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Mapping the Intersection of Migration and Marginalization: A Scoping Review Protocol

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Abstract

The migration crisis has reached unprecedented levels, disproportionately affecting marginalized populations, who face systemic inequalities and heightened social exclusion. Understanding the interplay between migration and these communities is crucial for addressing barriers to social inclusion and equity. The proposed scoping review aims to map the literature on the relationship between migration and marginalized populations, as understanding this relationship is key to identifying targeted interventions and addressing social inequities more effectively. This research will be performed via PECO structure and search strategies in multidisciplinary and specific databases. Studies on marginalized communities and migration, focus on social barriers and challenges and include quantitative, qualitative and mixed studies. The review will be conducted between September and October 2025, using multidisciplinary databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, as well as specialized sources including PubMed, Embase, and CINAHL. The inclusion criteria include original peer-reviewed articles, studies with a sample of migrants, vulnerable communities, and those examining migration barriers. Two reviewers will conduct the data analysis independently, and the results will be synthesized to identify effective interventions and recommendations for public policies. The review will identify gaps in knowledge, offering future research guidelines. The findings will not only guide future research but also support policymakers and organizations in developing tailored strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of migration on vulnerable communities, fostering sustainable and equitable social practices worldwide.

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Introduction

Global migration trends have reached unprecedented levels, exemplified by a record 6.1 million new permanent immigrants to OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries in 2022 (OECD, 2023). While these numbers signal a significant shift in migration patterns, they also underscore the complexities associated with the inclusion and integration of migrant populations, particularly those from marginalized backgrounds. Migrants from marginalized communities often face greater barriers, such as limited access to health services, discrimination in employment and housing insecurity (Plaza del Pino et al., 2024). Systemic factors, such as legal barriers and power dynamics, discriminatory attitudes, lack of cultural competence of health professionals and communication obstacles, aggravate the challenges faced by migrants, especially in accessing essential services and fully exercising their rights (Darebo et al., 2024; Plaza del Pino et al., 2024).

Faced with the continuous increase in the number of migrants in OECD countries, it is essential that public policies, social services and institutional attitudes are reformulated to respond inclusively and effectively to the needs of these diverse populations (Forray et al., 2024). Failure to address these issues risks perpetuating social exclusion, economic inequity, and cultural isolation for millions, underscoring the critical need for comprehensive, inclusive migration policies that go beyond economic considerations and promote social integration and equity for all migrants.

This protocol emerged from the growing need to explore the barriers marginalized populations face in the context of migration (Duda-Mikulin, 2024; Forray et al., 2024; Young et al., 2023), aiming to fill critical knowledge gaps and support the development of informed public policies and practical interventions. Migration is a complex global phenomenon, encompassing internal and international movements, whether voluntary or forced, motivated by economic, political, social and environmental reasons, as well as involving different levels of vulnerability and structural barriers (Duda-Mikulin, 2024; Forray et al., 2024; Gundacker et al., 2024). These challenges are further exacerbated by marginalization and social exclusion, hindering the integration and well-being of these populations.

In this study, we understand social marginalization as that closely linked to people navigating between cultures, particularly refugees and immigrants, and working women, Black and Indigenous people who face psychological challenges during cultural transitions (Fluit et al., 2024). The motivation for developing this protocol is directly linked to the urgency of providing evidence-based guidelines to address these groups' inequalities. The research uses a scoping review to map the available literature, identify gaps in knowledge and suggest interventions that can mitigate the marginalization faced by these migrants. This protocol is therefore a tool for academics, policymakers and human rights organizations seeking to understand the specific challenges of these populations better and promote inclusive and sustainable practices. The proposed scoping review aims to map the literature on the relationship between migration and marginalized populations, identify gaps in current knowledge and provide guidelines for future research.

The review seeks to address three central questions: What are the main challenges faced by marginalized populations in the context of migration? What are the knowledge gaps identified in studies on the relationship between migration and marginalization, especially regarding health, employment, security, social inclusion and quality of life? What approaches or interventions have been suggested or implemented to mitigate the marginalization of migrants, and how is their effectiveness evaluated?

Method

Research Design

We planned to conduct a scoping review to support the study and establish comparative parameters. This literature review highlights the study's relevance and compares its results with other studies (Creswell, 2007). The scoping review will be conducted according to the guidelines outlined by (Peters et al., 2015, 2020, 2022). This type of review has become a widely used approach to informing decision-making and research by identifying and analyzing the literature on a specific topic or issue (Peters et al., 2020). Scoping reviews are often valued for their role in the synthesis of evidence. They are particularly favored when the objective is to identify knowledge gaps, explore a body of literature, clarify concepts, investigate research practices or provide insights for future research (Munn et al., 2018).

A scoping review is especially appropriate when the objective is to quickly understand the breadth, diversity and main characteristics of a particular field of research (Munn et al., 2018; Peters et al., 2022; Tricco et al., 2022). This approach is particularly beneficial in emerging, complex or heterogeneous study areas because, unlike reviews that focus on specific issues and the effectiveness of interventions, it adopts a broader and exploratory perspective, offering a more holistic understanding of the subject (Peters et al., 2020).

Protocol and Registration

This scoping review protocol was registered at Open Science Framework (https://doi.org/10.17605/OSF.IO/5WRVN) Should any changes to this protocol be necessary, they will be duly reported and fully described in the final version of the systematic review, when published.

Search Strategies and Databases

The structure of the PECO strategy (Population, Exposure, Comparator and Outcomes) (Morgan et al., 2018) defines the issue to be addressed in the review. This review uses terms from Medical Subject Headings (MeSH), and the search strategy was developed considering the following structure: P = migrants; E = marginalized communities; C = country, gender, age and income; O = challenges, barriers and social exclusion. Searches in the databases will be conducted via the title, abstract and keyword fields, with adjustments for each one, to ensure the inclusion of studies relevant to the analysis.

The search strategy will be carefully adjusted to meet the specific requirements of each database, including adaptations in quotation marks and the use of plural and singular terms to ensure the comprehensiveness of the results (Available in the Supplemental Material). The Boolean operator *"OR"* will be used to group the synonyms of each term, and the terms will then be organized into blocks and connected by the Boolean operator *"AND"* to complete the search strategy (Table 1) (W. P. da Costa et al., 2024a). The search keywords will consist of three blocks related to the following guiding terms: *"migration"*, *"marginalized communities"*, and *"challenges"*.

The review will be performed, between September and October 2025, to identify and gather scientific evidence from multidisciplinary databases: Scopus™, Web of Science™ that offer multidisciplinary coverage and impact analysis, essential for a current and influential overview; and specific databases:

MEDLINE/PubMed® via the National Library of Medicine® interface, Embase™, Cumulative Index to Nursing and Allied Health Literature® Plus, that contributes specialized literature on mental health and psychosocial factors, while is key for public health studies, allowing exploration of the physical and mental health impacts of marginalized populations. The selection of these databases guarantees a comprehensive, high-quality review. These five databases together provide a complete, methodologically rigorous and worldwide overview.

Eligibility Criteria

This scoping review will consider relevant articles that address the relationship between migration and marginalized populations, without language restrictions, published in the last ten years (2016 - 2025), period in which significant changes occurred in global migration flows and social inclusion policies, offering a more directly comparable overview of the current context. This timeframe also aligns with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which since 2015 have guided global actions to reduce inequalities and promote social inclusion. Studies will be excluded if they meet at least one of the defined exclusion criteria. Eligible studies will be checked to confirm whether the evidence is valid or whether any retractions have been registered using the Scite tool (https://scite.ai) (M. B. Costa et al., 2024; Ribeiro et al., 2024). This tool is used to check the

Table 1. Keywords Included in the Database Search Strategy

Blocks	Keywords used
#1	"Marginalized communities" OR "marginalized groups" OR "marginalized population" OR marginalized OR "marginalized groups" OR "marginalised communities" OR "marginalised groups" OR "marginalised population" OR marginalised OR "marginalised groups" OR marginalization OR "marginalisation" OR labour OR minority OR minorities OR "minority groups" OR "minority communities" OR "minority population" OR "disadvantaged populations" OR "group, sensitive population" OR "groups, sensitive population" OR "patient, underserved" OR "patients, underserved" OR "population group, sensitive" OR "population groups, sensitive" OR "population, sensitive" OR "population, underserved" OR "population, vulnerable" OR "populations, sensitive" OR "populations, underserved" OR "populations, vulnerable" OR "sensitive population" OR "sensitive population group" OR "sensitive population groups" OR "sensitive populations" OR "underserved patient" OR "underserved patients" OR "underserved population" OR "underserved populations" OR "vulnerable population" OR "vulnerable populations"
#2	"Border crossing" OR "border crossings" OR "chain migration" OR "chain migrations" OR "crossing, border" OR "crossings, border" OR "emigration" OR "emigrations" OR "immigration" OR "immigration and emigration" OR "immigrations" OR "in migration" OR "in-migration" OR "in-migrations" OR "international migration" OR "international migrations" OR "labor migration" OR "labor migrations" OR "migration, chain" OR "migration, international" OR "migration, labor" OR "migration, return" OR "migration, temporary" OR "migration, turnaround" OR "migrations, chain" OR "migrations, international" OR "migrations, labor" OR "migrations, return" OR "migrations, temporary" OR "migrations, turnaround" OR "out migration" OR "out-migration" OR "out-migrations" OR "resettlement and settlement" OR "return migration" OR "return migrations" OR "settlement and resettlement" OR "temporary migration" OR "temporary migrations" OR "turnaround migration" OR "turnaround migrations"
#3	Challenges OR "social exclusion" OR experience OR experiences OR barriers OR "exclusion, social" OR "exclusions, social" OR "isolation, social" OR "isolations, social" OR "social exclusion" OR "social exclusions" OR "social isolations" OR "social cohesion"
Search string	(#1) AND (#2) AND (#3)

validity of the evidence and identify any retractions, improving the accuracy and reliability of the analysis (Nicholson et al., 2021; Pérez-Neri et al., 2022). Therefore, to be considered eligible, the articles must meet all the following inclusion criteria:

The inclusion criteria will be as follows.

(i1) Original articles from peer-reviewed journals published in the last ten years (2016 - 2025).
(i2) Observational study: cohort, cross sectional and case control studies, with quantitative, qualitative or mixed studies.
(i3) Studies with a sample of migrants, marginalized or vulnerable communities.
(i4) Studies that assess the challenges and barriers faced by marginalized communities concerning migration.

The following will be excluded.

(e1) Duplicate articles published on the same subject by the same authors will be excluded after being manually reviewed. The article with the best understanding will be considered.
(e2) Opinion articles, commentaries, editorials, letters to the editor or similar, reviews and case reports.
(e3) Studies with incomplete data.

(e4) Studies with mixed samples in which it is not possible to separate the analyzed data.
(e5) Studies not fully available in the databases surveyed and those that could not be accessed even after two attempts to contact the authors (M. B. Costa et al., 2024).
(e6) Articles written in a restricted language that cannot be adequately translated.
(e7) Studies that have been previously retracted.

Review Process

The analysis will be conducted according to guidelines for scoping reviews (Altman et al., 2008; Arksey & O'Malley, 2005) and the guidelines provided by the Reporting Scoping Reviews - PRISMA ScR extension (McGowan et al., 2020; Tricco et al., 2018, 2022) as follows (The complete PRISMA checklist is provided in the Supplemental Appendix).

(1) Information related to the identified articles will be extracted and imported via Rayyan software to eliminate duplicates.
(2) The articles found in the database search will be imported into EndNote X9, bibliographic reference management software (McKeown & Mir, 2021), to remove duplicate articles. The metadata will be transferred via Rayyan software, a tool designed to
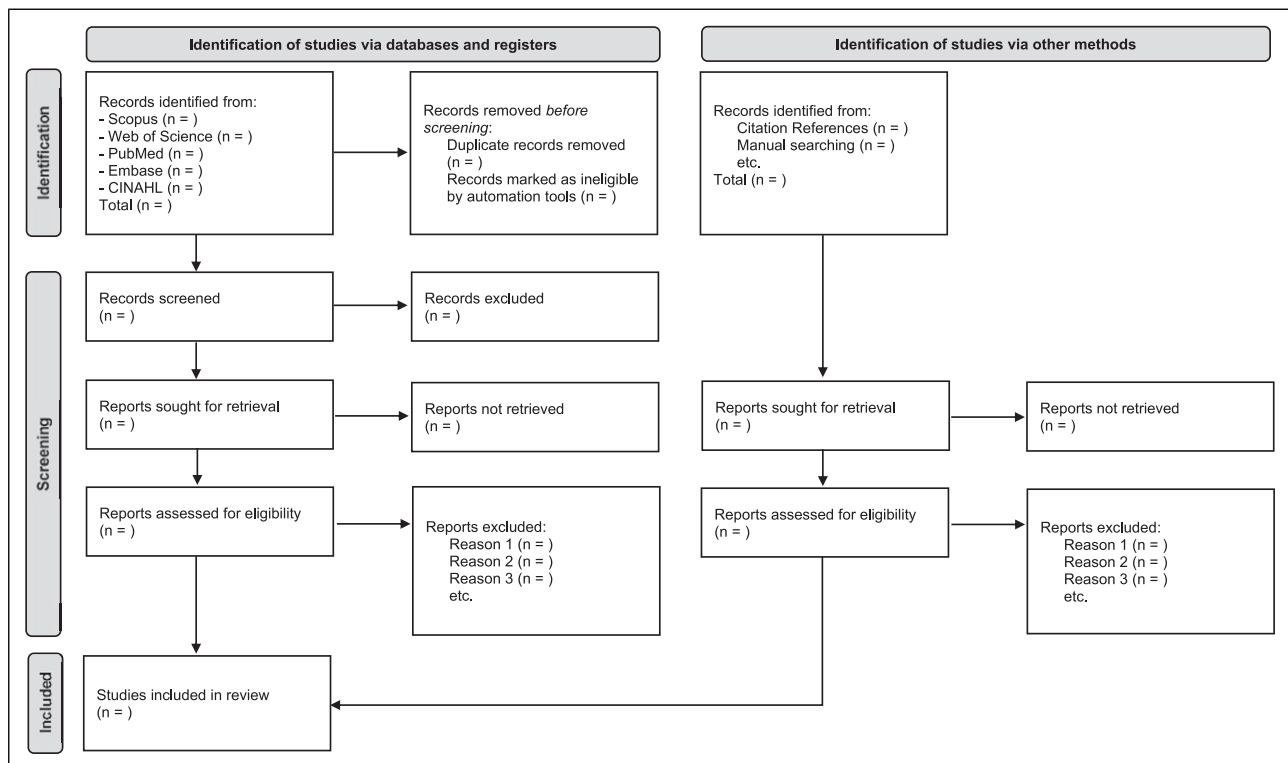

Figure 1. PRISMA 2020 flow chart for the process of identifying, screening and including studies in the review (Available in the Supplemental Material)

help conduct systematic reviews (Roberts et al., 2019), where the reviewers will evaluate them. The first stage of the review process involves the reading and selecting titles and abstracts by two independent reviewers (R1 and R2), which will increase the credibility of the process (Waffenschmidt et al., 2019). Discrepancies will be resolved later by reading the studies based on the previously established eligibility criteria. Notably, the two primary reviewers will perform this entire process simultaneously and in a blinded manner.

Percentage agreement and Cohen's kappa coefficients will be calculated to assess inter-reviewer reliability and agreement, and eligibility will be determined based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria (de Raadt et al., 2021; Rau & Shih, 2021).

(3) After screening, two independent reviewers (R1 and R2) will complete the reading of the articles selected in the first stage. Discrepancies will be resolved by consensus with a third researcher (R3 or R4). Finally, articles that meet the inclusion criteria will be included in the review.

Articles that meet all the inclusion criteria will then be included in the review. The flow diagram (Page et al., 2021) for selecting articles for this scoping review is shown in Figure 1.

Data Extraction, Synthesis, and Analysis

Two independent reviewers (R1 and R2) will extract, evaluate and synthesize the data, and any discrepancies will be resolved by a third reviewer (R3 or R4). For the data extraction in this study, an electronic spreadsheet will be used to summarize and explain the characteristics and results of the included studies. Details such as publication information (title, authors, year), the context in which the study was performed (country and population involved), the methodological design (type of study, instrument used, sample size and test used) and the main results obtained. The results will be summarized, critically evaluated, and integrated through a clear, direct, logical structure.

Confidence Evidence

The included articles will be evaluated based on the quality of their evidence, using the Grading of Recommendations, Assessment, Development, and Evaluations (GRADE) recommendations (Balshem et al., 2011; Guyatt et al., 2008). Using the online GRADE software ProGDT, the traces are coordinated according to the following levels of competence: (a) high, (b) moderate, (c) low or (d) very low (Balshem et al., 2011).

Reviewer Training

The researchers in charge will carry out detailed training on the inclusion and exclusion criteria and as part of the training, they will carry out practical evaluations of 50 test studies before starting the review (Noll et al., 2017; Terra et al., 2023). In addition, researchers will be trained to conduct standardized analyses using EndNote and Rayyan software (Ferreira et al., 2021). This preparation process will ensure that evaluators are well acquainted with the tools and methods needed to conduct a rigorous and accurate scoping review (W. P. da Costa et al., 2024b; Noll et al., 2017).

Discussion

Migration is growing global phenomenon with significant implications for marginalized populations (Li et al., 2021), forming part of a crisis narrative that, according to (Cantat et al., 2023), is not recent. In 2020, migrants accounted for 3.7% of the world's population and approximately 15% of the population in wealthier countries (UNDESA, 2020). Migrants from vulnerable groups, such as ethnic minorities, refugees and asylum seekers, face complex challenges that exacerbate their marginalization, with vulnerability—composed of economic, social, cultural, political and psychological factors—a central issue that varies across societies and times, unequally affecting different social groups (Doust Mohammadi et al., 2024). This concept of vulnerability has been consolidated in migration governance policies, as evidenced by the adoption, in 2018, of the Global Compacts on Refugees (GCR) and for safe, orderly and regular migration (GCM) by the United Nations (Karlsen, 2024).

Immigration can reduce social cohesion and well-being, although these studies focus mainly on populations with a white majority (Li et al., 2021). Studies on migration and vulnerability have been conducted in countries such as Sweden, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, Ethiopia, Switzerland and Nigeria (Dalingwater et al., 2023; Grassi & Nicole-Berva, 2022; Johnson et al., 2021; Michael, 2024; Roos, 2022; Strange & Askanius, 2023). Marginalization causes certain groups, especially socially excluded groups, to experience altered perceptions of time and self-image (Didic, 2022). In addition, migrants face problems such as discrimination, language barriers, a lack of access to essential services and integration difficulties (Strange & Askanius, 2023). These challenges are primarily related to inadequate housing conditions, precarious work and limited access to health care, caused mainly by uncertain residency status and restrictive migration policies (Dalingwater et al., 2023).

These conditions disproportionately impact the health of migrants, and they are more likely to live and work in situations that exacerbate these problems (Tai et al., 2022). Despite some government measures to support these populations, such as telemedicine technologies and financial

support, data on the effectiveness of these initiatives still needs to be improved (Li et al., 2021). Thus, it urges the implementation of political reforms that ensure immigrants' rights and promote their inclusion, covering health, security, and economic support (David et al., 2024). The prevalence of migration between countries requires the recognition of the social problems and vulnerabilities of immigrants and the development of practical solutions, especially in crises and emergencies (Doust Mohammadi et al., 2024).

Finally, understanding how policies, practices and social structures affect the experiences of migrants is essential for creating measures that promote social inclusion. Evaluating current policies is crucial in guiding future adjustments and research (Li et al., 2021). In many countries, migration policies contribute to marginalization, mainly due to the precariousness of residence status (Dalingwater et al., 2023). Examples of this include Malawian immigrants in South Africa, who face prolonged unemployment and low access to healthcare, and Syrian and Palestinian refugees in Jordan, whose difficulties are exacerbated for women (Acu, 2023). Young migrants in Gauteng Province, South Africa, also experience medical exclusion, especially women and unemployed individuals, due to economic and gender factors (Akokuwebe et al., 2023; Silva et al., 2022).

Strengths and Limitations

This study has several strengths. Firstly, the inclusion of five databases, two of which are multidisciplinary and three specific, considerably broadens the scope of the studies of interest. Secondly, the choice not to impose language restrictions, together with the ten-year time frame for the selected publications, promotes a comprehensive and inclusive approach. Thirdly, the adoption of consolidated methodological procedures for the selection of studies reinforces the reliability of the analysis. Finally, the rigorous method of data extraction and evaluation of the evidence, carried out by two independent reviewers, ensures the impartial inclusion of relevant studies, eliminating possible personal biases.

However, despite these strengths, scoping reviews can face significant challenges. One of them is the possibility that no study meets the previously established eligibility criteria, resulting in a review with no results. Nevertheless, even in this scenario, the study maintains its relevance by adding value to the scientific community, stimulating new research on the subject and encouraging efforts to fill existing gaps. In addition, the use of different instruments and approaches to study marginalized populations and their relationship with migration can generate varied results, which can, in some cases, make the analysis of this data difficult or even unfeasible.

A scoping review is a widely used approach supporting decision-making and guiding research by identifying and analyzing existing literature on a specific topic. Its importance lies in synthesizing evidence and is particularly valuable for identifying knowledge gaps, exploring a research field, clarifying concepts, and offering direction for future studies. This type of review is especially relevant in emerging, complex, or diverse study areas, as it provides a broad, exploratory perspective that fosters a holistic understanding of the subject. Our design also has some limitations, since the interpretation of the results can be influenced by factors not considered in the included studies and by variations in the results according to the cultural, social and economic contexts in which each study is carried out. This study will provide significant evidence to guide public policies and practical interventions concerning the challenges and difficulties faced by vulnerable populations in migration. However, considering these limitations, the results should be interpreted with caution.

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Ethical Approval

The data used in the analysis will be assessed based on studies that have already been published without the need for research ethics approval.

Author Contribution

Murilo Marques Costa: Conceptualization, Methodology, Software, Project administration, Resources, Formal analysis, Investigation, Validation, Writing – original draft preparation, Visualization. **Marcos de Moraes Sousa:** Conceptualization, Methodology, Formal analysis, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Nathaliê Silva Souza:** Investigation, Resources. **Miguel Matos Torres:** Formal analysis, Supervision, Validation, Writing-Reviewing and Editing. **Jéssica Traguetto:** Formal analysis, Validation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Priscilla Rayanne e Silva:** Methodology, Supervision, Validation. **Manuel Monfort-Pañego:** Formal analysis, Validation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing. **Matias Noll:** Formal analysis, Validation, Writing- Reviewing and Editing.

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Data Availability Statement

Data sharing not applicable – no new data generated, or the article describes entirely theoretical research.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

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