

# Parental Stress Associated with International Migration Processes: A Systematic Review\*

## Estrés Parental asociado a procesos migratorios internacionales: una revisión sistemática

Received: 11 may 2022 | Accepted: 17 november 2023

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this systematic review was to analyze scientific articles about the Parental Stress (PS) construct associated with people in international migration processes. Searches were carried out in seven databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PsycInfo, VHL Portal, MEDLINE/CINAHL, EMBASE, and Cochrane Library, considering publications between 2012-2021. Initially, 2193 documents were found and after the inclusion and exclusion criteria, 21 articles were analyzed according their theoretical-methodological aspects and main Parental Stress results. The critical appraisal of the studies indicates high methodological quality of the articles, since most of them (n = 12) got from 10 to 12 points in the 12 scale-score evaluation criteria. There was a predominance of articles that investigated the relationship between PS and social support, acculturative guidelines, parent-child relationship, mental health of caregivers, and interventions to reduce PS in caregivers. We discuss the dimensions of social support as protective factors for families who are in international migration process. The evidences suggest that government policies and interventions are necessary to mitigate psychosocial impacts on these populations.

### Keywords

human immigration; refugees; parental stress; social support; systematic review.

### RESUMEN

El objetivo de esta revisión sistemática fue analizar la literatura científica sobre el constructo Estrés Parental (EP) asociado a sujetos en procesos migratorios internacionales. Se consideraron siete bases de datos: Scopus, Web of Science, PsycInfo, BVS Portal, Medline/Cinahl, Embase y Cochrane Library, y publicaciones entre 2012-2021. Inicialmente, se encontraron 2193 registros y, después de los criterios de exclusión, se incluyeron 21 estudios para el análisis de sus aspectos teórico-metodológicos y principales resultados sobre EP. La calidad metodológica

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*How to cite:* Conte Gil, P. H., Da Silva Peixoto, C., Piccinini, C. A., & Pizzinato, A. (2023). Parental Stress Associated with International Migration Processes: A Systematic Review. *Universitas Psychologica*, 22, 1-14. <https://doi.org/10.11144/javeriana.upsy22.psai>

de los estudios incluidos es alta, ya que la mayoría de ellos ( $n = 12$ ) obtuvo de 10 a 12 puntos en los 12 criterios en la escala. Se observó un predominio en las investigaciones sobre la relación entre EP y apoyo social, orientaciones de aculturación, relación padres e hijos, salud mental de los cuidadores e intervenciones para reducir el EP en los cuidadores. Se discutió que las dimensiones del apoyo social son factores protectores para las familias en el proceso de migración internacional. Las evidencias sugieren que son necesarias intervenciones gubernamentales para mitigar los impactos psicosociales en las poblaciones.

**Palabras clave**

inmigración humana; refugiados; estrés parental; apoyo social; revisión sistemática.

International migration processes have grown exponentially in recent decades. Considering all migratory categories, the number of people in international mobility have reached the mark of 280 million in 2020, which represents about 3.6% of the world population (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). There are a variety of definitions to characterize the different kinds of people's displacements to other countries: migrants, immigrants, refugees, and others (Santinho, 2011). We will use the term "migrant" to refer to all people in any international migratory conditions. This concept was not defined by international law, but it is an umbrella term which contemplates the eminent fluidity of international displacements (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021), while also it covers the legal conditions of refugee status (Cogo & Badet, 2013).

International migration processes are considered a total phenomenon, since they affect all existential dimensions of people in a mobility situation: political, economic, psychosocial, health, among others (Sayad, 1998). Accordingly, migratory experiences can imply multifactorial vulnerabilities for these migrant populations, especially in cases of forced displacement, due to the unsustainable living conditions in their territory of origin (Granada et al., 2017). International geographic mobility itself can already put migrants under several stressful factors, such as physical and psychological violence, diseases, extortion, human trafficking, and insecurities regarding the public policies of the host countries (Prado

& Araújo, 2019). Additionally, when they arrive in the host country, they commonly find themselves in precarious socioeconomic conditions, marginalization, violence, lack of social support, and linguistic and cultural inadequacy.

Even though there are some theoretical frameworks to comprehend migration processes, such as the varieties of the classic acculturation models (Berry, 2008; Bourhis et al., 2010), we decided to not strictly follow their prerogatives. The reasons why were to not restrict the number of possible included studies, or even narrow down our analyses in this systematic review. Instead, we focused more on a broader conception of community processes in a critic multiculturalism perspective (McLaren, 1997). This background allows an analysis focused on the empirical evidence available about the psychosocial protective and risk factors among migrant families, which directly impact their stress conditions (McLaren, 1997).

In the context of international migration of families with children, there are some specificities about the concept of stress that must be considered. Migrant parents may find themselves in more stressful conditions since they experience stress from both immigration and parenting at the same time (Arakelyan & Ager, 2020; Ünver et al., 2021). Evidences involving migrant families with children have raised three dimensions of mental health that are strongly impacted in contexts of extreme stress: parental stress and psychological well-being, positive parenting practices, and parenting skills (Murphy et al., 2017; Ünver et al., 2021). Among these psychosocial constructs, parental stress appears as an important aspect to map other psychological conditions that are affected on stressful events such as international family migration.

Parental Stress (PS) as a construct refers to the stress arising from situations related to parenting, mainly related to how much parents feel capable of playing their parental role in general aspects (Brito & Faro, 2016), or even the feelings that emerge when parents realize that their resources are somehow insufficient to address their children's needs and demands

(Lee & Jeon, 2021). Abidin (1995), the author who theoretically defined PS, specified that the beliefs of caregivers are fundamental in the constitution of their parental care. In addition to how caregivers think and evaluate the benefits and/or harms of their parental role, social, environmental, behavioral, and developmental dimensions are elements that will influence the level of parental stress experienced (Abidin, 1995). Accordingly, empirical data show that high levels of PS have direct and indirect effects on children's development, and they are more common in families in situations of greater social vulnerability, low economic status, and in lack of social support (Eltanamy et al., 2021). Regarding migrant families, PS is strongly associated with anxiety and depression in parents, family conflicts, difficulties in adapting to another culture, feelings of parental ineffectiveness, and the Post-Traumatic Stress disorder (Murphy et al., 2017).

Furthermore, PS has been assessed through adapted and validated instruments for their use in different cultures, which reinforces its dimension as a transcultural phenomenon (Louie et al., 2017; Yoo & Vonk, 2012). These PS instruments have been used in different studies on international migration, which makes it possible to know the extent of this problem in different populations in migratory conditions.

In this sense, it is important to review the available scientific literature that sought to understand the associations between the PS construct and international migratory conditions, as a way of mapping the available evidence and proposing strategies for coping with or to mitigate parental or caregiver's stress in this context. Addressing this need, the objective of this systematic review was to analyze scientific articles about the PS construct associated with people in international migration processes.

## Method

This systematic review followed the recommendations proposed by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and

Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) (Page et al., 2021). Searches were carried out in seven databases: Scopus, Web of Science, PsycInfo, VHL Portal, MEDLINE/CINAHL, EMBASE, and Cochrane Library, considering the descriptors in English: [migra\* AND parental stress], [immigra\* AND parental stress], and [refug\* AND parental stress]. The research was limited to only articles published in the last ten years (2012-2021) in English, Spanish, and Portuguese.

The articles included in this review met the following criteria: 1) empirical quantitative study; 2) described the context of the international migration process of the participants; and 3) assessed the Parental Stress construct. In Selection stage, the articles were categorized through Rayyan software. After excluding duplicate documents, the first two researchers of this systematic review read the titles and abstracts and evaluated the articles based on the inclusion criteria. At this stage, the level of agreement between researches was calculated using the Kappa coefficient ( $k = 0.55$ ), reaching a moderate level (Pérez et al., 2020). The disagreements were solved by consensus between two researches (Leclerc et al., 2014). In the Eligibility stage, the articles were fully read and included in the review considering the same criteria previously described. Furthermore, in this stage, articles that (1) carried out cluster analyzes mixing people in international migration processes with other categories of participants; (2) articles that described intervention protocols without reporting PS measures; or (3) unavailable articles, were excluded from the sample.

Initially, 2193 documents were found and after the steps described, 21 articles were included for analysis. The details of this process, considering the stages of Identification, Selection, Eligibility, and Inclusion are available in Figure 1.

After the Inclusion, the first two authors of this systematic review evaluated each article independently. Firstly, the quality of the articles was evaluated based on the criteria by Berra et al. (2008), adapted for this study. Secondly, the articles were analyzed based on their objectives, methodological aspects and their

main results regarding PS associated with people in international migration processes.

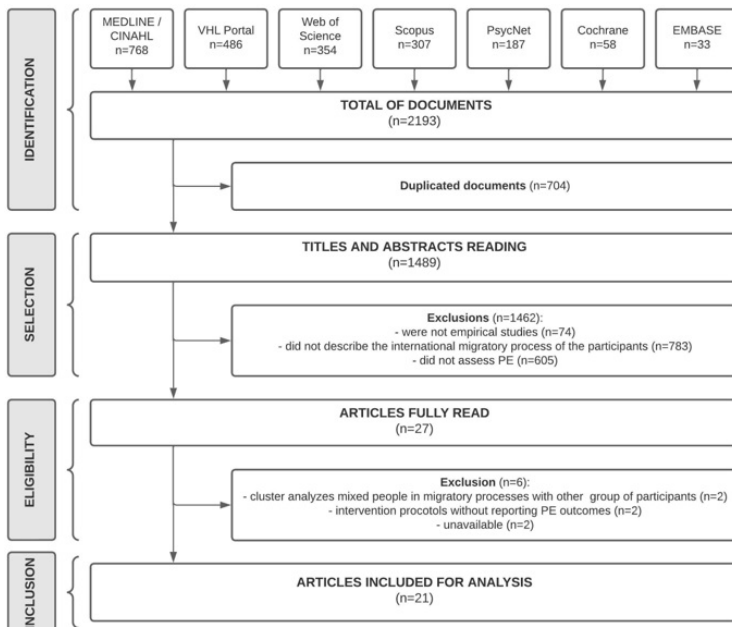


Figure 1.  
Flowchart of the inclusion of the articles.

## Results

Table 1 shows the Critical Appraisal of the 21 studies included in this systematic review, based on criteria adapted from Berra et al. (2008). Considering the 12 evaluation criteria for the quality of studies, which scores ranged from 6 to 12, most studies ( $n = 12$ ) were classified as High quality (10-12 score). Eight were considered Moderate quality (7-9 score), one was Low (4-6 score), and no studies were classified as Very low (1-3 score). We observed that only four articles carried out a sample calculation for the number of participants, while only eight studies reported the quantity of previously selected participants and those who effectively composed the final sample. The gaps recurrently found in the articles lie in the lack of description of the quantities of potential and effective participants, as well as absence of statistical calculation for the composition of the sample.

Table 1.

Critical Appraisal of the articles according to Berra et al (2008) adapted criteria

Authors (Year)	Critical Appraisal Criteria												Total (+)	Quality
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12		
1. Hong et al. (2021)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	10	High
2. Lee & Jeon (2021)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	High
3. Lakkis et al. (2020)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	+	+	11	High
4. Liu et al. (2020)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	11	High
5. Miller et al. (2020)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	-	-	+	9	Moderate
6. Ponguta et al. (2020)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	11	High
7. Wang et al. (2021)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	10	High
8. Ceballos et al. (2019)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	11	High
9. Mitchell et al. (2019)	+	+	+	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	9	Moderate
10. Yoo (2019)	+	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	9	Moderate
11. Eo & Kim (2018)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	11	High
12. Ernyar et al. (2018)	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	9	Moderate
13. Kim (2018)	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	12	High
14. Xu et al. (2018)	+	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	10	High
15. Garcia et al. (2017)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	9	Moderate
16. Parkes et al. (2015)	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	+	+	10	High
17. Tsao et al. (2015)	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	+	+	+	10	High
18. Lim & Ogawa (2014)	+	+	+	+	+	/	+	+	/	/	+	+	9	Moderate
19. Londhe (2015)	+	+	+	-	-	+	+	+	-	-	-	-	6	Low
20. Fernández-Castillo et al. (2012)	+	+	+	+	-	+	+	+	-	+	-	-	7	Moderate
21. Yoo & Vonk (2012)	+	+	-	-	+	-	+	+	-	+	+	+	8	Moderate

Note Criteria: (+) present; (-) absent; (/) not applicable. 1. Introduction adequately contextualizes the study problem. 2. Research objectives or questions were clear and specified in the text. 3. The inclusion/exclusion criteria of the participants were indicated. 4. Participants selection procedures were specified. 5. The research design is specified in the text. 6. The number of previously selected participants and those who actually participated in the study were informed. 7. The studied variables were clearly defined. 8. Validated instruments were used for all the main variables studied. 9. Calculation was made for sample size. 10. The statistical analyzes used were specified. 11. Results are clearly described accordingly to the objectives of the study. 12. Discussion articulates findings with adequate available literature. Quality: Very low (1-3); Low (4-6); Moderate (7-9); High (10-12).

Table 2 presents the characterization of the studies, accordingly to their (1) publication year and objectives; (2) methodological characteristics (study design, participants and instruments); and (3) main results regarding to PS of people in international migration processes.

**Table 2.**  
*Characterization of the included articles (n=21)*

Authors (Year)	Aims	Method		PS	Parental Stress Main findings*
		Design	Sample (Host country)	Instruments*	
1. Hong et al. (2021)	Investigate Korean immigrants' parental stress amid the COVID-19 pandemic, especially when they experience difficulties trying to meet their children's educational needs.	Cross-sectional (Online Survey)	341 Korean immigrants who had children under the age of 18 years. (United States)	Parental Stress Scale (PSS)	Parents' difficulties meeting their children's educational needs and language barriers were associated with increased parental stress. Parents' resilience and social support also significantly decreased parental stress levels.
2. Lee & Jeon (2021)	Assess the levels of parenting efficacy, parenting stress, and acculturation stress of North Korean refugee mothers and analyzed their effects on parent-child relations.	Cross-sectional	124 North Korean refugees' mothers with children under the age of 20 years. (South Korea)	Parenting Stress Index (PSI)	Parenting efficacy was negatively correlated with parental stress. Parent-child relations showed a negative correlation with parental stress. Parental stress was positively correlated with acculturation stress.
3. Lakkis et al. (2020)	Improve parents' well-being, parenting stress levels, parenting behavior, and discipline strategies after the implementation of a newly designed parenting intervention.	Pilot cohort study	125 mothers and fathers from Syria in three refugee camps with children aged 6 years or younger. (Lebanon and Jordan)	Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	PSI-SF total score and all subscales improved significantly after the intervention compared to baseline.
4. Liu et al. (2020)	Examine whether parental stress influenced parenting behaviors and whether this relationship was mediated by social support.	Cross-sectional	255 Chinese immigrant parents with one or more children under age 18 living in the same household. (United States)	Parental Distress Scale (part of the Parenting Stress Index-Short Form)	Higher level of parental stress and the presence of one or more stressors such as unemployment, low income, and low education were associated with fewer positive parenting practices, harsh discipline, and parent-child conflicts. Social support significantly mediated the effects of parental stress on positive parenting practices and parent-child conflict, but not the effects on harsh discipline.
5. Miller et al. (2020)	Describe findings of a two-arm pilot randomized controlled trial of the Caregiver Support Intervention (CSI) with Syrian refugees in Lebanon.	Randomized Controlled Trials	151 Syrian, Palestinian and Lebanese caregivers (79 families ~79 women and 72 men) with at least one child between the ages of 3-12. (Lebanon)	Caregiver stress was assessed with an 8-item scale (developed for the study)	The CSI group showed significantly increased parental warmth and responsiveness, decreased harsh parenting, reduced stress and distress, improved psychosocial wellbeing, and improved stress management. CSI parents reported increased child psychosocial wellbeing.
6. Ponguta et al. (2020)	Test the effects of a group-based intervention on parenting stress and practices among two refugee communities and one other marginalized community.	Randomized Controlled Trials	147 mother-child dyads from 2 refugee communities and one peri-urban community in Beirut, Lebanon. (Lebanon)	Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	Intervention group showed reduction in parental stress compared with the control group. Exploratory but underpowered analyses of dyadic interactions revealed reductions in the PSI were associated with a reduction in harsh parenting after the intervention.
7. Wang et al. (2021)	Examine the associations between parental cultural orientations and parental distress among first-generation immigrants in the United States from mainland China and further explored the mediating role of parent-child acculturation conflict.	Cross-sectional	268 first-generation China immigrants with at least one minor (under 18 years old) living in the household. (United States)	Parent Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	Chinese immigrant parents who had a stronger cultural orientation to the United States had less parent-child acculturation conflict, which in turn, lessened parental stress.
8. Ceballos et al. (2019)	Examine the comparative effects of Child Parent Relationship Therapy (CPRT) and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (STEP) with low-income immigrant Latina mothers.	Randomized Controlled Trial	30 first-generation immigrant Latina mothers and their children aged between two and five years. (United States)	Parenting Stress Index (PSI)	Between-group differences indicated there was no statistically or practically significant interaction effect on reducing parental stress between participants in STEP and CPRT. Both programs showed large treatment effects, but CPRT had a slightly larger treatment effect than STEP.
9. Mitchell et al. (2019)	Investigate midlife/late life parental transitions to retirement and the nexus of young adult's transitions to adulthood.	Longitudinal (Mixed-methods study)	588 parents aged 50+ with at least one adult child aged 19-35. (Canada)	Parental Stress Scale (PSS)	Higher parental stress was found among Persians/Iranians, and Chinese parents (compared to British); those with greater intergenerational conflict, those with unemployed children, lower education of parents; fewer years lived in Canada; and those with lower income satisfaction.
10. Yoo (2019)	Examine whether immigrant parental stress predicts the risk of child maltreatment better than previously identified risk factors.	Cross-sectional	366 Korean immigrant parents who have at least one unmarried child. (United States)	Immigrant Parental Stress Inventory (IPSI)	Immigrant parental stress was a significant predictor of psychological aggression, physical assault, and neglect by immigrant parents, after controlling for the other risk factors.
11. Eo & Kim (2018)	Investigate maternal-child interactions according to the mother's nationality among married immigrant mothers from the Philippines, Vietnam, and Korea.	Cross-sectional	348 mothers (142 Korean, 84 immigrant mothers from the Philippines, and 122 immigrant mothers from Vietnam) with children between the ages of 3 to 6. (South Korea)	Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	Parenting stress and maternal-child interactions differed according to the mother's nationality. Filipino mothers reported higher parenting stress than Korean and Vietnamese mothers. Maternal-child interaction characteristics of Korean mothers who sought to facilitate child development as compared with Filipino and Vietnamese mothers.
12. Erucar et al. (2018)	Investigate the association between trauma exposure and children's mental health, and the contribution of parent related factors in this association.	Cross-sectional	263 Syrian refugee children-parent dyads. Children's age between 6-18 years. (Turkey)	Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	Trauma exposure significantly contributed in predicting children's post-traumatic stress, whilst children's younger age, female gender, parental psychopathology, and parenting stress were variably found to be statistically significant in explaining overall mental health problems, as well as specific emotional/conduct problems.
13. Kim (2018)	Identify the relationships between social support, acculturation stress, and the parenting stress of marriage-migrant women.	Cross-sectional	284 women who immigrated through marriage to Korean men and were residing in South Korea. Children's age between 3 and 6 years. (South Korea)	Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	Parenting stress of marriage-migrant women with preschool children was mostly associated with acculturation stress, which in turn was mostly associated with social support. The effect of social support on parenting stress weakened when acculturation stress was included as a mediator in the regression model.
14. Xu et al. (2018)	Examine the predictors of non-U.S. born mothers' parenting stress across early childhood using data from the Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study.	Cohort study	639 mothers who were not born in the United States. (United States)	Parent Stress Index (PSI)	Maternal parental stress increased from year 1 to year 3, but decreased when children aged 3 years to 5 years old. Older age at child birth, lower education, major depression symptoms, and being Asian were associated with increased maternal parental stress.
15. Garcia et al. (2017)	Examine whether parenting stress and child behavioral problems are significant predictors of parent-child conflict in the context of low-income families and how these relations are moderated by maternal nativity.	Cross-sectional	236 mothers (134 U.S. born, 102 foreign born) with preschool children. (United States)	Parenting Stress Index-Short Form (PSI-SF)	U.S.-born mothers reported more parental stress than did their foreign-born counterparts. Parental stress was positively associated with parent-child (P-C) conflict, but did not interact with maternal nativity, suggesting that more parenting stress was related to more P-C conflict regardless of whether the mothers were born within or outside of the United States.
16. Parkes et al. (2015)	Understand whether limited support helps to explain parenting stress among high and low Socioeconomic Positions (SEP) groups.	Cohort study	5,865 mothers (4,558 were from Scotland, 681 from the rest of UK, and 478 from outside of UK) with 10 months old children. (Scotland)	Abbreviated version of the Parental Stress Scale (PSS)	Migrant and single-parent statuses were associated with higher parenting stress. Less frequent grandparent contact was associated with greater parental stress among high-educated migrants.
17. Tsao et al. (2015)	Assess parenting stress and the impact among Taiwanese mothers and immigrant Vietnamese mothers living in Pingtung County (southernmost part of Taiwan). The impact of parenting stress on postpartum depression (PPD) symptoms in these 2 groups was also investigated.	Comparative and descriptive cohort study	Two groups of postpartum mothers: 162 native Taiwanese living in Taiwan and 26 Vietnamese immigrants who immigrated to Taiwan less than years ago. (Taiwan)	Child Care Stress Checklist (CCSC)	Vietnamese mothers reported higher stress than Taiwanese. Positive correlation between parental stress and postpartum depression symptoms in Taiwanese and Vietnamese immigrant women. Nature of parental stress differed among these 2 groups of women: while Vietnamese mothers related to limited personal and social resources, Taiwanese mothers felt socially isolated and constrained by traditional child care practices.
18. Lim & Ogawa (2014)	Assess the perceived effect of Child Parent Relationship Therapy (CPRT) on a Sudanese refugee family.	Case study (Mixed method)	One Sudanese family: a father and a son dyad. (United States)	Parenting Stress Index (PSI)	The case study shows the effectiveness of CPRT in reducing parental stress and in reducing a child's externalizing behaviors in a Sudanese refugee family.
19. Londhe (2015)	Explore the relationship between the stress experienced by the immigrant Indian parents of young children, their perceived social support, and the acculturation strategies adopted by these parents.	Cross-sectional	60 first-generation immigrant Indian parents (30 mothers and 30 fathers) of young children (between the ages of 3 and 6). (United State)	Parental Stress Inventory-Short Form (PSI-SF)	No significant correlations were found among acculturation, parental stress, and social support.
20. Fernández-Castillo et al. (2012)	Explore the relation between parents' stress and satisfaction during children's hospitalization, seeking possible differences between immigrant and autochthonous population and also as a function of gender in a sample of parents of hospitalized children in Andalusia, Spain.	Cross-sectional	1347 parents (50% were immigrants and the other 50% were autochthonous). (Spain)	Parental Stressor Scale	General satisfaction in immigrant parents was higher than in the autochthonous population and the levels of satisfaction were higher in men than in women. With regard to satisfaction as a function of origin, results showed higher levels in all indicators of satisfaction in the immigrant population in comparison with autochthonous population.
21. Yoo & Vonk (2012)	Develop and validate the Immigrant Parental Stress Inventory (IPSI).	Cross-sectional	366 Korean immigrant parents ranged in aged 29 to 64 years who have at least one unmarried child. (United States)	Immigrant Parental Stress Inventory (IPSI)	IPSI is subdivided in two subscales: Immigrant Life Stress and Parent-Child Acculturative Gap Stress. The total IPSI and its two subscales showed good reliability, which is capable of measuring immigrant parental stress.

Note. \*Only instruments used to assess Parental Stress and their main outcomes were presented.

## Publication year and objectives

The majority of the articles ( $n = 14$ ) were published from 2018 onwards, with a decrease of publications in 2021, probably due to the COVID-19 pandemics (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021). Regarding the aims of the studies, they investigated multiple psychosocial variables associated with the PS construct. Among them, there was a predominance of articles that involved measures of social support (Hong et al., 2021; Kim, 2018; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Londhe, 2015), acculturation orientations (Kim, 2018; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Londhe, 2015; Wang et al., 2021), parent-child relationship (Garcia et al., 2017; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Yoo, 2019), and mental health of caregivers (Erucar et al., 2018; Tsao et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018).

Some studies ( $n = 5$ ) aimed to describe practices and results of interventions designed to reduce PS rates. The following interventions programs were applied: Caregiver Support Intervention (Miller et al., 2020), Mother-Child Education Program (Ponguta et al., 2020), and Child Parent Relationship Therapy - CPRT (Lim & Ogawa, 2014), in addition to a comparative study between CPRT and Systematic Training for Effective Parenting (Ceballos et al., 2019), and another unnamed intervention (Lakkis et al., 2020). Lastly, we highlight the validation study of the scale Immigrant Parental Stress Inventory - IPSI (Yoo, 2019), as well as another study that considered the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on PE focused on meeting children's educational needs (Hong et al., 2021).

## Methodological aspects

Most of the studies ( $n = 12$ ) were referred as Cross-sectional (Eo & Kim, 2018; Erucar et al., 2018; Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 2017; Hong et al., 2021; Kim, 2018; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012), followed by Cohort (Lakkis et al., 2020; Parkes et al., 2015; Tsao et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018), Randomized Controlled Trails (Ceballos

et al., 2019; Miller et al., 2020; Ponguta et al., 2020), Longitudinal (Mitchell et al., 2019), and Case Study (Lim & Ogawa, 2014). Among the study participants, there was a predominance of articles ( $n = 10$ ) that assessed mothers and fathers jointly (Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Hong et al., 2021; Lakkis et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Miller et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021; Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012), and six others which investigated only mothers (Eo & Kim, 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Parkes et al., 2015; Tsao et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018). Furthermore, one included only migrant mothers married with men from another country (Kim, 2018), another investigated mother-child and father-child dyads (Eruiyar et al., 2018), two studies assessed only mother-child dyads (Ceballos et al., 2019; Ponguta et al., 2020), and a case study with father-child dyad (Lim & Ogawa, 2014).

The migrants participating in the majority of the articles ( $n = 18$ ) were from South-Global countries (Ceballos et al., 2019; Eo & Kim, 2018; Eruiyar et al., 2018; Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Hong et al., 2021; Kim, 2018; Lakkis et al., 2020; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Lim & Ogawa, 2014; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Miller et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2019; Ponguta et al., 2020; Taso et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012) (Korea, North Korean, Syria, China, Palestine, Lebanon, Latin America, Iran, Philippines, Vietnam, Turkey, Taiwan, Sudan, and India). There was an article that assessed Europeans participants (Parkes et al., 2015), while others two did not mention the countries of origin of the migrants (Garcia et al., 2017; Xu et al., 2018). Regarding the host countries, most of articles ( $n = 13$ ) involved migrations to North-Global, such as North America (Ceballos et al., 2019; Garcia et al., 2017; Hong et al., 2021; Lim & Ogawa, 2014; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2018; Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012) (United States of America and Canada) or European countries (Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Parkes et al., 2015) (Scotland and Spain), followed by migrations to the South-Global countries (Eo & Kim, 2018; Eruiyar et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Lakkis

et al., 2020; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Miller et al., 2020; Ponguta et al., 2020; Tsao et al., 2015) (South Korea, Lebanon, Jordan, Turkey, and Taiwan).

The most used instrument to assess the PS construct was the Parenting Stress Index (PSI) ( $n = 13$ ), developed by Abidin (1995). This instrument was most used in its reduced format (Eo & Kim, 2018; Eruiyar et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Kim, 2018; Lakkis et al., 2020; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Ponguta et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021) rather than in its complete form (Ceballos et al., 2019; Lim & Osawa, 2014; Xu et al., 2018). Three other instruments were used to measure PS: Parental Stress Scale (Hong et al., 2021; Mitchell et al., 2019; Parkes et al., 2015), Child Care Stress Checklist (Tsao et al., 2015), Parental Stressor Scale (Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012), and one study did not use a validated scale to measure PS (Miller et al., 2020). Finally, a study stands out for the development of a scale that aims to measure PS specifically in migrants (Yoo & Vonk, 2012), the IPSI scale, which was later used in another study included in this review (Yoo, 2019). Finally, a study stood out for the development of a scale that measures PS specifically in migrants (Yoo & Vonk, 2012), which presented good reliability and validity. The IPSI scale was later used in another study included in this review (Yoo, 2019).

## Main findings on PS

Regarding the results of the reviewed studies, the main recurrent factor associated with PS was social support. There is a body of evidence that shows measures of social support are inversely correlated with PS (Hong et al., 2021; Kim, 2018; Liu et al., 2020; Parkes et al., 2015). A study (Hong et al., 2021) revealed that migrant fathers and mothers with higher levels of social support were less likely to have high levels of PS. Social support also contributes to positive parenting practices, reducing conflicts between parents and children and promoting a cycle of decreasing PS in the family (Liu et al., 2020). One study highlighted the role of the extended family

as a support for fathers and mothers in raising children (Parkes et al., 2015).

We also observed that PS was positively correlated with acculturation stress (Kim, 2018; Lee & Jeon, 2021), especially in cases which parents had different acculturation orientations from the host country (Wang et al., 2021). On the other hand, one study found no significant correlations among PS, social support, and acculturative orientations (Londhe, 2015). Regarding mental health indicators for mothers, the findings show that PS was positively correlated with greater depressive symptoms (Eruiyar et al., 2018; Tsao et al., 2015; Xu et al. 2018).

Constructs involving parent-child relationship, such as parental efficacy, were associated with lower levels of PS (Lee & Jeon, 2021), while harsh discipline (Liu et al., 2020), and child maltreatment (Yoo, 2019) demonstrated inverse correlation, suggesting that higher levels of parental perceived stress have a negative impact on the quality of the relationship with their children. Some studies found associations between PS and sociodemographic data: parent lower educational or economic levels (Mitchell et al., 2019; Xu et al., 2018), younger age of children (Eruiyar et al., 2018; Kim, 2018; Xu et al., 2018), mother age at child birth (Xu et al., 2018), female gender (Eruiyar et al., 2018) and less time living in the host country (Mitchell et al., 2019) were predictors of higher levels of PS. However, among the comparative studies between natives and international migrants, we noticed that the PS outcomes are controversial. To the same extent that there are two studies that report higher levels of PS in migrants compared to natives (Parkes et al., 2015; Tsao et al., 2015), other three have indicated exactly the opposite, natives showing higher levels of PS (Eo & Kim, 2018; Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 2017).

Among the psychological intervention studies, all of them demonstrated the programs significantly increased levels of psychosocial well-being while decreased PS rates (Ceballos et al., 2019; Lakkis et al., 2020; Lim & Osawa, 2014;

Liu et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020; Ponguta et al., 2020), whether within-group (Ceballos et al., 2019; Lim & Osawa, 2014; Liu et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020) or between-group, in which the control group was composed of natives (Ponguta et al., 2020). There is also an improvement in child well-being reported by parents (Miller et al., 2020) and in the quality of dyadic relationships, possibly due to the reduction in harsh parenting (Ponguta et al., 2020). One study compared two different intervention protocols and both showed positive results in decreasing PS after the intervention (Ceballos et al., 2019). The case study involving a father-son of a Sudanese refugee family also demonstrated the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing PS and in the child's externalizing behaviors (Lim & Osawa, 2014).

The interventions aimed to provide a space of comprehensive care for caregivers, given that the psychological well-being of parents is an important basis for positive parenting and for the children's psychological well-being (Lakkis et al., 2020). They also promoted group practices and individual interviews that emphasized the acquisition of parenting skills and the strengthening of positive parenting (Ceballos et al., 2019; Lakkis et al., 2020; Miller et al., 2020; Ponguta et al., 2020). Furthermore, these interventions also increased parental warmth and responsiveness (Miller et al., 2020), as well as decreased harsh parenting (Miller et al., 2020; Ponguta et al., 2020) and child externalizing behavior (Lim & Osawa, 2014).

## Discussion

The results of this systematic literature show that more studies about the PS construct associated with people in international migration processes were published from 2018 onwards, reflecting a greater interest of the academic community in the subject. This might have happened mainly because of the exponential increase of international migration in recent decades (McAuliffe & Triandafyllidou, 2021) and their respective physical and psychosocial impacts on

families with children (Arakelyan & Ager, 2020; Ünver et al., 2021). On the other hand, there was an expressive decrease in studies in 2021, something that was already expected due to the implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on society in general, but also because of journal publications, in which editors prioritized studies involving urgent and emerging demands raised by the current context of global health crisis (Rodríguez Forti et al., 2021).

Regarding the theoretical-methodological aspects of the reviewed studies, the criteria adapted for this review (Berra et al., 2008) considered that the quality of the articles were high. The absence of statistical calculation for the composition of the sample and the lack of description of participants were gaps recurrently observed in the articles. Although these methodological issues are fundamental for a better understanding of individual and collective characteristics (Manstead, 2018), and also for the representation of each sample group (Field, 2018), it is necessary to consider that the accessibility and maintenance of the migrant population in studies are challenges to be faced by researchers (Ziaian et al., 2018). These challenges vary from the language differences, from the communication and methodological resources limitation (Milfont & Klein, 2018; Ziaian et al., 2018), to the characteristics of migrants, such as the fluidity of their displacements to other territories due to their economic and social vulnerabilities (Prado & Araújo, 2019). These characteristics turns harder to carry out sample's size calculation and/or longitudinal follow-up study designs, something that may explain the reasons why most of the studies reviewed are cross-sectional design.

The reviewed studies investigated mostly mothers-fathers jointly (Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Hong et al., 2021; Lakkis et al., 2020; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Miller et al., 2020; Mitchell et al., 2019; Wang et al., 2021; Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012), or even dyads (Ceballos et al., 2019; Eruyar et al., 2018; Lim & Osawa, 2014; Ponguta et al., 2020). This demonstrates the interest of researchers in understanding PS associated with international

migration from different perspectives inside the same family. However, some studies have investigated only mothers (Ceballos et al., 2019; Eo & Kim, 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Kim, 2018; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Parkes et al., 2015; Ponguta et al., 2020; Tsao et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2018), something that may be reproducing specific gender roles, in which the centrality of child care is attributed exclusively to mothers (Valiquette-Tessier et al., 2019). It also may be associated with migrations involving only women and children, which are more common in war contexts. On the other hand, the characteristics of the sample can be also related to the migrant's own family organization or even the logic applied in the conceptualization and conduct of research (Hwang, 2020). Thus, it is important that new studies consider the existence of different care arrangements rather than the Eurocentric hegemonic model, which essentially refers the children's care as a female gender role (Blundell, 2017).

Regarding the results related to PS in these different population samples, we observed that regardless of the caregiver, whether solo mothers, mothers-fathers jointly or just the father, high levels of PS were present and related to the variables studied such as child abuse (Yoo, 2019), conflicts between parents and children (Lee & Jeon, 2021; Liu et al., 2020), and greater difficulties in meeting their children's educational needs (Hong et al., 2021). Even though none of the articles compared PS between different caregivers, we convey with the literature that parenthood during migration can be highly stressful to fathers, mothers and/or other caregivers (Eltanamy et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2017).

Most studies addressed the migrations from the South-Global to North-Global (Ceballos et al., 2019; Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 2017; Hong et al., 2021; Lim & Osawa, 2014; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Mitchell et al., 2019; Parkes et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2021; Xu et al., 2018; Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012), considering USA was the main host country. Historically, South-to-North migration flows are relatively common and on



a larger scale (Leal & Harder, 2021), especially among North America, Latin America and the Caribbean (Azose & Raftery, 2019). The reasons for these displacements focus on the cultural affinities shared by these populations, either by their symbolic constructions arising from the colonial past and their better living conditions, or the structural economic differences in North-Global countries (Leal & Harder, 2021). Still, we highlight the lack of studies on South-South migrations, particularly of the population from Africa or Caribbean-Latin American countries, such as Haiti (Conte Gil & Pizzinato, 2022) and Venezuela (UNHCR, n.d.), which both countries have recently experienced a massive diaspora.

Among the comparative studies between natives and international migrants, we noticed that the PS outcomes are controversial: while some report higher levels of PS in migrants compared to natives (Parkes et al., 2015; Tsao et al., 2015), others have indicated the opposite, natives showing higher levels of PS (Eo & Kim, 2018; Fernández-Castillo et al., 2012; Garcia et al., 2017). This ambiguity corroborates the phenomenon called “the immigrant paradox” (Zhang et al., 2021), which describes that, in some level, migrants have better or similar outcomes in mental health variables than their native-born peers, even after considering the contextual disadvantages and vulnerabilities of international migrant families. The literature confirms this phenomenon (Zhang et al., 2021), but we point out that this comparison between PS in migrants and natives needs to be further investigated.

Higher quantity of the reviewed studies addressed PS through the classic PSI instrument in its reduced version (Eo & Kim, 2018; Eruyar et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2017; Kim, 2018; Lakkis et al., 2020; Lee & Jeon, 2021; Liu et al., 2020; Londhe, 2015; Ponguta et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021), while the IPSI (Yoo, 2019; Yoo & Vonk, 2012), which is focused on assessing the PS construct in caregivers in the migratory context, considers the specificities of the international migration phenomenon. We stand out the importance of developing and using specific instruments for international

migrants, since this population can be constantly subordinate to several vulnerable and risky conditions, making their physical, economic, and psychosocial conditions quite unique (Prado & Araújo, 2019). Yet, it is known about that the processes of construction, validation, and adaptation of scales in different languages and cultural contexts are other challenges to be faced by researches (Ziaian et al., 2018).

Regarding the results, most studies indicate social support as a protective factor for migrant families, since this increases the family’s well-being during the adaptation challenges faced by them in the new life and country. For migrant families, the distance from grandparents proved to be a factor that worsens PS levels, since parents lose important affective, logistical and even economic support in the care of children. Thus, some dimensions of social support are fundamental, such as insertion in the community and in health and social assistance services, creation of support networks, maintenance and strengthening of social bonds, and opportunities of work and income (Hynie, 2018). In migrant populations, their support network is highly fragmented, especially in forced displacement contexts. Therefore, some investigations point out to the importance of offering support and conditions for rearranging family life in the different stages of the migration process (Hynie, 2018; Murphy et al., 2017). In cases of families with children of school or preschool age, a community support network is essential, since child care requires a group of people involved in promoting health and well-being of children (Eltanamy et al., 2021; Murphy et al., 2017). Therefore, raising and/or taking care of a child does not depend only on the fraternal care network, however on a broader social context.

The reviewed studies that carried out interventions with migrant families give some clues on how social support can help in the transition process that these populations are experiencing. Results indicate significant increases in levels of psychosocial well-being and decrease in PS after caregivers’ participation in all intervention programs (Ceballos et al., 2019; Lakkis et al., 2020; Lim & Osawa, 2014;

Miller et al., 2020; Ponguta et al., 2020). These interventions demonstrate promising results, even if they have still operated in a restricted sphere, within NGOs and research centers. Although they have achieved important results, they are still insufficient to meet the high contingent of migrant families demands. Thus, we raise the importance of actions at governmental levels and public policies, taking place especially in the host countries that currently receive most international migrants, such as the developed countries in Global-North or that share borders with countries in war conflicts or severe humanitarian crises.

Summarizing the evidences from the reviewed studies, we observed that social support is one of the main factors to be considered when seeking for strategies to reduce PS in caregivers in international migration process. Although, new studies have to be carried out, considering the present study limitation, which focused on reviewing only studies that assessed the quantitative PS construct. Other psychosocial constructs, such as anxiety, depression, Post-Traumatic Stress disorder should be reviewed, since they have close associations with international migration processes. For future empirical investigations, we suggest that studies should be conducted on PS in South-South migrations, especially in Caribbean-Latin America, in view of the latest migratory flows experienced by Haiti and Venezuela.

Finally, international migration processes will keep happening and they might be rapidly worsened, either as a result of predictable climate change or as a result of the recurrent wars. As an example of this last one, we point out the recent invasion of Ukraine by Russia [2022], which has caused the fastest mass migration in Europe in the last thirty years (Sacchi, 2022). In few weeks, around 6.5 million people left the country, and the overwhelming majority of these migrants were women and children, since men were forced to join Ukraine's defense forces. This may have strong implications for PS and all other psychosocial dimensions of people who migrated and those who remained in the invaded country. In addition to the

tragic war scenarios and to the implications of the COVID-19 pandemics, inequality in the distribution of world income, the precariousness of working conditions, the impoverishment of vulnerable populations, religious and nationalist issues, and other related factors, they will lead millions of people to move across the globe in the coming decades seeking for better living conditions (WEF, 2022). Host countries will need to assist the needs of these migrants, something that either the reviewed PS studies here or the ones involving other psychosocial constructs will contribute to better provide support and humanitarian help for people in international migration processes.

## Acknowledgments

P. H. C. Gil has a PhD Scholarship from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq). C. S. Peixoto has a PhD Scholarship from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). C. A. Piccinini and A. Pizzinato have a Productivity Grants from CNPq.

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## Notes

- \* Review article.