Exploring Labor Market Participation of Highly Skilled Immigrant Women in the United States: Barriers and Strategies

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Abstract : The United States is the country where the majority of highly skilled immigrants are hosted. Two-thirds of foreign-born migrants from Turkey - an underrepresented and understudied immigrant group in the United States - are highly skilled. Generated by the aim of filling this gap in the literature, the motivation of this research is to understand highly skilled Turkish immigrant women's integration into the U.S. labor market, including barriers that they face and strategies they develop to rebuild their career after relocation. The in-depth interviews of 20 highly skilled Turkish women residing in the U.S. revealed that the majority of women participants are either not integrated into the labor market, occupy positions below their skill, or cannot reach the same upper segments of the labor market in the host country, arising from a range of structural and personal barriers interplaying in their career trajectories. Furthermore, many of them cannot transfer their social and cultural capital gained in their home country into the United States. The labor market participation process of these women is analyzed in the light of Bourdieu's theory of capital and the intersectional approach of gender, class and ethnicity in order to understand the positions of highly skilled immigrant women in the host country labor market.