



## Letter to the editor

## What is the role of personal characteristics of psychiatric trainees in Turkey on their mobility and migration?



Dear Editor,

While many factors play a role in the decision to move abroad, the profile of a migrant might provide essential insights into the trends of international migration. Importantly, global trends illustrate that women are flowing into migration streams previously dominated by men (United Nations, Division for the Advancement of Women, 2005). In fact, the number of female migrants is already higher than the male migrants in Europe, North America, Latin America, the Caribbean and Oceania (United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2017). However, statistics concerning international migration by gender remain uneven in several countries (De Leon Siantz, 2013).

Recent shifts in the world's demography, migration dynamics, asylum-seekers, and transit migrants have changed Turkey's overall profile from a predominantly donor country to a country of both emigration and immigration (Içduygu, 2013). Although information about the health workforce migration in Turkey is scarce, reports seem to indicate that the top three destinations for Turkish doctors immigration are the United States of America, Austria and the United Kingdom (Dumont and Zurn, 2007). Furthermore, even though data about the migration of specialists is even more limited, research has, for example, showed that three-fourths of Turkish psychiatric trainees expressed intention to live outside Turkey, but a lower rate (4.7%) had actually migrated (Kilic et al., 2018). Still, little is known about the profile of psychiatric trainees in Turkey and how this is linked with their mobility and migratory tendencies.

The European Federation of Psychiatric Trainees (EFPT) conducted an international study to explore the workforce migration of psychiatric trainees (EFPT Brain Drain Study) (Pinto da Costa et al., 2017). The survey was anonymous, circulated in English through SurveyMonkey to the e-mail contacts of psychiatric trainees in Turkey. In this paper, we examine the role of personal characteristics (gender, relationship status, parenthood, the type and year of psychiatric trainees) on their 'migratory tendency,' as well as the features of an attractive job for them.

In this sample of 107 participants, the vast majority had Turkish citizenship (97.2%), coming from 22 different cities in Turkey (either universities or research and training hospitals).

Gender was key amongst the personal characteristics that influenced migratory tendency, with a significant effect on considering leaving the country ( $p < 0.000$ ). Male trainees were more likely to express intention to leave the country ('ever' considered leaving) compared to females ( $p = 0.04$ ). However, no correlation was found with other personal characteristics, such as the type of psychiatric trainee (adult or child and adolescent) ( $p = 0.386$ ), relationship status ( $p = 0.782$ ), or the number of years in training ( $p = 0.903$ ).

Those that most wanted to stay in the country for personal reasons were those trainees with children (44.4%), in a relationship (41.0%),

and women (35.0%). On the other hand, especially those with children (66.7%), single (43.6%) and women (36.0%), reported that academic reasons could be the trigger for them to leave the country. Table 1 displays trainees' top reasons to stay and leave the country divided by gender, relationship status and parenthood.

Several factors may explain the reasoning behind this gender variation of mobility trends. Firstly, more paramount family concerns in women might make them more willing to stay in Turkey. Already in other countries, family-related reasons were described as very important for female migrants whereas economic motives were perceived key for male migrants (Schoorl et al., 2000). Secondly, for men, working abroad could bring the chance of postponing or avoiding doing the compulsory military or health service (Güngör and Tansel, 2014), which could make them choose to move abroad not to be submitted to these obligations. Instead, having children presented as both a reason to stay or to leave the country. Migrating with children from a non-EU country could mean an increased amount of bureaucracy which could be off-putting for some, but others could embody a drive to provide a better future for their offspring, that is prevailing (Zuccotti et al., 2017).

For psychiatric trainees in Turkey, an attractive job should have supervision and support from senior staff are valued majorly by females (54.4% vs. 40.9%). The key feature of an attractive job for 67.3% of the female psychiatric trainees is to have a pleasant work environment, while 55% of males endorsed this. These results align with other reports of junior doctors who perceive an attractive job one in which they have control over their working pattern, balancing personal time and family life (Blades et al., 2000).

These results illustrate the importance of personal characteristics in the decision-making to migrate from Turkey and can help to raise awareness of the personal and professional circumstances of Turkish female psychiatric trainees beyond their workplace. Overall, society has changed with increasing migration flows, aspirational youngsters and both parents working, leading to several implications beyond the mental health care and its workforce (Srinivasa Murthy, 2018).

Although this study has limitations, such as small sample size and response bias, it provides evidence on international mobility and migration among psychiatric trainees in Turkey, showing the impact of gender on acting upon migration desires. Future studies should look into dynamic migration patterns and triggers of migration taking into account concerns about children and family.

### Conflict of interest statement

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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**Table 1**  
Trainees' top reason to stay and leave their country (by gender, relationship status and parenthood).

	Men (%)	Women (%)	Single (%)	In a relationship (%)	No children (%)	With children (%)
<b>Top reason to stay</b>						
Academic	12.5	11.3	14.6	9.8	10.6	22.2
Cultural	25.0	18.8	26.8	16.4	21.3	11.1
Financial	4.2	7.5	7.3	4.9	6.4	11.1
Personal	25.0	35.0	22.0	41.0	31.9	44.4
Political	4.2	3.8	7.3	1.6	4.3	0.0
Religious	4.2	2.5	2.4	3.3	2.1	11.1
Social	12.5	8.8	7.3	11.5	10.6	0.0
Work	12.5	8.8	9.8	8.2	9.6	0.0
Other	0.0	3.8	2.4	3.3	3.2	0.0
<b>Top reason to leave</b>						
Academic	28.2	36.0	43.6	29.4	31.9	66.7
Cultural	10.3	7.0	10.3	7.1	8.4	0.0
Financial	10.3	11.6	10.3	10.6	11.8	0.0
Personal	5.1	5.8	5.1	5.9	5.0	16.7
Political	7.7	10.5	5.1	11.8	9.2	16.7
Religious	7.7	3.5	2.6	5.9	5.0	0.0
Social	15.4	9.3	7.7	12.9	11.8	0.0
Work	15.4	15.1	12.8	16.5	16.0	0.0
Other	0.0	1.2	2.6	0.0	0.8	0.0

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