

The adaptation of Venezuelan migrants from an educational perspective in Peru and Ecuador

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ABSTRACT

Migration processes in the world promote socio-cultural, environmental and economic changes. The migrant population commonly suffers from discrimination, xenophobia, and labor abuse, with the educational level being a very important incentive for the adequate adaptation of the migrant. Peru and Ecuador host close to two million migrants; therefore, we sought to identify the educational level, living conditions, environmental care, and labor conditions of the migrant population and the level of association between them. For this purpose, a descriptive, non-experimental, cross-sectional study was carried out using a 24-question questionnaire to 120 migrants over 18 years of age who voluntarily participated in the study. The results showed that 50% had a fair level of education, 35% had a poor level, and only 15% had a good level. A total of 56.67% had a poor standard of living, 33.33% a fair standard of living, and 10% a good standard of living. There were 96.67% reported a good level of care for the environment. The 57.5% have poor working conditions; 40.83% regular, and 1.67% good. The study concludes that a good educational level allows a better adaptation process; likewise, educational level was significantly associated with living and working conditions.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Venezuelan migration to Peru has reached a volume of approximately 1.3 million people, driven mainly by the search for a better life in the face of a crisis that violates fundamental human rights in their country of origin [1]. In this migratory context, many families face the need to adopt survival strategies, such as reducing the quality and quantity of food, working in exchange for food or selling family goods to cover their most urgent needs, which negatively impacts their health and well-being [2]. For many, this migration represents not only a personal opportunity, but also a moral mandate to improve the living conditions of their loved ones [3]. The Venezuelan migration crisis is rooted in factors such as violence, deteriorating human rights, and social disorder [4]. However, migrants are often stigmatized in media and political discourses, where they are portrayed as a threat. This vision fails to recognize their positive contribution in economic, cultural, and educational areas, in addition to minimizing their capacity to contribute to the human development of the nations that receive them [5], [6]. In countries such as Peru and Ecuador, Venezuelan migration not only reflects a flight from unsustainable conditions, but also constitutes an opportunity for the integration and enrichment of these societies [7].

The educational role of migrants with higher education and technical training has a transcendental value in this process. Approximately 70% of Venezuelan migrants in Peru and Ecuador have university or technical degrees; however, they face the barrier of having to work informally or in jobs for which they are overqualified [8]. These professionals bring with them vast human and academic capital that, if properly integrated, could contribute significantly to the educational and labor development of the country. Migrants with higher education, for example, could enrich the technical-professional education system, not only in the teaching of regular basic education, but also in the training of new generations of technicians and professionals in various disciplines [9]. Despite the difficulties for the recognition of their degrees, some of these migrants are already having a positive impact on educational training in the areas of health, technology and social sciences, contributing with their knowledge and experience to the educational system at different levels [10], [11]. The experience of skilled migrants represents an opportunity to reduce the “brain drain” in the countries of origin and, simultaneously, an advantage for the receiving country. Countries receiving this migration have the opportunity to benefit from skilled professionals who contribute to the economy and development in fields such as science, engineering and the arts [6]. Through skills validation and academic degree recognition programs, the education system can facilitate the integration of these professionals in areas where their expertise can be instrumental in advancing research, higher education, and improving public services in general [12].

In the field of basic education, the integration of Venezuelan migrants poses challenges. The adaptation of students to a new educational system involves overcoming barriers such as constant mobility, lack of documentation and administrative barriers that hinder the continuity of their studies [13]. Also, social perceptions and prejudices create a hostile environment at times. For example, in Peru, some parents show discomfort with the presence of Venezuelan students in the classroom, which can affect the well-being and academic performance of these children [14]. In response to these barriers, it is essential that the Peruvian and Ecuadorian educational system, beyond the laws in its constitution, promote intercultural coexistence, recognizing diversity as a richness that enriches both students and teachers [15]. The educational issue of migrants leads them to face challenges in the workplace due to the lack of recognition of their degrees. However, there are exemplary cases of educational integration and academic validation in several regions of Peru and Ecuador. It is worth noting that in Argentina, for example, resolutions have been implemented to facilitate the validation of academic credentials of migrants, despite the lack of specific agreements between countries [16]. These efforts demonstrate that, with appropriate policies, it is possible to integrate migrants into the labor market and the educational system, making the most of their skills and knowledge [17].

A common characteristic found between Peru and Ecuador is that unemployment, due to the lack of academic validation, affects migrants differently, especially women, who face higher rates of unemployment and job insecurity [18]. However, Venezuelan migration brings a skilled labor force that, with an inclusive approach in the educational system, could boost the economic and social development of the receiving country in the long term [19]. This approach should also strengthen values of equality and justice from an early age, so that future citizens actively contribute to the construction of an inclusive and just society. In conclusion, education, both basic and higher, plays a fundamental role in the integration of Venezuelan migrants towards better living conditions. It is a tool that can transform the realities of these people and contribute to the development of a more cohesive and equitable society [20], [21]. Inclusive education and access to adequate job opportunities make it possible to take advantage of migrants’ potential and foster coexistence based on mutual respect, solidarity and recognition of their abilities, both in Peru and Ecuador.

As well as education and employment, other situations that have been arising as a result of Venezuelan migration, in the countries of Peru and Ecuador, are environmental and health policies. As the region faces an increase in population and a scarcity of resources, it is predicted that climate flows will continue to grow, especially in Latin America, where it is predicted that the number of migrants could reach 2.1 million by 2050 [22]. In this sense, education in environmental care and health are priorities for the development of wellbeing; almost half of Venezuelan migrants in Peru and Ecuador do not seek health services when they need them, suggesting a low prevalence of use of these services [23].

In view of the above, this research is particularly relevant as it focuses on the interrelations between the educational level of Venezuelan migrants and their capacity to adapt in the dimensions of living, working and environmental conditions in Peru and Ecuador. This specific approach not only contributes to expanding and updating existing knowledge, but also provides a solid empirical basis for the design of work plans, intervention plans and public policies aimed at promoting the educational and labor integration of this population, without harming the social and economic development of the receiving population. In addition, the analysis is relevant because it makes visible the experiences of a social group that is often stigmatized and underestimated, highlighting education as a key and transforming factor in the migratory process. The main objective of this study was to evaluate the role of educational level in the adaptation process of the Venezuelan migrant population in Peru and Ecuador. To this end, the specific objectives were: i) to identify

the educational level and the level of three dimensions, such as living conditions, care for the environment, and labor conditions that the migrant population possesses; and ii) to identify the level of association of the migrant's educational level with the dimensions analyzed.

2. METHOD

The research adopted a quantitative approach, using a questionnaire with closed questions as the main instrument for data collection. This design allowed the development of a descriptive, non-experimental, cross-sectional study. The sample consisted of 120 participants, men and women between 18 and 70 years of age, from Ecuador and Peru.

The questionnaire consisted of 24 questions distributed in four dimensions: living conditions, environmental care, education, and working conditions. To ensure its validity, an exhaustive review of the related literature was carried out and it was submitted to the evaluation of five specialists in the area, obtaining a validity index of 95% by calculating Aiken's V. The response scale was dichotomous: a score of 0 was assigned for the answer "No" and 1 for the answer "Yes".

The instrument used a clearly defined numerical rating scale for each dimension evaluated, allowing an objective interpretation of the results. The dimensions were as: living conditions and care of the environment dimension, using the scale good (7 to 9 points); regular (5 to 6 points); and deficient (0 to 4 points). In the education dimension, the scale was as: good (2 points), regular (1 point), and poor (0 points). Further, in the labor conditions dimension, the scale was: good (0 points), regular (1 to 2 points), and poor (3 to 4 points). Informed consent was obtained from the participants. Participants were clearly informed of the objectives of the study, and respect for ethics and the confidentiality of their responses was guaranteed.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Demographic profile of respondents

Prior to the application of the questionnaire, each participant was duly informed about the objectives of the research, 120 migrants of Venezuelan nationality voluntarily participated in the present study. Table 1 describes that the majority of participants were male (61.67%) and the rest were female (38.33%). Regarding the origin of the data collection, 37.50% of the surveys were carried out in Guayaquil-Ecuador, 30% in Quito-Ecuador, 27.5% in Tumbes-Peru, and 5% in Loja-Ecuador. Regarding the educational level, the majority had higher university or technical education (66.67%) compared to 33.33% who only had basic education or no regular education at all. The marital status was mostly separated (57.5%), followed by cohabitant (30%), married (11.67%), and widowed (0.83%). The most common age range among those interviewed was between 21 and 30 years of age (40%) and between 31 and 40 years of age (30.83%). Finally, with regard to the motive for migration, the population surveyed stated economic necessity (80.83%), others pointed to the political, social and insecurity situation facing their country (12.5%), and 6.67% stated other motives such as family reunification.

Table 1. Demographic profile of respondents (n=120)

	Item	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Female	46	38.33
	Male	74	61.67
Origin	Tumbes-PE	33	27.50
	Quito-EC	36	30.00
	Guayaquil-EC	45	37.50
	Loja-EC	6	5.00
	Higher and/or technical	80	66.67
Education	Basic or none	40	33.33
	Married	14	11.67
Marital status	Cohabitant	36	30.00
	Separated	69	57.50
	Widowed	1	0.83
Age	18-20	5	4.17
	21-30	48	40.00
	31-40	37	30.83
	41-50	14	11.67
	51-60	11	9.17
	61-70	4	3.33
	>70	1	0.83
	Economy	97	80.83
Migration motive	Economy+factor*	15	12.50
	Other	8	6.67

*Factor: insecurity and political situation

Figure 1 shows that 50% of Venezuelan migrants have a regular educational status, based on the educational level of the migrant and the educational status of the minors who depend on him or her. This is followed by 35% with a poor educational status and only 15% with a good level. Figure 2 shows that the vast majority (56.67%) of Venezuelan migrants have a poor standard of living, followed by 33.33% in regular condition and only 10% have a good standard of living. The standard of living was categorized based on the migrant's formal documentation, the formality of their current employment, social programs in which they participate, access to basic services, and initiatives to improve their living conditions.

Figure 3 shows the behavior of Venezuelan migrants in the cities surveyed. A good level of care for the environment was reported by 96.67% and only 3.33% reported a regular level, with the poor level category being absent. The categorization of the level of care for the environment was based on the care of the public space where the migrant works and lives, including the painting of walls, waste disposal, and care of green areas. Figure 4 shows that the majority of migrants (57.5%) have poor working conditions, followed by 40.83% in regular conditions, and 1.67% with good conditions. For this category, the number of hours worked daily and the monthly income associated with the number of people who depend on the migrant were taken into account, as well as the minimum wage base of the country where the migrant resides.

Table 2 shows the significant association ($p < 0.05$) between the educational level of the migrant and the living conditions in Peru and Ecuador. Likewise, this association is significant ($p < 0.05$) in the labor conditions he/she has. However, there is no significant association ($p < 0.05$) between educational level and the care for the environment that the migrant has in the city where he/she resides.

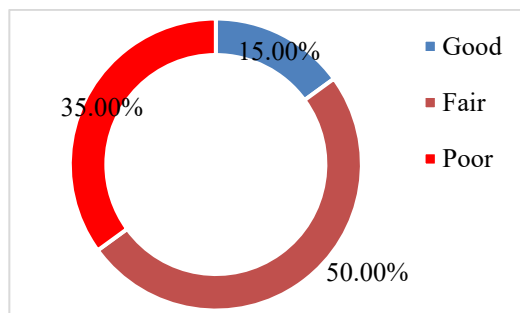


Figure 1. Educational conditions of immigrants in Peru and Ecuador, 2024

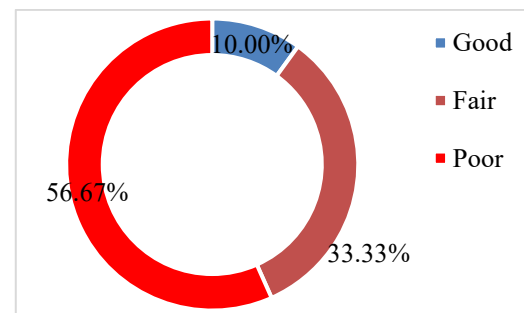


Figure 2. Standard of living of immigrants in Peru and Ecuador, 2024

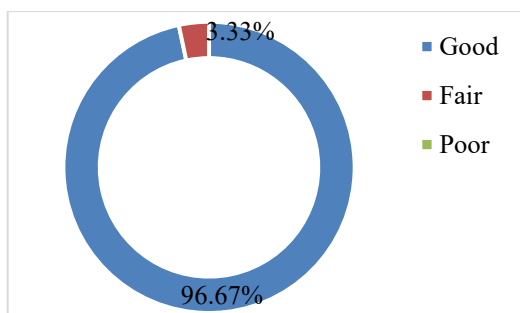


Figure 3. Behavior of immigrants regarding environmental care in Peru and Ecuador, 2024

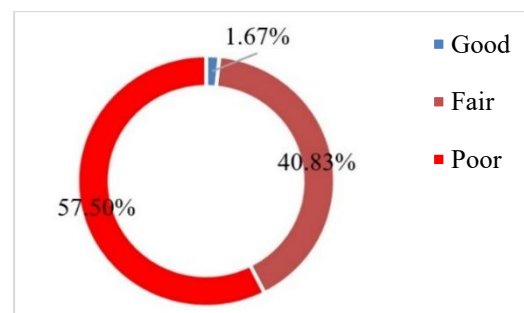


Figure 4. Labor conditions of migrants in Peru and Ecuador, 2024

Table 2. Test of association between the educational level of Venezuelan migrants and their living conditions, care for the environment and labor condition, Peru and Ecuador, 2024

Educational level	Test parameters	Value	gl	Significance
Living condition	Pearson's Chi-square	9.4877	4	0.0027*
	N of valid cases	120		
Care of the environment	Pearson's Chi-square	9.4877	4	0.051
	N of valid cases	120		
Employment status	Pearson's Chi-square	9.4877	4	0.003*
	N of valid cases	120		

(*) values less than 0.05 indicate a significant association

3.2. Discussion

The results show an important influence of the migrant's educational level on his or her adaptation process, as in Table 2; however, there are peculiarities that should be analyzed. Although the migrant population with professional or higher technical education reached 66.67%, in the dimension acceptable educational level is reduced to 65% with 50% in regular level and only 15% in good level, because it involves the educational level of the children who depend on the migrant surveyed. This shows an unfortunate reality in the migrant population and is the fact that their children are not receiving the education that they did receive in their country of origin; so the trend of the migrants' offspring is towards a lower level of education.

Figure 2 shows a similar situation with the standard of living where the majority of migrants (56.67%) have a standard of living categorized as poor, even though their educational level was mostly regular. This is due to the fact that not all migrants with a good educational level have the permits to work formally in the country, so their work has an informal tendency and therefore the basic services they acquire are not ideal. A separate reality suggests the behavior of migrants regarding environmental care, where regardless of educational level, 96.67% of migrants, as in Figure 3 developed a special care for their environment; many by education and others by obligation according to the local regulations of the city with the disposal of garbage, cleanliness, and green areas. Labor conditions do not escape a migrant reality, 57.5% have poor working conditions, where the monthly income variable is the decisive variable and is related to the educational level. Knowing the dimensions analyzed so far is essential to foresee in the future, not desired but statistically probable, subsequent migrations in our South American context; where it is necessary and urgent to build and implement comprehensive inclusion programs, which recognize the South American brotherhood that we must have and human rights in all contexts.

The study reveals a significant association between the educational level of the migrant and his/her living conditions in the country. These results coincide with the conclusions of recent studies [24], which highlight that a migrant's higher education improves living conditions compared to those who only have basic education; which allows us to understand that the vision of the educated migrant is broader in opportunities and other aspects that allow him/her to adapt better in another country. Cabieses *et al.* [25] point out that for migrants with a higher level of education, access to basic health, and housing resources is more effective, which is why they integrate quickly into receiving communities; they also highlight that better educated migrant can access more qualified and therefore better paid jobs.

The relationship between the educational level and the labor conditions of the migrant are significantly associated according to the results of this study; which coincides with different studies [26]–[28], who point out that the impact of educational level on labor market insertion is notable, establishing a direct relationship between the university degree with a better paid type of employment in most cases. In 2023 technical report, it stated that better educated migrants are more likely to establish labor networks, which allows them to access better job opportunities [29]. Therefore, intrinsically the educational level is linked to the labor status, economic stability and social stability of the migrant in the host country.

The study reveals that in the population analyzed, both in Peru and Ecuador, the level of education is not significantly associated with the care for the environment that the migrant develops. In addition, the results show a mostly good behavior (96.67%). These results oppose the conclusions presented in the R4V report [29] that show a direct and associated relationship between the level of education and the behavior of the migrant in terms of environmental care. In the field, it was evident that Venezuelan migrants dedicated to the sale of candy and other products on an ambulatory basis, regardless of their educational level, were very careful with the packaging and waste they generated; behavior associated with the fact that the neighbors in the area did not reject their activity and presence; the same was shown in the care of green areas.

It cannot be denied that educational level influences our behavior and living habits. Pinate *et al.* [30] state that migrants with a higher educational level are more likely to get involved in community projects that promote the care of green areas and the ornamentation of the city, develop environmental awareness, and participate in eco-friendly initiatives. These initiatives are associated with a better understanding of the implications that the better educated migrant has on the environmental sustainability that cities should have [31]. The results are probably differentiated by the migrant's tendency to take care of their environment for fear that by not doing so they would be the target of complaints, accusations and deportation.

In addition to the findings, the results highlight the impact of the level of education on the adaptation process of Venezuelan migrants in Peru and Ecuador in a comprehensive manner and according to the time it demands. Various studies [32], [33] under other parameters conclude in a similar manner highlighting that the level of education manages to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers that a migrant may face in his adaptation process in a city other than his own. Educational level also influences the migrant's ability to contribute to the development of the receiving society, since an educated migrant commonly participates in the civic and political life of his or her new community [32].

The results of the present study and recent research by Ro and Goldberg [34] consistently demonstrate the positive impact of educational level on migrant adaptation in all its aspects. Therefore, it is important to address the different processes associated with migration situations by considering educational level as a key axis. Public policy initiatives on migration in their different action plans should consider that the educational level will determine their viability and sustainability; therefore, it is important to consider the educational stratum beforehand in order to have better results.

The results are significant and novel, since we can demonstrate the evolution of the migrant perspective in recent years, by determining how some variables have been maintained and others have been able to adapt to the characteristics of the receiving population. Both Peru and Venezuela have received but are expected to continue receiving the highest rates of migrants in the next 5 years. Therefore, updated information is the most appropriate weapon to address the lack of inclusion, empathy and order that could be generated by not having plans and policies appropriate to migrant phenomena in the Latin American Region.

4. CONCLUSION

Educational level is directly and positively associated with a better adaptation process of the Venezuelan migrant population in Peru and Ecuador. The results conclude statistically ($p < 0.05$) a significant association of educational level with the level of living conditions and the level of labor conditions. The majority of the Venezuelan migrant population in Peru and Ecuador have a higher level of education (66.67%), a regular level of education (50%), undesirable living conditions (56.67%), a good level of environmental care (96.67%), and poor working conditions (57.50%).

Future research is needed to study the migration phenomena from a regional perspective that will make it possible to address particular but significant variables in the migration process, such as the folklore of the migrant and of the population that receives him/her, national regulations on health and social inclusion, among other aspects. Likewise, it is important to have a method of approaching the migrant appropriate to each age, which allows obtaining complete and sincere information; and thus, to be able to obtain correct conclusions. Likewise, the results obtained allow us to recommend the study of the migrant population by generations and age ranges in order to compare their level of inclusion in the receiving community, the facilities and difficulties they had in their adaptation process.

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Juan Carlos Rodríguez-Soto	✓	✓		✓			✓		✓		✓			

C : **C**onceptualization

M : **M**ethodology

So : **S**oftware

Va : **V**alidation

Fo : **F**ormal analysis

I : **I**nvestigation

R : **R**esources

D : **D**ata Curation

O : Writing - **O**riginal Draft

E : Writing - Review & **E**editing

Vi : **V**isualization

Su : **S**upervision

P : **P**roject administration

Fu : **F**unding acquisition

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

INFORMED CONSENT

We obtained informed consent from all individuals included in this study.

DATA AVAILABILITY

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author [YF-P], upon reasonable request.




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