

# Migration and gender: A study on flow migratory of young people from the Abaetetuba Islands, PA

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**Keywords**— *Youth, Riversides, Migration, Mobility.*

**Abstract** — *This article records the flow of young people from the riverside who migrate to the municipality of Abaetetuba in search of better living conditions, formal employment and higher education and/or technical courses. Data were collected in semi-structured interviews with young people in the countryside and in the city, women between 15 and 27 years old, born and raised in communities and, later, some settled in city spaces. Out of a total of 37 young people interviewed in the city and on the farm (the young people interviewed at the farm are those who intend to live in the city at some point in their lives), 25 are female, which is equivalent to 68% of respondents. The research highlights the reality experienced by these young women in the countryside and the devaluation of female work in rural areas. With the increasing migration of women from island communities to the city, the riverside environment has also suffered from masculinization and aging.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The central theme for this article was the analysis of the migration of young riverside dwellers on the gender variable. The importance of studying migration from a gender perspective is due to the fact that in the communities studied in the region of the islands of the municipality of Abaetetuba, most young people who migrate or who intend to one day migrate to the city are female.

As a dominant form, the role assigned to girls in our society has always been in domestic activities, as girls had to get married early, start a family and take care of the house and children [4]. In some rural communities this is still a reality, many families believe that women should marry and remain in the countryside.

In the region of the islands, especially when interviewing mothers of young people, it is observed that they do not want their daughters to continue living on the farm, living a life that is usually imposed by society. Mothers want their daughters to study and have a profession.

Studies draws special attention to the selective migration of women. Young people leave the rural environment the most, especially women, who also achieve higher levels of schooling and qualifications to enter the job market [3].

The fall in fertility levels, the intense urbanization, the increase in schooling levels and the incorporation of new social roles by women gave rise to inferences about the participation of women in migratory processes in search of

work, improvement of schooling and of professional development [2].

The rural exodus presents itself in two new ways: masculinization and the aging of the rural population [3]. In this way, the rural population becomes increasingly composed of men. For scholars, this phenomenon ends up generating a disproportion between the number of male and female young people living in rural areas [9].

Although the rural exodus was more intense until the 1980s, it was more homogeneous in terms of sex and age. Currently, with more young women migrating or moving from the countryside to the city, this process has been a form of resistance, which demonstrates that in their trajectories, women are able to face the inequalities that kept them stopped [4].

In this way, the present work aims to explain the selective migration of a female and juvenile public in the region of the islands of Abaetetuba and to understand why these young riverside women decided to leave the countryside to live in the city, facing the difficulties of the urban and fighting against prejudice, to survive facing a completely different reality.

## II. METHOD

The research was carried out in the Amazon estuary, in the region of the islands of the municipality of Abaetetuba, located in the Microregion of Cametá, which covers the municipalities of Cametá, Baião, Igarapé-Miri, Limoeiro do Ajuru, Mocajuba and Oeiras do Pará, which, in turn, time, inserted in the Mesoregion of the Northeast of Pará.

The municipality covers an area of 1,611 km<sup>2</sup> [10] and is one of the areas with the highest production of açaí in the Amazon. The municipality has an area of 1,610,743 km<sup>2</sup>, with 40% of this territory consisting of a floodplain area, known locally as "sítio" [5].

The estimated population of Abaetetuba is 141,100 inhabitants, of which 58,102 inhabitants are located in rural areas [10]. Families in rural areas are distributed in communities that are located in the regions of islands, rivers, streams, side roads, branches and highways that are also part of the scenario of the Baixo Tocantins region [8].

The economy of Abaetetuba was mainly based on three means, which were: the activities of the riverside people, an incipient industry, and local businesses [7]. With the opening of new roads, industrialized products from other regions began to enter the city and foods produced by the riverside people, such as açaí, for example, go out to the foreign market.

The landscape in the region of the islands is mainly composed of native açaí groves. The extraction of açaí groves is also the main activity carried out by families in the regions of the islands. In addition to açaí, families practice fishing for shrimp and fish. Most of the houses of the riverside people are on stilts and located on the banks of the rivers.

The communities visited during the field research are located on the Quianduba, Maracapucu, Maracapucu Miri and Arumanduba rivers (Fig. 1). The riverside people who live in these communities lead their way of life, social, religious and economic relationships through these rivers [8].

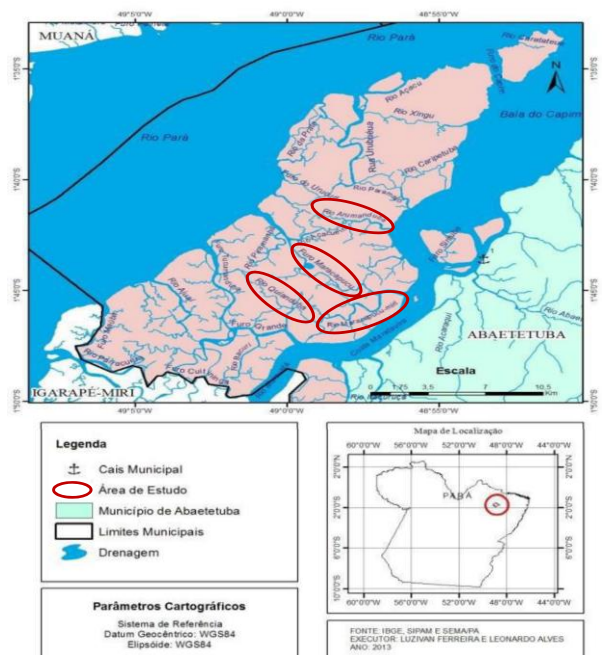


Fig. 1: Study Area Location

The research was carried out in 10 communities from different rivers in the region of the islands of Abaetetuba. The riverside area of the municipality of Abaetetuba, PA was chosen for the research due to the large flow of young people from the islands to the city, many of these young people are inserted in local businesses, in technical courses and higher education courses in the municipality of Abaetetuba.

The insertion in the communities of the Maracapucu river occurred firstly through a student of the Master's course in Family Agriculture and Sustainable Development of the Amazon Institute of Family Agriculture who is riverside and her family lives in the Santa Maria community of the Maracapucu river. From this contact it was possible to have a point of support in the region of the islands.

Then, an interview was carried out with the community leader and health agent of one of the main communities visited, in order to identify communities that have a greater number of young people in the countryside or who have already migrated to the city. Through this interview it was possible to identify the possible communities for application of the questionnaires.

A total of 45 young people were interviewed, but for this work only 37 questionnaires were analyzed, as they are interviews with young people who have already migrated or those who wish to leave the farm to live in the city (Table 1). The method of semi-structured interviews was used [12].

Table 1: Young people who want to migrate or who have already migrated towards the city.

| YOUNG PEOPLE INTERVIEWED | Nº | DIVISION BY GENDER | AGE GROUP      |
|--------------------------|----|--------------------|----------------|
| City                     | 18 | 7 Male Gender      | 16 to 27 years |
|                          |    | 11 Female Gender   |                |
| Sítio                    | 19 | 5 Male Gender      | 15 to 19 years |
|                          |    | 14 Female Gender   |                |

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In recent decades, migratory movements from the countryside towards the city are represented by a younger population than in the past, and to a greater extent female [3].

Factors such as, for example, the absence of public policies for rural women, has caused the delay in the development of rural areas, with consequences such as the rural exodus [6]. Young women are the biggest victims of this delay, they suffer from the lack of quality education on the site and the lack of attractive activities to stay in the countryside.

In Figure 2, we can see the gender division of young people from communities on the islands who were interviewed at the site and in the city. Of those who wish to migrate to the city or who have already migrated, 68% are female and the other 32% are male. The women in their reports want to study and work and the men mostly just want to leave the riverside area in search of employment and financial independence in the city.

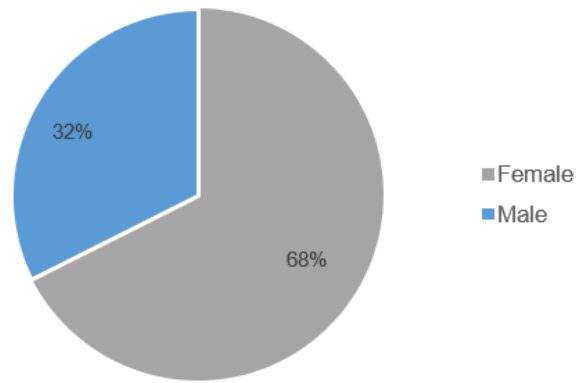


Fig. 2: Division by gender of young people interviewed.

During the interviews it was possible to find young people who want to leave the countryside in search of a job in the city, even if that job is with a family. One of the main aspects favoring female migration is the possibility of finding employment in domestic services in urban centers [11].

“I left the sítio to live in the city with a family my parents knew, I worked in the house, did the housework and in return I could study at night. They gave me shelter, food and the chance to finish high school, I am very grateful to this family that took me in. Today I am almost graduated in the pedagogy course, I got a job where I receive a salary and I can pay rent, I no longer need to work with a family” (Reports of a 25-year-old girl from the region of the islands, who currently lives in the city of Abaetetuba/PA).

Some of the girls who leave their parents' house to work as a maid or as a nanny in the city, manage to continue their studies and go to college, others are not so lucky and end up staying as maids or getting tired of work and returning to sítio.

In recent years, several works have been talking about migration, and more and more often the migration of young people from the countryside to the city. The rural exodus has been converted into a much more selective process, which refers to the cities the young and highly productive population [1].

This reality is no different on the islands of the municipality of Abaetetuba, the majority of the population that migrates are young. And even more curious is that women are leaving and wanting to leave the countryside much more than men (Fig. 3).

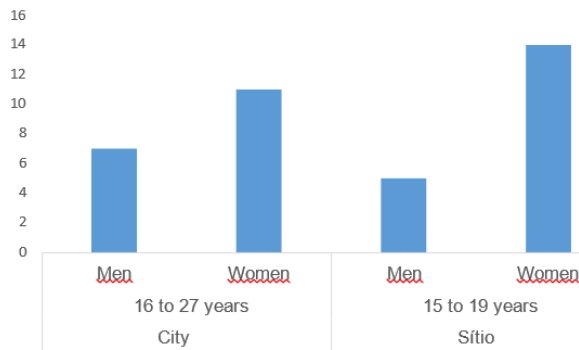


Fig. 3: Representation of young people interviewed at the sítio and in the city, according to age and gender.

According to Figure 3, it is possible to observe that the women interviewed during the field research are much more interested in living in the city. The young women from the sítio have as a justification for migration the need to reach more advanced levels in their studies, which in the countryside, according to them, will not be possible.

The young women interviewed at the sítio are between 15 and 19 years old, they already plan to live in the city. Most of them are in high school and aim to take preparatory courses for the Enem in the city of Abaetetuba. During the interviews, the young women reported that they will probably live with relatives (uncles, aunts, godparents). In Figure 4, it is possible to observe some moments of interviews with the young women at the sítio.



Fig. 4: Interviews in communities on the islands of Abaetetuba.

The young women report that at the sítio they work with the family, usually with housework, and help to take care of younger siblings (whenever that is the case). Some parents believe that it is necessary for their daughters to know how to take care of the house (cooking, cleaning, washing) either because they do not like to help in the fields or because they should think about marriage.

According to the reports of the interviewees, it is common for the work performed by women in the productive area of the sítio or even inside the house (housework) to be considered just a help, women's work is not considered tiring or painful, but light work. But this is not the view of the interviewees, for them the sítio will not work without the work carried out by the women.

Even when women work in functions considered as difficult and heavy as those culturally performed by men, their work is seen as a help, and as light work [14].

The dichotomy between women and men, based on sexual differences, encourages a hierarchy and sexual division of work, which devalues the work of women, making the work performed by them invisible, with its consequent devaluation [13]. This is also one of the reasons that young riverside women want to leave the countryside.

"Staying on the sítio was never my first option, I always wanted to live in the city. I know that here on the sítio I will never have opportunities to have a recognized profession, I will always be a housewife" (Reports of an 18-year-old girl, who lives in the islands region).

Circumstances such as these generate in women, especially younger ones, the need to seek autonomy through work outside the rural area, improve their studies or migrate to cities [13].

Of the young women who left the sítio with the aim of studying and/or working in the city, some managed to achieve their goals, others are still looking to achieve them.

"I left the sítio to live in the city, I always knew it wouldn't be easy, but I didn't imagine that I would have to work so hard to survive in the city and study, since I left my parents' house to study. At first I worked at a family home as a nanny, I worked until 6 pm and went straight to study" (Reports of a 20-year-old girl from the islands region, who currently lives in the city of Abaetetuba/PA).

"Living in the city has not been easy, at first I had difficulty developing in the school environment, I suffered because I spoke differently from the other students, because I was from the countryside, because it took me a while to get used to the level of education in the city. After a while, I got used to all this, after all, either I got used to it or I would go back to the sítio" (Reports of a 21-year-old girl from the islands region, who currently lives in the city of Abaetetuba/PA).

"I went through several difficulties when I came to live in the city, mainly financial. My parents helped me as they could, sending me food from the sítio, paying for my technical course, but it was never enough. I had to pay for



material in the course, among other things that made me rethink many times it would be worth so much sacrifice" (Reports of a 25-year-old girl, from the islands region, who currently lives in the city of Abaetetuba/PA).

Women's trajectories are fundamental to analyze the changes that have taken place in society as a result of the increasing mobility. Understand that these young women decide to leave their home environment to seek recognition in other places, in other spaces [4].

And if being a woman is hard enough, "to be young and a woman is to be doubly stigmatized" [15]. The role of young women in society has always been ignored, they had to impose themselves, "show" themselves to society as a subject who acts, who thinks and who transforms and even chooses their trajectories, in order to act towards their autonomy [4].

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Studies on migration and gender cannot be ignored, it is necessary to deepen these themes and the reasons that lead women to leave their comfort zone in search of work, gender equality, professional recognition, quality education, among others. It is necessary to show the strength of these young women.

The research aimed at the gender perspective showed that the girls migrate in search of recognition, they want to go to the city to study and have a recognized and valued profession, being able to receive a fair salary and thus help the family members who stayed in the countryside.

The young women who left the countryside to live in the city reported during the interviews their wishes for the future, as well as the struggle they live daily in the city. We point out in this research the prejudice that young riverside women suffer in the urban environment, because they are women and because they are from the countryside. Those who wish to migrate are aware of what they will face in the city to achieve their goals.

Often, the girls leave the *sítio* because they have little recognition at home. In the family environment, young women are taught to be housewives. The work in the fields is not handed over to women. For them, housework remains. Many prefer to do this same job in the city, knowing that they can get the opportunity to go to school and later to college in return.

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