


Article

Effects of Pandemics on Migrant Communities: Analysis of Existing Sources

Mollo Kenneth Otieno ^{1,†} and Lewis Nkenyereye ^{2,*,†} ¹ School of World Mission and Ministry, Kosin University, Pusan 49104, Korea; kenmollo2011@gmail.com² Department of Computer and Information Security, Sejong University, Seoul 05006, Korea

* Correspondence: nkenyele@sejong.ac.kr

† These authors contributed equally to this work.

Abstract: Gender, religion, and migration are perplexing issues, especially in this era of the COVID-19 pandemic in which gendered and religious dynamics are emerging within migrant communities across the world. The relations between these three concepts are explored within this bleak time that has exposed previously neglected dynamics present in migrant communities living in distant host countries in Asia, Europe, and the United States of America. In this paper, we discuss the intricacies within religion and gender among migrant communities and the gendered impacts that COVID-19 has had on the aforementioned migrant communities. Through a secondary desk review analysis of the diverse emerging literature, we show that there are gendered implications of the pandemic measures taken by governments as migrant communities occupy unique translocalities. Overall, the intersection of religion, gender, and migration underscores religion reproducing gender roles among the migrants. The reproduction of gender in religious institutions disadvantage women amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. The analysis confirmed the trivial fact that migrant women continue to suffer disproportionately due to increased unemployment and disease burden coupled with religious practices that continue to advance the upward mobility of male migrants. There is a need to recast the place of migrant women in this era, and lastly, religion plays a renewed role among migrant communities especially for women who have enhanced their social positions and organizational skills through it.

Keywords: gender; religion; COVID-19; migrant; pandemic; migrant community; host country



Citation: Otieno, Mollo Kenneth, and Lewis Nkenyereye. 2021. Effects of Pandemics on Migrant Communities: Analysis of Existing Sources. *Religions* 12: 289. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12050289>

Academic Editors: Enzo Pace and Glenda Tibe Bonifacio

Received: 9 February 2021

Accepted: 16 April 2021

Published: 21 April 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

Gender, religion, and migration are intersecting concepts commonly used in social science disciplines. Religion is a critical component in society and has played a central role in providing meaning and belonging to migrant populations. Additionally, religion is a source of identification for migrants in their migration experience. Gender refers to the masculine and feminine roles played by men and women in the society. Gender roles are developed and reproduced through religion among migrants in various contexts as they move or settle. Therefore, migration affects and also contributes toward shaping the gendered religious identities held by individuals and groups. With these concepts in mind, in this paper, we endeavor to relay the implications of pandemics on gender and religion among migrants moving across varying localities (Ryan and Vaccelli 2013).

When crises envelop human societies, people tend to turn to religion for comfort and explanation. In the wake of the ravaging COVID-19 pandemic, human beings have turned to religion and religious practices in droves. While the post-Renaissance era has tended to glorify science and governance institutions in handling socioeconomic and political problems bedeviling a society (Hong and Handal 2020), the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a heightened recourse to religious rituals and practices as more than half of the world population has resorted to prayers in the hope of bringing about an end to the pandemic. This was evidenced by the searches in the Internet on prayers fueled by an intensified

demand for religion as human beings sought to cope with the adversity of the pandemic (Bentzen 2020).

Religion has a rather complex intersection with migration patterns and processes. Religion serves a range of purposes in the migration experience of groups. As a process, migration stands to potentially shape the reproduction of religion. This may result in changes of how religion manifests in the daily lives of migrant populations as its associated practices and beliefs might change compared to the beliefs and practices prevailing in the place of origin. Religion stands to provide a transnational source of identification in which individuals and groups may consider before deciding to migrate. When groups consider their history or future and imagine themselves living within large collectives, they may consider migration to join other faithful populations. Lastly, religion plays a crucial purpose in the lives of migrants. This surpasses the basic need for spirituality and includes material and social purposes in which gender manifests within these religious groups (Ryan and Vacchelli 2013).

Among migrant workers, Sharma and Lalit (2020) found that while the crisis of the pandemic impacted negatively on this demographic cohort, women migrant workers were exposed to harassment, violence, and discrimination. This was particularly detrimental to migrant workers, bearing in mind the fact that they are excluded or barely covered by national social protection policies (Sharma and Lalit 2020). Therefore, in this paper, we delve into the concepts of gender, religion, and migration in the COVID-19 pandemic era. This issue is explored within migrant communities located in various geographical areas globally.

2. Methodology

We capitalized on various databases and conducted an extensive desktop review of the relevant literature. We searched for the publications using Google Scholar. Although it is not a database, Google Scholar is an efficient tool to find relevant articles, theses, books, and abstracts across the world of scholarly research (Martín-Martín et al. 2018). The last search for this work was made on 31 December 2020. Therefore, other scholarly materials that were added after the aforementioned date data are not considered in this work. Using the below-mentioned keyword, we then sorted by relevance and by date, which gave us the most recent sources. In future work, we will consider databases such as Scopus. We searched using the following three key keywords: migration, religion, and COVID-19 pandemic. These concepts were searched solely and while interconnected in order to include relevant literature. The relevant articles were further probed to determine their rigor, academic nature, and relevance to the theme of this paper. The normative and empirical papers were then used to construct a narrative. In addition, several critical websites on issues of migration and COVID-19 were reviewed for more insight and for purposes of getting the latest emerging issues in migrant communities.

3. Problem Statement

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a momentous effect on gender and migration. In examining the economic and labor market impacts of the pandemic on First Nations people, developing countries, women, immigrants, and young people in Australia in particular and across the globe, van Barneveld et al. (2020) were of the view that the pandemic has disrupted the flow-on economic impacts creating major supply and demand disruptions. This has amplified in-country inequalities adversely affecting women and immigrants (van Barneveld et al. 2020).

In vindicating (Clark et al. 2020; van Barneveld et al. 2020) points to the demographic “hot spots” that have demonstrated high rates of COVID-19-related mortality and that are located in minority populations, with a greater concentration in impoverished populations (Clark et al. 2020). Additionally, these communities are highly likely to experience increased prevalence of comorbid factors due to unequal socioeconomic conditions as well as unequal and limited access to quality and timely healthcare. Immigrant communities,

Clark et al. (2020) further aver, are at a higher risk for excessive stress due to poverty, poor social support, and trauma. As such, they are predisposed to poor mental health and may suffer from depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (Clark et al. 2020).

In locating the reasons for the high risk in areas occupied by migrants and refugees, Orcutt et al. (2020) hold the view that migrants and refugees live, travel, and work in conditions where physical distancing and recommended hygiene measures are impossible due to poor living conditions and precarious economic conditions. Additionally, most polities where migrants and refugees are domiciled largely exclude these populations from access to public health (Orcutt et al. 2020).

The impact of COVID-19 on migrants is caused by various conditions and situations that make them vulnerable. High poverty rates, overcrowded houses, and overconcentrated working areas where physical distancing is impossible endangers migrants more than natives. OECD countries statistics show that immigrants are more affected. In the labor market, they have less stable employment conditions and low ranking. They are also overrepresented in in sectors most affected by the pandemic. Migrant parents also have relatively fewer resources, which puts them at a disadvantage. The growing unemployment among migrants and the consequent international travel due to the COVID-19 pandemic has led to backlash against immigrants (OECD 2020).

Barnett and Walker show that population migration is associated with the spread of diseases. Diseases such as smallpox, plague syphilis, HIV, TB, and measles have been spread through travel (Barnett and Walker 2008). Even diseases with short incubation periods have been spread through the movement of people. Migrating populations have been at the center of this spread, especially for infectious diseases. It is also evident that migrant populations can change the patterns of diseases in a population. These cases can be dire when large numbers of migrants are involved. For instance, the resettling of refugees in African countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Ethiopia, and Ivory Coast has led to the spread of diseases. Measles, rubella, polio, hepatitis A, pertussis, and mumps have all been associated with migration patterns. Therefore, refugee resettlement experts have recommended immunization of mobile populations to reduce spread of immunizable diseases. The U.S. and Canada have adopted this model and practice routine immunization to reduce vaccine-preventable diseases.

In analyzing data on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on people's economic well-being among ethnic and native migrants in the United Kingdom, Hu finds that compared with U.K.-born white British people, black, Asian, and minority ethnic migrants in the U.K. are more likely to experience job loss during the COVID-19 lockdown. Additionally, black, Asian, and minority ethnic natives are less likely to enjoy employment protection such as furloughing. Furthermore, despite reducing their work hours during the COVID-19 pandemic as compared to black, Asian, and minority ethnic migrants, U.K.-born white British are less likely to experience income loss and/or face increased financial hardship during the pandemic (Hu 2020).

Scholars such as Ryan and Ayadi postulate that while the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacts men since they experience severe COVID-19-related health outcomes, the contagion threat, coupled with the consequences of protracted containment and mitigation efforts, is far worse for women (Ryan and El Ayadi 2020).

Migrants are risk groups involved in vaccine-preventable disease outbreaks in Europe. Temporary shelters or camps and the different nationality groups make the spread of the pandemic complex. Hepatitis A, measles, and varicella are the main causes of the disease burden related to outbreaks. Varicella affects adults, whereas measles affects all age groups. In Europe, the influx of migrants in temporary camps and shelters from 2015 has led to overcrowding and overstretching of infrastructure. The suboptimal conditions, poor sanitation facilities, and exclusion of migrants from the national vaccination program has caused an emergence of disease outbreaks (Deal et al. 2021).

Another study is that conducted by Jolly et al. (2005), who write on gender and migration. They dispel the previously held idea that migrants are mostly men. The

female proportion of international migrants has been increasing, which shows there is a change in migration patterns globally. This has been labeled the feminization of migration, particularly in regions to which women did not previously migrate. It has also been used in cases where women migrate independently and not for purposes of joining a male family member. The statistics relating to migrant women remain contentious based on the predominance of women categorized as irregular migrants. Women migrating as dependent spouses, women working in invisible labor, and women involved in illegal activities are undocumented, meaning their numbers are mostly underreported. Moreover, migration particularly in Africa is not well documented and, therefore, the gender dynamics may not be clearly captured.

The role of religion and gendered migration cannot be gainsaid. Bonifacio and Angeles explained the contemporary significance of religion in the context of global migrations. This is due to the fact that it may provide new insights and perspectives on the often missed link between the differing ways. In the case of immigrants, this is detrimental to churches across continental Europe as male and female immigrants find meanings of faith beliefs and religious traditions to belong in foreign lands, even residents' faith-based activism involving illegal migrants. While religion provides mechanisms for negotiating immigrant life in the host countries, it also inhibits integration of immigrants, especially in countries where the majority religion is different. Additionally, in cases where religion is used in finding meanings and alternative practices, it is further employed for activism to fight for illegal migrants (Bonifacio and Angeles 2010). Urbańska studied religion as a potential mediator in gendered conflicts. Drawing on migratory processes, Urbańska argues that the revolutionary potential that arises at the intersection of migration, gender, and religion is not limited to changing gender orders in religious institutions at the societal level (Urbańska 2018). Drawing on experiences from Kenya and migrant destination countries in the global north, Urbańska further postulates that religious beliefs themselves influence migrants' everyday lives and challenge the existing gendered contract in lay areas, in work relations, and in civic and political participation.

4. Background

Various perspectives have emerged and explained the nexus between religion, gender, and migration. However, in order to comprehensively tackle this, the relationship between gender and religion should be addressed. From a feminism perspective (Smith 2005), religion can be used as critical and influential in institutionalizing gendered roles. Religion stands as an important factor that has explained gender over time. Through institutionalized and legitimized religious practices, women migrants continue to be displayed as secondary and discriminated against. Their position is subjugated to male dominance and religious doctrine has been used over decades to legitimize power inequalities between men and women. Women have in religious books and narratives stood out as an oppressed group. Cases of these inequality are manifested through violence against women, lack of women's rights, and display of women as inferior and morally weak (Maher 2008). However, recent trends show that feminists are now acknowledging that religion can be contested and the cultural terrain is shifting with time as women fight for increased voice and authority. Religion and its institutions can therefore shift from a mechanism of reproducing the existing power order evident in gender. It can be used as a source of strength and agency by women seeking to change the existing imbalanced order. In the wake of the pandemic, migrant workers and refugee populations have found themselves in a predicament where they are largely excluded from national social protection policies that would have cushioned them from the vagaries of loss of income, hunger, and destitution (Sharma and Lalit 2020) but also live, travel, and work in conditions where physical distancing and recommended hygiene measures are impossible because of poor living conditions and great economic precarity (Orcutt et al. 2020) In translocal migrations in India, migrants working in the informal sector, for instance, were caught up in the sudden "lockdown" announced in March 2020 by the Indian government as the latter

sought to contain the spread of the pandemic. Mired in a survival crisis due to the sudden loss of income and facing the fears of hunger, destitution, and persecution not only from authorities policing containment but also from fearful communities maintaining “social distance”, migrant informal Indian workers were forced to resort to religious means to cope with the new depressive aura of vulnerability (Sengupta and Jha 2020).

Another source of stress among migrant communities is acculturative stress as migrants and refugees seek to fit into the new societies that they find themselves in. Among Latino migrants in the United States, for instance, acculturative stress negatively bogs them down, hence the recourse to religion during this difficult life transition. According to Sanchez et al. (2012), preimmigration external religious coping led to high levels of postimmigration acculturative stress among Latino migrants in the United States. Additionally, in the same demographic cohort, illegal immigrant status led to high levels of preimmigration religious coping as well as postimmigration acculturative stress (Sanchez et al. 2012).

Shaw et al. (2019) argue that women who are experiencing forced displacement usually resort to religion by not only trusting God to solve problems predisposing them to stress but also in relying on prayer and other religious practices to cope in managing stress. However, among minority refugee women, there are potential major challenges to religious practice as the fear and/or persecution of migrants and refugees who express religiosity limit religious practice (Shaw et al. 2019).

The roles played by religion among migrants populations is also mentioned by Stanczak (2006), who shows that religion is highly involved in the integration process of migrant populations by host communities. The involved religious organizations are a space for providing answers to identity issues involved in integration. Secondly, religious authorities play a significant part in shaping the narrative relating to integration. They provide legitimacy to the process by either reducing or increasing the hostility that may face migrant populations. Therefore, to any migrant population, religion can potentially provide a means for expressing their faith and practice while at the same time negotiating their integration in the host environment. Religious coping strategies tend to be activated when one is facing adversity. Additionally, there has been evidence for the effectiveness of cognitive reappraisal in reducing the impact of distressing emotions on well-being. In this regard, scholars have argued that there is a need to reinvent novel ways to incorporate physical religious practices owing to their utility in facilitating the use of reappraisal by promoting reframing of negative cognitions to alter emotional states. To Dolcos et al. (2021), the mediating role of reappraisal and coping self-efficacy is part of mechanisms that provide a protecting role of religious coping against emotional distress (Dolcos et al. 2021).

According to Hong and Handal (2020), the import of religion in dealing with the pandemic emanates from the realization that while the post-Renaissance era has tended to glorify science and governance institutions in handling societal problems, reliance on one institution exclusively has limitations. As such, religious/faith communities offer solace and refuge as well as means for coping, surviving, and even hope. This is due to the utility of praying, reading sacred texts, and engaging in communal worship and religious rituals as historical means for faithfuls to cope with socioeconomic and political problems. Religion remains a crucial factor, especially among migrant communities. The multiple and different ways in which it affects experiences of the genders is of specific interest in modern studies. Case in point is religious practices among Iranian women that discourage them from working while at home. However, it is observed that among the Iranian women migrants, they take up work when they move to countries such as Britain, thus challenging the status quo. Other groups such as Nigerian women associated with Pentecostal groups acquire their agency from religion. Religion allows them to serve at home and also take up leadership positions outside their homes. The migratory experience in relation to religion helps change gender roles and relations (Chloe 2011).

Politicization of the use of religion in society is expressed in issues surrounding gender and migration and also other greater issues in today's societies. The issue of gender and migration is well covered, and this is evident in some well elaborated cases such as the

one of Chechen migrant groups settled in countries such as Germany, Poland, and Austria. The social construction of migrant women as victims of their culture is commonly used to depict migrants as less civilized compared to host societies that are depicted as more liberal (Szczepanikova 2012). These patriarchal norms in their cultures and religion are not rigid and they undergo a transformation. This is particularly evident in the conditions surrounding migration and their transnational lives, which offer complex and different environments as those experienced back at home. There is great potentiality of migrant populations applying different gender practices, even when these migrants are constrained by patriarchal norms they are used to. It is also observed that immigrant practices in the host country can potentially lead to change of functions and also related gender orders. This is the case particularly in institutions that originate from the countries of origin. Instances have been recorded in the U.S. where formerly gendered immigrant churches have transformed into associations with horizontal relationships. Such a trend is borrowed from the local population and infused into the migrant trends. The influence of American culture with regard to religious institutions and congregationalism are, therefore, borrowed and this had led to new ways such as female leadership in these institutions. More women are now occupying important central roles. Likewise, the previous rituals, practices, and prayer styles change and reflect the dominant trends as per the host society. The new trends acquired by migrant populations are then transferred to their countries of origin (Yang and Ebaugh 2001).

Jones-Correa (1998) notes a rather interesting gendered trend in experiences recorded among South American women migrants in the U.S. After migration, wives of immigrants experience higher levels of mobility and they also tend to gain relative independence. This encompasses accessing paid activities that may relate to care and cleaning. The care roles these women perform in their households effectively involve them in communal life. This involves integration into roles around schools, social welfare, and religious organizations. This is crucial in the adaptation process into new environments. The women have a higher likelihood of engaging in activities of religious organizations compared to men. Most of these activities relate to religious organization work involving solving community problems. This has led to more women than men attaining U.S. citizenship. The ability of female migrants to pick a “gendered role” as noticeable in the U.S. is manifested in other countries in Europe where, through religious roles and organization, women take new positions and roles. Such is the case of the Iranian women who have migrated to countries such as Sweden. Men struggle with some of the consequences of migration and they tend to lose more in terms of their social roles and positions. The newly acquired positions mostly relate to their involvement with local religious institutions and public affairs in the host communities (Urbańska 2018). Another case of religious coping can be seen in occupied territories of Palestine. According to Mahamid and Bdier, Palestinian adults have responded to the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic and the quarantine system mooted in response through recourse to religious worship and rituals (Mahamid and Bdier 2021). The two scholars found that there was significant negative correlation between positive religious coping and depressive symptoms. Additionally, Mahamid and Bdier found a statistically significant negative correlation between positive religious coping and perceived stress.

Indonesian migrant workers have also shown a gendered approach to how they use religion in society. Most Indonesian women who serve as domestic workers utilize religious beliefs and spirituality to shift the patriarchal nature of their society in their favor. In order to get support from their patriarchal communities in their aims of migrating to work abroad, these women give reference to the will of God in their lives. They combine this with the communities’ traditional role specifically reserved for women. They highlight their role as caregivers in the families and, therefore, should supplement the family income. They use religion to convince the male members of the family that God is in control and will protect them as they fulfill His will (Urbańska 2018). It is further noted by Williams (2008) that religion transforms and applies in every stage of migration. In their

migration journey, women account for religion as a main source of helping them cope and endure the struggle while it is also used as a sort of push factor before migration. Religion as a coping mechanism has manifested in the lives of migrant women. This is demonstrated by Polish migrant women working in Rome. These women mostly in domestic work have been found to become religious during their stay in the resident country. Their stay away from family, lack of legal status, and loneliness are some of the factors that push them to become religious. Others include harsh experiences at the hands of their employers, which has caused some to become religious in order to find meaning and reason. Most have joined Polish religious communities in the host country to gain security and a sense of belonging (Leszczyńska et al. 2018).

The gendered context taking place in the labor market that favors migrant women compared to men has given religion a renewed life among migrant populations abroad. The advantages experienced by women empower them and lead to changes in roles, particularly in family relationships. Among the African migrant populations, this is a difficult situation for men who cannot accept it lightly. The men experience degradation of their status and experience social invisibility. The African migrant population resorts to using religion to explain those hardships and the masculinity crisis through rituals and purification practices. Such practice may be absent in the African context, but it is thriving abroad in African migrant populations in which religion serves as a tool for managing relations and gender in emigration (Rey 2013). Scholars such as Bonifacio and Angeles (2010) have also explored the issue of gender, religion, and migration across various geographical spaces. In a volume of works, the cases mentioned show a genderization of immigrant religiosity. Among the Vietnamese migrant population in Germany, the Pentecostal churches enlarge women's agency but still reinforce the patriarchal structures in communities. Church-related activities and outreach programs propel women of all walks of life and equip them with skills, particularly leadership and organizational ones, that make them agents in their communities as shown by Hüwelmeier (2010). The Filipino migrant working class population in the U.S., on the other hand, uses Catholicism and related activities as a base for social organization and relation (Bonifacio and Angeles 2010).

5. Discussion on Gendered Effects of Pandemics on Migrants in the Pandemic Era

Migration has an effect on the spread of disease, as it can potentially initiate outbreaks, change prevalence of infectious diseases, and also the state of chronic diseases. As migrant populations increase in an area, their interaction with the environment and disease-causing vectors contribute to emergence of infectious diseases (Barnett and Walker 2008). The COVID-19 pandemic has not only exposed but exacerbated the disadvantages faced by different genders due to government restrictions and a number of other rules. Rules pertaining to cleaning, gathering, and social distancing all present impossible situations for migrant communities in their various living and working localities. Most of these communities transit and live in spaces where enforcing and observing the newly set conditions may be hard or impossible.

There is a gendered aspect to how people have responded to and adapted to the situation. Men have had a hard time adapting to these new set of conditions while migrating and settling in new areas. Women are known to adapt faster and have greater levels of resilience and flexibility. They also have better psychological ways of dealing with change. However, migrant women have suffered from domestic violence from men. Migrant female victims have been placed in a worse position, as they have lacked places to turn to for protection due to closures associated with the lockdowns. Some migrant women have already been reported to be abused and introduced to organized crime due to the effects of the pandemic on support organizations, e.g., churches that support migrant women (European Network 2020). The migrant population working in care facilities and professions, e.g., nursing and cleaning, are mostly women. That profession and those institutions remain undervalued and receive few resources even in the developed world. In this pandemic period, a care crisis has emerged, and most of the migrant women working

in these sectors have experienced extensive working hours and risky working conditions. The situation is harder for migrant women who lack legal status in the host country but work in these sectors. The domestic and care workers in countries such as Spain are mostly women, and most have suffered from the live-in arrangements with their employers. They are not entitled to pension, labor inspection, insurance, and also possibilities of working remotely through the Internet ([Migration International 2020](#)).

Another gendered aspect brought out by COVID-19 is the establishment that more men have died compared to women. However, this resilience narrative has clouded the real health effects that have been brought about by the pandemic on migrant women. There are a range of mental health conditions and physical conditions associated with migrant populations. With the quarantine and cessation of movement in many countries, migrant communities have experienced harsh effects. There have been more cases of women shouldering heavier burdens within homes. The restriction of access to services such as reproductive health which have since been labeled unessential has affected both genders with women numbers being proportionally higher. In the global international migrant stock, women comprise 47.9% of the total population. However, there are more women migrating, but this group is more vulnerable to negativities associated with migration compared to male migrants. Care work, especially in this COVID-19 era, disadvantages women. Migrant workers form a huge part of the care services in health facilities as well as their homes. In light of the school closure, migrant women are predisposed to a huge challenge of working in healthcare to support the system as the fights against COVID-19 continues and also give care at home to their children. Furthermore, the global health crisis has affected the employment of women, as most migrants have been discriminated against and lost jobs ([Migration International 2020](#)).

[Migration International \(2020\)](#) further documents the gendered dimensions as a result of COVID-19. Compared to men, women have been burdened by caregiving, experienced inequality when it comes to access to healthcare, lacked gender specific information regarding the pandemic, and faced gender violence. Women are the majority of healthcare staff, but they are underrepresented in leadership positions, making the fight against COVID-19 even more complex. The pandemic also endangers the gains made in empowering women within the sociopolitical and economic areas. In addition, measures that have restricted mobility and migration have restricted migrant workers from access to healthcare due to their migration status or cultural linguistic barriers. There may also be possible restrictions of access to COVID-19 preventive measures due to financial reasons in migrant communities. Most migrant workers are men who migrate to fend and take care of their families back at home. The emergence and prolonged situation of lack/stoppage of work has affected migrant families and communities back at home. Significant decreases in income have affected remittances to their countries of origin and women and children have been left to their own efforts ([Testaverde 2020](#)). This opinion is also supported by [World Bank \(2020\)](#) in the report entitled "COVID-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens", in which it is stated that migrant remittances provide economic lifeline to households, but with the pandemic and consequent reduction in remittances, poverty will increase and families will be locked out of accessing healthcare services. Apart from this form of inequality, there are other global inequalities emerging from the pandemic. This relates to gender where the vulnerability to infection, exposure to disease pathogens, and also the treatment is different among women and men. COVID-19 has sharpened and clearly brought out the gender differences and inequality present in the global health system ([Wenham et al. 2020](#)).

The emergence of COVID-19 at a time when there is extreme connection and movement between local and international populations continues to complicate the fight against the pandemic. Movement of migrants affects the social, demographic, cultural, and economic dynamics of localities, and this situation has been further complicated by COVID-19. Migrant communities are at the center of response and recovery actions; therefore, their involvement or lack of involvement has an effect on the dynamics surrounding the pandemic ([Guadagno 2020](#)). Part of the hardship when there is involvement is the status of

migrant women. A huge number of migrant women work in sectors where social protection (leave, unemployment benefits) are not guaranteed. This is a disadvantage to them, especially their health and well-being. If any of them contracts the disease, they may opt to continue working as seeking health services may not favor them. Other sectors such as sex work predispose women to contracting COVID-19. The other sectors, especially in the informal sector in which women are dominant, are also worse off, as social security and unemployment benefits are also looming disadvantages. The pandemic has made switching professions almost impossible due to the skill set needed for essential services. Therefore, most unskilled and semiskilled are incapable of getting work. This is also the case for any skilled persons in other sectors outside the scope covered by essential services (Migration International 2020).

6. Conclusions and Future Work

The religious, gender, and migration dynamics that surround translocalities help in the understanding of times including this era of the COVID-pandemic. Several conclusions can be arrived from the emerging issues highlighted in this paper. It is shown in this paper that there is a need to consider the gendered implications of any measures taken, as migrant communities and women need targeted responses. Women and men have different physical, cultural, security, and health needs that must be recognized and addressed. Furthermore, even though women, especially migrant women, form a substantial portion of frontline workers in the pandemic, they have been subordinated in some aspects. There is a need to incorporate them into the host country's detection and prevention frameworks for COVID-19 pandemic. Critical to note is the role of religion in migration and gendered roles. Religion is a resource in terms of beliefs and practices that shape different groups, i.e., men, women, and others for greater roles and resilience. Religious affiliations, as it has been shown, are at the core of the coping strategies at every stage of the migration process. Since women have a better uptake of religious roles and participation in religious organizations, they should take new positions and roles that elevate migrant communities. This will help in addressing gendered issues relating to pandemics among the migrant population.

In this research, we analyzed the intricate connection between the old problem of pandemic-instigated migration, which is currently precipitated by COVID-19, gender, and the role that religion plays in migration and gender. Future research areas recommended by this paper include research on the role of religion on the uptake of COVID-19 vaccines among the migrants. COVID-19 has also exposed the inequalities in healthcare systems globally and, especially among the immigrant populations, the role that religion plays in addressing both gendered gaps in accessing healthcare.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, M.K.O.; methodology, L.N. and M.K.O.; validation, L.N. and M.K.O.; writing—original draft preparation, L.N. and M.K.O.; writing—review and editing, L.N. and M.K.O.; supervision, L.N. and M.K.O.; project administration, L.N.; funding acquisition, L.N. Both authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This work was supported by the Sejong University New Faculty Program through the National Research Foundation of Korea (NRF).

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

- Barnett, Elizabeth D., and Patricia F. Walker. 2008. Role of immigrants and migrants in emerging infectious diseases. *Medical Clinics of North America* 92: 1447–58. [CrossRef]
- Bentzen, Jeanet. 2020. *In Crisis, We Pray: Religiosity and the Covid-19 Pandemic*, University of Copenhagen, Copenhagen.
- Bonifacio, Glenda Tibe, and Vivienne S. M. Angeles. 2010. *Gender, Religion, and Migration: Pathways of Integration*. London: Rowman & Littlefield.
- Chloe, Lewis. 2011. Religion, Gender and Migration: Beyond Obedience vs. Agency. Available online: <https://www.opendemocracy.net/en/5050/religion-gender-and-migration-beyond-obedience-vs-agency> (accessed on 1 July 2020).

- Clark, Eva, Karla Fredricks, Laila Woc-Colburn, Maria Elena Bottazzi, and Jill Weatherhead. 2020. Disproportionate impact of the covid-19 pandemic on immigrant communities in the united states. *PLoS Neglected Tropical Diseases* 14: e0008484. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Deal, Anna, Rachael Halliday, Alison Crawshaw, Sally Hayward, Amelia Burnard, Kieran Rustage, Jessica Carter, Anushka Mehrotra, Felicity Knights, Ines Campos-Matos, and et al. 2021. Migration and outbreaks of vaccine-preventable disease in Europe: A systematic review. *medRxiv*. [CrossRef]
- Dolcos, Florin, Kelly Hohl, Yifan Hu, and Sanda Dolcos. 2021. Religiosity and resilience: Cognitive reappraisal and coping self-efficacy mediate the link between religious coping and well-being. *Journal of Religion and Health* 1–14. [CrossRef]
- European Network. 2020. Global Feminist Perspective on the Pandemic: What “Normal” Do We Expect When the Crisis Is Over? Available online: <http://www.migrantwomennetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/ENOMW-Covid19-article.pdf> (accessed on 20 November 2020).
- Guadagno, Lorenzo. 2020. *Migrants and the Covid-19 Pandemic: An Initial Analysis*; Migration Research Series N°60; Geneva: International Organization for Migration.
- Hong, Barry A., and Paul J. Handal. 2020. Science, religion, government, and sars-cov-2: A time for synergy. *Journal of Religion and Health* 59: 2263–68. [CrossRef]
- Hu, Yang. 2020. Intersecting ethnic and native–migrant inequalities in the economic impact of the covid-19 pandemic in the uk. *Research in Social Stratification and Mobility* 68: 100528. [CrossRef]
- Hüwelmeier, Gertrud. 2010. Female believers on the move: Gender and religion in vietnamese pentecostal networks in germany. In *Gender, Religion and Migration: Pathways of Integration*. Lexington Books, pp. 115–31.
- Jolly, Susie, Hazel Reeves, and Nicola Piper. 2005. Gender and migration: Overview report. In *Trabajo y Empleo*. Brighton: Institute of Development Studies. ISBN 1-85864-866-1.
- Jones-Correa, Michael. 1998. *Between Two Nations: The Political Predicament of Latinos in New York City*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.
- Leszczyńska, Katarzyna, Sylwia Urbańska, and Katarzyna Zielińska. 2018. Religion and gender in migration to and from central and eastern Europe: Introductory reflections. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 7: 105–10.
- Mahamid, Fayez Azez, and Dana Bdier. 2021. The association between positive religious coping, perceived stress, and depressive symptoms during the spread of coronavirus (covid-19) among a sample of adults in palestine: Across sectional study. *Journal of Religion and Health* 60: 34–49. [CrossRef]
- Maher, Monica. 2008. *The Truth Will Set Us Free: Religion, Violence, and Women’s Empowerment in Latin America*. Oxfordshire: Routledge, pp. 271–89.
- Martín-Martín, Alberto, Enrique Orduna-Malea, Mike Thelwall, and Emilio Delgado López-Cózar. 2018. Google scholar, web of science, and scopus: A systematic comparison of citations in 252 subject categories. *Journal of Informetrics* 12: 1160–77. [CrossRef]
- Migration International. 2020. Analytical Snapshot #25: Gender Dimensions. Available online: https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/documents/covid-19_analytical_snapshot_25_-_gender.pdf (accessed on 21 May 2020).
- OECD. 2020. What is the Impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on Immigrants and Their Children? Available online: https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/view/?ref=137_137245-8saheqv0k3&title=What-is-the-impact-of-the-COVID-19-pandemic-on-immigrants-and-their-children%3F (accessed on 15 June 2020).
- Orcutt, Miriam, Parth Patel, Rachel Burns, Lucinda Hiam, Rob Aldridge, Delan Devakumar, Bernadette Kumar, Paul Spiegel, and Ibrahim Abubakar. 2020. Global call to action for inclusion of migrants and refugees in the covid-19 response. *The Lancet* 395: 1482–83. [CrossRef]
- Rey, Jeanne. 2013. Mermaids and spirit spouses: Rituals as technologies of gender in transnational african pentecostal spaces. *Religion and Gender* 3: 60–75. [CrossRef]
- Ryan, Louise, and Elena Vacchelli. 2013. Introduction: Gender, religion and migration. *Religion and Gender* 3: 1–5. [CrossRef]
- Ryan, Nessa E., and Alison M. El Ayadi. 2020. A call for a gender-responsive, intersectional approach to address covid-19. *Global Public Health* 15: 1404–12. [CrossRef]
- Sanchez, Mariana, Frank Dillon, Beverly Ruffin, and Mario De La Rosa. 2012. The influence of religious coping on the acculturative stress of recent latino immigrants. *Journal of Ethnic and Cultural Diversity in Social Work* 21: 171–94. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
- Sengupta, Sohini, and Manish K. Jha. 2020. Social policy, covid-19 and impoverished migrants: Challenges and prospects in locked down india. *The International Journal of Community and Social Development* 2: 152–72. [CrossRef]
- Sharma, Meenakshi, and Malika Lalit. 2020. Social Protection of Women Migrants Amidst Covid-19: Can Social Protection Contribute to Social Inclusion. *International Journal of Legal Science and Innovation* 2: 146–58.
- Shaw, Stacey A., Laurel Peacock, Latifa Mahram Ali, Veena Pillai, and Altaf Husain. 2019. Religious coping and challenges among displaced muslim female refugees. *Affilia* 34: 518–34. [CrossRef]
- Smith, Dorothy E. 2005. *Institutional Ethnography: A Sociology for People*. Lanham: Rowman Altamir.
- Stanczak, Gregory C. 2006. Strategic ethnicity: The construction of multi-racial/multi-ethnic religious community. *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29: 856–81. [CrossRef]
- Szczepanikova, Alice. 2012. Becoming more conservative? contrasting gender practices of two generations of chechen women in europe. *European Journal of Women’s Studies* 19: 475–89. [CrossRef]

- Testaverde, M. 2020. Social Protection for Migrants During the Covid-19 Crisis: The Right and Smart Choice. Available online: <https://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/social-protection-migrants-during-covid-19-crisis-right-and-smart-choice> (accessed on 17 August 2020).
- Urbańska, Sylwia. 2018. Assessing the significance of religion in gender and migration studies: New avenues for scholarly inquiry. *Central and Eastern European Migration Review* 7: 111–24.
- van Barneveld, Kristin, Michael Quinlan, Peter Kriesler, Anne Junor, Fran Baum, Anis Chowdhury, Pramod N. Junankar, Stephen Clibborn, Frances Flanagan, Chris F. Wright, and et al. 2020. The covid-19 pandemic: Lessons on building more equal and sustainable societies. *The Economic and Labour Relations Review* 31: 133–57. [CrossRef]
- Wenham, Clare, Julia Smith, and Rosemary Morgan. 2020. Covid-19: The gendered impacts of the outbreak. *The Lancet* 395: 846–48. [CrossRef]
- Williams, Catharina P. 2008. Female transnational migration, religion and subjectivity: The case of Indonesian domestic workers. *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 49: 344–53. [CrossRef]
- World Bank. 2020. Covid-19 Crisis Through a Migration Lens. Migration and Development Brief. Available online: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33634> (accessed on 22 November 2020).
- Yang, Fenggang, and Helen Rose Ebaugh. 2001. Transformations in new immigrant religions and their global implications. *American Sociological Review* 66: 269–88. [CrossRef]