International migration and the transnational family: a systematic review[1]

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Abstract

The age of globalisation has favoured international migration. Current studies on this topic have begun adopting the transnationalism approach. Accordingly, not only is the influence of migrants on the place of destination being investigated; the relationships that occur at a distance with the place of origin are being examined also. In this respect, the family has come to form the core component of research on migration and transnationalism. Therefore, in this study, a systematic literature review has been carried out to analyse the situation with regard to families from the transnationalism perspective. The findings have been divided into two subject blocks: "Block 1. Reflections on the notion of transnationalism: a broad concept linked to migration"; and "Block 2. The transnational family: an approach to its conceptualisation". It is concluded that transnationalism provides an especially relevant approach in the study of international migration. However, the transnational family has been represented based on the parameters of the traditional family model and in keeping with current gender roles. The need to conduct research covering a broader perspective of the social reality, which addresses this issue, is considered. This paper aims to serve as an advisory guide for social practitioners (particularly

social workers) in their work with migrants and, specifically, with transnational families.

Introduction[4]

Migratory movements have taken place over the entire history of mankind and the phenomenon is intimately linked with the development of society (Castillo and Reguant, 2017). Migration has been spurred on by a number of varying factors. Even so, one cause that has been present over the ages does indeed stand out; namely, the desire to prosper and achieve a better standard of living. Present-day migration is all embedded in this factor, which serves as the trigger behind it. In addition, a further factor is the establishment of the age of globalisation since the late 20th century. Indeed, globalisation has allowed for the transnationalisation of emotional ties and relationships. These conditions have encouraged the movement of people across various corners of the globe (Arce, 2018). Along these lines, according to the International Organization for Migration, there is currently an approximate total of 257.7 million people who have moved abroad, in other words, 3.4% of the global population (Lotero-Echeverri and Pérez, 2019). What is more, all of these circumstances have garnered vast significance internationally, having a clear impact on the formation of policies in this respect (Benlloch-Doménech and Barbé-Villarubia, 2020).

Conventionally, most research on migration has centred on the impacts and consequences this movement brings about on the host society. Nevertheless, the perspective of transnationalism in studies on migratory movements involves nuances that need to be considered (Rivero, 2017). Thus, the preparation of research projects based on this approach has made is easier to understand the characteristics surrounding present-day migratory movements (Dalouh and Soriano, 2020). This has enabled it to be shown that while immigrants are embedded in the host location they also continue to be present in the place of origin (Rivero, 2017). Indeed, the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) has encouraged connection and long-distance support among migrants and their relatives who remain in the place of origin (Ballaret et al., 2022; Millán-Franco et al., 2019).

Several studies related to international migration have explored the level of wellbeing experienced by immigrants and their families (Parella and Speroni, 2018). Moreover, the existence of family support broadly contributes to the life satisfaction of people who emigrate (Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2016). Consequently, families act as a fundamental component and as the institution that has taken on the greatest precedence within the context of transnational migration. By extension, the transnational family has become a highly relevant subject of study for the scientific community (Fernández-Hawrylak and Heras, 2019). Far from being a trivial matter, an in-depth knowledge of this type of family takes on particular importance for social practitioners (e.g. social workers, social psychologists) in their

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4 The aim in this paper is to use inclusive language. Nevertheless, at certain times the masculine form has been used generically based on the principle of linguistic efficiency.

task of facilitating the integration of immigrants (Engels and Heidenreich, 2014; Giralt, 2015). According to Lacomba (2020), the pioneering women of contemporary social work (such as Jane Addams and Mary Richmond) took on a key role in addressing and protecting the rights of migrants at the start of the 20th century. In this respect, in the words of Carreño-Paredes et al. (2020), social work is highly linked to human rights based on its principles and forms of intervention, delivering major contributions in terms of dignity among vulnerable populations (for instance, international migrants). Indeed, according to Lacomba (2021):

> The link between social work and immigration is intimately tied to the very origin of the profession. Broadly speaking, contemporary immigration and social work unfold within the same setting and, indeed, one could say there is something of a symbiosis (p. 407).

Having said that, the primary goal of this study is to examine the current situation when it comes to families within the approach of transnationalism. Likewise, three specific aims have been set. To do this, a systematic literature review has been carried out on scientific documents that address this topic. The section on findings includes the foremost information gleaned from the process of searching through scientific literature. The findings have been structured into subject lines and blocks. Lastly, the discussion and the conclusions from the study have been set out. Based on the aspects stated, the goal of this paper is to serve as an advisory guide for social practitioners (in particular for social workers) in the context of their practice dealing with immigrant population and, specifically, transnational families.

Research question

What is the current situation when it comes to families within the approach of transnational migration?

Aims

General goal

To examine the current situation when it comes to families within the approach of transnationalism.

Specific aims
- To review the notion of transnationalism and its link to international migration.
- To show the psychosocial impact caused on transnational families when one or more of their members moves abroad.

- To become acquainted with the processes that emerge within the dynamics of the transnational family.

Method

The systematic literature review method has been used. The systematic literature review is a form of scientific research based on compiling noteworthy information that is available on a specific subject of study. This kind of research stands as a study in itself, as it is governed by the same principles as any other kind of research: posing of a research question, compilation of data and setting out of conclusions (Guirao-Goris et al., 2008). Moreover, the performance of this review has taken place over three stages, agreed on by both researchers, as put forward by Peña (2010):

- *First stage. Documentary research stage*: during this process documents relating to the subject to be researched are sought out and chosen.
- *Second stage. Reading and recording of information stage*: this involves reading the chosen texts and taking the main ideas from each text.
- *Third stage. Written text production stage*: this involves drawing up a document that summarises the ideas drawn from the previous stage. In this stage, the conclusions reached on the basis of the series of excerpts taken are included.

With regard to the search for scientific texts, several databases compiling documents relating to the various areas of the research field and community and social intervention have been used. By doing so, the aim was to gain an overall perspective of the subject of study. Specifically, the databases chosen were Scopus, ÍnDICEs-CSIC, Social Services Abstracts and PsycInfo.

Furthermore, a search has been carried out using descriptors in both Spanish and English. This latter language was included since it is the language in which most scientific literature is published. The following descriptors have been used: "transnacionalismo", "migración", "familia" and "transnacional" in Spanish, and "transnationalism", "migration", "transnational" and "family" in English. More specifically, the "AND" Boolean operator has been used during the search to combine the descriptors mentioned.

As far as the criteria for inclusion are concerned, scientific documents linked to transnationalism[5] and, specifically, the transnational family have been chosen, which had been published in English and Spanish

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5   According to Chávez (2018):
   As an activity, transnationalism involves not only migrants, but also the institutions or companies that have an impact in more than one country at the same time; for international migration it means the expansion of sociocultural and economic institutions, as well as an increased likelihood of more people being incorporated into migratory flows (p. 23).

between 2016 and 2021. This criterion has been used to choose recent publications and, therefore, to attain a high match with the present-day social circumstances. Both Spanish and other foreign publications have been chosen. Likewise, the decision has been made for these publications to deal with aspects linked to the research and/or psychosocial intervention. Based on a reading of each title, if it was deemed potentially useful according to the aims of the study, the abstract has been read and, ultimately, the full papers have been accessed in the case of those that were most closely aligned with the goals of the research. Indeed, exclusion criteria have been applied to all publications that failed to meet the aforementioned requirements. Specifically, scientific documents not drawn up in Spanish or English, those published prior to 2016, those not relevant to the subject of study and those not found in the afore-stated scientific databases. A screening has been conducted on a total of 1,617 publications found in the databases based on the criteria stated. This has led to a selection of 55 scientific documents. The final review for this study has been founded on the PRISMA 2020 statement for systematic reviews (Page et al., 2021).

Once the documents were chosen, the foremost ideas have been gleaned from each of them in line with the aims established in this study. Subsequently, these ideas have been summed up and structured into two subject blocks. Given the high volume of findings obtained in relation to one of the blocks, this one has also been sub-divided into subject lines. This sub-division has been performed to allow for greater accuracy in setting out this block. During the research, the requirements in terms of ethics and professional conduct in the social work discipline have been adhered to; in particular those laid down in the Code of Ethics governing Social Work and in the White Paper on the bachelor's degree in social work (General Council for Social Work, 2012; Giménez, 2014). Below, we set out four tables and five figures that compile the findings from each search conducted, including the name of the author, the title, the year of publication and the database from which the paper has been taken:

Table 1. Documents drawn from the search "transnacionalismo" AND "migración"

Author	Document title	Year	Database
Piñones-Rivera et al.	Perspectivas teóricas sobre salud y migración: determinantes sociales, transnacionalismo y vulnerabilidad estructural	2021	Scopus
Sobczyk et al.	Transnacionalismo localizado: las paradojas de la migración en la era de la inmovilidad involuntaria	2020	Scopus
Sassone and Lapenda	Migración, territorio y transnacionalismo: Peruanos en una ciudad global del Sur	2019	Scopus
Saldívar	Religión vivida, migración y transnacionalismo. El caso del Nazareno de Caguach en Punta Arenas, Chile, y Río Gallegos, Argentina	2019	Scopus
Chávez	El trabajo social y la transdisciplinariedad: Retos para estudiar migración transnacional, comunidad y comunicación	2018	Social Services Abstracts
Piras	Emociones y migración: Las vivencias emocionales de las hijas y los hijos que se quedan en origen	2016	PsycInfo
Gregorio-Gil	¿Por qué hablar de cuidados cuando hablamos de migraciones transnacionales?	2017	ÍnDICEs-CSIC
Pedone and Gil	Tramando futuros. Transnacionalismo familiar en la migración desde República Dominicana y Brasil hacia España	2016	ÍnDICEs-CSIC

Source: compiled by the authors.

Figure 1. Total number of documents selected from the search "transnacionalismo" AND "migración"
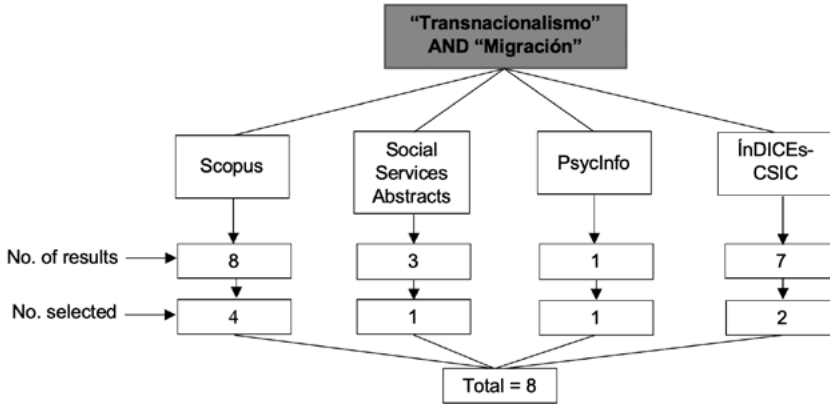
Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 2. Documents drawn from the search "transnationalism" AND "migration"

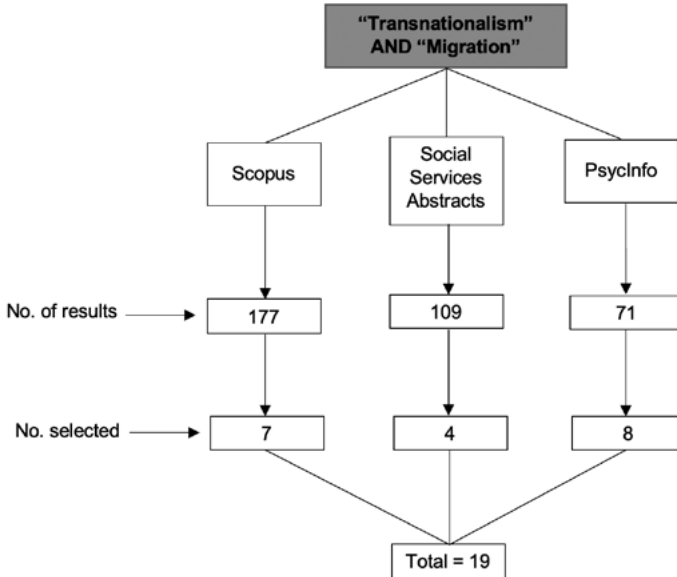| Author	Document title	Year	Database
Carling et al.	Living in two countries: Transnational living as an alternative to migration	2021	Scopus
Nowicka	(Dis)connecting migration: transnationalism and nationalism beyond connectivity	2020	Scopus
Merry et al.	Transnationalism and care of migrant families during pregnancy, postpartum and early-childhood: an integrative review	2020	Scopus
Talleraas	Who are the transnationals? Institutional categories beyond "migrants"	2020	Scopus
Engbersen and Snel	The emotion management of transnational living	2020	Scopus
Mazzucato et al.	Transnational parenting and the well-being of Angolan migrant parents in Europe	2017	Scopus
Lacroix et al.	Social remittances and the changing transnational political landscape	2016	Scopus

Villa-Torres et al.	Transnationalism and health: A systematic literature review on the use of transnationalism in the study of the health practices and behaviors of migrants	2017	Social Services Abstracts
Thomas et al.	Untold experiences and behaviors of transmigrants who remit: A qualitative study	2017	Social Services Abstracts
Held	A study of remittances to Mexico and Central America: Characteristics and perspectives of immigrants	2017	Social Services Abstracts
Lu et al.	Well-being of migrant and left-behind children in China: Education, health, parenting, and personal values	2016	Social Services Abstracts
Dyrness and Abu El-Haj	Reflections on the field: The democratic citizenship formation of transnational youth	2020	PsycInfo
Kwon	Mobilizing historical knowledge through transcultural play: A multi-sited ethnographic case study of an immigrant	2019	PsycInfo
Andersson et al.	The intersection of class origin and immigration background in structuring social capital: The role of transnational ties	2018	PsycInfo
Marschall	Transnational migrant home visits as identity practice: The case of African migrants in South Africa	2017	PsycInfo
Keegan	Belonging, place, and identity: The role of social trust in developing the civic capacities of transnational Dominican youth	2017	PsycInfo
Bell	Migrants: Keeping a foot in both worlds or losing the ground beneath them? transnationalism and integration as experienced in the everyday lives of Polish migrants in Belfast, Northern Ireland	2016	PsycInfo
Ryba et al.	The work of cultural transition: An emerging model	2016	PsycInfo
Afulani et al.	Transnational ties and the health of Sub-Saharan African migrants: The moderating role of gender and family separation	2016	PsycInfo

Source: compiled by the authors.

Figure 2. Total number of documents selected from the search "transnationalism" AND "migration"
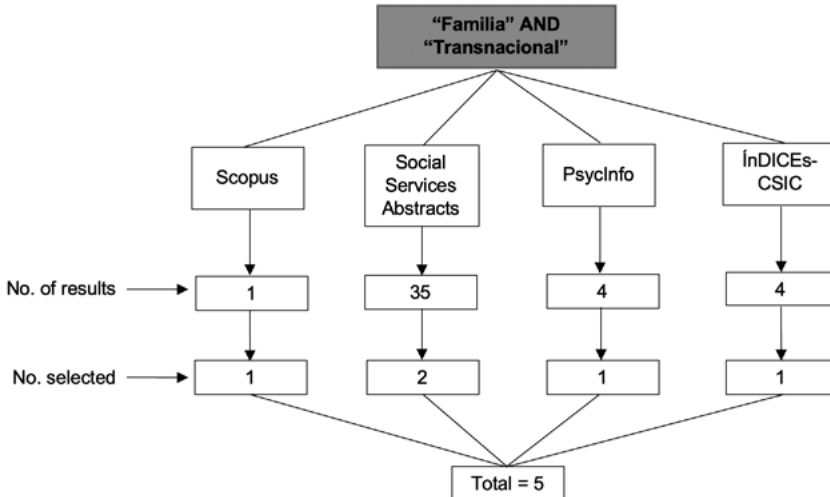

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 3. Documents drawn from the search "familia" AND "transnacional"

Author	Document title	Year	Database
Pérez and Neira	Las abuelas de la migración. Cuidados, reciprocidad y relaciones de poder en la familia transnacional	2017	Scopus
Solheim et al.	Ambiguous loss experienced by transnational Mexican immigrant families	2016	Social Services Abstracts
Gonzálvez-Torralbo	Historia de una pregunta: Consideraciones teórico-metodológicas para el análisis del género y el parentesco en la migración transnacional colombiana	2016	Social Services Abstracts
Hernández	Cuidar se escribe en femenino: Redes de cuidado familiar en hogares de madres migrantes	2016	PsycInfo
Mummert	«La segunda madre»: La naturalización de la circulación de cuidados entre abuelas y nietos en familias transnacionales latinoamericanas	2019	ÍnDICEs-CSIC

Source: compiled by the authors.

Figure 3. Total number of documents selected from the search "familia" AND "transnational"

Source: compiled by the authors.

Table 4. Documents drawn from the search "transnational" AND "family"

| Author	Document title	Year	Database
Berrocal et al.	Constructing collective identities and solidarity in premiers' early speeches on COVID-19: a global perspective	2021	Scopus
Pineros-Leano et al.	Depressive Symptoms and Emotional Distress of Transnational Mothers: A Scoping Review	2021	Scopus
Alinejad	Techno-emotional mediations of transnational intimacy: social media and care relations in long-distance Romanian families	2021	Scopus
Acedera and Yeoh	When care is near and far: Care triangles and the mediated spaces of mobile phones among Filipino transnational families	2021	Scopus
Cebotari and Dito	Internal and international parental migration and the living conditions of children in Ghana	2021	Scopus
Demirsu	Watching them grow: Intergenerational video-calling among transnational families in the age of smartphones	2021	Scopus

Bailey et al.	Migrant Remitting as Transnational Practice: Moldovans in Italy and Czechia	2021	Scopus
Zapata	Home in Transnational Contexts: A Reflection on the Migration of Colombian Mothers/Fathers to Santiago de Chile	2021	Scopus
Wilding et al.	Digital media and the affective economies of transnational families	2020	Scopus
Butsch	Financial engagement of the Indian diaspora in Germany: Remitting to India	2020	Scopus
Wen and Xie	Missing families and villages: The care deficit faced by rural left-behind children in China and its implications	2019	Social Services Abstracts
Uzcanga and Oiarzabal	Associations of migrants in Spain: An enquiry into their digital inclusion in the "Network society" in the 2010s	2019	Social Services Abstracts
Ahlin	Only near is dear? Doing elderly care with everyday ICTs in Indian transnational families	2018	Social Services Abstracts
Farshbaf Shaker	A study of transnational communication among Iranian migrant women in Australia	2018	Social Services Abstracts
Schrooten et al.	Transmigration and urban social work: Towards a research agenda	2016	Social Services Abstracts
Manyeruke et al.	Attachment, psychological wellbeing, and educational development among child members of transnational families	2021	PsycInfo
Jerves et al.	Ambiguous loss in transnational families' adolescents: An exploratory study in Ecuador	2020	PsycInfo
Capstick	Transnational literacies as social remittances: The role of language ideologies in shaping migrants' online literacies	2020	PsycInfo
Marchetti-Mercer and Swartz	Familiarity and separation in the use of communication technologies in South African migrant families	2020	PsycInfo
McCabe et al.	Transnational motherhood: Health of Hispanic mothers in the united states who are separated from children	2017	PsycInfo
Bacigalupe and Bräuninger	Emerging technologies and family communication: The case of international students	2017	PsycInfo

| Amoyaw and Abada | Does helping them benefit me? Examining the emotional cost and benefit of immigrants' pecuniary remittance behaviour in Canada | 2016 | PsycInfo |
| Peng and Wong | Who takes care of my left-behind children? migrant mothers and caregivers in transnational child care | 2016 | PsycInfo |

Source: compiled by the authors.

Figure 4. Total number of documents selected from the search "transnational" AND "family"
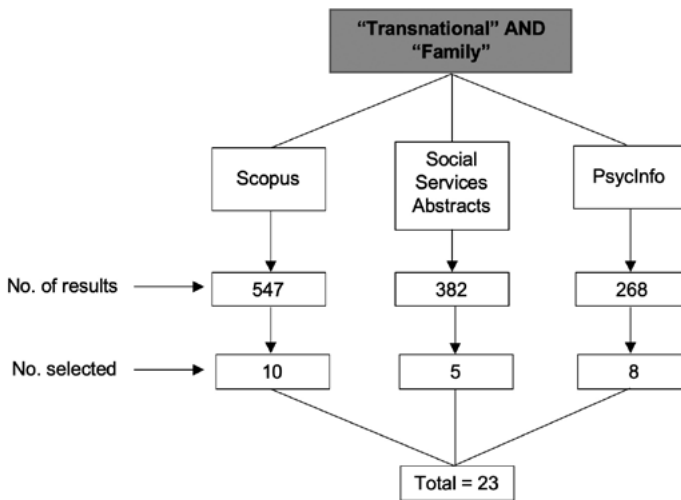
Source: compiled by the authors.

Figure 5. Total number of documents drawn from the Scopus, Social Services Abstracts, PsycInfo and ÍnDICEs-CSIC databases
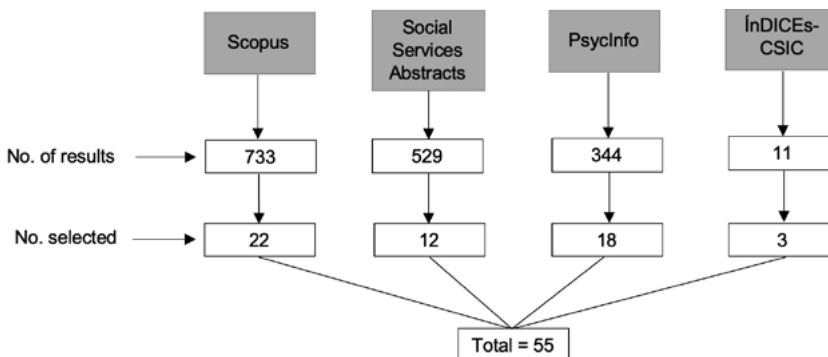
Source: compiled by the authors.

Findings[6]

A review has been conducted on the 55 scientific documents drawn from the various databases mentioned above. The information selected has been divided into two subject blocks: an initial introductory block entitled "Block 1. Reflections on the notion of transnationalism: a broad concept linked to migration"; and a second block that takes a closer look, more specifically, at the link between the family and transnationalism: "Block 2. The transnational family: an approach to its conceptualisation".

Block 1. Reflections on the notion of transnationalism: a broad concept linked to migration

In this initial block, the aim is to shed light on the concept of transnationalism,[7] and on the bearing it has on the study of international migration considered as a pragmatic paradigm of research.

As indeed Saldívar (2019) asserts, the concept of transnationalism encompasses various perspectives. Firstly, transnationalism is linked to the dynamics of present-day capitalism, and to the political and economic system; secondly, it is linked to the transfer of goods, remittances, movement of people and exchange of identities and meanings that cross borders in a globalised world. According to Villa-Torres et al. (2017), talking about transnationalism involves reviewing the financial, social and political events that transcend the borders of a specific country. By way of an example of present-day transnational phenomena, Berrocal et al. (2021) highlight the Covid-19 pandemic, the spread of which was spurred on by the processes of globalisation. Indeed, it led to a shared experience across the whole globe.

Saldívar (2019) argues that transnationalism involves the continual circulation of the cultural, economic and political flows that connect the people who stay in the country of origin to those in the host location. This leads to the formation of networks between the various connecting points. All of these networks therefore come together to form the "transnational social field", as it is known. Moreover, according to Piñones-Rivera et al. (2021), transnationalism goes hand in hand with the emergence of what are known as transnational social spaces. These spaces are comprised by various interactions (whether economic, social, political or cultural) between the place of origin of migrants and the host location, meaning that migrants experience a transformation.

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6   It should be pointed out that this paper strives to summarise the situation regarding international migration and the transnational family. However, given that the above may occasionally set out a generic, levelling perspective, throughout the document the references made to each of the scientific productions dealt with have been explicitly mentioned so they can be reviewed and, therefore, the role of the starting context or context of origin may be taken into consideration.

7   According to the Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) the adjective *transnational* means "Extending to several nations. Multinational".

Carling et al. (2021) point out that transnationalism consists of a notion that encompasses far more than migration. Nevertheless, in the present day both concepts are intimately tied. In this regard, Ryba et al. (2016) refer to the fact that transnational migration has presently increased owing to the changing global labour market. Indeed, according to Chávez (2018), transnationalism and migration cannot be understood without taking into consideration the processes associated with globalisation. Furthermore, she reveals how globalisation has encouraged transnationalism, despite the latter occurring before globalisation itself.

In this context, Villa-Torres et al. (2017) underline the fact that transnationalism has become a benchmark to take into consideration when researching current migratory processes. On the other hand, Gregorio-Gil (2017) asserts that transnational migration is feminised. Consequently, she champions the importance of researching into this phenomenon from a gender perspective. Indeed, the contributions made by the women involved in this type of migration must be highlighted so that their needs and their circumstances may be duly portrayed.

Carling et al. (2021) emphasise the importance of demonstrating that there are people who on account of leading a transnational life fall outside the classifications of "migrant"[8] and "non migrant". Engbersen and Snel (2020) define transnational life as being characterised by consisting of a situation where the people involved have to invest huge volumes of time and resources in various countries over an extended period. Even so, according to Talleraas (2020), it is very difficult to accurately determine the concept of transnational reality. For instance, this leads to a permanent state of institutional uncertainty when it comes to adapting various government bodies to deal with increased international migration.

Sobczyk et al. (2020) underscore the concept of localised transnationalism. It refers to the preservation of support networks that transcend borders whenever the migrant is held in the host country for various reasons. The reasons contemplated by the authors range from difficulty in travelling to the country of origin to the likelihood of being persecuted by security forces, in addition to limitations on regional and international mobility. Accordingly, identifications such as "non-EU foreigner" directly affect the potential to move that people who are categorised accordingly have. By extension, this situation gives rise to a state of immobility for many migrants, with transnational mobility being reserved for those whose papers are in order and who are financially sound.

According to Bell (2016), it may be possible to secure the full integration of the transnational immigrant in the host society, even if said individual maintains a frequent relationship of support with people who are in their country of origin. However, she acknowledges that maintaining these ties could hinder the ability of the migrant to fully participate in their new place of residence, which would in turn make it more likely for them

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8   According to the RAE, the verb *migrate* refers to "Moving from the place where one resides to a different one".

to experience exclusion. Indeed, Schrooten et al. (2016) assert that many transmigrants[9] are in a highly vulnerable social situation. This is reflected by the extent to which these people make up a significant proportion of community social service users.

Nevertheless, despite the many hurdles mentioned, Sobczyk et al. (2020) have classified borders between nations as being permeable. Consequently, close ties have been observed between migrants and their loved ones who remain in the place of origin. Also, these authors have asserted that there are two groups of migrants who are involved in the transnational practice: firstly, those people who are in a position to be able to travel regularly to the country of origin to visit relatives and friends; and, secondly, those who stay in touch with these groups merely from a distance. According to Marschall (2017), transformations may arise or be perceived in the identity of the migrant every time they return to their home in their country of origin. Even so, Chávez (2018) contends that all these transnational relationships that migrants form have changed in recent times owing to the incorporation of and developments in ICTs as they make communication from a distance much easier.

Nowicka (2020) claims that despite the significance of the bonds established by the migrant and the social context in which said person interacts for the transnational process, transnationalism cannot solely be reduced to these two issues; therefore, she upholds that there is a need for transnationalism to be championed as the upshot of connecting various conditions, belongings and practices. Consequently, Sassone and Lapenda (2019) state that an approach to the phenomenon of migration founded on transnationalism would make it possible to eradicate a perspective of migration whereby the individuals who move do so permanently for an extended period of time leaving them unable to return to their place of origin at will. Furthermore, it is accepted that the migrant may forge relations and interact with several destinations. As a result, transnationalism in migration suggests the emergence of connections that transcend borders. In this respect, these authors maintain the view that migratory processes are multidirectional.

Block 2. The transnational family: an approach to its conceptualisation

This second subject block provides a conceptualisation of the transnational family. Additionally, the mechanisms behind its organisation and the family dynamics that unfold within this process are set out. Thus, the block has been divided into four subject lines: "Transnational maternity", "Transnational childhood", "Use of ICTs for family communication" and "Remittances".

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9   According to the RAE, the definition of *transmigrate* is: "Referring particularly to an entire nation or substantial part of it: Moving to another country to live there. Referring to a soul: Moving from one body to another, according to those who believe in metempsychosis".

According to Sassone and Lapenda (2019), within the sphere of migration the family lies at the core of the transnational component. The transnational family is deemed to be a family in which one or more members have travelled to another place for an extended period of time, but where those members still share bonds or interaction between them. Along these lines, the existing bonds shall exist between them despite the physical distance. Some of the most influential factors on the dynamics of the transnational family are the type of family bond (extended or immediate family), the length of time of the migration, the capacity for communication between them, as well as cultural identity. When it comes to the transnational home, Zapata (2021) points out that this "is a place associated with emotions, privacy, care and all things family-related, and is not necessarily the place where one lives" (p. 93).

As Piras (2016) puts it, most research on international migration conducted from the standpoint of transnationalism has centred on the family unit, particularly on the mechanisms that arise within this core to hold the bonds and ties together while a physical distance is present. Similarly, it has been noted that the transnational family has also overcome the barriers that restrict the conventional notion of family. Accordingly, it is understood, for example, that care can be provided without the need for the aforesaid physical propinquity.

When a person decides to emigrate abroad in search of a job and, as a result, a change takes place in family relationships and roles, the members of the family tend to experience feelings of uncertainty. These sensations also go hand in hand with feelings of pain, loss and ambivalence (Solheim et al., 2016). Hence, according to Merry et al. (2020), the connection migrants form with their family who remain in the country of origin may provide them with resilience or, on the other hand, could exacerbate difficulties.

In relation to the above, Piras (2016) reveals that the movement of care in the globalised world forms one of the core components within the transnational family, along with the movement of emotions and affection. This therefore gives rise to "global chains of care", and moving through the links in these chains are the affection and care that are transferred transnationally. In this respect, Alinejad (2021) argues that digital media have been taking on greater importance in recent years as a tool enabling the movement of this care.

Alongside the emergence of global chains of care, a restructuring of family dynamics can be seen based in the changing roles of the members of the family. It is well known that labour market demands and the existence of a patriarchal, capitalist system have meant that the incorporation of women into the labour market has brought in its wake a care crisis. By virtue of this, the care that cannot be provided by women owing to their work responsibilities is provided by other women. This is also identified within the transnational family. As has been stated earlier, care forms one of the vital elements of study within the transnational sphere. Research on this issue suggests that when a woman moves to another destination,

the children who are left behind tend to be cared for by other women in the family, such as aunts or grandmothers. This means that these women are not only taking on the burden of reproductive work, but also that of productive work. When the parents move back to their place of origin, a rebalancing of the roles and dynamics unfolding within the family structure takes place again (Piras, 2016).

It is noted that the growing feminisation of migration has broadened interest in studying the family and the transnational home from the perspective of the mother-child relationship. Indeed, some studies portray the experiences of mothers who emigrate and address the practice of distance maternity, with the subject of transnational maternity being covered; while other research has been produced which reveals the kind of upbringing and the relationships that children have when they have been left behind or have to move, in other words, the transnational childhood (Piras, 2016). This notwithstanding, as Pineros-Leano et al. (2021) affirm, the studies have scarcely shed light on the consequences for mental health of women who emigrate to look for employment opportunities while their children remain in the place of origin. Conversely, Mazzucato et al. (2017) assert that evidence has been revealed of the impact that transnational migration has on the wellbeing of parents without applying the gender perspective. Based on these findings, four aspects that suffer the impact stand out: emotional wellbeing, happiness, health and life satisfaction level.

Transnational maternity

As Pineros-Leano et al. (2021) affirm, transnational maternity is a concept that may be defined as a situation where mothers move to another country for work while their children stay in the country of origin. These very authors point out that it is particularly important to look into these circumstances for three different reasons: firstly, because the physical distance between mothers and children could affect the bond and the attachment existing between both, leading to negative long-lasting impacts on the child's wellbeing; secondly, because in many cultures, motherhood serves a vital role in a woman's identity, meaning that transnational mothers often experience feelings of failure – as women and as mothers – stemming from the physical distance from their children; thirdly and lastly, because of the very few research studies that have been conducted on the subject, illustrative of a lack of data on such aspects as the prevalence of this social reality.

As Gonzálvez-Torralbo (2016) asserts, the concept of transnational maternity has been built on the basis of traditional criteria for defining motherhood. Consequently, she indicates that a large body of scientific literature has defined this term taking for granted that there is a natural bond between women and motherhood. This has all been determined on the basis of an approach that envisions instinctive maternal feelings. In this respect, Hernández (2016) notes that recent studies on transnational maternity have unveiled the issue that exists with regard to the conven-

tional model of motherhood. It is thus underlined that this model is based on the fact that caring for the children is the sole responsibility of the biological mother; hence, the author shares the idea that the concept of transnational maternity has been defined on the basis of this perspective. In spite of that, the reality shows that care for children is delivered via practices of intergenerational solidarity. Consequently, other women in the migrant's family take on responsibility for caring for the children while the men barely take part in this duty.

To be more precise, Mummert (2019) states that this pact or intergenerational solidarity is primarily provided by the grandmother. In doing this, the grandmother becomes the primary carer. This would address the problem of care. Thus, Hernández (2016) asserts that motherhood is exercised within a collective and community-based dynamic where each woman who takes part plays a specific role. Peng and Wong (2016) point out that transnational mothers adopt various discourses in keeping with gender roles depending on the person who has taken responsibility for the care of the child in the country of origin. Therefore, when the person entrusted with looking after the children is another woman, mothers consider this individual a "second mother" to said children. On the other hand, when this role is performed by the husband, they claim that said individual acts as the father and the mother. In this latter circumstance, the authors argue that the transnational mother seeks to protect her husband's masculinity.

Pedone and Gil (2016) bring to light the fact that mothers who emigrate become the family breadwinner, as well as leading reunifications. Hernández (2016) remarks that one of the motivations leading these women to emigrate is precisely that of their role as mother. Thus, mothers who are physically distant from their children do not become absent mothers; rather, they endeavour to strengthen the exclusive bond they have with their children. Additionally, she underscores the fact that a feeling of nearness is necessary. To achieve this, they are compelled to resort to coming up with strategies that diverge from traditional ones. As pointed out above, according to Pérez and Neira (2017), grandmothers play a vital role for transnational mothers. Once the latter group emigrate, grandmothers are often the primary carers for children who are left behind. This allows migrants to find a job opportunity abroad while acting as a driving force for the development of transnational dynamics. Having said that, it is important to not overlook the way in which grandmothers are greatly influenced by gender roles. As a result of these roles, responsibility for caring for their grandchildren is placed on their shoulders when their mother is no longer nearby. This entails an additional burden of work for them, while it also impacts on their psychological wellbeing.

Furthermore, with regard to the negative impacts of this process, Piras (2016) stresses that when the mothers emigrate these women carry a negative reputation and are labelled as "bad mothers" on account of the gender roles that still prevail in present-day societies. Indeed, they are deemed as having abandoned their children and having caused the disruption of the family, triggering feelings of guilt for them. Also, Piner-

os-Leano et al. (2021) state that these women exhibit greater emotional anguish and are therefore more likely to suffer depression. McCabe et al. (2017) illustrate that women who exercise their motherhood transnationally are more likely to exhibit an impairment in their mental health. What is more, they are more likely to be victims of violence (i.e., sexual assault). Accordingly, Pineros-Leano et al. (2021) indicate that it is important for social intervention professionals – and in particular social workers in the healthcare field along with other mental health professionals – to promote the development of strategies that will enable symptoms of depression among transnational mothers to be recognised and assessed.

Transnational childhood

According to Cebotari and Dito (2021), when parents move, the impact on the standard of living of children who stay in the place of origin is a subject that has been scantly researched to date. Similarly, they highlight the fact that studies on this issue show that migration by the father or by the mother is not associated with a more adverse standard of living for their children. Contrariwise, Lu et al. (2016) stress that research studies on transnational childhood have shown that migration by the parents – added to their residence status – has a negative bearing on the learning outcomes and health of their children. Likewise, Wen and Xie (2019) explain that many of these children experience weaker support and bonds compared to those whose parents have not emigrated. This could have a negative effect on their future resilience. Moreover, Manyeruke et al. (2021) maintain that children whose parents have moved abroad rank lower in terms of psychological wellbeing and higher when it comes to negative emotional symptoms. Regardless, they assert that no differences were observed when it comes to the child's academic performance or type of attachment.

Piras (2016) notes the importance of highlighting the progression in the feelings experienced by children whose mother or father emigrates. Initially, their emotional status is characterised by intense sadness. Later on, once this migratory grief is overcome, this status becomes one of pride for the family upon understanding the reasons that led this person to emigrate. Yet, certain circumstances can trigger the sadness and even the resentment anew, in addition to the perceived need for the parents to be physically close by. This is felt at important moments in personal and family terms, whether on certain dates such as birthdays or on other noteworthy celebrations. In addition, the comparison with other individuals of the same age who do live with both parents exacerbates these feelings. According to Jerves et al. (2020), a circumstance of ambiguous loss arises where ambivalent emotions are commonly felt.

When it comes to the feelings exhibited by children towards their carers, Piras (2016) points out that it has been revealed that they tend to experience affection, admiration and respect towards them. However, when it is the mother who emigrates, the children state that they are unable to find another figure to replace their mother when it comes to their

upbringing. In contrast, when it is their father who is physically absent, they report finding their father figure in their mother, along with their mother figure. Despite the feeling of emptiness that sometimes occurs with transnational childhood due to the absence of the parents, the fact is that children view their mothers as playing a protective, caring role, even if this relationship takes place from a distance. Conversely, in the case of the father, the feeling of alienation from this figure is greater as the father barely stays in touch with his children when he is away from them physically. Indeed, it is noted that he focuses in particular on providing for the family economically, while showing a concern for the emotional aspect of care to a lesser extent.

Andersson et al. (2018) note that transnational childhood also affords benefits to children's lives. In this regard, they indicate that children whose parents have emigrated, or children who have moved with them, have better social capital thanks to the transnational contacts they can gain. Likewise, Dyrness and Abu El-Haj (2020) suggest that children who experience a transnational childhood develop greater political and civic awareness and, as a result, enhanced critical ability on account of the fact that they are immersed in the transnational social field.

With regard to education during a transnational childhood, Kwon (2019) asserts that children who experience a transnational childhood in a country other than their place of origin benefit from greater knowledge due to their transnational experiences. Thus, children not only devote themselves to following their parents during transnational mobility, they also become active subjects in this process. By extension, they are in a position to benefit from a variety of cultural experiences. However, the author highlights the lack of visibility and the scant importance given to the experiences of these children by schools when they could provide invaluable resources for learning in class. Furthermore, Keegan (2017) reveals how several studies demonstrate that children who emigrate and live a transnational childhood experience a sense of belonging within their family and also within their neighbourhood and their school. Likewise, as far as school is concerned, it has been shown to be a setting where their confidence increases, provided their transnational experience is seen as enriching in this environment.

Use of ICTs for family communication

Zapata (2021) alludes to the fact that, within the transnational family, parents and children alike use technological means and resources for communication purposes. The use of ICTs act as a creative means of encouraging family dynamics to be maintained from a distance, while also favouring the emergence of other new dynamics, such as family celebrations and even new routines. Furthermore, Demirsu (2021) maintains that ICTs enable the family's values and culture to be conveyed to its members. In the opinion of Wilding et al. (2020), ICTs are essential resources for keeping ties in transnational families. In actual fact, as a digital medium they allow

care and affection to move around. Moreover, as stated by Ahlin (2018), ICTs help reduce the difficulties arising from geographical distance. This allows an enhanced feeling of togetherness to develop among the family members. Along these lines, as maintained by Acedera and Yeoh (2021), mobile telephones and online social media are highly significant tools for the transnational communication of migrants with their loved ones, particularly via video calls and photographs. Consequently, these authors indicate that ICTs encourage the transfer of care, and enable emotional experiences to be shared, transcending borders. Nevertheless, differences in opportunities to access ICTs also lead to inequalities when it comes to providing or receiving care.

Bacigalupe and Bräuninger (2017) mention that contact with the family via ICTs enhances the physical, social and emotional wellbeing of members of the transnational family. However, hurdles to access in this process emerge. This is because the more senior members tend to be less familiar with the use of ICTs, making it harder for them to access them. As a result, the younger members of the family play a key role in establishing this kind of communication. By way of an example of the foregoing, Demirsu (2021) proposes intergenerational and multigenerational communication. The former is communication established by the parents – the mothers in particular – with their children using technological devices and tools, such as video calls; the latter form of communication consists of a simultaneous exchange taking place over the same device between three generations: grandparents, parents and children. Additionally, it is posited that this latter method of communication gives rise to a new role being played by the grandparents.

That notwithstanding, according to Farshbaf Shaker (2018), the need to receive affection, confidence and emotional support encourages members of the family to ensure that all members who need it become digitally literate or even for the family's digital devices to be improved. In this regard, Uzcanga and Oiarzabal (2019) maintain that associations who work with the migrant population deliver initiatives that have favoured the digital inclusion of migrants. This has made it easier for these people to engage in transnational communication with their family in the country of origin.

Nonetheless, Marchetti-Mercer and Swartz (2020) note that use of ICTs to maintain communication from a distance can carry problems for transnational families in spite of all the benefits they afford. Firstly, the more senior members of the family are more likely to struggle to adapt to the use of new technologies. Likewise, this can trigger feelings of frustration among children who are cared for by seniors. This occurs when children try to communicate with their parents who are abroad and their carers are unable to use ICTs. Furthermore, frequent visual contact makes it harder to overcome the grieving process experienced by the migrant, caused by the physical distance from the rest of the family. In turn, it becomes harder to form deep bonds with people in the new place of residence and, as a result, is more difficult for the person to adapt to it. Also,

according to Ahlin (2018), ICTs are not a substitute for all care practices. Indeed, it is noteworthy that this resource is unable to take away the sense of abandonment that children may experience when their parents have moved abroad.

Remittances

Thomas et al. (2017) state that remittances[10] consist of all financial and/or material assets that are sent to the place of origin by transnational migrants. With regard to the study of remittances and their link to the scientific literature, the aforesaid authors note that most research studies have been based on determining the link existing between remittances and their impact on the global economy and on the finances of the family who remain in the place of origin, i.e., the recipient family. However, for around twenty years, studies have begun to include the term *social remittances*. This concept includes the movement of practices, identities, ideas and social capital transnationally between the host location and the place of origin (Capstick, 2020; Lacroix et al., 2016).

Therefore, as Bailey et al. (2021) remark, remittances must be acknowledged within the sphere of migratory policies as consisting of social practices and they should be studied in that capacity. These authors similarly assert that remittances are part of the processes that unfold within the transnational social field. Moreover, they highlight the fact that remittances are intimately tied to the series of communications and activities that form part of the routine of the transnational family. Accordingly, remittances aim to meet the needs of the family group, whether for them to make ends meet or for their long-term development. By extension, Held (2017) states that remittances from the transmigrant constitute a duty to be fulfilled with the aim of fostering the wellbeing of the family in the place of origin. However, this action can also give rise to positive feelings in the individuals who send them.

Butsch (2020) states that the sending and the receipt of remittances constitutes an essential function in terms of the fulfilment and readjustment of roles in the transnational family. This is the case both for relatives who remain in the place of origin as it is for those who have emigrated, despite the latter group being physically absent. Also, this author underlines the importance of this practice as an expression and driver of the sense of belonging in a family. Along these lines, Amoyaw and Abada (2016) have also set out the benefits of remittances. These include the emotional advantage brought about by the individuals sending monetary remittances. Consequently, they note that from six months of being in the host country, a certain beneficial degree of obligation is formed to support the family. In turn, this boosts the interpersonal resources put forward by the transmigrant and makes it possible to deal with the psychological and

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10 According to the RAE, the term *remittance* refers to a "Host of items both sent and received. Sending or receiving something from one party to another".

emotional stress more effectively. This benefit has been seen to a broader extent among women than men.

Nonetheless, it has been illustrated that sending of remittances similarly has a negative impact on the health of senders. With regard to this, Afulani et al. (2016) allude to the impairment of health linked to remittances being more commonly known among women, as it may consist of a source of stress for them. Indeed, having a child in the place of origin and sending money acts as a trigger for the deterioration of migrants' health. Ultimately, Amoyaw and Abada (2016) note that there is a greater risk of migrants experiencing emotional health problems when sending remittances in the first six months of arriving in the host country. This occurs because in addition to the process of adapting to the new place of residence, there is a financial burden that comes with it.

Discussion and conclusions

Based on this study it may be stated that there is consensus among the various authors with regard to the relevance of the approach of transnationalism to research on present-day migratory movements, heavily spurred on by the processes of globalisation (Arce, 2018). Furthermore, and in keeping with Dalouh and Soriano (2020), it has been shown that applying a transnational perspective has made it possible to change the conventional paradigm of study. In addition, it is necessary to underline the difficulty involved in establishing a uniform definition for transnational migration, as mentioned earlier by Talleraas (2020). On the other hand, authors such as Piñones-Rivera et al. (2021) conceptualise transnational migration as being a situation where the immigrant maintains ties with the place of origin which transcend national borders, while authors such as Sassone and Lapenda (2019) state that transnational migrants are able to interact with various destinations.

What is more, it is important to point out that the transnational family model has shown its ability to maintain bonds of togetherness and support networks without the need for all members to be physically present in the same location (Zapata, 2021). Maintaining family support is deemed a major part in achieving better life satisfaction among immigrants (Hombrados-Mendieta et al., 2016). Use of ICTs is therefore essential. They enable individuals to exercise their parental role, while allowing for the formation of a new family dynamic. No matter, the existence of a generational gap is evidenced. This hinders the creation of firm togetherness at a distance for the more senior members, and indeed with children who are in their care. In this regard, it is important to set up free digital literacy programmes for the elderly in a widespread manner at public social service organisations and at NGOs while offering advice on how to improve the digital facilities they have.

In addition, it has been revealed that women are the primary figures in charge of caring for children, even if it is women who emigrate. Care is

still a female duty in keeping with gender roles. When the mother moves abroad, according to Mummert (2019), a far-reaching structure of community support is deployed which mobilises many women. This circumstance stands in contrast with what happens when the father emigrates. As a consequence, when the mother is the figure who moves this has a bigger effect on family organisation. This in all likelihood has been one of the reasons why the transnational maternity has come to garner such major interest as a sphere of study. In this context, in light of the emotional and financial burden that is suffered in particular by women, and which has harmful effects (e.g., stress, impairment of physical and mental health) for women, the formation of mutual support groups has been posited. These may be formed by the women in question and be held at social service community centres, health centres and/or non-profit organisations, led by social workers. In this regard, and according to Pineros-Leano et al. (2021), the aim of these groups is to encourage interaction among individuals experiencing the same problem, so they may feel understood. Also, the aim is to secure the emergence of new ties of support among the members of the group to enable them to overcome their grief.

Within the transnational family dynamic, the importance of remittances must be underscored. Firstly, it is vital for public bodies to be aware of the implications of monetary remittances and, therefore, to allocate the resources needed to research the matter in all spheres. Far from being a trivial issue, this means they should be acknowledged within the sphere of migratory policies as consisting of social practices and they should be studied in that capacity. Although the action brings about positive feelings in the individuals who send them, it has been proven that remittances can be detrimental to the health of senders. They are in a position of greater vulnerability as they are more likely to suffer from issues linked to mental health stemming from the financial burden they are facing (Afulani et al., 2016; Amoyaw and Abada, 2016).

However, one should not overlook and, by extension, should in fact showcase the kindness behind "social remittances". It is children who benefit greatly as through their transnational childhood they are more likely to see an increase in their social capital (Andersson et al., 2018). Also, children who experience a transnational childhood benefit from an excellent ability to enrich the dynamics of their education in class thanks to the knowledge they gain through living in culturally diverse circumstances (Kwon, 2019). Nonetheless, transnational childhood fails to receive the attention it deserves in schools; therefore, it is necessary to draw up and implement social policies for education to encourage a drive for education policies that are based on an intercultural model based on transnationalism. In this respect, within the context of multidisciplinary teams (i.e., formed by psychologists and teachers), social workers in the sphere of education should deliver social integration programmes that are based on transnational experiences from a positive and enriching standpoint for all pupils.

As far as transnational childhood is concerned, the publications reviewed did not exhibit a consensus regarding the impact brought about on children's lives once their parents emigrate. While certain research studies, such as those conducted by Cebotari and Dito (2021), indicate that the move undertaken by the parents does not have a detrimental effect on the children, other publications, such as those by Lu et al. (2016), assert that children's wellbeing has indeed declined since their physical separation from their parents. What is true is that a large body of the studies looked at sets out the impact of the separation between mother and child from the viewpoint of the detriment both parties experience, whereby they both undergo a process of grief as a result of this detachment. However, once again it is necessary to point out that the research studies have been conducted based on a patriarchal perspective.

Throughout this study it has been shown that there is a need to continue to study highly important aspects such as the consequences brought about on the living standards of children who remain in the place of origin when parents move, the prevalence of transnational maternity or spousal relationships when a physical distance exists. Furthermore, systematic reviews on international migration and the transnational family, such as the one set out in this paper, make it possible to pool a substantial volume of relevant information in a structured way. Thus, the findings of this research are of particular interest for social practitioners in general and for social workers in particular. They could potentially be engaging in part of their practice with members from families of these types (these actors may include community social work professionals, members of family treatment teams and social workers in the education sphere).

With regard to the limitations and, also, evidence behind this study, the absence of scientific literature on the transnational family including a range of family models must be highlighted. In other words, although the transnational family in itself breaks the conventional family model, all the studies obtained from the searches carried out have been conducted on the basis of an immediate family structure, consisting of a father, mother and children. By extension, other types of families – such as LGBT or single parent families – are unrepresented.

As a future research line, the preparation of studies using qualitative methods is proposed. These should shed light on the reality of transnational families, including families with a structure that differs from the conventional and heteronormative family, which social practitioners (i.e., social workers) could draw from (Domínguez-de-la-Rosa and Montalbán-Peregrín, 2012).

To conclude, transnationalism is a particularly pertinent approach to the study of international migration. It makes it possible to review the migratory phenomenon not only from the standpoint of the influence of migrants on the host society, but also on the basis of the relationships that are formed between these migrants and the persons who stay in the place of origin (transnational family). Research on the transnational family has become a key component of literature on transnationalism. Even so, the

transnational family has been depicted on the basis of the parameters of a traditional and heteropatriarchal family model, in accordance with the prevailing gender roles. As a result, it is important to prepare research studies adopting a broader perspective of the social reality when addressing this subject.

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