

Transnational family arrangements of refugee families: the case of Syrians in Germany

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Abstract

Transnational families in which one partner and / or one or several children remain in the country of origin while one or both partners migrate to another country are a common phenomenon that has been increasingly analysed by previous research since the late 1990s. Focusing mainly on labour migration it finds that left behind family members, mainly children, are suffering emotionally and physically as a consequence of the geographic separation. Furthermore, the migrants themselves are experiencing negative effects concerning their emotional well-being and transnational family ties are also influencing the migrants' integration into the host society. It can be assumed that these consequences are even more pronounced in the context of flight and forced migration.

However, until now only few studies have dealt comprehensively with transnational family arrangements of refugee families. This paper aims to fill this research gap by comparing transnational – with at least one partner and/or child at origin – and non-transnational – with the nuclear family residing in Germany – families disentangling their different family structures. On the basis of the *IAB-BAMF-SOEP Survey of Refugees (M3/M4)* we are taking a closer look on the heterogeneity of Syrian nuclear families and the major driving forces that explain these differences. First descriptive analyses reveal that most Syrian refugee families live with both partners and all children in Germany and that transnational family arrangements are rather rare. Nevertheless, the paper shows important differences between transnational and non-transnational families, and between male and female refugees. In order to further examine these differences we performed several multivariate regression analyses accounting for socio-economic and demographic characteristics, the migration history and the legal status in Germany as well as the actual and past financial situation.

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