

Migratory Project and Structural Barriers: A Comparative Study of Psychosocial Issues for the Two Most Vulnerable Regular Migrant Populations in Switzerland

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Abstract

Despite Switzerland's tradition of migration, most foreigners are still considered a threat to Swiss values and identity, especially those from outside the European Union (EU) and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) whose permit conditions are more restrictive. In this context, different migratory groups face similar structural challenges. Based on this assumption, this paper compares the results of two qualitative studies conducted with the two most vulnerable regular migrant groups in Switzerland, according to their migratory project: women from third countries with university diplomas and asylum seekers. Both projects were conducted using semi-structured interviews and the data were analyzed with thematic content analysis. Results demonstrate how these two groups might face similar difficulties for social and economical insertion, impacting their well-being, despite the different conditions of arrival. Our comparative perspective contributes to the understanding of current migration issues and to possible strategies to avoid the victimization of politically disadvantaged groups in Europe.

Keywords: Structural violence, migratory project, skilled migrant women, asylum seekers, Switzerland

Introduction

Switzerland is a migration country since its foundations. While the migrant population is increasing (in 2015, 24,6% of the total resident population is of foreign origin according to Kristensen, Rausa and Heiniger, 2017), state policies are becoming increasingly restrictive for long-term living and working for foreigners in Switzerland. Swiss immigration policy is based on residence permits that are granted depending on origin and motive for migration (Piguet, 2004). Restrictive policies are a complex issue, especially because of the current migration flows due to wars, political and economical crises in the world. Permit conditions for people from third countries (from outside the EU and the EFTA) are more restrictive because of their perceived threat to Swiss values and identity (Piguet, 2004; Riaño & Baghdadi, 2007).

Foreigners face social and structural discrimination (Nunes-Reichel & Santiago-Delefosse, 2015; Mulvey, 2010; Pecoraro & Fibbi, 2010; Riaño & Wastl-Walter, 2006), even when they are highly qualified and migrate for a job opportunity. Within the foreign regular population, which excludes undocumented people, the most vulnerable groups¹ in terms of socioeconomic insertion are women from third countries (WTC) and asylum seekers (AS) (Goguikian-Ratliff, Bolzman & Gakuba, 2014; Meares, 2010; Pecoraro & Ruedin, 2013).

The migrant experience in Switzerland is highly heterogeneous. However, different groups may face similar structural challenges for social and economic insertion, which impacts their well-being. Based on this assumption, this paper compares the results of two qualitative studies conducted with the two most vulnerable regular migrant groups in Switzerland, according to their migratory project: WTC with university diplomas and AS.

Despite different conditions of arrival (personal choice for qualified women and quest for security for AS) we highlight the psychosocial impacts of the discrepancies between the migratory project and the structural difficulties faced by these two groups in Switzerland. We will show how arrival conditions influence the action possibilities of these migratory groups as well as the different coping strategies they mobilize. This paper is organized in five sections. The first section focuses on the specific motivations of these two groups to Switzerland and presents the political issues that concern both of our studied populations. The second section reports our research design and methods of the two studies. The third section describes our results. Finally, the fourth section discusses the comparisons/similarities between the two groups and is followed by the conclusion.

1. Migratory project and permit situation of vulnerable foreigners in Switzerland

In the two studied populations, the motives for migration can be multifactorial; however, there is a central element in the decision for coming to Switzerland: the migratory project, or in other words, the main goal that motivates a person to migrate. The migratory project is central in every migration of independent adults. For example, for WTC, professional insertion is a central aspect of their migration and life in Switzerland. While for AS, the central reason for migration is survival and a chance to start over, which includes aspects of social and professional insertion later. They choose to leave their region and/or their country, but this notion of choice isn't the same for everyone. When the goal is not achieved, its role becomes more important because it involves a loss and a grief of the migratory project. Besides the existence of this project, which is an individual one, there might be a migratory mandate from the migrant's relatives: close family, extended family or the whole community. This mandate can be verbalized or not, sometimes imagined, as highlighted by Métraux (2011, p. 61) « if the migratory project fails or becomes centered on the person's individual project, the migrant person might feel like he is betraying its mandate » (our translation).

The two populations do not depend on the same legislation in Switzerland. WTC depend on the Federal Act on Foreign Nationals and AS depend on the Asylum Act. The groups receive different permits, and thus they are given different rights and duties. The rights and political status of WTC status changes according to their permit: "L" permits authorize a short-stay in Switzerland, while "B" permits are for a duration of one year (renewable) and are delivered to workers, students and family members of Swiss/ regular citizens. AS first obtain an "N" permit, until the Swiss State Secretariat for Migration processes the request, a process that may last from days to years. The result of the asylum process can be: dismissing an application without entering into the substance of the case, refusal of asylum, provisional admission ("F" permit) or refugee status ("B" permit). For this last case, AS have to prove the persecutions and other forms of violence they suffered. Because the main migratory project of asylum seekers is the quest of protection, they hope to obtain the refugee status, which is defined in the Asylum Legislation, article 3, subparagraphs 1 and 2 (LAsi, 2014):

“Refugees are persons who in their native country or in their country of last residence are subject to serious disadvantages or have a well-founded fear of being exposed to such disadvantages for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or due to their political opinions. Serious disadvantages include a threat to life, physical integrity or freedom as well as measures that exert intolerable psychological pressure. Motives for seeking asylum specific to women must be taken into account.”

When a person seeks asylum in Switzerland, she is assigned to a Swiss canton, which is responsible for her (accommodation, health insurance, food, basic treatments, etc.). Thus, these migrants have to stay where chance has led them, and they can't choose their accommodation place as long as their procedure is in progress. The presence of a family member (except for minor child and parents) or knowledge of a national language isn't taken into account. According to the canton and the permit, they perceive an amount of money each month for their everyday basics. In some cantons, people could live underground during several months.

The migratory project of WTC is often based on professional integration. However, the real labor market context in Switzerland does not facilitate their access to a suitable position. Several studies highlighted the gender inequalities in the European labor market, especially for migrant women. Scholars refer to a “triple disadvantage” scenario for this population based on their foreign origin, gender and the fact that they come from a third country (which are submitted to more restrictive policies to access a work permit). The report of Rubin et al. (2008) shows that WTC present the highest unemployment rates when compared to other regular migrants groups. These two populations may face similar structural difficulties in Switzerland. Indeed, the structural difficulties lead to adjusting the migratory project accordingly to their sociopolitical status.

For example, the right to work is limited for some categories of residence permits, the access to housing is highly bureaucratic and complex and the local languages learning is often required for stabilizing permits and for some job positions (that require French and German). Moreover, foreigners with a valid work permit face several difficulties to have their diplomas recognized and to be integrated into the Swiss labor market. The absence of choice, even if reasoned, is a form of structural violence, preventing the person to project herself in a familiar context. This concept was defined by Farmer, Nizeye, Stulac and Keshavjee (2006), based on Galtung's works (1969) as follows:

“The term “structural violence” is one way of describing social arrangements that put individuals and populations in harm's way [...]. The arrangements are structural because they are embedded in the political and economic organization of our social world; they are violent because they cause injury to people (typically, not those responsible for perpetuating such inequalities).” (p. 1686).

This form of violence has political, social, economic and psychological impacts on individuals. Thus, they can use various strategies to cope with it. In this paper, we are particularly interested in the psychosocial impacts of this structural violence and the coping strategies used by these two vulnerable migrants groups.

2. Research design and methods

The two studies compared in this paper are based on qualitative methods and inspired by community psychology principles of social justice and empowerment. From a constructivist paradigm (Prilleltensky, 2008; Santiago-Delefosse & Rouan, 2001), we assume that meaning is co-constructed within interaction, therefore social discrimination and injustice may impact one's well-being and sense of agency (García-Ramírez, de la Mata, Paloma, & Hernández-Plaza, 2011; James & Prilleltensky, 2002; Prilleltensky, 2008, 2012).

2.1 Objective

The research conducted with WTC aims to understand the difficulties and strategies adopted by this population, beyond the phenomenon of deskilling, in their quest for well-being in Switzerland (Nunes-Reichel, 2016). The aim of the research with asylum seekers is to explore health representations of AS and to understand the interactions with first-line nurses in health consultations. Despite different goals, both studies address life context in Switzerland and coping strategies of these populations.

The objective of this paper is to highlight the psychosocial impacts of the discrepancies between the migratory project and the structural difficulties faced by these two groups in Switzerland as well as the different coping strategies they mobilize.

2.2 Methods

Semi-structured interviews were especially appropriate for the purpose of both studies. This method allows the participant to express and develop his/her own ideas on the subject and to introduce new topics that they consider relevant to explain his/her experience. 15 interviews were conducted with WTC between 2011 and 2016. 11 interviews were conducted with AS (6) and first-line nurses (5) between 2014 and 2016, which are part of a larger ongoing study. Both sets of interviews were conducted in the French-speaking part of Switzerland and were conducted in French and in English.

2.3 Participants

WTC participants (n=15) were recruited through ads through migrants' associations. The average age of participants was 37 years old. All the participants obtained their tertiary diplomas abroad in different fields: 7 in health and social professions, 3 in business and economics, and 5 in scientific/research fields. They have been living in Switzerland for 1 to 9 years and arrived with a B permit (studies, work, or family reunion).

AS (n=6) were recruited through third persons (“snowball effect”) and first-line nurses (n=5) were recruited through medical and social structures (11 participants in total). The average age of AS was 31 years old. They have been in Switzerland for 10 months to 13 years. 4 people had an N permit, 1 an F permit and 1 a B permit.

In this paper, we gather under this term of AS those who applied for asylum via the usual procedure, although 2 of them are so to speak no longer AS (F and B permits). The average age of nurses was 48 years old. They have been working as nurses with AS for an average of 7 years. All of them were working as first-line nurses.

2.4 Data analysis

Data from the interviews with skilled WTC and with AS and first-line nurses were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis. The elucidation of themes from an individual's experience allows the researcher to understand the individual's perceptions and beliefs. Following the procedures from thematic analysis, each researcher read all transcripts and took notes about constants in meaning. Then, the transcripts were coded to group common themes (triangulation). The themes were checked by several readings and discussions with colleagues. This analysis was assisted by QSR NVivo software.

3. Comparative results from the two studies

Thematic analysis of the transcripts from the interviews with WTC and with AS (including those with the first-line nurses) are organized into 3 main themes in this paper, related to their respective migratory project and life conditions: 3.1) Arrival conditions and impacts of legal status on employability, 3.2) Social discrimination and 3.3) Coping strategies and psychological outcomes. The similarities in these two populations' experiences as well as their specificities are presented for each theme.

3.1 Arrival conditions and impacts of legal status on employability

Different challenges might be faced depending on the migrant's permit situation when arriving in Switzerland, since there are different rights and duties based on political status. WTC and AS are submitted to different migration regulations, "foreigners law" and "asylum law", respectively, as was described previously.

Professional reintegration was challenging for both studied groups and represents one of the main aspects of their migratory project that demanded several adjustments made by WTC and AS. This theme is organized in three categories: 3.1.1) Legal status and professional life for WTC, 3.1.2) Legal status and life conditions for AS and 3.1.3) Permit delays and the quest for stability.

3.1.1 Legal status and professional life for WTC

For the WTC, the lack of clarity about the employment conditions linked to their permit situation was an important issue. Several participants reported their surprise when they realized that their diplomas and language proficiency were not enough to find a job in Switzerland. One of the most common solutions reported was to marry a European citizen. Some women who were already in a couple decided to get married in order to be able to continue their lives and relationships in Switzerland:

"It was a big surprise when they told me that my experience didn't count, I was convinced that after doing my master's again and learning the language it would be enough... But then you listen to that and you learn that you only have two possibilities: get married or leave! I didn't expect to hear that from an HR consultant..." (Olivia)

WTC reported feeling disappointed when they realized that their options in the Swiss labor market did not meet their expectations and their competencies, diplomas and experiences were unrecognized. Anastacia (extract below) had difficulties finding a job, even after years of investment in language courses and after doing her studies in Switzerland. Although her strategies followed the current prescriptions to facilitate professional integration in Switzerland, she reported a feeling of injustice when facing the labor market.

"For me, the most important thing was to finish university, and then when I did it and sought some advices on the professional placement bureau at the university they simply told me that all my previous professional experience did not count... For me that was very hard! Can you imagine, having your own business like I did back home and then start over, from zero here? For me that was the moment I realized I had to leave my pride behind and face reality, to start over, what else could I do...?" (Anastacia)

Other participants also reported the need to start over, meaning they would accept a job below their qualifications while trying to find a suitable one. This situation is difficult mainly because of the lack of clarity about the real conditions regarding their legal status and to get integrated in the Swiss labor market, which is experienced as structural violence.

3.1.2 Legal status and life conditions for AS

The constraints related to legal status were also mentioned by AS. One of the most difficult aspects for this population is the absence of choice of where to live when they arrive in Switzerland – they are assigned to a Swiss canton. This restricts employment options because AS must live and work in the same canton.

“And we were going to [another canton] to find a job for me. We talked with a boss, who told me “yes, you can come here for one day and I want to see your work”. (...) I worked one day, he saw how I worked, and he said “ok”. He wrote a letter to ask a change of canton. I went to the population office; I gave the letter and my job contract. She told me “listen Mister, you are an asylum seeker, you aren’t here as a tourist person!” (...) I said ‘but I want to work, and by doing so I can pay for myself’. She answered ‘no, you are an asylum seeker’.” (Eddy)

Indeed, AS experienced the absence of professional activity. They talked about the negative impacts of idleness, which led to a lack of general motivation and psychological impacts recurring for the participants. The testimony of a nurse illustrates the negative impacts, including depression:

“Most of asylum seekers are depressed because they don’t find a job. They came, they left their country, maybe they sold everything or their parents became indebted to pay the road, expecting the person who left to pay back when she arrives in Europe. And arrived in Europe, they don’t find a job, so they’re completely depressed, because in their country, there is a lot of pressure on their family. They can’t do anything without a job.” (Ibrahim)

In this extract, the nurse emphasizes the gap between the migratory project or mandate and the reality for AS in Switzerland. Additionally, AS, such as Adriano, are also concerned with limited financial resources to cover basic needs:

“The money I get here is not enough to cover my months, because I get 440 [Swiss francs = ~410 Euros). So, with 440, I have about 10 Francs for one day. So, with 10 Francs, you can’t eat correctly, you can’t go eat sometimes in restaurants. And cooking, sometimes it’s difficult for me, sometimes I haven’t got the courage to cook alone, because I eat alone. So, generally, I eat some kebabs or pizzas, and I do some concessions. One day I eat and the other I don’t eat.” (Adriano)

3.1.3 Permit delays and the quest for stability

Besides the lack of clarity of rights and duties according to arrival and stay permit conditions, the question of uncertainty or the lack of stability during the legal process for permit has been highlighted by the two studied populations. For the WTC, the example of Natalia below shows how she experienced the waiting period for her wedding preparation in order to get a B permit (family reunion) that would allow her to stay in Switzerland after her studies (a Master’s degree, during which she had a student permit).

“It was like if my life was frozen (...) Yeah, this feeling that you cannot leave without a visa, (...) so we are totally limited, stuck, it was really weird because, indeed, we had never lived something like this (...) when I came to Switzerland, that [the permit situation] was never an issue, because I came for the Master’s, as a student, but then now it’s very difficult. And then, you see, it’s awful, we think about irregular people, who are always struggling with this kind of situation, it’s very weird, I mean, we did nothing wrong... Yeah, for someone who has never experienced this kind of power relationship with the State it just seems absurd...” (Natalia)

For the AS, the extract of Sana’s interview illustrates the psychological and physical impacts, such as fatigue, due to the length and uncertainty of the asylum procedure.

“I feel tired in my head. Too much thinking, too much stress, I don’t know. [I. You talked about asylum procedure before, it has an influence too?] A lot! (...) It’s like a child during his first day at school: it LASTS a lot because he knows nobody; he thinks that the day will never end. It’s a story like this. You don’t know what to expect, you don’t know. And all of that, it makes me tired. [I. There is a lot of expectation?] Too much.” (Sana)

Many discuss the impossibility of projecting into the future and investing in their life, such as whether to learn the local language, during this period of time.

3.2 Social discrimination

This theme is organized in two categories: 3.2.1 Institutional discrimination and 3.2.2 Isolation and loneliness.

3.2.1 Institutional discrimination

Participants from both studies highlighted the impacts of institutional discrimination on their self-esteem and motivation to pursue integration in Switzerland. For this topic, the different conditions of arrival implied challenges on specific domains of life. Specifically, WTC participants reported feeling exclusion due to lack of language proficiency.

Institutional discrimination was pinpointed mainly when in the contact with official services for housing and at the habitants control office (the lack of translation services was considered as discriminatory).

Those who did not speak French had difficulties understanding the Swiss system. The lack of translation services was problematic for administration, housing, insurance, and other practical aspects of everyday life.

Some participants were surprised by the attitude in the Habitants Control Office where the staff did not speak English, like in the case of Petra below:

“Then, I feel some other people at the commune are very, in these administrative roles are very cut and dry. No, we’ll serve you in French or German, but we won’t speak English, and I have no sense of whether that means that they can’t speak English or whether they’re choosing not to. I hope that it’s they can’t.” (Petra)

WTC also reported that they believed that lack of language proficiency was the main obstacle for obtaining a job. Whereas, AS reported feeling discrimination in healthcare settings, such as from caregivers:

“With some nurses, there are always some problems [...] because you are an asylum seeker. [I. Because of your status?] Yeah. Even in the hospital, when I was hospitalized, they gave me a room only for me, with nobody. I was always in a room alone. Me, personally, I was ok, no problem. I’m alone, and I can watch TV in quiet, no problem. Personally it’s ok, but in my head, I feel... it breaks me.” (Eddy)

The excerpt from Ibrahim, a first-line nurse, highlights the refusal of some general practitioners to take care of this population in vulnerability situation:

“It’s unusual, but it could happen that a general practitioner says ‘no, I don’t have free place anymore’, or something like that. Or we can feel reluctance towards the taking care of asylum seekers, because he doesn’t want any foreigners in his medical practice. Maybe he thinks that his Swiss patients wouldn’t come anymore.” (Ibrahim)

This nurse supports that some general practitioners do not see their AS’s patients in the time period planned. If a practitioner is behind schedule, he may favor Swiss patients. Thus, some AS could wait hours before being taken care of.

3.2.2 Isolation and loneliness

Participants from both groups emphasized the impacts of social discrimination by locals on their motivation to connect with the local community. WTC perceived the Swiss people as a reserved and closed group and thus made connections with other foreigners to create a supportive social network, in which they felt more accepted and self-confident. Some participants were frustrated by the feeling of having to change oneself in order to be socially accepted and reported this as a reason to want to return to their home country, as illustrated by the excerpt from Stella:

“I need to be part of a group where I am accepted unconditionally. Now, I feel ready to leave Switzerland with my daughter, to go back home where I can feel unconditionally loved, that’s what I’m seeking.” (Stella)

AS highlighted how they are labeled by locals, such as in the interview with Eddy:

“I said ‘ok, I’m an asylum seeker’. I said ‘listen, in any case, if I stay here one year, two years, two hundred years, I always will be an asylum seeker. It’s like this Madam, if I have the red passport [Swiss passport], it doesn’t matter, I stay here as the asylum seeker’.” (Eddy)

Isolation leads to loneliness, which was highlighted by all the interviewees. The loneliness implies a lack of security and confidence:

“But the problem is that I’m alone here. It’s maybe the problem, nobody looks after me, I lack security, and also confidence. I lack confidence and security... I live like someone who is lost alone in the desert. I don’t have any support around me, which could give me faith or confidence.” (Adriano)

3.3 Coping strategies and psychological outcomes

Despite the difficulties experienced by migrants, the participants described strategies in their quest for meaning and well-being in the face of structural violence. In this theme, we explore the main strategies and sources of encouragement: 3.3.1 Focusing on controllable elements (sense of agency), 3.3.2 Self-appreciation and sharing with significant others.

3.3.1 Focusing on controllable elements (sense of agency)

Participants from both studies highlighted the importance of sense of agency for feeling motivated during their adaptation to life in Switzerland. For WTC, the example from the interview with Rebecca shows how focusing on the possibilities of personal choice in the future provided relief from the difficulties faced to find a job:

“I like to go to the bottom of things, and I had decided to stay for one year at least, it is not a matter of proud but of perseverance, this way I could say to myself that I had really tried, so in the end it was really helpful to focus on that deadline when things were difficult, it allowed me to keep moving forward and now things are easier for me here.” (Rebecca)

Many participants talked about the importance of feeling free to stay or to leave during difficult moments. The sense of agency reinforced their self-esteem and confidence, as Mercedes pinpoints below:

“Well, I remember telling myself “you wanted this, you wanted to be here, so you should not cry around complaining, you decided, so just move on until you decide you don’t want to try anymore”. (Mercedes)

In the case of AS, the sense of agency is also a strategy used to cope with the different types of structural violence. Asylum seekers with N permit have to wait for the decision of Swiss authorities about their request for refugee status; those with an F permit will probably live during years in Switzerland. Despite these variations about status, asylum seekers talk about the sense of agency, like Aferwerki (N permit) and Adriano (F permit):

“If we want that things are going fine, it is our responsibility to do something, to change our attitude, and to try to be ok with the situation.” (Aferwerki)

“Here I do nothing, I haven’t any perspectives, I haven’t any future. I have no hope for the future. So, I tell myself that instead of staying here and stagnating, it’s better to go back.” (Adriano)

3.3.2 Self-appreciation and sharing with significant others.

In some cases, when they had enough resources, migrants had enhanced purpose due to the opportunity to contribute a positive image of their countries and cultures, as described by Elisa:

“I never had to lie about my origins like some other women I met (...) until now I am here by my own means, which makes me very happy. I am the opposite of those ashamed of their nationality, I am proud of being Mexican, I feel like I am an ambassador of my culture, someone who can show Swiss people that we can be serious, efficient and change the stereotypes about my people. It’s very important for me to contribute to this change and to benefit from it later...” (Elisa)

For Elisa, French fluency was necessary to communicate her opinion, was a source of pride and confidence, and helped her gain social acceptance among locals.

Other participants talked about the importance of being active instead of blaming the situation in a victim role. That was a rewarding resource for social interaction for Grace:

“I’m the kind of person who’s not really complicated in a way. I can adjust myself really well. Really easily. I’m not complaining in a way, like, ‘Oh my god, they’re not smiling’, and then I’d stop and be grumpy. No I’m not like this, I’m more like, ‘Okay they’re like that, that’s fine, then I smile first’, for example.” (Grace)

Indeed, participants highlighted the importance of being proactive in order to change relational patterns they did not appreciate, such as « excessive » formality.

Most of the AS interviewed mentioned the importance of a social network. Generally, the network consisted of people from the community of origin. It seems that the host society does not embrace outsiders and that leads to a sense of loneliness for these persons. Every AS interview highlighted their proactive attitude towards building social networks. Nahom, an Eritrean man, expresses a form that social network might take:

“I get a negative decision [about asylum] and the police would come to take me off. I decided to go to sleep at a friend’s home, who lived in [place]. During six months, I was there, at my friend’s home. He was so nice. [I. Is he Eritrean?] Yes, he is.” (Nahom)

The communities of origin support migrants, especially newcomers, in daily activities as well as provide advice on the asylum procedure, as demonstrated by Flore:

“It’s a friend, who told me ‘when you don’t feel safe there, you can come here’. (...) It’s a Cameroonian [same nationality as Flore]. When I went out my appointment in the hospital, I didn’t know which train track to take. And I, I was always asking ‘please, Madam’, I looked for a person who has the same color of my skin, I said ‘please Madam, which train track should I take to go there?’. (...) We get to know each other like this. She said ‘no problem, as you come from my country, from Cameroon, you can come. We can talk to each other, if you feel tired you can go back, it depends, there is no problem’.

And you see, it's her who does that [she shows her hairs] (...) it's her who takes care of my appearance. She told me 'you don't stay at home, you have to come with me, I want to show you how it works here. You see here, it's expensive, you can't enter. Here, you can do some shopping'. I'm fine now, I'm fine." (Flore)

4. Discussion

As highlighted in the introduction, policies for foreigners in Switzerland are based on the reason of the immigration and the person's origins. Third-country foreigners and asylum seekers may be seen as a threat to social and economic stability from the State's perspective, as they could "take advantage" of Switzerland's resources, rather than contribute to its growth from a neoliberal paradigm. Nevertheless, our results from two studies on different migrant populations, women from third countries (WTC) and asylum seekers (AS), show that there is a strong will to participate in the new society, but they face several political and structural difficulties that often keeps them isolated and excluded because of formal (legal and institutional) and social discrimination.

Formal discrimination concerns migration policies and official services in the host country, such as the political procedures and conditions for a permit and the lack of opportunities and recognition in the labor market when seeking a job. The sociopolitical background does not in practice guarantee equal basic rights for the entire society, and thus, is a form of structural violence. Moreover, there is a lack of clarity about the real conditions of life in Switzerland for these populations, specifically, the cantonal placement policies for AS and the right to work for WTC, as shown in the results section. For example, after years of investment on language classes, WTC face other challenges, especially when they are willing to work in the local market/language, like local employers' discrimination and hesitation to hire a foreigner.

Social discrimination concerns the social interactions in everyday life in the new country and the perception of being an outsider, not welcomed by locals. This kind of discrimination is also considered a form of structural violence because of its sociopolitical and historical origins that are embedded in the values of the host society. In Switzerland, the hesitation to openness to other cultures was reported by Riaño & Wastl-Walter (2006) who described the construction of a threatening image of foreigners for the Swiss identity in the history of immigration policies in this country. Indeed, it reflects on some locals' attitudes towards foreigners. Results from both studies indicate that many participants felt excluded and had difficulties connecting to locals.

This perception of discrimination is particularly problematic when it concerns official interactions in institutional settings in Switzerland. As indicated in the example of the difficulties to access translation services when in the habitant's registration office (reported by WTC) and the feeling of discrimination within health services (for AS), participants perceive these experiences as unfair. These situations illustrate both formal and social discrimination, and consequently, similar exposure to structural violence. Other researchers highlighted these forms of discrimination in different European countries (Pavli & Maltezou, 2017; Suurmond, Uiters, de Bruijne, Stronks, & Essink-Bot, 2011).

However, these two populations' experiences differ in several domains. The most essential distinction between these populations relies on the freedom to stay in Switzerland for survival reasons that they have or not. Freedom is embedded in the daily life of WTC in contrast with the daily life of AS. The lack of choice and instability due to uncertainty in political status impacts psychological outcomes and planning for the future.

Indeed, the waiting process for stabilizing the legal status, which implies a passive position and an impossibility to invest its life actively, can impact the insertion of AS in the host society. For example, learning local language is impacted: not knowing if they can stay or not, the investment is complicated. Moreover, the impossibility to have a lucrative activity weighs a lot on most of the AS, especially because most of them are young men who always worked. This impossibility implies a (new) loss of social status they had in their country, which has a psychological impact.

Comparative results show that the uncertainty has important impacts on the capacity to project oneself and on the motivation to insert in the host society for the two studied population: several participants from both studied groups highlighted a feeling of being powerless because of structural violence. However, this feeling paradoxically mobilizes these persons' sense of agency, which is an important coping strategy. Even if they have no control over the permit delays or the job opportunities, they still have the possibility to focus on other aspects of their lives in Switzerland, such as social life and safety.

5. Conclusion

This paper's goal was to compare the psychological impacts of structural difficulties of the two most vulnerable regular migrant populations in Switzerland. Nevertheless, our study presents several limits. As both researches were qualitative, our respective samples were small and do not allow generalizations. Furthermore, we can criticize the heterogeneity of the two studied populations. Besides, the research with asylum seekers involves people in different stages of their asylum procedure, namely different permits (N, F and B), which implies different political and social situations. It would be interesting to conduct further comparative research between our data and results from similar studies with other migrant groups.

Despite this study limits, our comparative results provide a new perspective on understanding structural violence for migrants in the Swiss context and represent an overview of the social reality in Switzerland. Our findings highlight the importance of more clarity about permit conditions in Switzerland and show how different socially disadvantaged groups face similar challenges on the structural and psychological levels and mobilize efficient coping strategies. Moreover, this comparative paper indicates potential structural domains to be improved in order to facilitate migrants' social and economical insertion in Switzerland.

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ⁱ In favor of simplicity, we use in this paper the appellation of “vulnerable group” or “vulnerable migrant”. It is important to precise that we do not consider the person as vulnerable; but rather, he/she is in a **vulnerable context**. This distinction avoids stigmatization.