

Immigrant working women and work-life balance: Fewer opportunities for occupational mobility?

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Abstract

This paper studies the occupational mobility of immigrant women by analysing their work-life balance strategies. Results show that the lower level of support for the work-life balance received by these women is an obstacle to their upward mobility. However, the segmented structure of the job market must also be taken into account in the analysis.

Key words: occupational mobility, immigration, gender, work-life balance.

Until recently, the occupational mobility of immigrants has been studied from different vantage points, bearing in mind factors like human capital, market and labour segmentation, migratory policy, gender and age. Nonetheless, the implications of family care burdens have seldom been considered when trying to grasp this population's occupational mobility. More specifically, immigrant families' difficulties balancing work and household chores has scarcely been studied within the framework of mobility. This article aims to contribute to filling this void with a qualitative analysis of the occupational experiences of immigrant working women in Spain. It starts with the idea that the careers of these workers show slower patterns of promotion over time than those of autochthonous women because they have less support to achieve a work-life balance. The analysis of interviews corroborates this idea; however, it is important to bear in mind the segmented structure of the Spanish labour market in order to understand how vertical mobility occurs over time.

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1. Introduction

The study of the occupational mobility of the immigrant population is situated within the sphere of relations between the job market and migratory flows. This relationship is not static but changes and evolves over time. For this reason, longitudinal studies enable us to capture the work itineraries of immigrants in the host country more accurately. In Spain, empirical evidence shows that since the late 1990s and the onset of the current economic crisis, there has been occupational mobility among immigrants, albeit to a lesser extent than among the autochthonous population (Simón, Ramos, & Sanromá, 2010). Furthermore, the segmentation patterns within the job market are different for autochthonous and immigrant workers, and this mobility has been possible within the context of strong economic growth during this period. On the other hand, in addition to being dynamic, these processes are not gender-blind. The figures show that in recent decades, when the migratory flows to Spain have increased, the presence of women who emigrate alone has been quite high, which has led to talk of the feminisation process of migratory flows (Ribas, 1999; Mestre & Casal, 2002). This process is closely related to the labour demands of the Spanish market, which has needed unskilled workers to cover jobs in the lowest rungs on the occupational scale during the period studied (late 1990s until 2007).

The purpose of this article is to study the effects that difficulties achieving a work-life balance can have on the occupational mobility of immigrant working women. For this reason, the study concentrates on occupational evolution in the years when heavy migratory flows were coming in, and it analyses the careers of female immigrants during this period from the standpoint of the work-life balance. The research question on which this study is based revolves around ascertaining the effects that difficulties achieving a work-life balance between productive and reproductive time can have on the careers of immigrant women.

Many previous studies have shown that autochthonous women have fewer opportunities for promotion, work in occupations with lower pay with more part-time workdays and are more affected by unemployment than men (Rica, 2007; Villar, 2010). The desire to explain the reason behind these differences has prompted the need to reveal the connection between the productive and reproductive work spheres (see Rubery, Fagan, & Smith, 1994; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). This approach assumes the socioeconomic existence of two spheres or subsystems which account for the complexity of the concept of work. The relations between the two spheres are unequal in that paid work is economically and socially dominant. Men and women are not equally distributed in these spheres, and historically the responsibility for housework has fallen exclusively upon women. Currently, despite women's full entry into the workplace, these patterns still remain in place. Although it is true that men are gradually increasing their involvement in reproductive tasks, especially those from the younger generations and with a higher educational level, women still spend more hours on household chores and therefore have a double workday: in the job market and at home.

In the case of immigrant women, their type of migratory plan, the dominant social mores in their home country, the weakening of their family network after emigration and their lower access to social policies all hinder the work-life balance. This study seeks to ascertain to what extent these difficulties may prove to be a hindrance to vertical mobility,

while also observing the structural factors that condition careers, like the occupational structure of the Spanish job market and the limitations imposed by migratory policy. With this goal in mind, the results of six[†] in-depth interviews with immigrant and autochthonous women with similar occupational characteristics are analysed.

Even though this is not the first study to relate immigration, family and work-life balance (Bailey, Blake, & Cooke, 2004; Parella & Samper, 2007), it is one of the first that tries to shed new light on the phenomenon of occupational mobility by incorporating the qualitative study of immigrant women's imaginaries of care.

2. Occupational mobility of the immigrant population

In this study, occupational mobility is approached in an intergenerational way, bearing in mind the changes in the occupational positions of individuals throughout their working lives. In this sense, mobility can be upward or downward in terms of differences between the salary and/or status of the previous and new jobs.

The literature has shown that changes in immigrant workers' occupational mobility depend on multiple factors. First, emigration itself leads to a major social and economic ruptures (McAllister, 1995) which initially positions emigrants in disadvantageous situations. Studies conducted in different geographic and social settings show that immigrant workers experience unfavourable occupational differences compared to their socioeconomic status at home (McAllister, 1995; Clark & Lindey, 2005; Redstone, 2008). Secondly, there are significant disparities according to gender, in that women tend to experience a steeper occupational downgrade after emigration (González-Ferrer, 2011). In this sense, the structure of job opportunities for immigrant women differs from that of immigrant men and from that of autochthonous women. First, the status of immigrant women is affected by the restrictions of a sexually segregated occupational structure in which they earn lower salaries, have less job stability and are given fewer opportunities for promotion than immigrant men, regardless of their qualifications (Parella & Samper, 2007). Secondly, their immigrant status situates them on a lower stratum of the occupational structure compared to autochthonous women, in that they cover the jobs with the least social prestige that are not wanted by their autochthonous counterparts, such as domestic service and the lower-tier occupations in the hotel or retail industries (Ribas, 1999; Mestre & Casal, 2002; Parella, 2003). Thirdly, other factors have often been mentioned as well, such as individuals' legal status, entry visa or national origin (Friedberg, 2000; Redstone, 2008). Finally, other studies have proven the existence of major differences in mobility according to educational level, with less mobility among workers with lower levels of schooling (Chiswick et al., 2005).

Other approaches have stressed structural explanations, such as market segmentation theories. From this vantage point, the lower mobility of the immigrant population can be explained by their concentration in secondary segments of the job market (Martín Artiles et al., 2011). Likewise, we should not ignore explanations based on

[†] These interviews are part of a broader study on the careers of immigrant workers in Spain between 1997 and 2011 (Lozano, 2013).

social capital; social networks are sources of information and resources of occupational mobility for immigrants, while also lowering the risks of emigration (Massey et al., 1998).

A new approach is proposed in this study, without ignoring previous contributions. Specifically, given that immigrant women are fitting into a previously segmented job market with a particular demand for labour in a process in which social variables such as gender and socioeconomic status also come into play, this study seeks to provide yet another element of analysis which will allow for a better approach to studying occupational mobility. As mentioned above, the work-life balance difficulties experienced by immigrant women are presented here as an explanatory factor of their mobility; they may not work in isolation from other variables, but they are suitable for being considered an important factor in the job expectations of immigrant women, just as they are for autochthonous women (see, among many other studies, those by Tornø, 2005; Crompton & Harris, 1999; Jacobs & Gerson, 2004; Lewis, 2009).

3. Immigrant women, the job market and work-life balance

Currently, there is a broad range of studies on the occupational mobility of immigrant women, and the inclusion of gender as an explanatory variable has led to a considerably better understanding of international migrations and immigrants' entry into new job markets (see Oso, 1998; Anthias & Lazaridis, 2000; Parreñas, 2001).

Nowadays, conceptualising migration from the gender perspective means addressing a series of debates that had already weighed heavily in studies on women and the job market. The first debate was on the assumption of multiple segmentation by class, ethnicity and gender, which entails studying the relations between and gender, immigration and work. This multiplicity must be understood as more than the mere sum of different sources of discrimination and instead as the intersectionality of the different elements shaping the status of women and immigrants. In other words, under the prism of multiplicity, explanations of immigrant women's lower rates of participation in the job market, as well as their lower results compared to their male counterparts, reflect their triple status as women, immigrants and working class. These factors condition the way they access the job market, which is limited to certain activity sectors such as the informal economy (Pessar, 2009) and domestic service (Escrivá, 2000).

This study sets out to take a second debate into account, one that is seldom addressed in the case of female immigrants: considering the relationships between productive and reproductive work time when studying the occupational mobility of immigrant women. This interest reflects two main motives. First, studying work trajectories without bearing in mind the intertwined dynamics between the work and domestic spheres would entail taking a step backward in the study of job market inequalities. Secondly, many studies have stressed the effects of the segmented market structure on immigrant women's mobility (Rendall et al., 2008), and the influence of other institutional variables and individual attributes (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Nonetheless, the effects that the impossibility of balancing paid work and family can have on the occupational mobility of immigrant working women has not been sufficiently studied. The work-life balance, or more accurately the degree of support available, conditions the quantity and quality of time available of productive work. Having less time

may be an obstacle to occupational mobility, especially for immigrants who require a heavy initial investment to become familiar with a new work environment.

This proposal emerges from the observation that even though many studies on the job market and gender have emphasised that women have fewer opportunities for job promotion because they are the ones balancing work and family, and therefore they cannot devote as much time to work as men can, in studies on the job market, immigration and gender, this situation has seldom been taken into account. This is why before specifying the methodology and results of this study, we should first clarify the terminology regarding the notions of *work-life balance* and *work*.

According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), the concept of *work-life balance* is defined via the tensions between employment and family stemming from the incompatible pressures between work and family roles. Throughout this study, we will refer to the concept of *employment* to mean productive work, understanding the notion of *work* based on the revision undertaken by the feminist sociology of work (see Borderías, Carrasco, & Alemany, 1994). Starting with the analysis model called the paradigm of production and reproduction, the notion of work is understood to include not only activities geared towards producing goods and services in the market but also all activities geared towards the biological, social and ideological reproduction of the workforce (Torns & Carrasquer, 1999). Following this revision, and bearing in mind the critiques levelled at the concept of *work-life balance* in the previous literature (Moreno, 2006), this study defines the notion of *work-life balance* as the act of harmonising the two spheres of production and reproduction, which do not start on the same level and have incompatibilities on a macro scale. These incompatibilities are an important factor that must be borne in mind when examining the differences in occupational mobility that may emerge between immigrant men and women, and between autochthonous and immigrant workers. Furthermore, this incompatibility takes shape through not only the unequal and asymmetrical social recognition of productive and reproductive work but also the logic of space and time. In this vein, Balbo (1978) describes the situation of working mothers using the term *double presence*, to reflect the double burden in the same time, space and day.

4. Methodology

This study uses qualitative data analysis techniques to answer the research question guiding the entire article; specifically, it uses six work biographies of immigrant and autochthonous working women chosen after a typological grid was developed. The informants were chosen by empirically developing a theoretical typological grid, identifying four sample distribution axes of the most important work biographies to be defined. To do so, two primary data sources were used: the Continuous Sample of Working Lives (CSWL) for 2007, and the Active Population Survey (APS) for the period 2007-2011. With these two empirical databases, a qualitative typology of trajectories was defined. Specifically, the sample selection criteria took the following basic dimensions of the social structure into consideration: gender, generation, geographic origin and socioeconomic class. In terms of gender, only profiles of immigrant women were chosen and then compared with similar profiles of autochthonous women with the goal of explaining the different conditions on accessing and remaining in the job market, and the

presences and absences in housework and caregiving. Secondly, women between the ages of thirty and fifty who have a minimum of ten years of work history in Spain, and who live with at least one child between birth and twelve years old, were taken into account in order to capture a sufficient work trajectory. Thirdly, geographic origin was established as a definer of the immigrant population, and only profiles from Latin America, Eastern Europe and North Africa were chosen, with the goal of capturing immigration for economic reasons. Finally, socioeconomic class was defined via three sub-indicators: level of formal education, employment sector and mobility throughout their career in Spain. The data from the APS and the CSWL were extraordinarily helpful in establishing the mobility indicators (classified into high, middle and low) as measured through changes in positions along the occupational scale, as well as in seeing their distribution throughout the employment sectors. High mobility corresponds to changing positions between six and nine times, middle between three and five, and low between one or two, or no changes. Although the interviewee's socioeconomic class at home was not a selection criterion, it was borne in mind when interpreting the results as a structural and conditioning factor of their work trajectories.

Based on the stories of their work trajectories, this study seeks to inquire into the factors related to work-life time balance, immigrant and autochthonous women's perception of productive and reproductive work, and the connections between the work and family spheres throughout the course of an individual's life. The ultimate goal is to identify the imaginaries around employment and family care in order to respond to the hypothesis guiding this study, which starts from the idea that the work trajectories of immigrant women show fewer opportunities for upward mobility because the degree of work-life balance accessible to them curbs their mobility. With this goal in mind, the work-life balance strategies adopted by immigrant women are compared to those of autochthonous women, along with their perceptions of the tensions between employment and family. Following Garrido and Gil Calvo's (1993) definition, by strategies we mean the selection of alternative courses of action (tactical resources) to produce future results (strategic objectives) in situations of uncertainty.

The table below shows the distribution of the universe of informants in the sample. All the interviews were held between March and November 2011.

Table 1. Typological grid

Educational Level		Higher ed.	Middle-primary school	Primary school
Activity sector		Healthcare and skilled services	Unskilled services, retail, hospitality and industry	Household and domestic service sector
Origin	Immigrant	<i>MAI1 (Ana)*</i>	<i>MMI3 (Milena)</i>	<i>MBI5 (Fàtima)</i>
	Autochthonous	<i>MAA2 (Marta)</i>	<i>MMA4 (Laura)</i>	<i>MBA6 (Roser)</i>
Mobility trajectory		High mobility	Middle mobility	Low mobility

* Pseudonyms in parentheses.

Source: Created by the authors by identifying the four sample axes.

5. Results

5.1. Immigrant women with high mobility

The mobility of this first profile is usually defined by the interaction of factors such as the importance of the first sector in which they work, their skill level, their migratory project, the class of their family in their home country, their job expectations and their subjective assessment of caregiving work.

With regard to their professional trajectories, both immigrant and autochthonous women always start their careers in unskilled jobs, but while for the latter this is the time when they are finishing their education, for the former it is a result of inconsistent status, that is, a discrepancy between their skill level and the job they hold, which often lasts much longer than they had imagined.

When I came, I never imagined that I would never again work as a journalist... I mean, the entire process is really complicated, [...] I had to take classes to earn my degree [...] and I came to earn my Master's, because you realise that if you want a skilled job you have to study here. If not, they only glance at your CV, I mean maybe not if I'd gone to Harvard instead of the University of Lima, but actually I don't know... [...] it's a bit frustrating. [Ana, MAI1]

In the case of this interviewee, a journalist who emigrated from Peru, the fact that her inconsistent status has lasted a long time becomes clear. Her efforts to invest in education and the time she spent on the job throughout her career in Spain have enabled her to improve her professional status, but she never manages to develop her career as a journalist. Thus, what allows for the occupational mobility of these women is the acquisition of new educational resources, which is also made possible because of their social status in their home countries and their professional aspirations to improve their career. Nonetheless, as explained below, their social imaginaries around caregiving and family responsibilities significantly curb these aspirations. Furthermore, the origin of these women must also be taken into account. They have university degrees and come from the prosperous middle class in their countries, and they had sufficient family resources to emigrate. Therefore, this emigration takes place not because of the family's economic need but because of their desire to further their careers; thus, they emigrate either alone or with their partners with similar job expectations.

I left Peru because I didn't think I'd find the same conditions there, I don't know. It was a carefully planned decision, and before deciding I came here to spend a month of vacation, quote-unquote, but before coming I searched for contacts and met with some people to see what it would be like. I came to Spain obviously because the language made it easy, and because I thought that later it would be easier for me to go to France with Spanish nationality. It was a strategy I had thought through from the start. [Ana, MAI1]

Understanding how these women's mobility takes place, with an emphasis on their work-life balance, enables us to see aspects which are hidden with just quantitative data, such as women's double presence and the existence of feelings of guilt that curb their upward mobility. Even though work-life balance strategies often come up when the interviewees are asked about their occupational mobility, the perception of caregiving varies according to their origin and determines different work expectations. For the autochthonous women, family burdens are part of the "puzzle" that they identify in their daily lives, and

they have resources such as a family network, the distribution of household chores (even though they run the household), hiring help formally or informally, access to public and private resources when school is out, etc. In contrast, even though the immigrant women have some resources, their perceptions of caregiving time and work time come into conflict. Even though these women have university degrees and professional migratory projects, they tend to find themselves in polarised situations: on the one hand, they want successful careers, but on the other they feel guilty for leaving their children with other women (often immigrants as well), which leads them to reject opportunities for upward mobility. For the autochthonous women, this guilt is lower because they have family networks which they regard as nurturing, affective environments for their children. This is illustrated by the stories recounted.

Since I have a more flexible timetable [than her husband] I usually go myself [to take the children to school], but my daughters are no doubt the queens of extracurricular activities. They do one every day because I can't get off work until 6:30. [...] Obviously, I'm very happy to be a mother, and fortunately I have my own mother, I mean, and my husband who does help me a lot, but still it's exhausting. [Marta, MAA2]

Oh yeah, my son is my life, my reason for being; he's everything to me, and when I don't have much time to spend with him, I feel awful. It's difficult to be a good mother, and sometimes I wonder if my mother was a good mother. And yes, she was, the best mother I could ask for, and the reason is simple: my mother is always there when she's needed [...] so I prefer to stay where I am, because accepting the managerial job [with more responsibility than her current job] would mean that I have to study and then spend lots of hours in the hospital... and I'd have to leave my son with a babysitter and that would kill me. [Ana, MAI1]

The work-life balance strategies of these women are therefore affected by job market expectations, where feelings of guilt appear and double-presence strategies reveal that despite their access to higher education, they nonetheless abide by the typical gender roles. The differences between the two lie in the weakening of family networks that immigrant women experience because of their emigration; however, all the women accept the reproductive work as "their own responsibility" and therefore, even if they outsource housework, they are in charge of managing and overseeing it.

5.2. Women with middle mobility

The trajectories identified in this profile share a much higher presence of unemployment than in the previous profile. Furthermore, the periods of unemployment often dovetail with times of more family responsibilities (small children or ill parents), such that these women leave the job market both by being dismissed and out of the need to care for their families. In this sense, these women's availability for caregiving marks their trajectories. The differences between female autochthonous and immigrant workers can be explained by the fact that the latter are less protected from unemployment, both because they have less support from the family network and because of the lack of unemployment benefits or other job-related subsidies. Furthermore, the importance of work-oriented migratory projects is also worth noting, such as sending home monetary remittances, which renders it absolutely essential to have economic income, a need that autochthonous women do not have.

The cases interviewed clearly exemplify these factors: on the one hand, Milena (MMI3), originally from Rumania, who started as a household worker and is currently a waitress in a restaurant, and on the other Laura, who was born in Barcelona and is the owner of a café without salaried workers, who left the job market for four years to care for her children. They both identify the constant conflict between work and family but are able to resolve it in different ways. Generally speaking, the factors that influence occupational mobility have to do both with the productive sphere and the work role they play, and with the family structure and their role as mothers. In this sense, one of the important factors in understanding the mobility of these women is what has been called gender self-schemas (Bem, 1981), which determine patterns of attitudes and behaviours. These patterns are common to both autochthonous and immigrant women, but the resources available to each group determines the differences.

It's always gone like that, I mean it's easier for me to stay at home with the kids because ultimately if you count day care, and I mean with the bar we also need solutions for after school, recreational activities and stuff, and the summers, in the end all that is much more expensive. And we decided that I would stop working and stay at home. So I didn't work for four years, I mean, I didn't work outside the house because let me tell you at the end of every day I had bags under my eyes like you couldn't believe! [laughing] But you know it could have been more, but in the end, I mean, since my father was elderly I started working in the café. [Laura, MMA4]

I spent a few months taking care of my son, but I had to start looking soon because we need both salaries [hers and her husband's]. Would you have liked to spend more time caring for your son? Of course I would, a lot, but then comes rent, money to send to Rumania, the... expenses, I mean there are lots of expenses and I had to look for work. [Milena, MMI3]

Another important aspect of this profile is that the work trajectories of the autochthonous and immigrant women are parallel, that is, their jobs are complementary, which means that there is no competition for jobs. In this sense, the autochthonous women tend to accept part-time work or fewer hours in order to balance productive and reproductive time, while the immigrant women need the salary from a full-time job even if there are incompatibilities between job and family. For these women, the time they spend in the Spanish job market is key because it produces mobility, not only because of the acquisition and improvement of linguistic competences but also because of the importance of the relational network.

At first I didn't leave it, it didn't matter to me because what mattered was having a job, and I mean I did lots of things I had never done before, and of course only those of us from abroad did them, like night-time cleaning hours, lots of hours on my feet in a restaurant until very late and so on. Later, you gradually come to understand the country better. [...] What you notice the most is that after a year you start knowing people, and they help you or you help them and so it's better. Plus, now I speak Spanish really well, and I'm taking Catalan classes, and this is very important because everything doesn't seem so strange, like it did at first. [Milena, MMI3]

In terms of the work-life balance strategies in this profile, the first differential factor between immigrant and autochthonous families is the greater division of household chores between immigrant men and women. This is not due to a change in mindset among

the immigrant population; to the contrary, in the discourses analysed, the women are always the ones who take the responsibility. However, having a smaller network of work-life balance resources means that men have to share the household chores so the women can spend more time working and therefore contribute more money to the household. For example, Milena (MMI3) very clearly describes how she and her husband arrange their job schedules so that they can both devote as many hours to paid work as possible. She describes it as an economic necessity for the household, while she nonetheless exclusively manages the housework.

I'm there in the morning and I prepare lunch, so my husband is there at lunchtime and he goes to get the kids and they eat what I've left prepared. And he goes in the afternoon, too, and then I arrive soon after that. If we need to go shopping, he goes, and I leave him a list in the mornings, too. So, what time do you get up to prepare so many things? At six, and I work from... at night until 11, he works from 7 in the morning until 1 in one place and from 6 to 9 in another. And I work from 9 to 6, and after 9 I go and clean at the hospital until 11. [...] The problem is weekends, when both of us work and our son doesn't have school, so it's difficult... since our older son is bigger he can take care of the little one, or sometimes a neighbour, who's also Rumanian, comes for a bit. [Milena, MMI3]

In fact, as highlighted in the excerpt above, another strategy that these women use is having older siblings care for younger ones, never as the only solution but often for just a few hours. This strategy is not found in the interviews with autochthonous women of any profile. Making timetables compatible is found, but in these cases, autochthonous women often care of each other's children. In the case of Laura (MMA4), who was interviewed in this mobility profile, family care tasks are divided between both partners, but especially between herself and her sister, and between the sisters and their mother.

Yes, of course, it's all covered, both Saturdays with recreation and during the week. I mean they also go to recreation, but I can see that they're happy; it's a place with outstanding values, which is what we're missing today. [...] And I mean, of course I also leave them with their grandmothers, that's great, and with my sister because she lives right above us, you know? And you know sometimes I get home late and she's fed them dinner at home. I mean, it's a luxury because who knows: it's not like I have to go collect them or take them anywhere, you know? I've got peace of mind because I can always stay at work without worrying because I know that if my sister sees that I'm going to get home late she'll come down and takes care of them. So, you know, so I'm more relaxed at work in this respect. And sometimes she works on Saturdays, so I stay with all the kids. [Laura, MMA4]

Finally, one very important aspect which distinguishes these women is the legal status of the immigrant women. Their work trajectories are also directly affected by their legal status, which creates a keen sense of insecurity and positions them in the most vulnerable spaces within the informal economy.

5.3. *Women with low mobility*

Finally, for women with low-mobility trajectories, their threefold status as women, immigrants and working-class situates them in one of the weakest positions on the occupational scale (Parella, 2003), in line with what previous studies have concluded.

This position also explains their greater difficulties managing their daily time between work and family responsibilities.

This profile encompasses workers with less occupational mobility and less stable working conditions. However, once again the differences according to the socioeconomic level of the family in the home country explain the subjective validity of each of the women interviewed. The work trajectories analysed in this profile show particular characteristics, some of which are associated with migration, such as the emergence of global caregiving networks or the inconsistent status of immigrant working women, while others are associated with the employment sector and the structure of the Spanish job market, such as their perpetuation as household workers and the more glaring lack of protection in the domestic sector. Once again, one of the most important characteristics of these women's occupational mobility is related to their gender self-schemas.

Generally speaking, the factors that influence their occupational mobility have to do both with the productive sphere and the work role they play, and with the family structure and their role as mothers, or with their migratory plans (it is important to distinguish between those who have been brought here by their husbands to reunite the family and those who initiated their own pioneering migration project). The case of Fátima (MBI5) from Morocco illustrates the importance of the migratory project. She was reunited with her husband and their two children, and at first her main occupation was caring for the family. It was not until her husband's parents came from their home country that they needed higher earnings, and she had to look for paid work. She found a job as a domestic worker, and she expresses the impossibility of being able to work as anything else even though her legal status would allow her to (three years after the family was reunited, she secured a work permit). One of the reasons she accepts the current working conditions is that they allow her to care for her own children while she cares for her employers' children. Furthermore, signs of ethnic discrimination she perceives in the host society are clear in her discourse.

Since the parents aren't there, I can take my children, and this helps me because otherwise I don't know how I'd do it. This is why I don't want another job, because if I go somewhere else I don't know what I'd do with my little kids. And it's not easy, because we Muslims are not very well accepted, and I know this because I walk down the street and other women tell me about it. [Fátima, MBI5]

Another important aspect observed in the discourse is the expression of a kind of moral superiority of her own values over the caregiving values of Spanish society. As low-paid workers, it is possible to argue that this rhetoric saves them and enables them to feel better not only about their jobs but also with the migratory experience they have undertaken by leaving behind their families and roots (this is also described in Datta et al., 2006). To these women, respect and discipline are values that have been lost in Spanish society, where the children are poorly raised and become "little dictators" within the household.

You don't dare tell a child from here "don't do this or don't do that" because they're going to answer you with something like "who do you think you are? I don't care." It's terrible, they show no respect either at home or in public places. Sometimes I'm riding the train and I see situations in which the children are hanging off the rails or don't let elderly people sit down, they make a lot of noise,

they're little kids in uniforms coming back from prestigious schools. [Fátima, MBI5]

On the other hand, the differences between the women interviewed in this profile can also be found in the number of hours and therefore time spent on their jobs, which they are willing to work in exchange for money. It should not be surprising that immigrant women have a greater need for income, but what is worth pointing out is that for autochthonous women, a part-time job is a way to achieve a work-life balance, while for immigrant women, more income means more help sent to their family in their home country.

I prefer to work mornings only, because that way I have the entire afternoon to do housework, be with the kids, help collect them at school, prepare dinner, run baths, do laundry and all that, and since my husband works and earns more than I do, because you know all that about caring for the grandparents. [Roser, MBI6]

Furthermore, just as in the previous profiles, the difficulties balancing work and family are greater for the immigrants. Two strategies were identified in this sense; the first is observed in the families of women in the middle-low mobility trajectories, and the second is a low-cost version of strategies also found in the families of the interviewees with high-mobility, stable work trajectories. On the one hand, the solution to incompatibility lies in the combination of the couple's work hours, even though the women are the ones who coordinate and manage all the reproductive work. On the other, the low-cost solutions are based on occasionally hiring caregiving services, always with contractual informality, usually young immigrant women who have just arrived whom they meet in their neighbourhood or through the community network. What is more, we observed a third route facilitated by the very informality of their jobs, which enables them to bring their children to work with them, as mentioned above.

6. Conclusions

The interviews conducted for this research reveal that immigrant women use a variety of strategies to balance work and family. Specifically, four different strategies were identified; they never occur in their pure state, but instead two or more of them are often combined, and the double female presence is always present: 1) paying for care from caregivers without a family relationship with the hiring family, mostly informally; 2) negotiating care within the family, in that both partners take on certain responsibilities but always under the management and coordination of the woman; 3) informal work-life balance in the workplace, meaning a preference for informal jobs which make it possible to bring children to paid jobs; and 4) putting older siblings in charge, minors who care for other minors who are home alone while the parents are working.

Furthermore, the results of this analysis also show a relationship among migratory projects, work trajectories and the work-life balance strategies identified. In this sense, women with higher educational levels who have expressive or professional migratory projects and high mobility in their host country tend to outsource part of the household and family work. In contrast, among the immigrant women who have emigrated via family reunification or who have initiated their own migratory projects because of economic needs in their home country, who are less qualified and have middle- and low-mobility career trajectories, the work-life balance is achieved with low-cost solutions or via the presence of children at work and siblings caring for siblings. These women are also

more exposed to occupational and residential segmentation, atypical workdays and low income.

Among the more qualified women with higher mobility, the perception of care has a strong presence and directly impacts their careers. To these immigrant women, the difficulties achieving a work-life balance are the expression of a polarised situation between the quest for professional success after emigration and the sense of guilt for “neglecting” their small children. In contrast, the autochthonous women with similar occupational characteristics have a lower sense of guilt because they have more resources to achieve a work-life balance, which they also consider affective and educational, such as the family network made up of grandparents and other family members or children’s free-time environments.

Among the workers with lower qualifications and mobility, the pressures to work (economic migratory projects, need for income) and the pressures in the workplace (atypical workdays, job insecurity) are the main factors limiting their work-life balance, especially childcare. Given the need for income and the low salary levels, these workers have to find low-cost solutions to caregiving, such as combining the unwieldy working hours of both adult members of the household, older siblings caring for younger siblings or the community network. In the specific case of women with low-mobility work trajectories, another important factor in occupational vulnerability is the job sector in which they work, usually domestic service. This sector has a high rate of job insecurity; furthermore, since it is vastly unprotected by the welfare state, unemployment and joblessness make these women’s trajectories more vulnerable. Many of them also face the paradox of caring for other women’s children as they scramble to care for their own. In these situations, these women’s narrative discourses revolve around creating a kind of moral superiority compared to the caregiving values of the host society. This discourse protects them and makes them feel better not only in terms of their jobs, but especially with regard to the social and economic exclusion which they experience during their early years settling into the Spanish market and society.

The work trajectories of the autochthonous women in the middle- and low-mobility profiles can primarily be explained by the importance of motherhood and the perception of care. In this sense, these trajectories are marked by the centrality of reproductive time, with long periods spent outside the job market to exclusively dedicate themselves to family tasks. This later has an indirect impact on their work trajectories, as they always remain in sectors directly or indirectly related to caregiving and cleaning activities. Many of them naturalise their experience of this process by justifying the internal division of work at home with their husbands’ ability to earn more and the added expenses of extracurricular services.

In short, the class differences between the mothers show different kinds of preferences and limitations when choosing work and family alternatives, and these are usually socially and culturally created via their biographic experiences, their kinship relations and the normative views of the society where they live. In this context, work-life balance strategies are linked not only to time or economic needs throughout the work trajectory but also to aspects of morality with regard to the family role of these women.

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