



Editorial: Women's Empowerment, Migration, and Health

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Editorial on the Research Topic

Women's Empowerment, Migration, and Health

The Research Topic gathers studies related to crucial themes concerning women's empowerment and its consequences on health, physical and psychological wellbeing, and social welfare. Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls globally is one of the Sustainable Developmental Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda (UN, 2015). Despite substantial progress attained in the last three decades, many open issues remain (World Economic Forum, 2021), like the gender pay gap, underrepresentation at the political level, gender-based violence, difficulties in accessing health care, and advanced educational programs. Such inequalities are particularly evident for women living in developing countries and for migrant women and may be exacerbated by the effects of the current global COVID-19 and international crisis (Roesch et al., 2020).

The first topic addressed in the collection is that of human trafficking. Zimmerman et al. present qualitative and quantitative findings from a 5-year theory-based assessment of an empowerment intervention (experimental and quasi-experimental design) to prevent the exploitation of South Asian female migrant workers. Results indicate that empowerment was not achieved due to flawed assumptions about power inequalities and poor integration of context-related factors.

Second, two articles presented in this Research Topic focus on the issue of gender-based violence. Leye et al. reflect on the application of the Council of Europe's Istanbul Convention. The authors review a study promoted by the European Parliament focused on the implementation process of the Convention. It is reported that the ratification of the Convention leads to the adoption of new legal measures and amendments to the existing legislation. By contrast, legislative changes are less extensive in countries that have not ratified the Convention. These countries and countries with high resistance to the Convention often display victim-blaming public attitudes to intimate partner violence, stronger gender stereotypes, and resistance to same-sex marriage/rights. The authors also review resistance to the Convention in countries that have ratified it but have concerns in response to the proposed legislation on sexuality education in schools, same-sex marriage, and adoption. In another contribution, Earp presents a critical essay highlighting the concept of genital cutting as gender-based violence and sex-based discrimination against or between children. Virtually no societies practice female genital cutting (FGC) without also committing unnecessary male genital cutting (MGC). The inverse is not necessarily true since several communities practice MGC without practicing FGC. According to the author, a more appropriate target of condemnation, from the perspective of promoting women's and girls' rights in FGC-practicing cultures, may be MGC rituals that invariably occur in the same societies. Thus, both FGC and MGC of children should be targeted by interventions, given the significant power asymmetry involved and children's unique vulnerability, regardless of sex, to painful and potentially traumatizing practices.

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Third, other studies deal with challenges to women's health in contemporary societies. Noh reflects on the condition of women's healthcare in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The author reviews data on maternal mortality and its putative causes and data on the healthcare organization system for women in the DPRK. Some principles and suggestions for a long-term sustainable improvement of women's health conditions in the DPRK are provided. Zheng et al. used data from the China Migrants Dynamic Survey (CMDS) to analyze the relation between air pollution, economic advantages, and settlement intentions of internal migrants. They find that higher health education and social integration are positively associated with the likelihood of settlement intention. The authors conclude that health education and social and organizational participation can reduce the negative effect of air pollution and increase the positive impact of economic advantages on migrants' settlement intention. Park et al. used data from the South Korean Longitudinal Survey of Women and Families to assess the putative association between the degree of married women's satisfaction with their husbands' participation in family caregiving and the emergence of depressive symptoms. The authors find that women reporting not being satisfied are more likely to show depressive symptoms than women who reported being satisfied.

A fourth topic analyzed in the collection is gender roles in grandparental childcare. Trappolini et al. explored this issue using data from two Italian surveys released by the Italian National Institute of Statistics, the "Social Condition and Integration of Foreign Citizen" and the "Multiscopo—Aspetti della vita quotidiana." The authors analyzed possible differences in childcare provided by co-resident grandparents between Italian and migrant households, considering the role of gender and self-rated health (SRH). They find that migrant co-resident grandparents are less likely to declare bad SRH and no childcare and are more likely to declare good SRH and

provide childcare than non-migrant co-resident grandparents. In addition, women have a higher probability of reporting poor care for their grandchildren than men and having a higher probability of self-reporting poor health.

Fifth, the Research Topic presents an investigation of gender-related issues in the COVID-19 era from the perspective of policymakers. Camussi et al. discuss the role of the Task Force on these problems promoted by the Italian government to tackle these issues in 2020. This experience attests to the importance of a multiplicity of perspectives that reflect reality's complexity to promote women's empowerment in the post-COVID era. The authors also consider gender-related policy issues and the role of different disciplines, like social psychology, sociology, and demography, in the political and decision-making debate.

Overall, the contributions included in this Research Topic demonstrate that empowering women is both a goal and a promoter of development. In general, empowerment can lead women to participate in social and political life, promoting their effective involvement and equal opportunities in the labor market. This can have a noteworthy impact on health, ensuring better care, social protection, promotion, universal access to sexual and reproductive health, and the reduction of harmful practices such as forced marriage and FGC. It can also reduce all forms of violence against women and girls in the private and public sphere, thus decreasing the impact of violence. Empowerment can be important for the most vulnerable women, and especially for migrant women, who are particularly exposed to the effects of violence, discrimination, and underrepresentation.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

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