

Attitudes toward migration on the Ecuadorian border

*Andrés Fabricio Subía Arellano*¹

¹ Universidad Indoamérica Sede Quito, andressubia@uti.edu.ec

*Diana Carolina Montero Medina*²

² Universidad Indoamérica Sede Quito, Universidad Católica Argentina,
dianamontero@uti.edu.ec

*Robin Williams Calvo Rodríguez*³

³ Universidad Indoamérica Sede Quito, rcalvo2@indoamerica.edu.ec

*Vanessa Mercedes Villarreal Villarreal*⁴

⁴ Universidad Indoamérica Sede Quito, vvillarreal@indoamerica.edu.ec

Abstract

This study aims to analyze the difference in the attitudes toward migrants that have Ecuadorians living in the border city of Tulcán, compared with the attitude of those who live in the city of Quito. The instrument used was the Scale of Attitudes Towards Immigrants EAPI (by its Spanish acronym) designed by Subía, A.; Arroyo, D.; Montero, D. and Cedeño, X. (2019). Findings show that there is a statistically significant relationship between the variables: level of education, knowledge of the difference between voluntary migration and forced migration, place of residence of local citizens and the attitude of rejection towards migrants.

Keywords: Attitudes; discrimination; forced displacement; migration

Actitudes frente a la migración en la frontera ecuatoriana

Resumen

Este estudio tiene como objetivo analizar la diferencia en las actitudes hacia los migrantes que tienen los ecuatorianos que viven en la ciudad fronteriza de Tulcán, en comparación con la actitud de los que viven en la ciudad de Quito. El instrumento utilizado fue la Escala de actitudes hacia los inmigrantes EAPI (siglas en español) diseñada por Subía, A.; Arroyo, D.; Montero, D. y Cedeño, X. (2019). Los resultados muestran que existe una relación estadísticamente significativa entre las variables: nivel de educación, conocimiento de la diferencia entre migración voluntaria y migración forzada, lugar de residencia de los ciudadanos locales y la actitud de rechazo hacia los migrantes.

Palabras clave: actitudes; discriminación; desplazamiento forzado; migración

1. INTRODUCTION

Interregional migration between Latin American and Caribbean countries has presented an increase in recent years, of about 17% in general, to CASTRO-ESCOBAR TRIAL (2016). Historically, some of the most important migrations have been Paraguayans, Bolivians, and Peruvians to Argentina, and the Colombians to Ecuador and Venezuela (International Organization for Migration, IOM, 2012). Concerning forced displacements in Latin America, Colombia is a country that has faced this problem for more than six decades. Around 340,000 Colombians live as refugees or in a similar situation to refugees abroad, mainly in Latin American countries. In this context, Ecuador has been one of the most common destinations used by Colombians forced displaced to settle fleeing the persecution of armed groups and threats against their integrity (CÉLLERI, 2019).

Similarly, as of 2015, a high migratory flow of Venezuelans began to be documented throughout Latin America, and worldwide. According to IOM, by 2015, 606,281 people had left Venezuela, while the World Bank establishes this figure at 655,400 through its Knomad initiative (EGUIGUREN, 2017). This new migration route has as its prime countries of destination precisely to Colombia and Ecuador, because of its territorial proximity.

CÉLLERI (2019) states that in Ecuador, migration was not conceived as “a threat” nor was so visible on the streets or in commercial fields, but, with the increase of migratory flows of people from Colombia, Cuba and Haiti (CORREA 2013, MOSCOSO 2013) and later Venezuela, these perceptions have intensified in the Ecuadorian population, creating a kind of rejection. Additionally, the crisis in Venezuela in the last four years has risen migration flow in the last decade to Ecuador and other countries of the region.

Regarding migration, Ecuador ratified The Geneva Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (also known as the 1951 Refugee Convention) on August 17, 1955. This Convention constitutes an international agreement that contents several statements on the status of refugees. Having ratified this Convention (and its 1967 Protocol), Ecuador undertakes to comply with the International Refugee Law.

Ecuador also included the statements of the 1951 Refugee Convention in its national legislation through the promulgation of Executive Decree 3301 of May 1992.

Additionally, the right of asylum and refuge is based on the new Constitution of the Republic of Ecuador (2008), which recognizes and guarantees: 1) The full exercise of rights, 2) Non-refoulement when the life, freedom, security or integrity of the refugee or that of their relatives is in danger (Art. 66, 14), 3) Humanitarian assistance and juridical in emergencies (Art. 41 and 393), rejects racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination (Art. 416.5) and, contemplates the principle of universal citizenship and the free mobility of all the inhabitants of the planet (Art. 416.6).

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees promotes three durable solutions for refugees as part of its core mandate (UNHCR, 2002): voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration. Voluntary return or repatriation occurs when uprooted people return to their homes after making such a decision based on enough information. Resettlement occurs when it is difficult or impossible to return to the country of origin or remain in the country of asylum; then it is sought that refugees can be admitted to a third country where there are resettlement programs to rebuild their lives in conditions of security. Local integration occurs when refugees rebuild their lives in a country where they have found safety conditions and can eventually reach obtain permanent residence or citizenship (naturalization), in which case they stop being refugees. To stay in a country permanently, immigrants should gradually achieve self-reliance, instead of depending on the humanitarian assistance. To achieve this, they must have access to work, education, health services and other basic services. They must also be integrated into the social and cultural environment in the communities that have welcomed them (UNHCR, 2009).

The development contexts in which people live, the places where they go and the intermediate steps until they reach these places, play a role in the modeling of the resources, aspirations, motivations and opportunities that these people have to migrate. Conflicts, climate changes, labor markets and other factors related to development, are elements that can have an impact in their local integration. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a general framework to address this complex and dynamic relationship between migration and development, and to better understand how migration and migrants can shape progress achievements (IOM, 2016).

The 2030 World Development Agenda (United Nations, 2016) recognizes in the migration a fundamental aspect of development. This is the first time that migration has been integrated clearly into this agenda. This includes all people in contexts of human

mobility, both in internal and cross-border displacement, forced or not. The document states that “we want to see the Objectives and goals fulfilled for all nations and peoples and for all sectors of society” (UNITED NATIONS, 2016, p. 27). It also recognizes that all migrants, women, men, and children, form a vulnerable group that requires protection, and also recognizes them as instruments for transformation.

According to the IOM (2016) the central reference to migration is described in Goal 10.7 about to “Reduce inequality within and among countries” that urges the countries to “Facilitate orderly, safe, regular and orderly migration and mobility people responsible, including through the application of migration policies planned and well managed”(United Nations, 2016, p. 28). Many other's objectives also make direct reference to migration, while, for others, the Migration is a cross-cutting issue.

The implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provides an opportunity to protect and empower moving populations, enabling them to develop their development potential and benefit people, communities, and countries around the world.

Other studies have shown that the majority of refugees and asylum seekers in Ecuador want to integrate because they share culture and language with the host country. However, they have to face obstacles such as discrimination, the barriers of legal documentation and poor socio-economic conditions; all of these factors affect their full integration.

An investigation led by UNHCR in Caracas, Venezuela, states as a central difficulty the fact that, the lack of integration implies serious consequences and high economic and social costs for the receiving countries, because of the segregation of the groups of immigrants, their economic marginalization and the wasting of resources and skills, adding an increase in violence, confrontations and xenophobia (TIMARCO and GUEVARA, 2005).

The same study establishes as fundamental the exercise of forced migrant’s rights in the host country, for their effective local integration, among them documents that allow its legal permanence, access to education, work, housing, and health.

At the same time, a study conducted by UNHCR (2009) in Mexico, indicates that one of the main drawbacks for the local integration of refugees is that State officials, including governments, suggest that immigrants are responsible for increasing insecurity in host countries. In this research, 50% of the refugees indicated that they were unjustifiably

accused of committing crimes, by local people, and after being investigated, they could prove their innocence. (UNHCR, 2009).

This is an indication of the necessity to study the elements related to xenophobia and rejection practices in host communities, that are directly associated with psychosocial factors. The studies have focused their intervention strategies mainly on community, economic and social integration. The psychosocial actors, both of the migrant population and the receiving community, are not usually considered as important factors to the effective or failed local integration.

In Europe, authors such as LYNOTT *et. al.* (2019) have studied the positive and negative associations against migration, based on publications in local newspapers and the application of an implicit association test. ROOTS, MASSO & AINSAAR (2016) make a methodological contribution to the qualitative measurement of attitudes towards migration and migrants, based on the data of the European Social Survey of 2014. In the United States, CHEBEL D'APOLLONIA (2012), makes an approach to the study of perception on the security - migration nexus based on proximity to border areas; PRYCE (2018), conducts a study to measure in a specific way, the effects of patriotism, nationalism, and xenophobia on attitudes pro-immigration. On the other hand, COOPER *et. al.* (2016), study the cultural impact of migration and attitudes of local people, concerning different socio-demographic variables, such as age, sex, and region.

Studies on the perception of migration in Latin America are few (URZÚA & BOUDON, 2017), (PÁEZ, GONZÁLEZ, & ZUBIETA, 2000), (ZLOBINA & BASABE, 2004). In Latin America, mainly in Chile and Uruguay, there are studies such as “Perceptions about immigration in Chile: Lessons for an immigration policy” (YÁÑEZ, 2017) and “Cultural values and attitudes towards immigrants in Europe” (ALVARO & RODRÍGUEZ, 2010).

DAVIS, SELLERS, GRAY and BILLSBORROW (2017) studied the context Migration and population of five indigenous groups and mestizo co-residents in the Ecuadorian Amazon. WIESEHOMEIER and SAGARZAZU (2015) studied attitudes toward Migration in Ecuador, and the preferences of the different economic actors reflected in their electoral vote. Significant differences were found in attitudes of economic winners and losers about migration. Likewise, a study conducted by ZEPEDA and CARRIÓN (2015) showed a percentage close to 7% of respondents who have a “very

good” opinion, and favorable opinions were increasing 41.8% (2010) to 52.8% (2012). However, this positive vision was associated with professional skills and foreigners with financial resources to support their manutention. By 2013, the perception was kept high negative regarding foreigners concerning employment and safety factors. It is considered among the surveyed population that foreigners take jobs to Ecuadorians.

In 2013, in line with the National Plan for Good Living driven by the Ecuadorian government, UNHCR Ecuador developed a Comprehensive Solutions Initiative (CSI) that was complemented in 2016 with a multi-year solutions strategy that was executed in coordination with public institutions, civil society and the private sector, and covers different legal, social and economic dimensions. For the impact of CSI to be evaluated and the multi-year strategy for local integration, UNHCR Ecuador designed a Local Integration Index (LII) that would serve as a tool to better identify and assist the most vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers.

SUBÍA, ARROYO, MONTERO & CEDEÑO (2019), in an exploratory study conducted in the city of Quito state that: “men, younger people, as well as people with greater academic training have higher levels of acceptance to migrant citizens”. However, other possible variables remain to be explored. The attitude, whether of rejection or acceptance, may differ depending on the cities where people reside. The migratory influence is different in cities that are located near the border area, where the interaction is closest in economic, social and cultural levels. It is essential to study the effect of migration in such extreme conditions like the current in Ecuador, where according to a report by the EFE Agency (2018) “At the beginning of 2018, 641,353 Venezuelans have entered Ecuador, most of them by the northern border and mainly by the passage of Rumichaca, the closest to Tulcán”.

The effect of the high reception of migrants by Ecuador is evidenced in the whole country. For example, in the city of Quito, migrants occupy the same spaces that local informal merchants. According to a study by MONTERO, VARGAS, UP, & AMP, ESPINOZA (2018) “all participants stated that they carry out informal activities such as vehicle surveillance and street sales.”

The city of Tulcán has been exposed to a complex economy for several years, marked by its geographical location. The perception of citizens has reflected in a journalistic note of the year 2016: “It's sad, very sad because at the end of the day there are fewer jobs for

us and more for Colombians. Sales in Ipiales and Pasto have risen 50% and in Tulcán dropped to 75%". (El Diario Ecuador, 2016). MANRIQUE (2016) says that the demand for Colombian products due to its monetary devaluation significantly affects merchants in Tulcán - Ecuador.

This bad experience has worsened today, with the increase of the migration, no longer only Colombian but also of people from Venezuela. Furthermore, there is an increase in the practice of informal business activities led by immigrants, and a decline of the formal trade, due to the difference in prices in border cities, such as Ipiales or Pasto, in the Colombian territory, all this, in one context of high migration mobility.

On the other hand, CÉLLERI (2019) states that, in January 2019, a great march that toured the streets of the center-north of Quito, in which students, young people, and adults demonstrated against gender violence and xenophobia. The March was triggered by two events, the rape of "Martha" by four men (Ecuadorians) and the murder of "Diana", to whom her partner -Venezuelan nationality- stabbed in the streets of Ibarra (province of Imbabura) a few nights later. This caused reactions from the ibarreños (people of Ibarra), who took the streets and ransacked some homes where Venezuelan people resided (New York Times, February 2019). The province of Imbabura is located in northern Ecuador, between the province of Carchi (Tulcán) and the province of Pichincha, where the city of Quito is located. Considering these violent events, it is necessary to understand the complexity of forced displacement in Ecuador based on studies that allow the understanding and treatment of this phenomenon.

The integration of immigrant groups in the communities, cities, and countries of reception contributes to the transformation of the identity and self-concept of people, which has an impact on different levels of acceptance and attitudes of the local population toward migrants. Its effective integration is a challenge for countries, in contexts in which a markedly hostile opinion on immigration has become, in many cases, promoted by the same organizations and governmental institutions (RINKEN, 2015). In this sense, immigrants will integrate into the culture that offers them better social mobility and economic opportunities, otherwise, the integration will continue to the present difficulties. BARBIERI, CARR, BILSBORROW (2009) state that border areas are important locations for the study of the integration of migrants, providing important differences, compared to areas of long settlement, especially in terms of the association

between the life cycles of households and workforce allocation. Immigration has been studied from sociological and psychosociological, demographic and legal perspectives or more micro points of view, such as those focused on the analysis of specific groups of immigrants or receiving societies.

1.1 Purpose

It is the main interest of this study to explore sociodemographic factors such as sex, age, level of education and the condition of proximity to the northern border of Ecuador as explanatory variables of the Ecuadorian's attitudes to migrant citizens. The differences between the residents of Quito from those who they reside in the border city of Tulcán, as seen in the previous paragraphs, could be considered a definite interest in the understanding of the difficulties to empathize toward forced migrants.

2. METHODOLOGY

This is a non-experimental quantitative research, with a predictive correlational design and a cross-sectional analysis. A comparative method was applied between two samples of Tulcán and Quito citizens.

An intentional sampling was used, and consisted of 200 volunteer participants, 100 belonging to the city of Quito and 100 to the border city of Tulcán, of which 120 were women and 80 men. This sample was selected with a non-probabilistic procedure. The inclusion criteria were: 1. To be Ecuadorian citizens; 2. Reside in the cities of Quito or Tulcán, and; 3. Participate in voluntary way in the study. Integrity was protected at all times.

To measure attitudes the "Scale of Attitudes Towards Immigrants EAPI (by its Spanish acronym)" designed by Subía, A.; Arroyo, D.; Montero, D. and Cedeño, X. (2019) was used. This questionnaire was validated using Cronbach's Alpha, obtaining the following value: .75, with 30 items directed to measure attitudes in locals.

The dimensions of the scale are distributed in 4 factors:

Employment dimension, with the following items: 1. I think immigrants can contribute to development from the country; 2. I perceive that they are resourceful people; 3. I think they are only trained to carry out informal activities; 13. Jobs are taken from local; 16. They treat the customers they serve well; 17. They are usually people with good

preparation; 20. They are good workers; 25. They should have the same job opportunities as locals; 26. They are lazy to work; 30. If there is a staff cuts in a corporation, forced migrants should not be fired first.

Educational dimension, with the following items: 4. I believe they should have the same access to education as local people, 5. Children keep too many quotas in public schools; 6. Children often have learning difficulties; 22. Parents are often careless with the education they give their children; 29. Forced migrant teachers should be allowed in educational institutions.

Social Dimension, with the following items: 7. Immigrant women take local women's husbands; 8. They are usually honests; 9. They should have access to the same services as locals; 10. They are optimistic people with a good attitude; 11. They are too scandalous and conflicting people; 12. They are cowards by leaving their land; 14. If I see a street vendor, I prefer to buy from local vendors than forced migrants; 15. I feel comfortable sharing with forced migrants; 18. Women often practice prostitution; 19. They adapt easily to our customs.

Legal dimension, with the following items: 21. I think it is correct that exist institutions that support the most vulnerable forced migrants; 23. There should be laws that decrease their access to the country; 24. They usually live legally in the country; 27. There must be laws that facilitate their legality in the country; 28. The laws should be tougher with forced migrants who commit crimes.

The scale is structured in Likert format with 4 response alternatives: Strongly disagree (0), Disagree (1), Agree (2), Strongly agree (3).

For the analysis of the data, it was used the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient to relate: age, sex, knowledge of the difference between migration voluntary and forced migration, level of education and place of residence of participants, with the score obtained on the EAPI scale. Likewise, the average scores obtained on the EAPI scale, among the participants of Tulcán and Quito and the other socio-demographic variables using the Mann - Withney nonparametric U test.

3. FINDINGS

Within the results obtained in the analysis of the Mann-Whitney nonparametric U test or Wilcoxon rank-sum test shows an important average score difference on the EAPI scale set at 75.71 points for Tulcán participants versus 125.29 points for Quito participants. This difference obtained a bilateral asymptotic significance $\leq a .001$. (See table 1).

	City	N	Middle range	Sum of Ranks	Significance
Attitude	TULCÁN	100	75.71	7571	.000
	QUITO	100	125.29	12529	
	Total	200			

Table 1. Average score on the EAPI scale, in the cities of Tulcán and Quito

In the variable “city of residence” was reached an r-value of .413 with a level of significance $\leq a .01$, a very significant coefficient, where residents in the city of Quito have a higher level of positive attitudes towards immigrants, that the inhabitants of Tulcán, a border town of Ecuador. (See table 3).

Variable	r-Value	Significance
Sex	0.067	0.347
Age	-0.068	0.342
Level of instruction	.183**	0.009
Knowledge about the difference between volunteer migration and force displacement	.179*	0.011
City	.413**	0

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

Regarding the variable knowledge of the difference between voluntary migration and forced migration, the analysis with the Mann-Whitney U test shows an average score difference on the EAPI scale of 106.52 points for people who know this difference, compared to 88.82 points with people who do not. This difference gets an asymptotic bilateral significance $\leq a .005$. (See table 2). In this variable, an r-value of .179 was obtained with a level of significance $\leq a .05$ significant coefficient. (See table 3). This result reflects that knowledge about forced migration increases positive attitudes towards this population, and their ignorance is related to the attitudes of rejection.

Knowledge about the difference between volunteer migration and forced displacement		N	Middle range	Sum of Ranks	Significance
Attitude	I do not know the difference	68	88.82	6040	0.04
	I know the difference	132	106.52	14060	
	Total	200			

Table 2. Average score on the EAPI scale, in the variable knowledge of the difference between a volunteer migrant and a refugee

Pearson's correlation analysis in the instruction level variable, obtained a r-value of .183 with a level of significance $\leq a .01$, very significant coefficient. (See table 3) which implies that people with a higher level of education, present higher levels of benevolent attitudes towards forced migrants. On the other hand, the variables sex, age and level of instruction do not present in the comparative analysis a statistically significant difference.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In the validation study of the EAPI scale (SUBÍA, et al., 2019) it is observed that there is a relationship between variables such as level of education, age, and sex, concerning benevolent or hostile attitudes towards migrants.

This study confirms the relationship between the level of instruction and attitudes, including the knowledge of the difference between a volunteer migration and a refugee, as well as the city of residence of the respondents. It is observed that people who live away from the border and that have a higher level of instruction are more positive with immigrants.

In a study conducted on the northern border of Mexico by ANGUINANO (1998), population growth is associated with the development of economic activity and with the perspectives offered by the labor market on both sides of the border. Similarly, MANRIQUE (2016) states that the intensity of the migratory flow on the Colombian-Ecuadorian border, obeys to the demand for Colombian products, due to its low cost, in relation to the US dollar which is the official currency in Ecuador. These studies indicate that this phenomenon may be one of the most relevant explanations for attitudes of rejection by the residents toward immigrants.

PIÑEIRO-AGUIAR (2017) states that not only immigrants are transnationalized, but also the rest of the inhabitants who have contact with them. In critical times is usually a

more elevated sense of nationalism, as the foreign people are blamed for the negative situations of the country. In this way, attitudes of rejection of the citizens of Tulcán can be related to the current migration crisis, where the border scenario is crucial.

If it is considered the events of 2019 in the province of Imbabura, a town nearby to the Carchi province and the border of Ecuador with Colombia, it is concluded that the towns closest to the border are more prone to present and maintain negative attitudes towards immigrants.

Negative attitudes towards migrants constitute a limitation for their effective local integration and the achievement of the SDGs, mainly of objective 10: “Reduction of inequality in and between countries”, where they are urged, in the numeral 10.4 to “Adopt policies, especially fiscal, salary and social protection policies, and progressively achieve greater equality” (UNITED NATIONS, 2016). When these attitudes are generalized against a particular social group, they can generate, even beyond established public policies, forms of inequality in treatment, in the implementation of salaries and the effective measures of protection of rights. In Ecuador, a kind of invasion of immigrants has been perceived in the labor market, while negative ideas about their behavior have been established in society that has generated persecution, violence, and threats towards foreigners, mainly Venezuelans, because of their nationality. These attitudes of exclusion and violence have been justified on the premise that it is necessary to protect jobs and the integrity of the local population.

These results open a new debate towards ways of understanding the dynamics of citizens and the establishment of mechanisms for the inclusion of migrants, taking in mind that its effective integration will constitute a benefit for reception societies.

4.1 Research Limitations / implications of the investigation

The following were considered limitations: 1. The impossibility of having a randomly selected sample, which limits the generalization of results; 2. Permanent changes in the immigration policy of countries where migrants come from and from recipient countries. 3. The instrument used does not fully cover all conditions that intervene in the structuring of the attitude of the local population.

4.2 Practical implications

The current historical moment marked by a massive migration of Venezuelan people to nearby countries requires the generation of studies that explain the reality of the host villages and propose intervention alternatives. This investigation shows an initial requirement to generate an inferential data of the explanatory variables of the migratory crisis, from the perspective of the host population.

4.3 Social implications

The study of the migratory social phenomenon with its two aspects: the integration of those who migrate in correspondence with the attitude of local citizens produces relevant data that allow Nongovernmental and Government-linked Organizations to benefit the community and to extend intervention strategies that favor coexistence relationships in a globalized society.

4.3 Originality / Value

In the review of the scientific literature, there were found several examples of studies on migration processes in the world. However, the crisis at the border of Ecuador has other characteristics. Particularly, the requirement to explore the attitude of the local citizen with all its implications is a proposal congruent with the reality of the region. The confrontation of this social emergent phenomenon gives added value to this research.

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