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WHAT IS THE WORTH OF
HIGHLY EDUCATED
FEMALE MIGRANTS IN
THE LABOR MARKET OF
BARCELONA?
(Master's Thesis)

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Abstract

What are the challenges that Latin American female migrants face in their integration of labor market?

Education is considered as one of the basic tools for migrants to be integrated in the labor market of host country. But does this theory applies equally for female migrants too? The biggest immigrant population in Spain comes from Latin America. They are almost equal in male and female ratio according to census data. But there is a common phenomenon about integration of these Latin American female migrant. Mostly, they are found in '*pink collar*' job in labor market which does not need higher education. So, what happens to those women who are highly educated and have aspiration to be integrated in white collar job in Spain? Present data shows that there is an increase of educated migrants among women but why the number of women in labor market in those jobs is not increasing simultaneously? This paper aims to investigate why there are less representation of Latin American female migrants in '*white collar*' job in Spain.

This paper examines the thorny issue of female migrant integration with a qualitative method by interviewing 16 Latin American female migrants who are highly educated and currently working in Barcelona in a "white collar" job. To do further investigation and understand their challenges from the aspect of race and feminism, there was controlled ratio of participants who has darker skin and a ratio of women with kids.

Analysis of the respondent demonstrated that though Latin American female migrants are high educated, but they face various discrimination. With further analysis of their life story and carrier aspiration some other negative issues were revealed for example, disadvantage position of gender role, presence of racism and discriminatory gender pay gap etc.

The result indicates that despite having a cultural and language advantage, higher education cannot be considered as an advantage in the labor market if the migrant is female.

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1.Introduction

Migratory flows between Europe and Latin America have been constant throughout the last two hundred years. Migration from Latin America to Spain has been impressive, and women from this area represent many of the host country's Latino community. While until the late 1970s, Spain was primarily a nation of emigrants, sending workers to Northern Europe and Latin America, since entering the European Union in 1986, the country quickly switched from exporting to importing labor. As a result, Spain is now an essential immigrant-receiving society, taking in many migrants from former colonies in Latin America and North Africa.

According to the data provided in 2004 by the Government Delegation for Aliens and Immigration (DGEI) on immigrants with residence permits, Latin America is the leading region of origin of immigration, representing 31.20%, compared to 26.3% of Africans and 24.7% of the countries of the EU. Interestingly, one of the distinguishing characteristics of Latin American migrations to Spain is the feminization trend, which contrasts with other migrating countries where males dominate the patterns. Among those from Latin America, women represent 56% (opposite to North-African migrations, where men represent 69%). Mainly, the countries with the highest feminization rate are Brazil and the Republic Dominican with 70%. Other Latin American countries with a significant female presence are Mexico, Peru, Venezuela, Colombia and Cuba (Economist, 2004). The differences between these groups can be understood as a product of gender relations and cultural patterns within communities of origin and the effects of the labor market and migration policies in the destination society(Araujo, 2011).

Another interesting element of these migration patterns is the level of education of Latin American women. In 2004, most of them had completed secondary studies (54,7%), and 16% had a university degree. The Barcelona municipal register data also confirm a high level of education for the city's resident Latin American population. In the same year, of the immigrants (both men and women) from the Caribbean countries, Central America and Mexico, 37.6% have primary studies whereas 25.4% have secondary studies, and 35.6% have completed higher education. From South America, conversely, most immigrants have primary studies (43.6%), and only 24.9% have a higher degree (Barcelona City Council 2004).

These figures portray interesting migration patterns which seems worthy of further analyzing. Since women represent a large portion of Latin America migration in Spain, few questions arise:

What are the challenges that highly educated Latin American female migrant face when they enter labor market?

It will be a qualitative research with investigative deductive method. The main state of art for this thesis can be stated as 'female migrants fall behind in the labor market of host country because of their gender role'. But, to be more precise, case specific it can be stated as following 'L.A Migrant women are failing integrate in labor market of Barcelona because of gender role'. But only gender role can never be the only fact for failed integration. The other facts that can impact the state of art can be Language, Race, marital status, Higher education. Given so the possible implications:

- A. Latin American women should experience a smoother integration in the labor market and on a social level because of language advantage.
- B. L.A. women who are highly educated are expected to have relatively high qualified job positions.

C. Race (skin tone) plays a role in labor market integration

My research will focus on high-educated women from twenty countries in Latin America. By focusing on this category, this paper may illustrate the challenges for them to integrate into Barcelona's labour market. The research may also help overcome the social stigmas and stereotypes around these women, showing that integration is, in fact, possible, although sometimes challenging. The paper's structure is the following: firstly, I will discuss the literature on the topic to provide background knowledge for our study. Secondly, I will illustrate the methodological approach of our research and data collection. Since one of the objectives of this paper is to understand the challenges faced by female migrants when integrating in Barcelona, a section of the paper will be focused on issues such as gender role, racial discrimination, and language affinities, salary structure, social-work life inclusion etc. Thirdly, gender-related issues will be discussed in the following section, whereas the final part will be dedicated to stereotypes concerning Latin American women. Finally, I will conclude by acknowledging the limitations of our study and its possible contributions.

2. Puzzle in present Literature

Research on Latin American migration to Europe has fostered some rich conceptualizations on these migration flows. Studies on the so-called Latino populations have developed from various perspectives, such as their cultural, ethical and social identities, their working life and their political situations (McIlwaine, 2011). Notably, research on Latin Americans in this context has been mainly confined to Spain - which has the largest Latino population in Europe - covering a range of different issues (McIlwaine, 2011).

On this matter, many academic studies during the last decade have discussed Spain's strong 'historical ties' with Latin American countries (Martín Díaz, Cuberos Gallardo and Castellani,

2012). While in the past most Latin Americans looked towards the United States as a destination (accounting for three-quarters of the outward flows), immigration to Europe amplified in recent years, especially after the restrictions on movement imposed by the US in the wake of 9/11 in 2001 (McIlwaine, 2011). In this case, the appeal of Europe, and mainly southern Europe, was ‘bolstered by historical ties forged through colonialism together with linguistic legacies’(McIlwaine, 2011). Furthermore, in the early twentieth century, many immigrant communities in Latin America originated from southern Europe: in this sense, we assist to a ‘return’ of Latin Americans to the country of their ancestors (such as Spain, Italy or Portugal) which is encouraged by favorable citizenship processes. Especially when considering Spain's immigration policies, it is crucial to consider the preferential immigration legislation arrangements that favored Latin Americans(Carrasco, 2015). For instance, in 2001, Spain signed bi-lateral agreements with various Latin-American countries, such as Ecuador or Colombia, that regularized a large portion of migrants present in the Spanish territory. These legislative changes in the Spanish case are due to a change in the labor demand: according to many studies, the most recent flows have been linked with labor demand in the care, cleaning and construction sectors (Peixoto, 2009; McIlwaine, 2011).

In terms of defining migrations from Latin America to Spain, the migrating population is mostly youthful and has relatively high education levels, with most having completed secondary school or university. Moreover, these flows are highly feminized: among these Latin American immigrant societies, female migrants represent a large portion. The female migration from Latin America became sustainable from 1960 until 2000 and increased female representation from 44.7% to 50.5% (Pajnik, 2014). Most of these women have migrated hoping to improve their household living conditions and quality of life (Però, 2007). On this matter, present literature shows how women are now migrating independently, looking for

work, and how they have assumed a more significant role in household survival. Previous studies, instead, show that a lack of domestic and care worker jobs invited Latin American women to seek employment, which also contributes to the high rates of women's participation in the labor market (González-Juárez et al., 2014).

Nevertheless, women are still substantially more likely than men to work part-time, and they earn considerably less than their male colleagues (Goldin and Fuchs, 1990). Research shows that it is more difficult for migrant women to transition into the labor market than either native-born women or migrant men. The reason is that they are facing a double battle: first, to integrate as foreign-born citizens in their host country socially and culturally; second, and equally significant, to address gender bias in the labor market as well as in other aspects of social, political and economic life relative to native-born women in the host country, which is around 40% at the time of their arrival (Purkayastha, 2005). In 2017, the EU Member States that put particular importance on women's integration have also identified unique funding goals as an instrument for facilitating the integration of women (Inclusion of Migrant Women in the Labour Market' n.d.). Access to education and training opportunities for migrant women is another important aspect for improving their social and economic status; however, most of them- especially those with a higher education level - have jobs that do not require their current skills. (Garrido *et al.*, 2009)

The increase in the number of Latin American migrants to Spain has been accompanied by constructing these migrants as 'desirable' within a context of ethnic segmentation of the Spanish labor market. Several authors have rightly termed Latin American collectives as "preferred" in early twenty-first-century Spain (Escribano and Martínez-Buján, 2014). Typifying these people as preferable migrants, based on their supposed cultural compatibility

with the autochthonous population, has been a determining factor in these migratory currents' political and economic management. The notion of 'cultural compatibility' is supported by the theoretical tradition that understands the migrant's condition as a sociocultural construct (Bover *et al.*, 2015), which falls within the more general literature on the construction of the foreigner (Pellegrino, 2004). This construction awards an inferior status to the other, as a biological carrier of insurmountable differences (Pérez *et al.*, 2017) and is based on an essentialist definition of the culture (Pardo, 2018) on which the 'cultural distance' with respect to the national ethnos is built. This reasoning makes it possible to define some migrants as culturally closer, more human and 'integratable', while other collectives are described as more removed and uncivilized and therefore incompatible (Corregido, 2012). This shared reasoning also tends to be confirmed by a legislative framework which translates into different steps to access citizenship (Pellegrino, 2004). Politics that give a privileged migratory or citizenship status because of presumed common origins and ethnic affinity, such as the ones made by the Spanish government towards the Latin Americans, foster the expectation that ethnic affinity facilitates social and economic integration. Nevertheless, a few studies indicate that migrants from Latin America still face many challenges, particularly women lacking in the labor market.

Modern societies are nowadays characterized by cultural pluralism and often establish formal and symbolic relations between the recipient society and immigrants who enter the country. According to (Jaskulowski and Pawlak, 2020) there is an ongoing social debate on immigration, explaining that debate as a discursive hyper-genre 'allows treating suitably various actors, discursive types, means and attitudes that participate in migration'. For their part, (McLaren, 2012) point out that ethnocentric information is present in the construction of opposing ideas and opinions regarding a determinate group and in the media. (Antón, Muñoz de Bustillo and Carrera, 2012) referred to the stereotypes as a 'decomposition of the value of

the soul', in which the important for the concept of image as an aesthetical tool transmutes, disseminating marked separations of human differences based on sex, races, religions, socioeconomic status and geographic origin. Stereotypes represent not objectionable generalizations about categories that are generally proven to be false, or there is a potential difference between what is true and what is false. (Okin, 2004)

The stereotype around migrant women is that they come to Spain to look for better life prospects, but they end up integrated with low paid jobs with little opportunities to aspire for higher positions. Since women are often in a position of marginality and vulnerability in some Latin American countries, Spaniards often perceive Latin American women as being 'affectionate, kind, obliging and willing to do anything' (Agustín, 2003). Moreover, too often, Latin Americans are associated with lack of studies and education. For instance, Latin American women are characterized in the media by having poor schooling, low economic level, and performing poorly paid non-trained labor (Rodríguez, Uriarte and Basterretxea, 2020). In general, the image of young Latin American revolves around ideas of personal deficit, school failure, gang violence and adjustment problems, among others. Their image rarely recognizes their capabilities and skills to adapt, accommodate, and integrate socially and culturally.

The challenges faced by migrant women as they integrate into the host country's labor market are nuanced. They may vary according to their reasons for migration, family dynamics and the role of women in the home, cultural characteristics and social networks, and the host country's political climate (Garrido *et al.*, 2009). In this context, it is essential to know how Latin American women integrate into the host country when they have better possibilities to succeed in the labor market and what are the challenges they may change.

3. Methodology

3.1 Qualitative approach with semi-structured interviews

By carrying out this research, I aim to study a new generation of migrants from Latin America: those highly educated women who migrated to Spain holding a Bachelors and, in some cases, a Master's degree, and who aspire to grow professionally in Barcelona, intending to work in their area of studies and for prestigious companies. Due to the lack of qualitative studies regarding this group of women from Latin America, I chose to investigate this matter through a qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews.

A semi-structured interview is a verbal interchange where the interviewer attempts to elicit information from the participant by asking questions. This method consists of «a predetermined and standardized list of questions» (Dunn 2005:80; Clifford & Gill 2003). However, the conversation is directed by the informant rather than by the set of questions. In other terms, although this form of the interview has some degree of predetermined order, it still «ensures flexibility in the way issues are addressed by the informant» (Dunn 2005:80; Clifford & Gill 2003). Semi-structured interviews are useful «for investigating complex behaviours, opinions, emotions and effects, and for collecting a diversity of experiences» (Clifford & Gill 2003).

My data collection method will be focused on gathering the participants' life experiences to find out which factors worked well for them for their economic integration. Open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews allowed the informants to spontaneously talk about important topics and aspects to them, such as facing racism, challenge of motherhood, work life adversity, cultural advantage etc. This method enabled us to know the personal experiences - and struggles - in integrating in the labour market and, more generally, in the hosting community.

2.2 Participants and case of study

I had to conduct interviews during Covid pandemic in a online mode. Though, prior to the COVID-19 epidemic, the use of technology for qualitative data collecting was not novel. However, employing technology such as videoconferencing to conduct interviews and focus groups has become the standard, not the exception, and may continue to be so for some time.

Randomly I selected 16 participant for this thesis paper. One third of my participant are married and one third of them has darker skin. Besides, sixteen participants in this study are women between their twenties and thirties. All of these participants were chosen from top 10 national and international companies which are operating their business in Barcelona. According to the American business magazines Fortune and Forbes, these are the largest firms in Barcelona in terms of sales, net profit, and total assets. (“Global 500,” no date)

I tried to take a controlled selection in this study by choosing my participants from 20 Latin American countries with a ratio of 11:5. Eleven participants had a fare skin and 5 participants had darker skin. This selection ration helped me to scrutinize the variant of racism in migrant labor market for female. Besides, 5 of my participants were married and went through maternal leave which helped me to explore how motherhood is treated in present labor market of Barcelona.

All the participants had regular legal status with work permit, and a majority share of them currently working in jobs related to their areas of studies. The 16 online interviews for this research were conducted in Barcelona (Spain) between April to June 2021. Each one-on-one

interview lasted around 40 minutes and the mode of language was either spanish or english according to the participant's preference.

All interviews were recorded and later translated and transcribed. I also obtained signed consent to use the interviews for academic purposes, provided that informants remained anonymous.

Barcelona was selected as my case of study as it is a cosmopolitan country which welcomes a great number of migrants each year. Besides it is the capital of the autonomous community of Catalonia and the second-most populous municipality of Spain. Being an industrial metropolis and a Mediterranean port, the city has traditionally been a migrant destination for economic migrants and refugees. According to Institut d'Estadística de la Generalitat de Catalunya, in January 2012, a total of 282,178 of the residents registered in the city of Barcelona were foreigners, which represents 17.4% of the total population. Foreigners of Latin American origin in Barcelona represent around 39.6% of the total foreign population, with a mean age of 33 years. Barcelona is also highly attractive for international students, mainly from Europe and Latin America. Although the city has a dynamic and diversified economy, the economic crisis of 2008 widened income inequalities among the population.

Moreover, Barcelona is drawing more foreign investment and is establishing itself as a European startup hotspot. Barcelona has established itself as a technology center in southern Europe, ranking fifth in Europe behind London, Paris, Berlin, and Dublin, according to the 2018 Digital Start-up Ecosystem Overview.(Spain Economic Snapshot - OECD, 2018). Which, makes it the most lucrative place for migrant than other Spanish cities.

Besides, among two migrant destinations in Spain _ Barcelona and Madrid, Barcelona seemed more suitable for my case, because of its unique position with language. There are two official

languages in Barcelona- Spanish and Catalan. This unique position of Barcelona will help me to investigate deeply into what extent “language and cultural tie” helps migrants in host country.

Notably, income gaps between foreign residents - mainly women - and Spanish nationals have formed since the crisis has deepened. Accordingly, the labor market integration of migrants - and especially females - tend to be difficult despite its strong multicultural character. By taking Barcelona as a case study I will illustrate the obstacles faced by Latin American women when integrating in a foreign country.

4. The findings

4.1 Higher education: a blessing turned into curse

It is a widespread common stereotype that women from Latin American countries only work as second-level jobs and cannot grow professionally in the labor market. Although the demand for domestic workers and the policy of quotas has facilitated the feminization of the flows in Spain (Araujo, 2004), currently there are many Latin American women living in this country who have significant job positions and professional aspirations.

As I stated earlier, all of the female migrants who took part in in my interview came from Latin America hold a bachelor’s degree at least. Some of them took a specialized course or a masters of MBA here. The main reason why they chose Barcelona stays behind a cross comparing calculation of expense of studies between Barcelona and United States. Considering other factors the cost of education and living expense in Barcelona is lower than that of United States, which made it lucrative for student to come here. One participant stated.

‘.I came primarily to pursue Master's degrees, attracted by Barcelona's reputation as a city of innovation and design, its extensive educational offerings, and lower tuition costs than in the United States...’ (p2.Dominican Republic.27)¹

Besides another big factor to pick Barcelona is migrants come here come here with an aspiration of getting a job in their field of study and being independent. But, coming to Barcelona is not a total fairy tale of course, one participant even described her peers earn more money than her in home country. According to her words,

‘In almost every company you must start with an unpaid internship or temporary contract. It is a stage of frustration after all the hurdles.... when my friends are earning more in Bogota. In some other sectors, situation is much worse. For example, in medical sector, for a long time my friend is working on temporary contract here...’ (p6.Colombia. 28)²

This creates an ambiguity about facts behind their decision to migrate. Gradually, with further query, most of the migrants also emphasized on the fact that though they might be earning less but the comfort of their life is much better than their own country. This fact sheds another light over the motif of migrating to Barcelona from Latin America.

But, none of them was able to enter into the labor without getting another educational degree or specialized certificate here in Barcelona. According to the Spanish Ministry of Education, about 11,300 Latin American students travelled to Spain in 2015 to undertake Specialization courses. (*Statistics | Eurostat*, no date)

¹ A participant from Dominican republic, age 27

² A participant from Colombia, age 28

Some of the participants even stated that though this education in host country was one of their primary tool to be integrated in labor market but it was one of the prime reason for them to fall they fall behind in host country's competitive labor market. One of the participant quoted

'....This was my second Masters In finance. I wanted to shift from Lima. This degree helped me to get a job which I can relate with my field of study. But, I believe, it was a redundant period of my carrier.' (p14.Peru.28)³

This specific fact justifies why female migrant enters into the labor market with a delay. Nothing comes without a price. Some participants even marked this delay and cost of education in host country as "the price of integration in labor market". But it was obvious that in some case this redundancy of study and delay to enter in labor market is another reason to lag in the race of labor market. One participant specifically quoted that though many students come here to study but a number of them even drops out and settled down with basic job which is not up to the mark. In her words,

'..I came to study architecture in Barcelona, after all, it is city of Gaudi and so many prominent artist....but the living all alone is tough, specifically when you don't have emotional support from partner or family, a friend of mine came from Ecuador too, but she rather than finishing the study, she settled down with a guy' (p7.Ecuador.31)⁴

Another factor which sheds a light on the fact that the academic system in Barcelona is very rigorous and updated from their country of origin. In her words "It is more theoretical, which is how it is supposed to be". But, from statement it was reflecting several times that sometimes when someone is in a foreign country dealing with life alone it becomes tough to keep up with

³ A participant from Peru, age 28

⁴ A participant from Honduras, age 30

studies. This could be another possible reasoning why migrants' women are falling behind in job market in some cases which can be generalized in this specific case of L.A female migrants.

4.2 Cultural affinity or aversion

Barcelona has a long cultural and historical tie with Latin American countries because of its colonial past. Most of the migrants chose Barcelona over USA because of this cultural affinity.

One participant who has a really unique profile of coming from Honduras even quoted

'In addition, I was seeking for a place where I could feel at ease and not be too far away from my culture. I know there are less Hondurans in Barcelona than in Texas, but I feel more at ease here.'(p11.Honduras. 30)

Though Barcelona feels quite homely atmosphere to most of the Latin American immigrants because of Spanish language and culture but it has its own share of language and culture too.

In Barcelona, most of the local people prefers to speak Catalan. Which puts these L.A female migrants a little bit disadvantaged situation. A participant, who is also a mother of nine years old kid and working in a Spanish company said,

'.... I felt a little bit left out at the beginning when I joined this company because at that time all my colleagues spoke Catalan.... but with time, now I have more grasp over Catalan. My kid is even learning Catalan in school and now during pandemic, he is taking private classes on Catalan and English. I don't want him to feel left out here ever!' (p13.Ecuador.35)⁵

This could be an insight, why in some Spanish companies we do not see a huge representation of L.A female migrants. On the other hand, when I tried to dig deeper to what extent language could be an issue for these migrant women, I found out, those women who works in multinational companies are less bothered about Catalan language. Several participants who

⁵ A participant from Argentina, age 29

have one thing in common- they are working for multinational companies, in spite of their sectors ie. Technology, car manufacturing etc. stated one thing in common that English is more used in workplace than Spanish, since their companies work worldwide. One participant who is working in one of the biggest car manufacturing company here in Barcelona even quoted

'....Companies are turning more towards English language, speaking Spanish is an advantage to be integrated in social life, but for your carrier you need to know English very well, to be specific business English to deal with your client....' (p5. Argentina.29)

4.3 Racial segregation

Latin America has a huge range of ethnical variety in its population. Historians have chronicled the lengthy and sometimes confusing history of race in Latin America, highlighting the significance of whiteness as a national and personal desire. In much of Spanish America, the Spanish government developed a caste system based on the percentage of Spanish blood in the people, albeit phenotype or skin color was frequently utilized instead of genealogy, save in the most prominent families. Spaniards and their "pure-blooded" descendants were well aware of their privileged status, as they were accorded full legal and social privileges, which included access to top employment, schools, vocations, and a variety of economic possibilities.

Though, in todays time, people don't discriminate openly but from some participants insight it was obvious that racism is not totally uprooted from Spanish culture. Two of the participants who have dark skin and working in a local company stated in sarcasm and frustration that

'....In the rule book there is no racism, but I don't get invitation to private parties arranged by my colleague..... their parties are even white like them'. (p1.Brazil.26)⁶

⁶ A participant from Brazil, age 26

'...While I finished my program in Barcelona and applied for jobs, I was getting rejection after rejection in interviews. Most of the time I was the only one black woman sitting in the waiting room and I believe it was my reason of rejection in those job too... you tell me, whom the company will choose - a black chica or white chica? ..even though they are equally competent...'(p2.Dominican Republic.27)⁷

This indicates to the racial discrimination among immigrants too. I selectively chose 5 participants with dark skin to examine this racial segregation. Surprisingly, 3 participants out of 5 confirmed they feel a form of racism in their social life in work. The other 2 participants who work in international companies think, it is more of a personality trait which helps to be included in social circle of work life. But, at some of point of their life they did face exclusion because of their race and skin color too. According to them,

'...It depends more on your personality, if you are outgoing and extrovert, you will always find people to mingle.... When I joined, there was some ice-breaking session in the office like Casual Friday which was helpful to know my colleague'(p11.Ecuador 31)⁸

though it is a tiny sample, but it reveals the presence of racism in migrant labor market too, even though they are equally educated like their peers who have fair skin. May be this issue need further investigation and could be a puzzle for other papers to scrutinize more.

4.4 Gender role

The increasing incorporation of women into the labor market has been one of the most significant transformations experienced in recent times by the Spanish economy, which

⁷ A participant from Dominican Republic, age 27

⁸ A participant from Ecuador, age 31

“rapidly transitioned from a traditional model based on the segregation of paid and unpaid tasks by gender towards a rather generalized dual-income household model” (Conde-Ruiz & Artíñano, 2016). Spain's gender gap in participation has progressively narrowed due to the expansion in female activity rates. This improvement may be due to changes in the dynamics of the participation patterns and changes in the characteristics of the population (higher educational attainment, reduced fertility, demographics, migration) and more external factors (Conde-Ruiz & Artíñano, 2016). Being this paper's focus on high-skilled Latin American women, a significant section of the interviews included gender-related questions. All my interviewees equally admitted that they experienced discriminating comments in job interviews when asked about their priorities regarding family and work.

Most of the participants admitted that they felt somehow "not qualified" when during the job interviews, the employers would ask them about personal life:

‘I’ve received a few discriminating comments, such as “are you planning to get married, to have kids” ... which made me really uncomfortable’. (p6.colombia.28)⁹

It is true that employers have all the rights to ask about family life and marital status of an interviewee to calculate if this candidate is productive for the company or not. However, all of the participants confessed that if there were competent “male candidate” in their place of job recruitment, they had more chances to be hired over women. Though in another discussion, all the participants confirmed that there are over representation of Latin American male than female in *white collar* Job market. In most cases, women are expected to do caregiving job which basically goes under the tag of *pink collar* job market. In one cross-cultural stereotype, Latina women are believed to be adept at childcare because they are caring or nice, but they are also accused of being sloppy cleaners. This gender stereotyping in job market is not new

⁹ A participant from Colombia, age 28

but pulling culture card along with gender card is something alarming in labor market. Besides, these women face disadvantage situation in their own community too because of their educational background and gender role too. One participant quoted,

'...there are communities which helps Latinas to find jobs but most of those are for cleaning floor or being a cook... and mostly low paying without proper paperwork, not for women who aspires to do high skilled job as if we are expected to clean floors, not more than that. though, men are different.... you will find them almost equally in every sector'. (p9. Colombia.30)¹⁰

One interesting discussion came out during this interview. According to her, Latin American male migrants are more connected, united, and informed than female migrants. This piece of information can shed lights on the backward trend of female migrant integration. In spite of all possible advantage and required skill in host country like what Latin Americans have, women can still fall behind in labor market because of adequate information and lack of strategic support from helping communities.

4.5 Family Constraint

All the participants admitted that they never directly faced gender discrimination in their job positions. Overall, they are satisfied with the companies' values, which often offer benefits for women such as maternity leave with salary, flexible hours during the breastfeeding period, and nurseries near the workplace. Nevertheless, on this matter, recent studies show how having children has a significant effect on women's employment, and that the effect is noticeably stronger than on men. According to (Goldin and Fuchs, 1990), women's and men's average earnings at the beginning of their professional career are similar, but the wage curve flattens for women following motherhood. These Latin American female migrants are no different case

¹⁰ A participant from Colombia, age 30

in this. In fact, in some cases, they are more vulnerable compared to native women. While doing the interview, I added a huge section regarding motherhood and maternity leave, since motherhood is an eternal part of womanhood which is often labeled as prime reason to hinder women's career in general. The result was not surprising at all, in fact anticipated. Though there are strict labor code rules to encourage motherhood for working moms, but it is not a total 'bed of roses. There were some important remarks from two participants who has kids. Both confirmed that after taking a maternity leave, the workplace is more tends to be changed. One of the participants stated,

'... the attitude of my boss changed when I joined work after my maternity leave. My company was bound to give me all the facilities while I was pregnant, and it did. But, I felt threatened and less competent...less updated when I joined back. Every now and then, my boss who was a man made sure I feel so but my colleagues were supportive...'

(p16.Ecuador.31)¹¹

Interestingly, one of the respondents from Bolivia confessed that she feels she had more chances to be employed - and aspire to go to a higher job position - because she has no family constraints, and she is able to spend more hours at the office. Which reassure the theory of (Goldin and Fuchs, 1990), that, with ages women are tend to earn less because of family constraints and this theory applies equally to migrant and native women. But what is alarming from this Bolivian participant's statement is that she is so habituated with the idea that having a family and being pregnant has a negative effect on high skilled migrant women's career, when, in reality this is her right to go through a smooth integration in labor market despite of her choice of being pregnant or not.

¹¹ A participant from Ecuador, age 31

4.6 Pay-scale gap

Generally, gender wage gaps are perhaps amongst the most widely studied topics in economic research on labor market differentials. In addition to that, giant companies have general accusation of taking advantage of cheap migrant labor. In terms of female migrants, the situation is much worse. Since they have to face a double axe of being ‘a migrant’ and ‘a woman’. Which makes them vulnerable to the host country’s labor market and easy to exploit. Moreover, when it is a migrant woman, they try to pay them less than male migrants to increase the profit per unit. One participant quoted regarding this

*‘....After being selected, when my Human Resource manager asked me about my salary expectation....I was scared to ask for what I deserve! ... All I wanted is to get this job at any cost and I think I am underpaid comparing to the amount of work I do now.... but this job opened my door to get a long-term residence and work permit in Europe..’
(p10.Argentina.33)¹²*

Given so, unfortunately, their salaries tend to be lower than their other colleagues, and they often feel pressured to compete in a predominant workplace with natives and male migrants. This indicates towards pay gap strongly and another possible reason why there are less Latin female migrant in managerial job in labor market. This struggle of pay gap in the beginning of their carrier is so severe that some of the participants even stated that financially it is more profitable to run a business or work in service industry or *pink collar* job .

Most interviewees coped with all these challenges by stepping up for themselves and adopting harsher and stricter attitudes with more charisma and patience as they feel that these situations are regular.

¹² A participant from Argentina, age 33

5. Limitation:

This paper was done during the time of COVID-19. Which limits the scope of collecting primary data from respected filed. All the interviews were conducted online. This was the only best option to collect the data. But, at a same time, it hinders the opportunity of observing body language of the participant. Also, I conducted this thesis by being a total outsider. Though the format of the interview was both in English and Spanish, but I believe, being a native Spanish speaker would have help me understand my participants deeply.

6. Discussion

Drawing on qualitative research, this research focused on the under-researched topic of high skilled migration of women from Latin America to Barcelona. Starting from a research question that debates whether these women feel some type of discrimination when entering the labor market in Spain, this paper contributes to the definition of three factors that are mainly discriminatory: i) gender role, ii) racial segregation, and iii) pay role structure. Each of these were analyzed as core factors that migrant women faced when entering the labor market in Barcelona. Given so, by documenting the life experience of 16 migrant women for Latin America, this paper presents with three main findings.

Firstly, this research contributes to the theory that ‘being highly educated’ is not always a an advantage for migrants. It is generally considered that education is a tool for migrants to be better integrated in the labor market of host country. But, it can also be a disadvantage if that

migrant is a female. The social stigma of gender role sometimes even vary with different culture as well. In fact in some cases, female migrants are expected to be low educated to discourage their ambition of better paying job in host country. Also, this statement demands furthermore scope for future research since the idea of gender norm is evolving now. Another important mention is all these 16 female participants were picked on the considerably basic of gender definition of “male and female” but in present world, gender norm and dissection has been diversified. I believe, in future, further research will be much appreciated on gender minority group of migrants, for example LGBTQ community people in migrants and their challenge in labor market.

Secondly, the paper contributes to better understand the reality of entering the labor market in Barcelona as well as in Spain. According to the respondents’ own experiences, there is no institutional discrimination for Latin American female migrants in labor market either it is multinational company or a local company. But, in terms of equality in gender, race and payroll, the workplace culture of multinational companies hold better value than local companies. Moreover, there are still some indirect presences of inequality and racism in local companies which can be found in the social inclusion of employee when she is an L.A female migrant with a darker skin tone. Another important addition to this theory is that though there are social welfare laws to protect female migrants during their maternity period but the tag of “migrant” and “female” still holds a negative connotation in employers’ accounting book.

However, these are not the only challenges that migrant women face. Discriminatory attitudes from co-workers, lower salaries compared to male migrants and native colleagues, discriminatory attitude based on their skin color, judgmental attitude after coming back from

maternity leave are just some other issues that were found to be faced as challenges by these cluster of Latin American female migrants repeatedly.

Finally, the third and last finding gives relevance to the somewhat successful integration of these women, not only in the labor market, but also in the cultural life of Barcelona. It affirms that cultural affinity is an asset for any host country to attract skillful migrants for their economy. Besides, Spain is opening a door to Latin American women who aspires to be European than American. Last but not least considering all these aspect and theories if policy makers and employers take effective and timely steps to integrate these highly educated women, they can add a significant input to the national economy.

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Appendix:

1. All the participant has signed the consent form which was suggested by the CIREP, at UPF website with condition of being anonymous.

2. The following table is the format of interview question that were asked to these 16 participants.

Keyword for tracing pattern	Sample question
Personal Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• When did you move to Barcelona?• What is your last degree in education?• Do you live with your family here?• Do you have kids?

Work Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What position you are working on? • Which language you mostly use in workplace? • From when you started working on this company • Did you need any specific job skill to work here? • Do you speak fluent Spanish? • Do you speak fluent Catalan? • Are you Satisfied with your salary?
Pre-Work Life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been unemployed before joining this company? -If yes, how long? -If not, can you tell me more about why did you quit in last job? • Do you remember what was the question that you were asked in your job interview?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the most difficult question/strange question you had been asked? • Which part of that job interview impressed your employer (according to your idea) • Before getting this job, how many vacancies you applied for? • For how many you got a call to interview? • Why do you think you got rejection in other jobs?
Study Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does your previous education in your home country helped you to get a job here? • Did you do any extra course or internship to get a job here? • How long were you unemployed after being graduated here? • Where did you get that information about Job and skill?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you have good relationship with your community here (e.g.: Hispanic community; Latino community etc.) • Did anyone from your community helped you to get a job here?
Work Life inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How many days of paid holiday do you get in a year? • Did you ever take maternity leave? -If yes, how long? -Did you feel any difference in your workplace after maternity leave? -Was your colleagues and boss helpful during this time? • Do you go on any casual Friday with your colleague? • Do you hang out with your colleague during “siesta”? • How many Latin American women are there in your company? • Do you think there could be more women from Latin America? • Why do you think you specifically got this opportunity of working in this job among all the candidates?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you ever do paid/ unpaid overtime in your job? • How often does that happen? • Does your other colleague do so too?
Satisfactory level and social life	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did you ever need an emergency week/day off?If yes, How long?Was it paid? • Do you get invitation for parties to your colleague's house?