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Moroccan Immigrants in France: Navigating the Challenges of Integration and Identity Struggles

Farah Boumouna¹

¹PhD student and researcher, Specialising in Sociology, Mohammed I University, Oujda, Morocco,
bemmounafarah@gmail.com, 06 51 81 14 90

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to analyse the experience of Moroccan migration to France in relation to identity, focusing on the social and cultural challenges faced by this group in their ongoing attempts to integrate into French society. The article also addresses the issue of the identity conflict experienced by this group, particularly between the need to

preserve their original Islamic identity on the one hand, and the necessity of assimilating certain aspects of prevailing French values on the other, in order to avoid conflict and alienation from their new society, without overlooking the gap that arises between perceptions of original belonging and the requirements of integration into the French context, and the accompanying tensions regarding self-perception and self-redefinition.

The research will be based on a qualitative field study using semi-structured interviews to uncover the most significant personal experiences of Moroccan migrants in the context of identity conflict, by analysing their perceptions of the meanings of belonging and the reconstruction of the self within different social and cultural spaces. The study will thus focus on highlighting how Moroccan migrants reshape their identity through daily interaction with others within different host contexts.

Key words: migration, identity, integration, conflict.

1. Introduction

Moroccan migration to France constitutes a complex social experience that transcends economic or geographical dimensions, touching upon the very depths of an individual's identity structure and reshaping it within a completely different cultural context; In the midst of this transition, the migrant finds themselves confronted with two contrasting value systems: a deeply-rooted system of origin, grounded in memory, culture and belonging, and a host system that imposes itself through prevailing social institutions and norms. This situation creates constant tension between the need to preserve one's original identity and the necessity of integrating into the value system of French society, thereby imposing a kind of daily negotiation of meanings and affiliations.

This tension is not confined to the individual level alone, but takes on broader symbolic and social dimensions, whereby the migrant is expected to adopt a set of prevailing values and norms as an implicit condition for acceptance and integration, whilst, should they strictly adhere to their original identity, they may face various forms of rejection, ranging from symbolic exclusion to social marginalisation; indeed, this may sometimes extend to overt practices that reveal the limits of cultural tolerance. Conversely, total immersion in the new values may lead to feelings of alienation, guilt and a loss of identity, thereby deepening the sense of internal conflict.

Consequently, the issue of identity conflict amongst Moroccans living in France manifests as a dynamic state of fragile equilibrium between the two affiliations, in which the individual experiences a profound sense of duality and attempts to reconcile two different frames of reference, which is reflected in their perceptions of themselves and their surroundings. This issue becomes increasingly complex given the multiplicity of interactive contexts in which the migrant operates, making identity a fluid construct subject to constant reshaping in accordance with the conditions of social

acceptance and the narrow limits of recognition. Based on the above, the following research question emerges:

How does the symbolic coercion to conform to dominant French values contribute to the production of identity conflict amongst Moroccans living in France?

This central question gives rise to the following two sub-questions:

1. How does the interaction between one's original identity and the demands of integration affect Moroccan migrants' perceptions of themselves and their sense of belonging?
2. How does this dual sense of belonging affect the stability of migrants' identities?

The general hypothesis has been formulated as follows:

The symbolic coercion resulting from compliance with French values contributes to the emergence of an identity conflict amongst Moroccan migrants.

The following two hypotheses stem from the general hypothesis:

1. The interaction between one's original identity and the demands of integration often influences migrants' perceptions of themselves and their sense of belonging.
2. Dual belonging has a negative impact on migrants' identity stability.

2. Research methodology and sample

The study adopts a qualitative approach, given its suitability for understanding individuals' subjective experiences and exploring the meanings they ascribe to their social and cultural reality. This approach allows for an in-depth examination of sociological phenomena in their natural contexts, with a focus on the interpretative dimension rather than merely quantitative description.

In this context, the semi-structured interview technique was employed as a key tool in sociological field research, given the unprecedented opportunity it offers to gather in-depth data on individual perceptions and personal experiences. Furthermore, interviews generally allow for direct interaction with research participants, which helps to understand the dimensions of the phenomenon under study with greater accuracy and depth.

The sample consisted of five first-generation Moroccan migrants residing in France, who have lived there for between 20 and 25 years. This sample was selected purposefully, given its ability to provide in-depth qualitative field data on the long-term migration experience and the shifts in identity associated with integration into French society over time.

3. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework constitutes a fundamental step in this study, as it aims to define the central concepts around which it revolves, identify their linguistic and sociological implications, and then adapt them methodologically to the context of the field study, thereby enabling a more precise understanding of the phenomenon under investigation.

3.1. The Concept of Migration

Sociologically, it is defined as the movement of individuals or groups from one social space to another, whether permanent or temporary, and the resulting reconfiguration of social and cultural relations (Castles, 2009, p. 12).

In the context of this study, however, migration is understood as the movement of Moroccan individuals to France with a view to long-term settlement, accompanied by radical changes in lifestyles and social interaction, and the rebuilding of relationships within a new social and cultural context.

3.2. The Concept of Identity

In sociology, identity refers to the social and psychological construct that defines an individual's sense of belonging within a group, and is shaped through social interaction and mutual recognition (Jenkins, 2014, p. 5) .

In the context of this study, identity is understood as the Moroccan migrant's self-perception within French society, shaped by the interplay between their original Moroccan identity and their exposure to French values and norms.

3.3. The Concept of Conflict

In sociology, conflict is associated with a clash of interests, values or identities within the social structure; it is regarded as a dynamic state reflecting an imbalance within social relations (Dahrendorf, 1959, p. 135) . 'Georg Simmel' viewed conflict from an unconventional, positive perspective; in his view, conflict is not a state of social disintegration or a negative phenomenon, but rather a form of social interaction that contributes to maintaining and reproducing group cohesion, Conflict inevitably expresses tension arising from conflicting interests or values, but at the same time it fulfils a positive

function by organising social relations and defining the boundaries of belonging within the group . Consequently, conflict has an integrative dimension: despite its negative aspects, 'it reinforces the internal unity of the group by confronting elements of difference, rather than necessarily leading to its disintegration.

In the context of this study, conflict refers to the tension—both in terms of values and symbols — experienced by Moroccan migrants between their original cultural framework and the demands of French society.

3.4. The Concept of Integration

In sociological discourse, integration refers to the process by which individuals and groups become embedded in the host society through the adoption of certain values and norms, whilst retaining significant aspects of their original identity or even modifying some of its elements.

Giddens also emphasises that social integration does not necessarily imply complete conformity; rather, it is a continuous interactive process between individuals and groups across time and space within institutional frameworks that ensure the stability of the overall social structure (Anthony, 2013, p. 88) .

In the context of studies on migration and identity, integration is often understood as the migrant's ability to interact with the host society by adapting to certain prevailing values without a complete loss of their original cultural reference points.

4. Migration as an experience of deconstruction and reconstruction of belonging and identity

The experience of migration cannot be reduced, in contemporary sociological analysis, to a mere geographical movement; rather, it is a profound experience that deconstructs the structure of belonging and reconstructs it within a new social context. As soon as the migrant enters a new society and opens up to a different world, they find themselves confronted with a different symbolic system that reshapes their relationship with themselves and with others, whether consciously or unconsciously. In this context, Abdelmalek Sayad points out that migration produces a state of existential duality, in which the individual lives between two worlds without fully belonging to either.

However, this situation is not limited to the emotional dimension alone, but extends to encompass the social structure of relationships, whereby the migrant is redefined according to the host society's classifications, Thus, the idea emerges that identity is not constructed freely on an individual

basis, but is partly imposed through mechanisms of social categorisation and recognition which impose themselves on the individual and exert a form of coercion upon them without their full awareness. Identity is a continuous process of becoming rather than a fixed given, as it is shaped within discourses and historical contexts (Stuart, 1996, p. 4).

Based on this perspective, it can be argued that migrants — particularly Moroccan migrants in France — do not merely undergo a spatial transition, as it may appear, but are subjected to a process of forced self-redefinition, whereby they are required to reposition themselves within a new social framework that compels them to reshape their identity in accordance with prevailing mechanisms of recognition. This places identity in a state of constant flux, oscillating between holding on to one's origins and seeking recognition within the host society, which places the migrant in a position of constant negotiation regarding their identity and sense of belonging.

Consequently, belonging becomes a matter of negotiation rather than a fixed or static given, and this process is further complicated for Moroccan migrants living in France due to the intersection of two distinct cultural frameworks, making identity a dynamic field of re-formulation. It thus becomes clear that migration, when approached from a sociological perspective, is not merely a geographical movement, but rather a process of identity transformation and a profoundly impactful human experience.

5. Identity conflict as a product of symbolic violence and mechanisms of exclusion

The conflict surrounding identity goes beyond being merely an internal tension; it reflects a complex structure of unequal relationships that often govern the position of migrants within host societies. In this context, this conflict can be understood through the lens of symbolic violence, whereby dominant values and norms are imposed as natural and legitimate, whilst the migrant's original values are marginalised without their full awareness or realisation. Symbolic violence is a hidden form of domination typically exercised through the imposition of certain cultural norms and the exclusion of others, without the direct realisation of those subjected to it. In the same vein, Goffman explains that individuals who are perceived as different within a given society are subjected to processes of stigmatisation that affect their self-perceptions and prompt them to modify their behaviour in pursuit of acceptance (Erving, 1963, p. 3). Identity conflict thus becomes a direct result of the tension between the individual's true self-image and the image imposed on them by society.

Consequently, it can be argued that identity conflict in the context of migration should not be reduced to merely the result of a cultural clash between the country of origin and the host society; rather, it can also be understood as a complex sociological process produced by hidden mechanisms of symbolic domination; for the migrant not only faces a difference in values, but also finds themselves within a system that compels them to constantly redefine themselves according to pre-established categorisations that determine their social and cultural position; this makes the construction of identity, given the interplay of all these circumstances, an unequal process from the outset.

In this context, it is clear that integration is not always a balanced process based on reciprocity, as it is commonly defined; rather, in many cases it can become a one-way, fruitless process, in which unfair conditions are imposed and the individual is forced to live under oppressive circumstances in order to integrate into the new society indirectly. Prevailing cultural norms are presented as the standard for social acceptance, placing the migrant in a complex situation: either to adapt to these imposed norms — which will require them to make a series of adjustments to certain elements of their original identity — or to preserve that identity, with the consequent risk of varying degrees of rejection and symbolic marginalisation. From another analytical perspective, we find that symbolic violence does not usually manifest itself in the form of direct or explicit exclusion, but rather through subtle mechanisms that permeate everyday life without the individual being fully aware of them, such as language, stereotypes and preconceived social expectations. These mechanisms produce a kind of invisible pressure that compels the individual to reshape their behaviour, discourse, attitudes and modes of self-expression without being fully aware of the depth of this influence, thereby creating a new situation that serves to reproduce symbolic hegemony in a quiet, subtle yet effective manner.

This type of conflict stems not only from cultural differences, but also from social structures that distribute recognition unequally, whereby migrants are constantly required to prove their belonging or their ability to integrate. This situation places identity in a state of constant testing and justification, as if it were an unfinished project requiring continuous justification and proof within the host social sphere. This dynamic not only leads to psychological strain and social pressure, but also contributes to the development of various strategies among migrants, ranging from superficial adaptation to the symbolic reinterpretation of identity, and sometimes the creation of intermediate living spaces based on reconciling two different frames of reference. However, despite their adaptive nature, these strategies fundamentally

reflect a persistent imbalance in recognition and acceptance within the social structure. Consequently, identity conflict should not be viewed merely as an emergency or exceptional situation; rather, it goes beyond this to produce symbolic power relations which, in turn, reproduce themselves within society, making identity a constant arena for negotiation, tension, reshaping and reconstruction.

6. Identity conflict as a productive mechanism for self-reconstruction and the broadening of cultural vision

Despite the tension and turmoil that conflict generally entails, an in-depth sociological analysis allows us to move beyond this narrow interpretation — which confines it to the status of a crisis — and to understand it as a dynamic mechanism that contributes to the reshaping of the self and the production of new forms of belonging. For, despite its tense nature, conflict remains a form of social interaction which, in all cases, fulfils a positive function: that of strengthening cohesion and reorganising relationships within the group (Georg, 1955, p. 13) . Based on this perspective, identity conflict amongst Moroccan migrants in France can be regarded as a space for self-reinvention, rather than merely as the result of symbolic coercion or power imbalances; Through their daily exposure to two different cultures, migrants do not remain mere passive recipients of pressures; rather, in some cases, they may become active agents who selectively reconstruct elements of their identity, thereby enabling them to forge a hybrid identity that transcends the binary division between their origins and that which differs from them. In other words, this perspective opens the way for the migrant to develop a critical awareness of both the self and the other simultaneously.

This situation creates a kind of reflective distance that is not necessarily available to individuals embedded within a single cultural framework; for the migrant, by virtue of their intermediary position and their genuine openness to another culture, becomes capable of viewing their culture of origin not merely as a given, but as a subject for understanding and scrutiny, which in turn strengthens their desire to hold on to it. As for the culture of the host society, it is viewed with the same critical distance and awareness (the migrant continues to observe it, analyse it, and even identify its shortcomings and differences). This duality of perspective does not necessarily imply a division; rather, it may evolve into a form of complex consciousness that allows for a more flexible and selective reorganisation of the elements of identity. Thus, in the context of the migration experience, the migrant remains neither fully entrenched in their culture of origin nor fully integrated into the culture of the host society, but occupies an intermediate zone that allows them to view matters with a dual critical awareness; for the values associated with both cultures are not

understood as self-evident givens, but as systems open to understanding and scrutiny. Through this awareness, the individual is relatively liberated from the automatic compliance resulting from symbolic hegemony, becoming an active agent in selectively rearranging the elements of their identity to suit their lived reality, which transforms the experience of migration from a mere physical relocation into an intellectual process and an exceptional human and social experience that reshapes the individual's relationship with themselves and the world around them, where identity is ultimately constructed on the basis of overlap rather than conflict.

However, this productive dimension is not realised mechanically or automatically, nor does it apply to all individuals; rather, it remains contingent upon multiple factors, including the level of awareness, the nature of the lived experience, and the degree of openness within the host society. Nevertheless, acknowledging the existence of this possibility allows us to rethink identity conflict beyond the dichotomy of crisis and adaptation, and to view it as a dynamic process that opens up new horizons for self-reconstruction and the broadening of one's cultural horizons.

Consequently, identity conflict, despite the psychological and social tensions that may accompany it, can be regarded as a necessary structural phase within the process of adaptation and self-reconstruction, rather than merely a transient state of crisis; Through this conflict, individuals—particularly migrants in host societies—test their ability to assimilate the transformations around them and develop a deeper awareness of themselves and their place within a changing social order. In this context, conflict is not viewed as a negative state to be definitively overcome, but rather as a human and social experience that enables the individual to rearrange the elements of their identity and formulate a more complex definition of themselves. Furthermore, tension is inseparable from the very nature of social interaction itself, as conflict remains one of its dynamic forms that contributes to the continuity and reproduction of society, with its inherent potential for renewal and rebalancing.

7. The Dynamics of Identity Conflict in Field Data: From Tension to Negotiation and Reconstruction

The data extracted from interviews with the research participants (A, B, C, D, E) revealed a clear divergence in representations of the migration experience; however, this divergence does not necessarily negate the existence of a common framework underpinning these experiences. Respondent (A), who has been living in France for 27 years, adopts a relatively candid discourse, acknowledging the

challenges he faced at the outset of his journey, both in terms of adaptation and in reconciling the values and cultural frameworks (Moroccan and French). The interviewee also reveals his experience of stigmatisation, noting that in the early days he was more sensitive to the views and categorisations of others, which caused him a sense of unease, psychological pressure and an identity crisis linked to a feeling of difference or lack of full acceptance. This initial reaction reflects a keen awareness of his position within French society, where stigmatisation was not merely a passing experience, but constituted a moment of direct encounter with the mechanisms of categorisation that redefine the migrant outside his original frame of reference. However, this situation did not continue at the same pace; it is clear from the subject's discourse that he gradually moved towards a kind of acceptance and normalisation of this situation, where he no longer paid attention to those classifications, but rather accepted the situation and came to believe that the classifications directed at Moroccan migrants might be accurate. Consequently, he developed what might be termed apathy and emotional detachment as a psychological defence mechanism to protect himself from the sheer volume of pressures he faces in his daily life. He shifted from seeking symbolic recognition to focusing on material stability and a peaceful existence. There is no doubt that this shift reflects a kind of pragmatism shaped by the pressures of reality, as the primary goal becomes the attainment of a degree of social security.

Thus, the experience of Research Subject (A) highlights how stigma can lose its apparent intensity over time, not because it has disappeared, but because some individuals deal with it in an intelligent and exceptional manner by developing mechanisms to re-contain it and coexist with it, thereby transforming the course of the experience from an emotional reaction to a rational response to social reality.

As for the discourse of Research Subject (B), who has lived in France for over thirty years, it reveals a complex identity situation characterised by a kind of apparent balance, yet conceals within it a constant tension between the desire to preserve Moroccan cultural roots and the demands of French reality, which he describes as 'strict and unfair'. Although he has succeeded in retaining certain aspects of his original identity, he has not been able to ensure that his children preserve it in the same way. It is here that the main points of tension emerge through his sense of having lost symbolic control over them, as his children have become more attached to French values and culture, placing him in a profound dilemma; He had willingly embarked on the journey of migration with the aim of improving living conditions and securing a better future for his children, but found himself

confronted with a process of cultural integration amongst his children that did not correspond to his initial conception of identity and belonging. The tension experienced by the subject here cannot be confined to the issue of differing values, but extends even to the redefinition of his role as a father within a different social context.

From this perspective, the experience of Research Subject (B) reflects a form of intergenerational identity conflict, where the conflict is not confined to the individual alone, but extends to become a conflict within the family structure, between a generation that experienced migration as a dream of stability, a decent life and the preservation of their roots, whilst and another generation that experiences integration as a natural part of daily life. This contradiction places the research subject in a difficult mediating position, in which he attempts to strike a balance between preserving his original religious and cultural references and the inability to fully impose them on his children, who were born and raised within a completely different social environment.

The discourse of the research subject (B) highlights his combination of a kind of partial acceptance of reality and an implicit sense of relative helplessness in the face of the rapid shifts in his children's values. Even when he expresses attempts at coexistence, these appear to have limited impact, rendering his identity conflict a constant state of negotiation between what he wishes to preserve and what is imposed by the realities of daily life. Thus, this research participant's experience reveals how the identity conflict has shifted from a manageable individual level to a family-wide, systemic level that is difficult to control and manage wisely, with identity becoming a sphere of renegotiation between generations within the context of migration.

In another context, research subject (C)'s experience of identity conflict emerged clearly and explicitly, characterised by a high degree of psychological intensity in which the personal and social dimensions intertwine; identity does not appear as a stable trajectory, but rather as a tense process linked, in his case, to a series of drastic changes in his private life, culminating in marital separation. The data indicate that the research subject experienced a long period of migration spanning more than 25 years; however, the length of this period was not sufficient to achieve internal identity stability. On the contrary, it appears that the conflict between his original cultural framework and the demands of the French social context remained a constant presence, taking on an intense psychological dimension manifested in feelings of loneliness, hesitation and indecision regarding his sense of belonging.

The subject's account shows that the conflict was not theoretical or merely a difference in views and perspectives; rather, it became a significant factor in close relationships, particularly the marital relationship, where he indicates that the difference in value perceptions between himself and his wife (who shared the same cultural background as the research subject) was one of the key factors leading to their separation. He presents himself as someone who adheres to his original cultural framework, whilst his wife tended towards a more open lifestyle within the French context, which led to a gradual divergence in values between the two parties. This was not resolved through negotiation or mutual adaptation, but ended in a rift.

From an objective analytical perspective, this situation can be understood as embodying a prolonged identity conflict within everyday life, where cultural difference is not merely symbolic but becomes a factor influencing lifestyles and decision-making within the family. The identity conflict experienced by the research subject was not resolved over time, as he had thought, but persisted internally; it became clear that the loss of family stability had deepened the sense of symbolic separation from his surroundings, for the feeling of loneliness here is understood not merely as the absence of the other, but as an emotional state linked to a sense of disharmony between the self and the social context in which they live.

It could be said that the case of subject (C) reflects a model of identity conflict that has not yet found middle ground for adaptation, as identity remained confined between two poles without sufficient capacity to construct a hybrid identity. This situation has made the experience more acute, not only on a social level but also on a psychological level, where the conflict becomes part of daily life rather than merely a passing phase. Nevertheless, this experience should not be reduced to its individual dimension alone, but must be understood within a broader context of how value differences within the migration experience can shift from the symbolic sphere to the family sphere, thereby generating tensions whose effects extend to the individual's emotional and social structure.

As for the discourse of Research Participant (D), who has been living in France for around 23 years, it reveals a particular pattern in the representation of the migration experience, characterised by a tendency to downplay the severity of the difficulties associated with integration or identity conflict, and to present an experience that appears, on the surface, to be calmer and more stable than the previous accounts. However, this downplaying of the difficulties cannot be interpreted solely as a direct denial of them; rather, it can also be understood as a discursive mechanism reflecting a particular

way of managing the experience and reorganising its meaning within the individual's consciousness.

From the interview conducted with the research participant, it appears that she adopts a stance based on normalisation with French social reality, noting that life in France has become 'normal' and 'stable' without any clear indication of tensions regarding values or identity. However, this type of discourse does not necessarily imply the complete absence of challenges, so much as it reflects a reframing of them within a less confrontational framework to avoid alienation from French society. This allows for the maintenance of psychological and social equilibrium.

It could be argued that this approach reflects a prominent form of quiet adaptation, whereby difficulties are gradually absorbed into everyday life without being transformed into a subject of overt conflict or problematic discourse. Rather than focusing on cultural contradictions or identity-based tensions, the emphasis is on continuity and stability, which illustrates the extent to which some migrants are preoccupied with matters unrelated to conflict, and do not focus on or pay attention to tensions and challenges. In this context, maintaining day-to-day stability becomes more important than fruitless scrutiny of cultural differences. Despite the calm nature of this stance, it carries with it implications of a profound social dimension: the absence of explicit expression does not necessarily mean the absence of experience, but may often indicate its shift from the level of direct awareness to a more implicit level. Identity-related tensions in such situations are not necessarily experienced as an overt crisis; rather, they may become integrated into daily practice to such an extent that they need not be explicitly articulated – though this does not mean they do not exist.

Consequently, the experience under study (D) can be described as a coping strategy based on reducing symbolic tension, as the experience of migration is reframed in a way that lessens the intensity of the conflict and highlights elements of stability. This is not a contradiction of the concept of identity conflict, but rather reflects one of its indirect manifestations; the conflict does not manifest as an overt confrontation, but rather as a reinterpretation of the experience, allowing one to live within it without constant discursive pressure. Thus, the experience under study highlights that adaptation to migration does not always take the form of overt conflict, but may also manifest in quiet forms of coexistence and the continuous reinterpretation of social reality.

As for the experience of Research Subject (E), it reveals a relative balance of identities, characterised by the ability to

combine recognition of the existence of real constraints linked to migration with an emphasis on the potential for adaptation and overcoming these constraints, which he has developed over his long journey in France. Subject (E), too, does not deny the existence of tensions or challenges, whether in terms of integration or in terms of adapting to social changes within French society, but at the same time, he does not reduce the experience to its negative aspects; rather, he is keen to include positive elements that reshape the meaning of this experience within his personal perspective, given that he is characterised by a higher degree of openness compared to the other research participants.

As evident in the interviewee's discourse, he consistently praised the quality of services—particularly healthcare—in France compared to Morocco. This element carries profound sociological significance, as this comparison is not merely presented as a technical or material fact, but goes beyond that to become part of the construction of positive representations of the experience of settling in the host country; the reference to the availability of treatment and access to advanced healthcare services reflects a reordering of evaluation criteria, particularly as the interviewee suffers from a serious illness. From this, we can deduce that the experience of migration is not measured solely in terms of cultural or psychological difficulties, but also in terms of the practical and functional benefits offered by the new context.

An analysis of the data structure derived from the interview with the research participant (E) reveals that he adopts a stance based on a dual recognition: on the one hand, an acknowledgement of the constraints associated with adaptation and integration; and on the other, an acknowledgement of the tangible benefits associated with life in France. This balance does not reflect a contradiction so much as a prudent and conscious attempt to construct a coherent narrative of the experience, thereby reducing the internal tension arising from the contrast between different cultural frames of reference.

It could be argued that the subject's (E) experience is an example of what might be termed 'evaluative adaptation', whereby the process is not limited to behavioural adaptation to the new reality, but extends to a reshaping of the criteria used to judge that reality itself. Rather than focusing on the dichotomy of success and failure or harmony and conflict, the subject's discourse moves towards a more complex approach, allowing contradictions to be integrated within a single, coherent narrative. Consequently, the identity conflict in the subject's case appears less acute, not because it is absent, but because it is reorganised within an interpretative framework

that allows difficulties to coexist with the recognition of gains, without undermining the overall experience of emigration.

Based on the body of data analysed through interviews with the five research participants, it is evident that the first-generation migration experience cannot be reduced to a single model or a uniform linear trajectory, but rather manifests itself as a multidimensional process in which individual experiences intersect with the social and symbolic transformations imposed by the new context. Although the patterns of attitudes differed amongst the research participants, a synthetic analysis reveals a common thread: the issue of repositioning oneself within a different social and cultural space, and the accompanying varying forms of tension, adaptation or reinterpretation. The data revealed that the intensity of the identity conflict does not manifest to the same degree among all research participants; at times it is explicitly evident, whilst at other times it takes an implicit or mitigated form, and whilst it may be absent from overt discourse, it is present indirectly through mechanisms of silence, minimisation, interpretation and reframing. This diversity in representations does not necessarily negate or invalidate the existence of the phenomenon; rather, it reflects the multiplicity of ways in which it is lived, perceived and dealt with within the everyday context.

It can therefore be argued that, as explored in this study, the experience of migration is not merely a geographical move or a change in lifestyle, but rather an ongoing process of profound identity reshaping, in which psychological, social and symbolic dimensions intertwine, producing diverse forms of belonging and interpretation. Furthermore, the identity conflict—whether overt or covert—remains a structural element that shapes this experience; however, it is not necessarily understood as a permanent crisis, but rather as part of an ongoing dynamic of rebalancing and constructing a firm sense of self within a world that is, by its very nature, different and ever-changing.

8. Summary and Conclusions

The most important point to be drawn is that the experience of migration cannot be reduced to its material or circumstantial dimensions; rather, it extends to form a profound process of self-reconstruction within a multi-referential context. Although migrants' attitudes vary in terms of the degree of candour, downplaying, or even denial and reserve, an in-depth sociological analysis reveals a common framework underpinning these experiences, characterised by constant interaction with shifts in identity and attempts to reposition oneself within a different social and cultural space.

It also becomes apparent that the identity conflict does not necessarily take a single form, but manifests itself on multiple levels, sometimes explicitly through psychological or familial tensions, and sometimes implicitly through adaptation, a reordering of priorities, or even through silence, with these choices serving as psychological defence mechanisms adopted by some to protect themselves from the excess of tensions associated with identity fragmentation and value conflict. However, this variation in expression does not reflect an absence of conflict; rather, it indicates the mechanisms used to cope with it, as each individual, according to their own path and personal experience, seeks to strike a balance between their original frame of reference and the demands of their new reality.

In this context, identity conflict does not appear to be merely a negative situation or a passing crisis, but rather forms part of a broader process of reshaping belonging, whereby it becomes a dynamic mechanism that enables the individual to negotiate with themselves and their surroundings, and to produce more flexible and complex versions of identity. Consequently, migration, as reflected in previous experiences, is not merely a physical relocation, but an ongoing process of self-redefinition, in which tensions intertwine with the potential for adaptation, reflecting the complexity of the relationship between the individual and the world to which they belong.

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