

In March 2022, the European Commission proposed the immediate transposition of the Temporary Protection Directive due to the events of Russia's invasion of Ukraine (European Commission, 2022c). Followed by the Council's consent, the directive was implemented and accounts for all Ukrainians fleeing the war. The apparent differences in migration policies that are in place for Ukrainian migrants, in comparison to, for instance, Syrian migrants, generate distinctive rights and opportunities for each beneficiary (De Coninck, 2022; Zaru, 2022). Therefore, this chapter will uncover the different Dutch immigration and integration policies for migrant women from Ukraine and Syria. Furthermore, this chapter will elaborate on how these regulations might affect women's experiences in general and as part of different cultural groups.

Migration Processes for Syrians

The current immigration policies in the Netherlands require all migrants between the ages of 18 and 65 entering the country from outside the European Union to undergo a national civic integration exam before further migration steps can be taken (European

Commission, 2022b). However, the Dutch immigration policies are decentralized, which transfers the responsibility of integration to the local and regional municipalities (European Commission, 2022b). Specifically, to provide language courses and employment, municipalities are obliged to support newcomers (European Commission, 2022b; Ruis, 2019). Nonetheless, the Dutch immigration policies have evolved over the years and took a shift from segregation, in which the minority community could maintain their own cultural values and live alongside the Dutch society, to assimilation, in which it was expected that migrants would become similar to the Dutch society (Janssens, 2015). This change was mainly implemented due to the increasing inflow of migrants and the perceived threats by extremist terrorism (van Meeteren & van Oostendorp, 2019).

However, the current decentralized system has been accounted for since 2022 and was appointed by the Civic Integration Act to enhance the support and range of opportunities of the individual's integration processes through three different tracks (European Commission, 2022b; Samson, 2019). The first is a combined effort of language courses complemented by volunteer work to obtain the Dutch language within three years and enhance one's social network. The second path focuses mainly on helping young people to receive an academic diploma. Lastly, the third option covers everyone who cannot be categorized to either of the first two options and is thus self-reliant. These tracks support the idea of assimilation of migrants in Dutch society, but it is limited in the intersectionality of the individual's cultural background and the preservation of one's own norms and values. This limitation can affect migrant's experiences in the Netherlands as assimilation can be perceived as an intentional reduction of other cultural norms through political power structures (Ivarsflaten, 2005; van Meeteren & van Oostendorp, 2019; Yuval-Davis, 2017)

Nonetheless, no matter the chosen path, all non-EU migrants are obligated to take part in the civic integration exam, which covers 'Knowledge of Dutch society,' 'Writing skills,' 'Reading skills,' 'Listening skills,' and 'Speaking Skills' all on an A2 level (European Commission, 2022b; Ruis, 2019). After passing the exam, a naturalization test can be requested to obtain Dutch citizenship (European Commission, 2022b).

However, most migrants, this includes Syrian migrants, fall under temporary residency, which is usually kept for approximately five years, in which the integration exams are taken before permanent residency. Eventually, Dutch citizenship can be requested (Ruis, 2019). Additionally, migrants with a temporary residence permit cannot choose where they would like to reside but are allocated to a regional municipality, which can affect their access to social networks or labor opportunities (European Commission, 2022b; Samson, 2019). Smaller cities might be somewhat limited in the integration possibilities than bigger cities, which might also have a more prominent international sector. The decentralized system also requires each municipality to host a certain number of status holders, which leads to the apparent distribution of migrants.

The immigration procedure in the Netherlands aims to support migrants in terms of integration into Dutch society. However, the lengthy processes restrict the individual's agency through social and political power structures (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Therefore, to take agency, for instance, relocating to another city within the Netherlands with greater work opportunities cannot easily succeed under temporary residency status, which reduces the range of freedom, despite the support of the regional municipalities (Rohof, 2020). Furthermore, access to the Dutch labor market strongly depends on the individual's migration status, as the integration procedures must be completed before migrants can work in the Netherlands. This can also restrict the individual's agency and overall mental, physical, and economic well-being.

Migration Processes for Ukrainians

As mentioned in the introduction, the invasion of Russia into Ukraine has led to an unexpected increase in the migration of Ukrainian citizens to EU countries (European Commission, 2022c). Due to this inflow, the European Commission advised upon the proposal of the Council to implement the temporary protection directive to reduce migration pressure on European countries (Kienast et al., 2023). Thereupon the Council adopted the advice, and since March 2022, the temporary protection directive has been in place in all EU countries (European Commission, 2022c). The directive applies to everyone with a Ukrainian nationality, individuals who had international protection or were recognized refugees in Ukraine before the war started (European Commission, 2022c; Kienast et al., 2023). It applies to people with a valid permanent Ukrainian residence permit and who did not return to their country of origin after the war started. Lastly, the directive includes everyone who lived in Ukraine with relatives covered by the directive (European Commission, 2022b). All individuals that fall under the temporary protection directive are entitled to move mostly freely within EU countries without a visa but by providing a biometric passport and after being affirmed into a territory for 90 days (European Commission, 2022c, 2022a; Kienast et al., 2023).

Furthermore, they are entitled to receive healthcare and education and acquire the possibility to work in the receiving country (Kumar et al., 2022). The Netherlands has also adapted to the directive and allows Ukrainian refugees to reside in their country for at least 90 days or longer if the circumstances require it (European Commission, 2022c; Zaru, 2022). Upon arrival, all Ukrainians must register in the Personal Records Database to use Dutch services such as accommodation, subsistence allowance, education, and access to free healthcare (European Commission, 2022c). Based on the decentralized immigration system in the Netherlands, the local municipalities are also responsible for integrating Ukrainian

citizens. However, due to the temporary protection directive, registration, accommodation, and entering the labor market are done much faster than for 'usual' migrants (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023; Zaru, 2022). Even though EU countries can now quicker regulate the administrative procedures of Ukrainian refugees to manage the tension of the inflow, for migrants that do not fall under this directive, this could be perceived as an exclusionary approach, as for them, a much longer integration procedure is required (Kienast et al., 2023; Zaru, 2022).

However, not only do the policy regulations seem to increase the possibility of integration for Ukrainians, but private volunteer engagement, specifically in terms of accommodation, has also significantly increased since the war started, which can make Ukrainians feel more included but other migrants more excluded from Dutch society (Kumar et al., 2022; Zaru, 2022). This warm, welcoming attitude towards Ukrainians creates a distinct contrast compared to the relatively hostile position of some European countries towards Syrian migrants (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023). Negative attitudes often result from categorizing and stigmatizing a specific outgroup by the ingroup (Dovidio et al., 2010; Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017). Nonetheless, the different immigration policies for Ukrainian and other migrants in the Netherlands can perpetuate the idea that there is a distinction in value between these two groups. It might be received as more urgent and meaningful to support Ukrainian citizens than other migrants wanting to integrate into the Netherlands. Thus, the Dutch immigration policies enforce a perception and stigmatization of migrants that transfers onto society's attitude and behavior towards migrants from Ukraine and, for instance, Syria. The following chapters will discuss the processes of stigmatization and the consequences of societal inequalities.

Furthermore, the current migration policies do not focus on migrant women but are targeting all genders. Nonetheless, there are recognized differences in the migration

experiences of migrant men and women. Thus, the next section will elaborate on the support services for the integration of migrant women in the Netherlands.

Integration of Migrant Women in the Netherlands

The migration policies in the Netherlands usually account for all migrants except for Ukrainians due to the temporary protection directive. Migrant men and women must obtain the civic integration exam to receive a permanent residency permit (European Migration Network, the Netherlands, 2022; Ruis, 2019). Even though civic integration policies do not explicitly address migrant women, the Dutch government has acknowledged specific differences in the challenges and opportunities of migrant women in contrast to migrant men (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022). The Dutch Emancipation Monitor (*Emancipatiemonitor*) has identified a list of obstacles that make it more difficult for migrant women to integrate, especially in the labor market (European Migration Network, the Netherlands, 2022). These challenges were primarily related to women with a non-western background, assuming they have a lower educational level than Dutch women. Even though many women hold a high academic status in their home country, their credentials are being discredited in the Dutch context, which decreases the opportunities to receive work and contributes to the obstacles of integration (Ruis, 2019; Samson, 2019). Thus, they are often unemployed and less economically independent (European Migration Network, the Netherlands, 2022; Rohof, 2020). According to the Emancipation Monitor from 2020, women with non-western backgrounds also often feel discouraged from entering the labor market as they do not expect a positive response in the first place.

As elaborated on in the first section of this chapter, the Dutch immigration regulations are based on a decentralized system in which each municipality is responsible for the integration of the received migrants. In the Netherlands, only 26% of the regional

municipalities provide specific support for migrant women to enter the labor market (Rohof, 2020). Still, generally, there is no targeted approach for migrant women on a national level (European Migration Network, the Netherlands, 2022). However, there are alternative national programs that are not necessarily tailored to migrant women but women in general with difficulties integrating into the labor market. One is the *Skilled at Work (Vakkundig aan het werk)*, which aims to improve women's economic independence and obtain a better understanding for the municipalities to integrate further gender-sensitive actions (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022; Rohof, 2020). The program, *Economic Resilience of Women (Economische veerkracht van vrouwen)*, focuses on the economic independence of specifically vulnerable women (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022). Even though these programs exist, it appears to be rather challenging to implement an intersectional approach in which migrant women with entirely different cultural backgrounds are targeted and supported in their capacities (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Yet, the intersectionality should be taken into consideration as it emphasizes how institutional and societal power dynamics can influence and shape the individual's migration experiences differently, depending on the perceived narratives of their social status, ethnicity, or gender (Cleton & Meier, 2023; Yuval-Davis, 2017).

As mentioned earlier, to receive permanent residency, the civic integration exam requires a certain level of Dutch language skills (European Commission, 2022b). However, migrant women might either be intimidated or, in some cases, the partner has already obtained Dutch language skills and has been pursuing to enter the labor market (Samson, 2019; Timmerman et al., 2018). This can reduce the incentive to actively engage with the integration processes for the other partner. The Dutch program *Tel mee met taal* specifically addresses migrant women concerning language training and is initiated by the national government (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022). Another sector in which

the Dutch government, specifically the Ministry of Social Affairs and Employment, tries to increase its support is the emancipation and self-determination of people living in closed communities (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022). Again, this does not necessarily address migrant women specifically; however, throughout the migration processes, people tend to engage with people from their community, even in the host country. This might be due to equal norms and values or due to an economic dependency of the partner (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Samson, 2019; Timmerman et al., 2018). Therefore, the immigration policies for migrant women in the Netherlands aim to educate women regarding civic integration procedures, increase their social network, and help improve their skills in self-determination.

Furthermore, the programs in place stress the importance of safety and equality of opportunities to enact financial independence and equal treatment of genders (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022). Though these programs are not created for migrant women, they claim to take an intersectional approach by being aware of the different cultural backgrounds, levels of education, age, and possible labor disabilities of women (Ruis, 2019; Samson, 2019). This includes being aware of these women's language barriers and socio-ethnic background since a dependency on their partner or the social status they carry in their home country might hinder their engagement with these opportunities in the first place. However, the question remains on the accessibility of these programs specifically for migrant women, as the understanding of having the opportunity to access those support systems needs to be communicated. In the next chapter, the societal aspect of migrant women and the related challenges will be further discussed.

Conclusion

To conclude this chapter, the Dutch immigration policies differ in regulations and opportunities for Ukrainians compared to Syrian or any other migrants due to the temporary protection directive. This directive is necessary for managing the migration increase of Ukrainian refugees; however, it perpetrates an exclusionary approach towards other migrants, who seem to have different human rights concerning migration possibilities (European Commission, 2022a; Kienast et al., 2023). Furthermore, the welcoming attitude towards Ukrainians by the society supports this narrative and strengthens the already existing negative stigmatization of migrants from Middle Eastern countries (De Coninck, 2022; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017). The integration policies in the Netherlands follow a decentralized approach in which migrant women receive greater support depending on the engagement of the local municipality (European Commission, 2022b). On the national level, several programs support women to enter the labor market and become financially more independent (European Migration Network, the Netherlands, 2022). However, none of these programs specifically target migrant women; municipalities tend to fail to support integrating migrant women due to a lack of intersectional perspective (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022; Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Thus, social divisions such as gender, ethnicity, and race are not considered independently nor cross-sectionally, which can impact the migration experiences of the individual (Yuval-Davis, 2017).

Additionally, in the case of married partners, municipalities tend to focus on the partner most conveniently to integrate into the labor market (Ruis, 2019). The focus tends to be on the migrant men, as they migrated first and represent the 'breadwinner' whereas women follow later for family reunification and as the role of the 'homemaker' (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019; Timmerman et al., 2018). Therefore, integration policies in the Netherlands show a gap in the sufficient support of migrant women and tend to perpetrate gender narratives, including

gendered practices, which can put migrant women in a disadvantageous position of integration in the Netherlands. The next Chapter will look more closely into the integration of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria in the Netherlands.

Chapter 2: Integration of Migrant Women in the Netherlands

Introduction

The last chapter identified the differences in immigration policies in the Netherlands. The temporary protection directive enables Ukrainian citizens to have faster integration procedures in the receiving country (European Commission, 2022c). In comparison to migrants from Syria, the policies in place for Ukrainians privilege them to enter the labor market more quickly. Furthermore, integrating into a Western European country such as the Netherlands entails encountering a different culture and adapting to new societal norms (Ruis, 2019; Samson, 2019). Women from the Middle East and women from Eastern European countries live by different cultural norms and might also retain another social status in their home country (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Samson, 2019).

The conflict in Syria has led to a shift in the distribution of the traditional gender roles between men and women, as many women were required to take on more public responsibilities (Hilton, 2017). Nonetheless, young women especially needed to interrupt their academic carrier due to the conflict of taking on work that is important for their livelihood but is beneath their capabilities (Moore & Talarico, 2015).

In Eastern European countries such as Ukraine, women are widely represented in academic fields and often obtain equal educational attainment as men (Machlouzarides et al., 2021). Nonetheless, research before the war showed that women reported higher levels of financial insecurity due to gender inequalities in employment and pay wage. Especially older women from rural areas experience poorer health, economic fragility, and reduced access to public services (Kumar et al., 2022; Machlouzarides et al., 2021). Hence, these women are less likely to engage with civic society and might feel disconnected from the modern aspects of the state. Other women living in urban areas in the academic field still recognize pervasive gender inequality between men and women in labor (Kumar et al., 2022).

These disparities can already establish differences in the respective starting position of the individual, as well as shape the expectations when migrating to the Netherlands and entering the Dutch labor market (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023). Therefore, this chapter will focus on the societal role of women from Ukraine and Syria and the changes and challenges after migrating to the Netherlands. This chapter will primarily focus on the challenges and opportunities of entering the labor market, the possible changes in their public and domestic role, and the effects of stigmatization with consideration of the applicable immigration policies in the Netherlands.

Integration in the Dutch Labor Market

The last chapter identified that employment is essential for migrant women to improve their integration experiences (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Though the Dutch government established some support services, these do not account primarily for migrant women and thus miss an intersectional approach to fully consider cultural and social backgrounds (European Migration Network the Netherlands, 2022). Additionally, the possibilities of employment highly depend on the asylum status of the individual and highly influence the chance of independency and agency to shape a new life in the Netherlands (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). It can take months or years before entering the workforce, explicitly receiving work in a desired sector. However, when employed, migrants often experience that their professional credentials received in their home country are often discredited in the receiving country, such as the Netherlands. This forces them to take on labor below their capabilities (Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). Studies have shown that this financial stability and social status loss affects migrant men more prominently than migrant women (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). Women seem to have less association between self-worth and employment, as they often need to join the labor force to

supplement the family income during migration (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). However, these findings cannot be generalized as many migrant women, especially from a younger generation, are highly educated and value their place in the workforce. Thus, unemployment or employment below their credentials can be very destructive to their well-being and general integration experience (Hilton, 2017; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Samson, 2019).

The language barrier is another challenge when entering a new country (Ruis, 2019). Most migrant women from Ukraine and Syria do not speak Dutch when migrating to the Netherlands, and some only master the very basics of the English language. This complicates the possibility of entering the labor market and integrating into society (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Ruis, 2019).

On the contrary, due to the temporary protection directive, Ukrainian migrants can register and receive employment much faster than other migrants (European Commission, 2022c; Kienast et al., 2023). Many educated Ukrainian women could find labor quickly and often in a similar sector to before the war. However, especially women with a lower educational background experience greater difficulties entering the labor market (Machlouzarides et al., 2021). Notably, the language barrier and societal differences reduce their engagement in the workforce.

Public and Private Role of Migrant Women in the Netherlands

The changes that come along with the integration process not only shape the experiences of the individual but can also create a transformation in family relations and the division of gender roles (Fleury, 2016; Llácer et al., 2007). Due to the changes in the cultural and societal environment, the integration of migrant women can influence their domestic relationships and the perceived connection with Dutch society (Fleury, 2016; Llácer et al.,

2007; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). Women who were previously responsible for the domestic sphere and are now encouraged to enter the labor force in the Netherlands might require men to take on more stay-at-home obligations (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). This shift in gender roles in the private and public realms can reshape someone's cultural identity and can affect the individual's self-esteem (Timmerman et al., 2018). On the other hand, many young migrant women from Ukraine and Syria are widely educated and represented in academia. Nonetheless, the integration policies in the Netherlands tend to perpetuate gender narratives by focusing on the partner that is most easy to integrate, which is often assumed to be the men, as well as by discrediting the educational achievements of migrants (Abad-Merino et al., 2018; Ruis, 2019). This can force migrant women to decrease their autonomy in the public realm and increase their engagement with homemaking (Ruis, 2019; Timmerman et al., 2018).

Stigmatization and Discrimination

The integration of Ukrainian and Syrian migrant women is not only affected by the Dutch immigration regulations that create a clear difference amongst migrant groups, but also the societal perception of migrant women is based on certain stigmas that can perpetuate cultural and gender-based narratives (De Coninck, 2022; Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016). These narratives often take their origins from assumptions about the differences in cultural values of another social group (Abad-Merino et al., 2018; Kienast et al., 2023). According to Goffman, stigmas signify a group of people because of cultural or social features that this group shares (Goffman, 2016). The framework of stigmatization is described as the process of perceiving and categorizing an individual of a certain outgroup based on stereotypical characteristics (Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017; Samson, 2019). Stigmatization can lead to the devaluation and

dehumanization of that group through social exclusion and discriminatory behavior (Abad-Merino et al., 2018).

Stigmas around migrants are primarily based on othering processes and the distinction between the ingroup, the Dutch society, and the outgroup of Syrian or Ukrainian migrants (Wodak & Boulaka, 2015). Often the host society experiences a perceived threat from the migrant flows, which can be classified as realistic threats, such as economic intimidation, or symbolic threats, such as cultural and societal differences (Moufakkir, 2020b). These stigmas are perpetuated by the host society, the media, and the government by enforcing stereotypical narratives on a migrant group (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Shaver et al., 2017; Wodak & Boulaka, 2015).

However, stigmatization and discrimination differ amongst migrant groups as they hold different stereotypes that reinforce more or less negative attitudes toward them (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Goffman, 2016). Western societies seem to have a public discourse towards people from Middle Eastern countries, which often leads to negative attitudes and discriminatory behaviors (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Kienast et al., 2023; Moufakkir, 2020).

Historical events on extremist terrorism led to an aggravation of immigration policies in the Netherlands (van Meeteren & van Oostendorp, 2019). These governmental policies influence the perception of society, enforcing stigmatization and discrimination of Muslim minorities (Shaver et al., 2017). Thus, the power structures of the government, supported by the Dutch society, make it more difficult for some migrants to integrate into the Netherlands (Janssens, 2015; Ruis, 2019). The generalization is not only affecting the people that were supposed to be targeted but all migrant groups, such as citizens from Syria, who fulfill the stereotypical image but do not associate with the extremist views, can experience a disadvantage in the integration processes in the Netherlands (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Ruis, 2019).

Often Western values are perceived as being threatened by the increasing number of Syrian migrants coming to the Netherlands (Moufakkir, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Syrian women who wear a headscarf or a hijab tend to be seen as a problematic minority that refuses to integrate properly into the new society (De Coninck, 2022; Ruis, 2019). This stigmatization based on apparent, distinct visual affinities and contrasting societal values can create frustration and anger among migrant women from Syria. The awareness of being judged under a certain stigma is described as stigma consciousness (Moufakkir, 2020). This consciousness can affect the individual's well-being, life satisfaction in the Netherlands, and identification with one's culture.

In contrast, the judgment of Ukrainian women seems to be significantly less than that of Syrian women. In fact, Ukrainian migrants are generally described as similar to Western European societies (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023). Specifically, the increasing willingness to help by the host communities supports the narrative of normative acceptance of Ukrainian migrants but simultaneously creates an exclusionary impression towards Syrian migrants (Zaru, 2022). Furthermore, this bias advocates the European identity theory, in which similar cultural and political values shape the idea of a European ingroup (Abad-Merino et al., 2018; Nadler, 2002; Wodak & Boulaka, 2015). This can strengthen the overall European network, but it can also create an ever-more-rigorous gap between Europeans and others (Wodak & Boulaka, 2015). According to Nadler, individuals tend to empathize more with ingroup members than outgroup members, which leads to this bias to help outgroups less, especially if they are perceived negatively (Nadler, 2002). Furthermore, outgroup members are often provided with help reinforcing dependency, whereas ingroup members receive support reinforcing independence (Halabi et al., 2021; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Nadler, 2002). This process is known as the Intergroup Helping as Status Relations model, which proposes that intergroup helping relations between structurally unequal groups constitute

implicit mechanisms whereby groups reinforce or challenge existing inequalities (Halabi et al., 2021; Nadler, 2002).

Conclusion

This chapter outlined the integration challenges and opportunities for migrant women from Syria and Ukraine in the Netherlands. Hereby, the societal role of these women in their home country, the Dutch immigration policies, and its society's bias towards migrants from different cultural backgrounds were considered. The temporary protection directive enables Ukrainian women to enter the labor market quicker than Syrian women (Kienast et al., 2023). Nonetheless, the devaluation of previous work experience and the burden of the new language can establish challenges for both groups (Ruis, 2019; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). These challenges not only affect the individual's well-being and life satisfaction in the Netherlands but can also reshape family relations and connection to one's cultural identity (Fleury, 2016; Ruis, 2019).

Furthermore, this chapter specified the processes of stigmatization and discrimination of migrants, migrant women, and specifically migrant women from the Middle East. Historical events and distinct differences in cultural values establish prejudice, in which negative attitudes and behaviors are developed by the ingroup of the Dutch society against the outgroup of Muslim migrants that is being generalized to Syrian women (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Ivarsflaten, 2005; Moufakkir, 2020). On the contrary, Ukrainian women seem to belong to the European ingroup due to the similarities in obvious norms and values (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023; Nadler, 2002). Thus, it implies that Dutch society endorses a more welcoming stance towards migrant women from Ukraine. Therefore, it is received that the Dutch immigration policies not only reinforce biases regarding gender and cultural background, but it appears that the Dutch society is also primed to hold a

preconceived opinion towards migrant women from non-European cultures. The next chapter will elaborate on the inequality dimensions of Ukrainian and Syrian migrant women.

Chapter 3: Inequality Dimensions and Consequences for the Experience of Ukrainian and Syrian Migrant Women

Introduction

The last chapters identified the different immigration policies in the Netherlands concerning the migration of Syrian and Ukrainian women and the integration opportunities and challenges in the Netherlands. It has been shown that migrant women do not receive specific integration support according to the Dutch integration regulations (European Migration Network, the Netherlands, 2022; Samson, 2019). Furthermore, due to the temporary protection directive, Ukrainian migrants seem to have a more significant advantage in the Netherlands (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023). These governmental power structures, as well as the societal perception of different groups of migrant women, can establish inequality dimensions that reproduce bias in the host society and marginalize the targeted individuals (Abad-Merino et al., 2018; Dovidio et al., 2010). The consequences are greater difficulties in integrating into Dutch society, poorer mental and physical health, and low life satisfaction, which shapes the experience of migration for these women (Bustamante et al., 2018; Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015).

This last chapter will review the main findings of the previous chapters. It will dive deeper into the complexity and the intersectionality of comparing Ukrainian and Syrian women in the Netherlands. As the intersectionality framework is used for the scope of this paper, this chapter will concretely analyze the different inequality dimensions of Syrian and Ukrainian migrant women in the Netherlands. With this, the focus will lie on the dimensions of gender, racial perception, and social class, considering the Dutch immigration policies. Additionally, the consequences of these inequalities will be disclosed to understand better the experience of migrant women from Syria and Ukraine in the Netherlands.

Intersectionality of Inequality

The framework of intersectionality acknowledges the interconnectedness of all societal dimensions that interact with each other and should not be viewed in isolation (Crenshaw, 1990). These societal dimensions include, for instance, race, gender, ethnicity, class, and sexuality, which intersect and all influence each other (Crenshaw, 1990; Santovec, 2017). Therefore, it is crucial to review migration with an intersectional perspective to capture the relevant dimensions that affect the migration and integration experiences of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria (Cleton & Meier, 2023). Their perception of integration in the Netherlands does not primarily depend on their gender, cultural background, or social class but on the interplay between all of them. So do the immigration policies and the societal bias in the Netherlands towards Syrian and Ukrainian migrant women shape their distinct migration experiences based on the intersectionality of these social markers (Ruis, 2019; Timmerman et al., 2018). The disadvantages of migrant women due to political regulations and societal stigmatization can induce inequalities based on the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and social class of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria (Eijberts & Roggeband, 2016; Moufakkir, 2020).

Gender Inequalities

The consideration of gender in migration studies has led to understanding differences in migration experiences among men and women. Nonetheless, inequality dimensions based on gender are formed through socially established discrepancies and reinforce narratives dependent on biological factors (Amelina & Lutz, 2019). The previous chapter on immigration policies in the Netherlands has already identified that migrant women are not sufficiently supported (Samson, 2019; Stenbacka & Forsberg, 2020). Instead, policies reinforce gender narratives through power structures that provide greater opportunities to

integrate into the Dutch labor market and society to men (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Women are often pushed into subordinate positions that perpetuate traditional gender norms, which might contrast with the responsibilities and achievements in their home country (Ruis, 2019; Samson, 2019). Migrant women often experience the discrediting of their academic achievements in their home country and are pushed into labor below their credentials without any prospects of advancement (Rohof, 2020; Samson, 2019). However, the process of receiving work can only take place once the immigration procedures are fulfilled, which tends to be lengthy and tiresome (Ruis, 2019). These policies can make migrant women economically dependent, affecting their overall well-being and enforcing a certain social status in Dutch society (Fleury, 2016; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). Migrant women might be stigmatized as lazy and unwilling to work, leading to negative attitudes and discriminatory behavior toward them invoked by Dutch immigration policies (Dovidio et al., 2010; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). This negative attitude held by society can be amplified through already existing prejudice towards migrants from different cultural backgrounds and complicate the integration of migrant women even more (Ivarsflaten, 2005; Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017).

Racial Inequalities

The previous chapter already touched upon the processes of stigmatization and discrimination of an outgroup due to social distinctions and prejudice held by the host society. Especially migrants from Middle Eastern countries such as Syria experience higher levels of discrimination in the Netherlands than migrants from other European countries, such as Ukraine (De Coninck, 2022; Kaya & Kayaoğlu, 2017). Furthermore, policy regulations on integrating Syrian migrants and Ukrainian migrants reinforce the issue of ethnicizing and racializing (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023). Cultural identities of Syrian migrants

tend to be devalued and perceived as threatened in comparison to Ukrainian values, which seem to be more suitable to Western European standards (Abad-Merino et al., 2018; Dovidio et al., 2010; Wodak & Boulaka, 2015). To connect the inequalities of ethnicities with the ones of gender, migrant women from Syria seem to carry the double burden of gendered bias and racial prejudice. In contrast, Ukrainian women hold the same disadvantage in gendered dimensions but seem more welcomed by Dutch society as their Eastern European identity is perceived as similar to Western European norms and values. These disparate narratives regulate the individual's access to political and social rights in the Netherlands.

Social Class Inequalities

Social and political exclusion or inclusion determinants are further defined by the social status and class migrant women from Ukraine or Syria might hold (Cleton & Meier, 2023). The social distinction of ethnical background, work performance, and socioeconomic stability of migrant women are critically viewed by Dutch society (Amelina & Lutz, 2019). However, as mentioned in the previous chapter, the cultural and socioeconomic background differs among migrant women from Ukraine and Syria and might be of a lower level according to Dutch standards (Abad-Merino et al., 2018; Kienast et al., 2023). Additionally, it is essential to note that the Syrian conflict has been active for over a decade, whereas the Ukrainian war only started one and a half years ago (Alessandria Masi, 2018; Machlouzarides et al., 2021). This does not imply a greater severity of one conflict over the other. However, it shows that migrant women from Syria might have experienced greater economic instability over a more extended period than migrant women from Ukraine (Hilton, 2017; Ozkaleli, 2018; Ruis, 2019). Thus, the social class of migrant women should not be evaluated based on biased assumptions of the social and political establishments in the Netherlands.

The previous chapter has also touched upon the devaluation of the academic and work-related achievements of migrants. Nonetheless, Ukrainian women tend to receive similar work opportunities in the labor force as before the war than Syrian women, who are often forced to take on work below their credentials (Machlouzarides et al., 2021; Salikutluk & Menke, 2021). Connecting this dimension with the previous two sections, migrant women already have a greater disadvantage in entering the labor market to achieve financial stability, increased by the categorization and judgment of their cultural and socioeconomic background. This three-way dimension of inequalities shows a clear disadvantage of integration in the Netherlands for migrant women, yet greater levels of discrimination for Syrian women and stronger European inclusiveness for Ukrainian women. These perceived deeply rooted processes shape the experiences of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria and impact their well-being and life satisfaction in the Netherlands (Bustamante et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2013; Cleton & Meier, 2023; Llácer et al., 2007).

Consequences of Inequalities

The interplay of all inequality dimensions rooted in the societal perception and the political immigration enforcement shape the experience of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria in the Netherlands (Cleton & Meier, 2023; Ruis, 2019; Samson, 2019). The perception of the individual's experience is often based on the level of well-being and life satisfaction in the receiving country, which is simultaneously dependent on the experiences of inequalities (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). Life satisfaction has been used as a standard measurement to develop a better understanding of the well-being of migrants (Llácer et al., 2007; Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). Low levels of life satisfaction can lead to increased stressors that generate poor mental well-being, often accompanied by adverse physical health (Bustamante et al., 2018; Chu et al., 2013; Llácer et al., 2007).

It shows that higher rates of experienced discrimination led to lower levels of life satisfaction and tended to affect migrant women more than migrant men. Another indicator is the possibility of entering the labor market and reaching economic stability, which is associated with greater life satisfaction if the opportunities are higher (Ozkaleli, 2018; Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). Interestingly, the adjustments and uncertainty in employment seem to affect migrant men more, even though women are experiencing frustrations when losing their academic identity (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015; Timmerman et al., 2018). Generally, the social and political support by the receiving country can positively impact the individual's life satisfaction and reduce integration barriers.

Furthermore, the consequences of immigration inequalities entail the loss of self-agency among migrant women (Ruis, 2019). The possibility of agency over one's life enables humans to strive for goals and achievements. These ideals are shaped by cultural background, social environment, and personal identity, but it creates meaning in one's life and positively influences self-esteem (Amelina & Lutz, 2019; Dovidio et al., 2010). However, migrant women's agency is often restrained due to the Dutch immigration policies, which create structural inequality (Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). The current immigration policies limit migrant women's work opportunities in the Netherlands by discrediting their academic status and placing them in employment sectors that reinforce traditional gender narratives (Rohof, 2020; Ruis, 2019). These regulations create an image of migrant women that determines society's attitude and sympathy towards them (Dovidio et al., 2010; Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015). Thus, their agency to ascent or to become economically independent is restricted by political and societal power structures, which enforces poor life satisfaction and higher insecurities amongst migrant women from Ukraine and Syria, perpetuating the existing bias in Dutch society (Ruis, 2019; Safdar & Kosakowska-Berezecka, 2015).

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed the political and societal immigration and integration aspects in the Netherlands by applying the intersectionality framework. Three overarching inequality dimensions were identified, and their consequences on migrant women from Syria and Ukraine. Inequalities of gender are reinforced through policy regulations that restrict women's independence and perpetuate gender narratives. Migrant women from specific cultural backgrounds might experience higher levels of inequality due to greater othering processes by Dutch society leading to discriminatory attitudes. Furthermore, the restrictive policies determine the socioeconomic status migrant women might gain, impacting their financial stability and integration possibilities in Dutch society.

The deeply integrated inequalities in Dutch social and political realms can impact migrant women's agencies to build a new network in the Netherlands. Overall, it appears that migrant women have greater difficulties in integrating in the Netherlands, despite the governmental support services for women and because of the governmental policies that seem to reinforce gender narratives (Cleton & Meier, 2023; Halabi et al., 2021; Nadler, 2002; Ruis, 2019). Nonetheless, due to the temporary protection directive, Ukrainian women are given the advantage of integrating faster than Syrian women and perceive stronger united assistance from the Dutch society (De Coninck, 2022; Kienast et al., 2023).

Conclusion

Summary of Chapters

This research paper has identified the experiences of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria in the Netherlands based on the Dutch immigration policies from a gendered perspective with an intersectional approach.

Through the analysis of three chapters, this paper first elaborated on the current immigration policies in the Netherlands for migrants from Ukraine and Syria, as well as the governmental support services for migrant women. Ukrainian migrants fall under the temporary protection directive, which enhances their opportunities to integrate into the Netherlands. Especially the possibilities of receiving work are much higher than for other migrants. Syrian migrants need to undergo standard immigration procedures to ensure assimilation into Dutch society. However, this tends to be time-consuming and hinders them from receiving work in general and in sectors that live up to their credentials, reinforcing traditional gender narratives. The Dutch government only partly supports migrant women as the immigration policies are decentralized the regional municipalities are responsible for ensuring equal integration possibilities. The governmental support services specifically focus on integrating women into the labor market but lack the intersectional perspective to include migrant women from all ethnic-cultural backgrounds.

The second chapter touched upon the integration challenges and opportunities for migrant women in the Netherlands, emphasizing the societal stigmatization of Middle Eastern and Eastern European women reinforced through the policy regulations on the integration of migrant women. Integration in the workforce differs for these two groups, as Ukrainian women seem to have an advantage through the temporary protection directive. Syrian women, on the contrary, are restricted in their agency to integrate economically, which can perpetuate gender narratives and might influence the relationship with one's family and the

Dutch society. Specifically, the stigmatization of Muslim women reinforces othering processes, creating challenges for their integration journey. Ukrainian women are perceived as more similar to Western European societies, enhancing their opportunities in the Netherlands.

The final chapter focused on applying the intersectional framework to the previous findings, identifying three dimensions of inequalities concerning gender, race, and social class and their effects on the overall well-being of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria. Perceived inequalities restrict migrant women's agency to become economically independent and socially integrated in the Netherlands. These restrictions, enforced by immigration policies and cultivated through society, can highly impact the life satisfaction of migrant women and their perceived prospects for their new lives in the Netherlands.

Overall, the literature findings have revealed a bias in political immigration regulations, as the temporary protection directive enables Ukrainian migrants to integrate faster into Dutch society than other migrants such as Syrians. Furthermore, there is a lack of efficient support for migrant women on a national and regional level. On a societal level, the process of stigmatization has influenced the increasing discrimination towards Muslim women, having an overarching generalized effect on migrant women from Syria. On the contrary, Ukrainian migrant women are largely associated with a similar European identity to Western European communities. Thus, the immigration regulations in the Netherlands not only establish unequal integration processes for migrant women from Ukraine and Syria economically but reinforce biases in Dutch society that also complicate integration socially. These invisible power dynamics establish distinct intersectional inequalities for migrant women that impact and shape their migration experiences in the Netherlands. Thus, the key determinant lies in the responsibility of the Dutch government to ensure just and equal integration for migrant women from different cultural backgrounds and to reduce its

reinforcing impact on society's stigmatization and discrimination processes towards migrant women. By implementing improved policies and raising awareness, equal opportunities can be better ensured, and societal bias can be reduced.

Policy Recommendations

Policy and Social Improvements

Based on the findings of this research, this section aims to display a set of policy recommendations concerning the political and societal power dynamics that influence the experience of migrant women from Syria and Ukraine in the Netherlands.

On a political level, the Dutch government needs to ensure improvement in equal status and treatment of migrants. This will reduce the waiting periods of migrants that do not fall under the temporary protection directive and will allow faster economic integration. With equal status, regional municipalities can ensure better support services for integrating migrant women into the labor market. This support should not reinforce gender narratives assuming migrant women to be more vulnerable but to provide sufficient services for equal opportunities.

By providing equal opportunities, the power structures of the government can reduce the enforcement of categorization and stigmatization of migrants within Dutch society. It can help to change the public discourse on the issue of prejudice towards migrants and provide a more inclusive perception amongst society to enhance the migration experiences, including integration and overall life satisfaction, for migrant women from Ukraine and Syria.

Limitations and Future Research

This desk research also aims to set a fundamental framework for further research to uncover firsthand experiences of migrant women from Ukraine and Syria migrating to the

Netherlands. As this desk research only portrays the experience of migrant women through academic literature and policy reports, there is a limitation in primary data. Furthermore, interpreting literature through desk research might entail unconscious bias, which could be reduced through a data collection of primary migration experiences. Conducting qualitative ethnographic research will help back the key findings of existing literature and provide these women with a voice to explain their experiences migrating to the Netherlands.

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