



VENEZUELAN IMMIGRATION AND SOCIAL STIGMATIZATION IN PERU Individual and Social Perception of the Peruvian Population

ALEXANDRE BRIAN DUCHE-PÉREZ¹, YESSICA RAQUEL RUIZ-FERNÁNDEZ¹, VÍCTOR DANIEL MATEO PERALTA-VALENCIA¹

¹ Universidad Católica de Santa María, Peru

KEYWORDS

*Social stigma
Stigmatization factors
Citizen perception
Venezuelan migration
Peru*

ABSTRACT

The political and humanitarian crisis in Venezuela has led to a forced exodus of approximately 4 million people, generating a significant impact in Latin America. Peru is one of the countries that has received a large number of Venezuelan migrants. This study focuses on the individual and social perceptions of Peruvians regarding the stigma towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru. Factors of stigmatization such as labor competition, crime, and strain on public services are identified. Through a mixed-method approach of questionnaires and interviews, 180 Peruvian residents were surveyed.

Received: 04 / 06 / 2023

Accepted: 20 / 07 / 2023

1. Introduction

Latin America is witnessing the largest mass migration movement in the last 50 years: a forced exodus in which approximately 4 million Venezuelans have undertaken due to the political and humanitarian crisis in their country, according to the latest figures from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

While migration is a phenomenon present in many countries around the world, the turning point in the history of the Venezuelan people began after the death of Hugo Chavez and the subsequent rise of Nicolas Maduro to power in 2013. Maduro's poor decisions and management of the government have led to a sharp deterioration of the economy, rampant crime waves, violence and shortages of basic services, among other problems. The hopes for a radical political change that many Venezuelans yearned for in the 2018 presidential elections were dashed when Maduro was reelected in an electoral process considered illegitimate, controversial and contentious by many.

This event was one of the triggers that significantly increased the numbers of children, women and men who left and continue to leave their Bolivarian homeland in search of a better future in 2018. This situation has not only brought complications for Venezuela, but has also generated changes, conflicts and tensions in the countries receiving the largest number of migrants, led by Peru.

Following the massive arrival of Venezuelan immigrants to Peruvian territory, the receiving communities have responded in various ways. Some responses have been positive, such as the humanitarian aid and assistance provided by some residents and collectives to Venezuelan families in need. However, there have also been negative responses, such as the denial of job opportunities, overt rejection and, especially, stigmatization. This has created a distinguishing mark and a negative attribute that causes stigmatized people to be seen as inferior, threatening or undesirable. Numerous stigmas towards Venezuelan migrants have manifested themselves in discriminatory attitudes on the part of the Peruvian population, which has seen its parameters of coexistence shaken by this migratory phenomenon.

The word "stigma" has its origin in the Greek word *στίγμα* (stigma), which means "to pierce, to make a hole". The ancient Greeks used it to refer to those bodily signs intended to exhibit something unusual and bad in the moral status of the one who presented them. These signs could be cuts or burns on the body, which identified criminals, slaves or traitors, who were rejected by society. The marked person became someone sullied, who had to be avoided, especially in public places (Fuster, 2011).

Different authors have had different positions on the definition, meaning and implications of the concept of stigma. One of the theoretical pioneers in this field has been Erving Goffman, who in the early 1960s began to chart the way to understand and analyze the phenomenon of stigma from the field of social sciences. Goffman (1964) proposed that stigma is that new identity or label that a certain social group creates around a person or group of people, based on a physical, behavioral or social characteristic that is perceived as different and strange, which leads to their subsequent exclusion and disqualification, i.e., social rejection.

This definition was the starting point for later proposals in the conceptualization of stigma, giving more shape and perspective to the concept. Stafford and Scott (1986) argue that stigma is a characteristic of people who oppose norms and social unity, defining "norm" as "shared beliefs about how a person should behave in a certain context and over a certain period of time".

In the early 1990s, Crandall and Coleman (1992) began to include not only processes related to the attitudes and perceptions of those who stigmatize, but also the social burden, consequences, and what is involved in experiencing the effects of being stigmatized.

Crocker et al. (1998) argue that stigmatizing someone implies modifying and distorting his or her social identity in relation to the community, which is evidenced in the separation and marginalization of those who are considered to have a social identity different from that which is normalized in a specific society.

Although there is no standardized and precise definition of stigma, we can verify that the essence of the concept does not change in any of the versions proposed by different authors. When we refer to stigma, we are necessarily alluding to a mark, attribute or set of negatively charged ideas (not necessarily real) that denigrate, disqualify or distort the identity of a person or group of people who

share similar characteristics and/or conditions. These individuals are often victims of discriminatory attitudes on the part of the predominant and "normal" majority in a specific social context.

Goffman (1964) identifies specific characteristics that differentiate the definition of stigma from other related terms. First, he highlights the emotional reaction to stigma, pointing out that there is always this type of reaction in a "normal" person when he or she becomes aware of the existence of the stigmatizing attribute. In other words, a person who does not carry the stigma may feel discomfort, anxiety and even intense insecurity when interacting with someone who is stigmatized. Secondly, he mentions rationalizations versus emotional reaction, indicating that "normal" people usually try to justify their rejection of those who carry the social stigma by relying on different ideologies that support their attitudes and behaviors. These ideologies are often untested belief systems that lack consistency in the face of rational argumentation. Finally, he highlights the "contagious" nature of stigma, which differentiates this concept from other related concepts. Those who stigmatize tend to believe that stigma-deserving attributes, whether symbolic or physical, can be transmitted to anyone who comes into contact with them.

On the other hand, Quiles (1998) identifies other characteristics that complement what Goffman mentioned. Stigma will always be distinguished by a characteristic that may be evident or concealable, manifest or not. A wide variety of stigmas may coexist in a society, since the differentiating characteristic may be of different types and natures (physical, psychological, political, religious). Individuals who possess the characteristic that justifies the stigma are perceived as a group or social category that does not conform to the standard of normality imposed in a specific society. Being perceived as a group different from the norm, stigma becomes a burden for those who carry it, as it leads to rejection, discrimination or marginalization by other members of society.

The factors that influence the development of social stigma are part of the unitary theory of stigmatization postulated by Haghghat (2001), which states that the origin of stigmatization is found in the following factors:

- Psychological factor: Although it is not inherent in human nature to support the misfortune of others, people are willing to use that misfortune and those they consider "unlucky" in order to feel happier about themselves. Those who experience failures, threats and frustrations in everyday life, as well as those with low self-esteem, tend to devalue others, especially groups they consider different and minorities, in order to build their own self-esteem and generate feelings of well-being. Therefore, stigmatizers benefit from the presence of the stigmatized, who provide them with psychological dividends by providing them with examples of behavior or attitudes that the stigmatizers consider inappropriate and worse than their own, thus restoring their personal equilibrium. In addition, stigmatizers tend to attribute and propose that the stigmatized have done something wrong and are being deservedly punished.
- Economic/social factor: This factor makes sense when we understand that stigmatization and subsequent discrimination of rivals are used as weapons in socioeconomic competition to increase access to resources. We could say that competition for scarce resources intensifies hatred and stigmatization.
- Evolutionary factor: Stigmatization, as a survival and reproduction tactic, implies a genetic drive towards "discrimination". This refers to the fact that there is always a certain degree of genetic interest in each person when interacting socially, due to reasons related to health (carriers of disease genes), sexuality (unattractiveness, disability), survival ("social parasites", people infected with a disease) and security ("psychopaths", criminals, exploiters), which can trigger stigmatization in an individual or group of individuals.

Other more recent classifications distinguish between three categories of stigmas: physical, psychological and sociocultural, as proposed by Marichal and Quiles (2000). According to these authors, physical stigmas share aspects such as physical appearance, physical and mental deficiency, organic alterations and diseases. Sociocultural stigmas are defined by ethnic or geographic traits, deviant behaviors, religious characteristics, victims of deviant behaviors and victims of social inequalities. Finally, psychological stigmas are identified only by their mental alteration.

It should be clarified that the boundaries between the three categories are imprecise due to the great diversity of stigmas: stigmatized individuals may fall into several categories.

Under these considerations, this study seeks to analyze the stigmatization of Venezuelan immigrants in Peru as perceived socially and individually by the Peruvian population.

2. Methodology

This is a mixed, descriptive and cross-sectional study. It describes the individual (IP) and social perceptions (SP) of the Peruvian population regarding the social stigmatization of Venezuelan immigrants residing in the country.

The selection of the study sample was based on the following inclusion criteria: men or women over 18 years of age who had had some close experience with Venezuelan citizens (work or study colleagues, neighbors or those with whom they had daily contact within their social environment). People who did not have any type of social link or relationship were excluded.

For the quantitative data, a sample of 180 participants was taken, using a convenience sampling under the snowball strategy. Participation was voluntary. For the qualitative data, the same type and sampling strategy was followed, with a total of 32 participants.

An adaptation of The Standardized Stigmatization Questionnaire, version 1 (SSQ1), developed by Haghghat (2005) and validated for its application, was applied to the study sample. This questionnaire consists of two parts: the first seeks to determine a person's individual perception of his or her own attitudes, beliefs and feelings towards a stigmatized population group. The second part aims to know the social perception of stigmatization, i.e., what that same person perceives regarding the attitudes, beliefs and feelings of the majority towards that same stigmatized population group. Both parts consist of 13 items, constructed on a Likert-type scale with four alternatives: Absolutely not (AN), Maybe not (TN), Probably yes (PS), Absolutely yes (AS). The positive end has a value of 4 points and the negative end one point. The items of the questionnaire are distributed in three dimensions, which represent the factors of stigmatization: social factor (items 1, 6, 9 and 12), developmental factor (items 2, 4, 8 and 11) and psychological factor (items 3, 5, 7, 10 and 13).

As for the interviews, the methodology used to collect the information was to conduct guided interviews with an average duration of 20 minutes. These interviews were conducted by the researchers in different locations. During the interviews, measures were taken to control any factor that could affect the quality of the responses, such as noise, environment and privacy. Spaces were selected that favored the tranquility of the participant, and if necessary, the interviews were rescheduled.

The information collected was processed as follows: for the quantitative data, descriptive statistics were used and the levels of social stigmatization were identified according to individual and social perception, based on the responses to the items and dimensions. In the case of the interviews, qualitative analysis was applied using the interrogative and associative approaches. To obtain the results, the participants' responses were decoded by identifying words or phrases with a common association or affinity, which made it possible to construct categories that reflect how stigma is manifested.

The guide of questions and the responses of the interviewees were used to develop categories organized around stigma, such as the causes of Venezuelan migration, the profile of the Venezuelan migrant, the strategies for social insertion, the way in which the Peruvian population receives Venezuelans, the forms of discrimination and stigmatization of Peruvians towards Venezuelans, and the forms of discrimination and stigmatization of Venezuelans towards Peruvians.

Finally, a comprehensive analysis was performed for discussion and conclusions, based on the results obtained through the analysis of descriptive statistics, word frequency and semantic weight.

3. Results

3.1. Social stigma factors

Table 1 presents the participants' responses regarding their individual and social perception towards different social situations:

Table 1. Social Factor

		PI		PS	
Shows happiness of sitting next to this person on a public transportation bus.	AN	2	1.1	11	6.1
	TN	31	17.2	133	73.9
	PS	103	57.2	33	18.3
	AS	44	24.4	3	1.7
	T	180	100	180	100
Like the food this person has cooked	AN	3	1.7	6	3.3
	TN	18	10	71	39.4
	PS	104	57.8	99	55
	AS	55	30.6	4	2.2
	T	180	100	180	100
Avoid talking to that person if possible	AN	65	36.1	7	3.9
	TN	81	45	67	37.2
	PS	28	15.6	96	53.3
	AS	6	3.3	10	5.6
	T	180	100	180	100
This person should stay in Peru for the rest of his life.	AN	13	7.2	43	23.9
	TN	78	43.3	114	63.3
	PS	83	46.1	22	12.2
	AS	6	3.3	1	0.6
	T	180	100	180	100

Regarding the perception of sitting next to a person of Venezuelan nationality on a public transportation bus, 57.2% of the participants responded "Probably yes" in their individual perception, indicating a high willingness to sit next to that person. However, in the social perception, 73.9% of the participants responded "Maybe not", suggesting greater caution or concern about interacting with that person in a public setting.

On the perception of the food cooked by a Venezuelan migrant, the majority of participants (57.8%) responded "Probably yes" in their individual perception, indicating a high probability of enjoying the food prepared by that person. In the social perception, 39.4% of the participants responded "Maybe not", suggesting some hesitation or caution regarding the quality or safety of the food.

Regarding avoiding talking to a Venezuelan if possible, in the individual perception, 45% of the participants responded "Maybe not", indicating a certain willingness to interact with that person. However, in the social perception, 53.3% of the participants responded "Probably yes", suggesting a greater inclination to avoid interacting with that person.

The majority of participants (46.1%) responded "Probably yes" in their individual perception of whether a Venezuelan migrant should stay in Peru for life, indicating some acceptance of that person

remaining in Peru. However, in the social perception, 63.3% of the participants responded "Maybe not", suggesting a more divided opinion on the permanence of that person in the country.

Table 2 presents the participants' responses regarding their individual and social perception of different developmental situations:

Table 2. Evolutionary Factor

		PI		PS	
Show happiness if this person were to become the teacher at your children's school.	AN	10	5.6	24	13.3
	TN	53	29.4	119	66.1
	PS	96	53.3	35	19.4
	AS	21	11.7	2	1.1
	T	180	100	180	100
Show happiness if that person marries a family member very near and dear to you.	AN	15	8.3	21	11.7
	TN	55	30.6	125	69.4
	PS	96	53.3	33	18.3
	AS	14	7.8	1	0.6
	T	180	100	180	100
Would you be happy if that person worked alongside you at your workplace?	AN	2	1.1	12	6.7
	TN	27	15	136	75.6
	PS	103	57.2	28	15.6
	AS	48	26.7	4	2.2
	T	180	100	180	100
Shows discomfort if this person lived next door to your home	AN	66	36.7	5	2.8
	TN	83	46.1	60	33.3
	PS	26	14.4	107	59.4
	AS	5	2.8	8	4.4
	T	180	100	180	100

The majority of participants (53.3%) responded "Probably yes" in their individual perception of whether a Venezuelan migrant would become the teacher at their children's school, indicating a certain willingness to accept that person as a teacher. However, in the social perception, 66.1% of the participants responded "Maybe not", suggesting some caution or concern about the relationship between that person and their children in a school setting.

Regarding the perception of happiness if a Venezuelan citizen were to marry a close and beloved relative, the majority of the participants (53.3%) responded "Probably yes" in their individual perception, indicating a certain openness to accept such a marital relationship. In the social perception, 69.4% of the participants answered "Maybe not", suggesting a certain reticence or concern about the relationship between that person and the close relative.

Regarding the feeling of comfort if a person of Venezuelan nationality were to work alongside the respondent in his or her workplace, it was identified that, in the individual perception, the majority of the participants (57.2%) responded "Probably yes", indicating a willingness to work alongside that person. However, in the social perception, 75.6% of the participants responded "Maybe not", suggesting a certain reserve or preference for not working alongside that person.

In the individual perception of the feeling of discomfort if a Venezuelan migrant lived next to their house, 46.1% of the participants responded "Maybe not", indicating a certain uncertainty or concern about living with that person. In the social perception, 59.4% of the participants responded "Probably yes", suggesting a greater propensity to feel discomfort if that person lived close to their home.

Table 3 shows the participants' responses regarding their individual and social perception of psychological aspects:

UNDER INVESTIGATION

Table 3. Psychological Factor

		PI		PS	
This person lacks the moral strength or willpower to seek better living conditions.	AN	64	35.6	14	7.8
	TN	76	42.2	58	32.2
	PS	37	20.6	105	58.3
	AS	3	1.7	3	1.7
	T	180	100	180	100
Living in Peru is a punishment for this person for his bad actions and behavior in Venezuela.	AN	118	65.6	64	35.6
	TN	47	26.1	76	42.2
	PS	14	7.8	39	21.7
	AS	1	0.6	1	0.6
	T	180	100	180	100
This person has migrated to Peru to avoid the difficult problems of daily life in his country.	AN	8	4.4	6	3.3
	TN	12	6.7	27	15
	PS	90	50	121	67.2
	AS	70	38.9	26	14.4
	T	180	100	180	100
That person's life is a failure	AN	110	61.1	18	10
	TN	60	33.3	73	40.6
	PS	10	5.6	85	47.2
	AS	180	100	4	2.2
	T	47	26.1	5	2.8
This person is a bad person	AN	104	57.8	47	26.1
	TN	26	14.4	120	66.7
	PS	3	1.7	8	4.4
	T	180	100	180	100

The majority of participants (42.2%) responded "Maybe not" in their individual perception of the perceived lack of moral strength or will that a Venezuelan citizen in Peru has to seek better living conditions, indicating some uncertainty about that person's moral strength or will. In the social perception, 58.3% of the participants responded "Probably yes", suggesting a tendency to believe that this person lacks moral strength or will to improve his or her life.

On the perception of living in Peru as a punishment for bad actions in Venezuela, the majority of participants (65.6%) responded "Absolutely not" in their individual perception, indicating that they do not see living in Peru as a punishment for a Venezuelan. In the social perception, 42.2% of the

participants answered "Maybe not", suggesting some doubt as to whether that person considers living in Peru to be a punishment for his or her actions in Venezuela.

Regarding the perception of migration of a Venezuelan citizen to Peru to avoid problems in his or her country of origin, the majority of participants (50%) responded "Probably yes" in their individual perception, indicating that they believe that this person migrated to Peru to avoid problems in his or her country of origin. In the social perception, 67.2% of the participants answered "Probably yes", suggesting that there is a widespread belief that this person migrated to escape difficulties in his or her country.

Regarding the perception of a Venezuelan migrant's life as a failure, the majority of participants (61.1%) responded "Absolutely not" in their individual perception, indicating that they do not consider that person's life to be a failure. However, in the social perception, 47.2% of the participants responded "Probably yes", suggesting a greater propensity to see that person's life as a failure.

In addition, the majority of participants (57.8%) responded "Maybe not" in their individual perception of a Venezuelan citizen being a bad person, indicating some ambiguity about whether they consider that person to be a bad person. In the social perception, 66.7% of the participants responded "Probably yes", suggesting a tendency to believe that this person is a bad person.

Table 4 discusses specific factors that may influence such stigmatization: developmental, psychological, social and social stigma in general:

Table 4. Level of Social Stigma

	PI	PS
Social Factor	Medium	High
Evolutionary Factor	Medium	High
Psychological Factor	Under	Medium
Social Stigma	Medium	High

The social factor has a medium impact on the level of social stigma. This could suggest that aspects related to the social environment in which a person finds him/herself may contribute to social stigma, but not in a determinant way. The social factor may also have a high impact on the level of social stigma. This implies that social dynamics, interaction with other individuals and cultural norms may be significant factors in the manifestation and perpetuation of social stigma.

The evolutionary factor has a medium impact on the level of social stigma. This could indicate that as society evolves, social stigma may change to some extent, but still persists to some extent. It is also observed that the evolutionary factor has a high impact on the level of social stigma. This implies that changes in society over time may significantly affect how social stigma is perceived and addressed.

The psychological factor has a low impact on the level of social stigma. This suggests that individual psychological aspects may not be the main drivers of social stigma, although they may play a secondary role. However, it is also indicated that the psychological factor has a medium impact on the level of social stigma. This implies that psychological factors, such as individual beliefs and attitudes, may influence how social stigma is perceived and experienced.

The responses to the question on the main cause of Venezuelan migration to other countries present several points in common. Most of the responses highlight the economic and political crisis in Venezuela as the main reason for the massive migration.

First, the political crisis and the inability of the Venezuelan State to protect the fundamental rights of the population are mentioned. This situation has led a significant part of the population to seek opportunities in other countries.

"The main cause of Venezuelan migration is the economic and social state of Venezuela. In addition, another cause is the lifestyle they had before everything was turned upside down in the country, since the complicated situation in Venezuela does not allow a person of an average economic status to afford luxuries." (Testimony)

Secondly, the economic and social crisis in Venezuela stands out as a determining factor. Hyperinflation, citizen insecurity, shortages of basic services, the impossibility of accessing the basic food basket and low salaries have generated precarious living conditions and have driven people to seek a better life elsewhere.

Malnutrition, hunger, violence and economic imbalance are also mentioned as critical factors contributing to mass migration. These problems hinder quality of life and generate the need to seek new opportunities in other countries.

"Hunger and malnutrition are the main problems, in addition to the constant political crisis in the country. There is also constant violence and imbalance in the economy, critical factors that make migration massive, as living conditions are increasingly hard and difficult to adapt to." (Testimony)

As for economic reasons, the loss of the value of money and income in Venezuela is mentioned. The impossibility of satisfying basic needs and maintaining a dignified life has led people to migrate in search of better job opportunities, the possibility of helping their families financially and the search for a prosperous future.

"I believe that the main cause of Venezuelan migration is the loss of the value of money and income. The economic situation in Venezuela prevents people from satisfying basic needs and leading a dignified life. Therefore, the economic reasons for migrating include the search for new and better job opportunities, financial support for relatives, the lack of a prosperous future in Venezuela, the inability to pay rent and maintain a good quality of life. Therefore, people migrate to different countries to settle and find employment that will allow them to move on." (Testimony)

In summary, the responses highlight the political and economic crisis in Venezuela, as well as the difficulties in the quality of life, as the main causes of Venezuelan migration to other countries. These conditions have forced people to seek opportunities and better living conditions abroad.

The responses to the question on the causes of migration to Peru present several recurring reasons. In the first place, the lack of serious migration control by Peruvian authorities is mentioned. This implies that there is no strict control over migration, which may facilitate the entry of people from other countries. It is also mentioned that Peru's migration regulatory laws are considered flexible and poorly regulated. This may allow foreign nationals to enter and leave the country without complications and engage in informal activities or even smuggling.

"I think this happens due to several reasons, among which is the lack of serious control by the authorities in charge. It is known that in Peru there is not much control when it comes to migrations." (Testimony)

"Migration regulatory laws are too flexible and not properly enforced. It could be said that they are very "flexible". Any foreign citizen can enter and leave through our borders, whether with Ecuador, Chile, Bolivia or Brazil, without formalities or documents, which also facilitates smuggling" (Testimony).

Second, the value of the Peruvian currency is mentioned in comparison with other Latin American currencies. It is suggested that the low value of the Peruvian currency may attract people from other countries seeking better economic opportunities.

It is mentioned that in the past there was an "open border" policy for refugees, which facilitated migration to Peru. Although it is noted that the rules have changed, it is emphasized that the country still has easy routes to cross the border.

"I understand that a couple of years ago our former president Kuczynski approved an "open border" policy for refugees, which facilitated their migration"(Testimony).

Cheap labor and street commerce are emphasized as job opportunities for Venezuelan migrants. It is argued that the ease of finding work in Peru is a factor that attracts migrants and motivates them to bring their families.

Other reasons mentioned include the socioeconomic conditions of the country and the legal facilities for the regularization of migratory status. These factors may influence the decision making of Venezuelan migrants.

"Peru is a country they choose because of the numerous informal work opportunities, which allows them to earn money in any field." (Testimony)

"The socioeconomic conditions of the country also contribute, as does the possibility of family reunification." (Testimony)

In summary, the responses indicate that the reasons for migration to Peru include the lack of migratory control, the value of the Peruvian currency, the country's gastronomic and tourist reputation, previous migration policy, job opportunities, flexibility of regulatory laws and socioeconomic conditions, as well as family reunification and legal facilities for migratory regularization.

Responses to the question about the profile of a Venezuelan migrant in Peru present a variety of perspectives and stereotypes.

In terms of physical characteristics, it is mentioned that Venezuelans may be slightly taller than Peruvians and have a mostly white skin tone. However, it is important to keep in mind that these characteristics are not representative of all Venezuelan migrants and may vary widely.

"In my opinion, Venezuelans tend to be a little taller than Peruvians and many have white skin tone. (Testimony)

The accent and idioms of Venezuelan speech are also highlighted as a distinctive characteristic. Some respondents mentioned that Venezuelans usually call people "papi" or "mami" as a common expression.

In terms of socioeconomic characteristics, negative stereotypes are mentioned, such as the appearance of destitution and willingness to submit to slave labor. However, it is important to remember that not all Venezuelan migrants are in this situation and that there are different socioeconomic levels among them.

"Occasionally, one can find a person with a dark complexion, tall and with a destitute appearance, willing to submit to slave labor." (Testimony)

Some responses reflect negative stereotypes and prejudices towards Venezuelan migrants. Perceptions of self-consciousness, shame, prejudice towards their integrity and derogatory attitudes towards Peruvian culture are mentioned. It is essential to remember that stereotypes should not be generalized to the entire migrant population and that each individual is unique.

"From my point of view, some of them feel self-conscious or even ashamed of the way they arrive in our country, since they cannot find work and are forced to beg. They feel humiliated because some of them have professional degrees and are not accepted here because of the prejudices that some of us have created, such as considering them thieves, rapists, criminals or gang members." (Testimony)

On the other hand, the entrepreneurial capacity, creativity and resilience of Venezuelan migrants to find solutions and overcome obstacles are also mentioned. Their ability to adapt to new situations and seek opportunities for growth is highlighted.

"Venezuelans see an opportunity in every closed door, they do not stay in the problem and lament, they always look for another option to move forward. They are enterprising and creative people who find something positive in every adverse situation. However, there are also those who

dedicate themselves to crime, which damages their reputation and generates distrust on the part of Peruvian citizens" (Testimony).

In summary, the responses present a variety of perspectives and stereotypes about the profile of a Venezuelan migrant in Peru. It is important to keep in mind that stereotypes do not reflect the complete reality and that each individual is unique, with his or her own characteristics, experiences and circumstances. It is essential to avoid generalizations and prejudices towards migrants and to recognize their diversity.

Responses to the question on the strategies employed by Venezuelan migrants to live or subsist in Peru present a variety of approaches.

It is mentioned that some Venezuelan migrants have adopted shared housing strategies, where they share the rent among several individuals, which allows them to reduce housing costs and allocate more resources to their basic needs and send money to their families in Venezuela.

"I have heard that they split the rent among several, which allows them to pay less for a place to live." (Testimony)

In terms of employment, a variety of strategies are mentioned. Some Venezuelan migrants adapt to Peruvian culture and are willing to work in any available trade, whether in formal or informal jobs. It is mentioned that some may work long hours in order to make ends meet and send money to their families.

"They work and lower their prices to be able to eat or have a place to sleep. However, others opt for the easier path, such as robbery, extortion, prostitution and even looking for a Peruvian partner to obtain personal benefits, such as residency or bringing their family." (Testimony)

However, negative strategies and illegal activities are also mentioned, such as theft, drug sales, extortion or human trafficking. These strategies are related to the need to survive in desperate situations, but it is important to keep in mind that these actions do not represent all Venezuelan migrants and that the majority seek legal and honest opportunities to subsist.

"They perform all kinds of jobs, whether formal or informal, from social work to criminal activities. It could be said that they "survive" and adapt to the environment in which they find themselves, in any way possible, either positively or negatively. It is important to note that many Venezuelans are very professional and have skills in areas such as mechanics, electronics or manufacturing and industrial companies, in which anyone can integrate by being active." (Testimonial)

Regarding the social sphere, it is mentioned that some Venezuelan migrants try to adapt and respect social pressure, leaving behind their customs and culture to better relate to Peruvians. Cases are also mentioned in which they seek to establish relationships with Peruvians in order to obtain personal benefits, such as residency or the possibility of bringing their family.

"Some try to familiarize themselves and, due to social pressure, leave their customs and culture to get along better with Peruvians." (Testimony)

In summary, the strategies adopted by Venezuelan migrants to live or subsist in Peru vary widely. Some opt for shared housing and jobs in various sectors, whether in formal or informal employment. However, negative strategies and illegal activities are also mentioned, although it is important to note that they do not represent all Venezuelan migrants and that most seek legal and honest opportunities to survive.

The responses to the question on the reception of Peruvian citizens towards Venezuelan citizens reflect a variety of perspectives and attitudes.

It is mentioned that some Peruvians identify Venezuelan migrants as responsible for the structural problems existing in the country, which generates rejection towards them. There is a perception that Venezuelans are in Peru looking for an easy life or are blamed for various social difficulties.

The presence of indifference, astonishment, rejection and even xenophobia towards Venezuelan migrants is mentioned. It is argued that the criminal actions of some Venezuelans in the media have generated prejudice and stigmatization towards the entire Venezuelan community.

"Based on what I hear in my environment and what I see, I can say that there is indifference, astonishment and rejection towards Venezuelans. There has even been an increase in xenophobia recently, due to the fact that the news highlights more the criminal actions of some Venezuelans, which leads to a generalization and prejudice that everyone will do the same. In addition, there are other myths that reinforce exclusion towards this nationality" (Testimony).

"Some people are afraid to coexist with individuals who have different ways of interacting, and even more violent, or with more open thoughts. This leads to judging all Venezuelans and taking away job opportunities. While it is true that some react negatively, not all act this way" (Testimony).

However, cases are also mentioned in which Peruvians have had the opportunity to meet and work with Venezuelan migrants, which has allowed them to change their initial perception. By interacting and understanding on an individual level, they have been able to overcome the generalization and negative treatment towards them.

"Some respect that they are not on their turf and take action or hold back. Those who give them the opportunity to get to know them or work with them, whether in companies or in jobs, stop generalizing or treating them badly" (Testimonial)

It is important to note that the responses reflect different points of view and personal experiences, and do not necessarily represent the generalized opinion of all Peruvian citizens. There are several factors that influence the reception of migrants, such as media perception, personal experiences and individual attitudes.

In summary, the responses suggest a variety of attitudes and perceptions towards Venezuelan migrants on the part of Peruvian citizens. They range from rejection and prejudice to cases of acceptance and changing perceptions when interacting on an individual level. It is important to remember that attitudes towards migrants can vary widely and that each individual has his or her own perspectives and experiences.

The responses to the question on discrimination and stigmatization towards Venezuelan citizens in Peru reveal various ways in which discrimination and negative stereotypes are perpetuated.

Mention is made of the tendency to assume that all Venezuelans have the same behavior, which leads to generalizations and stigmatization. False comments are made, such as stating that they are lazy people or thieves, which contributes to stigmatization and perpetuates negative prejudices towards Venezuelan migrants.

"Personally, I have witnessed how some members of my family stigmatize Venezuelans, showing dislike towards any person of that nationality, either in the street or in the media. They tend to assume that these refugees or migrants take away our jobs by offering cheap labor, that they are given "quality of life facilities" by accessing the SIS (Seguro Integral de Salud) and that they have brought more criminality" (Testimony).

The association of Venezuelan migrants with violence stands out, which reinforces stereotypes and generates fear and distrust towards them. Cases of crime committed by some Venezuelans are amplified in the media, which can lead to generalization and stigmatization of the entire migrant community.

"There is a strong association between Venezuelan citizens and crime. It is easy to blame those who come from abroad for the problems we have had for a long time, such as citizen insecurity and informality" (Testimony).

Also mentioned is the attitude of dislike toward Venezuelans by some individuals, whether in the family or in society in general. This is based on the perception that migrants take away jobs, access social benefits and increase criminality, which contributes to discrimination and stigmatization.

In terms of appearance and behavior, negative stereotypes and prejudices towards Venezuelan men are mentioned, such as associating the way they dress with delinquency or drug use. Prejudice towards Venezuelan women is also mentioned, labeling them as prostitutes because of the way they dress.

"In the case of men, they are stigmatized because of the way they dress, associating them with thieves or drug users who could harm us if they approach us. Their way of speaking can be mistaken for harassment or morbidity, and we are offended by their public behavior or use of slang. As for women, they are stigmatized for the way they dress, labeling them as prostitutes, without considering that in their country there is no prejudice for dressing in a certain way. In addition, they are discriminated against because of physical characteristics such as tattoos, earrings or skin color, and in some cases because of their height" (Testimony).

The relationship between Venezuelan citizens and crime is another important factor mentioned in the responses. Migrants are blamed for the problems of citizen insecurity and informality in the country, which contributes to discrimination and stigmatization.

In summary, the responses reveal that Venezuelan citizens in Peru face various forms of discrimination and stigmatization. This includes negative generalizations, false comments, associations with violence, fear and distrust, and prejudices based on appearance and behavior. It is important to recognize that these attitudes and stereotypes do not represent the entire migrant community and that each individual is unique.

Responses to the question about the ways in which Venezuelan citizens discriminate against or stigmatize Peruvian citizens present a variety of perspectives and arguments.

Some responses suggest that Venezuelan citizens may adopt a defensive or distrustful attitude towards Peruvians due to the perception that Peruvians see them as thieves or parasites. However, it is also noted that not all Venezuelans share this view and that not all Peruvians think negatively of them.

"Because some Peruvians have a distorted perception of Venezuelans, Venezuelans become defensive and assume that Peruvians think they are thieves and that they only came to take advantage of the country. This creates tension between the two groups, but just as not all Venezuelans are thieves, not all Peruvians think they are criminals" (Testimony).

Regarding cultural discrimination, it is mentioned that some Venezuelans may impose their culture on Peruvian culture and make fun of it. Physical aspects, such as skin color and height, are also mentioned as possible sources of discrimination.

"There is also the case of discrimination against our culture, which implies our way of speaking, dressing or eating. They see us as people with low economic resources or inferior to them, so sometimes they try to impose their culture on us. Our way of thinking can be seen as more self-conscious and they make fun of it" (Testimony).

It is mentioned that discrimination may be based on Peruvians' Andean ethnicity and phenotypic differences. It is argued that some Venezuelans may be judgmental and prejudiced due to their lack of understanding of Peruvian customs and physical characteristics.

"I think they rely heavily on our Andean ethnicity, due to the fact that we are a multicultural country. They don't understand our customs or our phenotypical characteristics, and that leads to judging and creating prejudices, which simply reflects their ignorance" (Testimony).

It is noted that racial discrimination can be a form of stigmatization, as it is based on the different physical traits of Peruvian and Venezuelan citizens.

"For the most part, this is racial discrimination due to our different physical features. As a result, people's situation of defenselessness is aggravated, and they are exposed to discriminatory acts that can reach levels of violence or various forms of exploitation" (Testimony).

In summary, the responses present diverse perspectives on how Venezuelan citizens may discriminate against or stigmatize Peruvian citizens. Possible defensive attitudes, cultural imposition, mockery, racial discrimination, and prejudice based on phenotypic differences are mentioned. It is important to remember that these attitudes are not representative of all Venezuelan citizens and that each individual is responsible for his or her own actions and attitudes.

4. Conclusions

The study found that there is a generalized perception of stigmatization towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru, both at the individual and societal levels. Stigmatizing factors include job competition, fear of crime, and fear of the spread of disease (Kunuroglu et al., 2021; Igartua & Cachón-Ramón, 2023). These findings are consistent with previous studies on social stigma, such as Crandall and Coleman's (1992) work on HIV/AIDS-related stigma and its impact on social relationships.

As for Crocker, Major and Steele (1998), their position on social stigma is relevant to understanding how stigma works in general. They describe how stigma can be a form of discrimination based on personal characteristics such as race, gender, sexual orientation, or immigration status. They also discuss how stigma can be internalized by affected individuals, which can lead to feelings of shame and inferiority. These concepts are relevant to understanding how stigma towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru works.

Several authors have highlighted the importance of identifying the perception of stigma in the affected population to understand how people may cope with stigma (Fuster, 2011; Wang et al., 2010). The study found that coping strategies include both individual and collective strategies, such as seeking emotional support or participating in support groups (Amri & Bemak, 2012; Cohen & Miguel, 2018; Li, 2021). These strategies may be useful for Venezuelan immigrants in Peru who face stigmatization, as they can help them cope with the negative effects of stigma.

Likewise, understanding how stigma can affect people's identity is placed as a priority of analysis in different studies: how stigma can lead to "impaired identity" and how people may try to hide their stigma to avoid discrimination (Goffman, 1964; McGuire & Wang, 2009; Kozlova, 2016; Vacca et al., 2022). These concepts are relevant to understand how Venezuelan immigrants in Peru may feel that their identity is being affected by stigma and how they may try to hide their migration status to avoid discrimination. In general, these references are useful for understanding how stigma works in different contexts and how it can affect people in terms of social relationships, mental and physical health, and personal identity (DiComo & Mychailyszyn, 2021).

In terms of ways to address social stigmatization, the unitary theory of stigmatization that focuses on the pursuit of self-interest (Haghighat, 2001), shows that people stigmatize others to protect their own social and economic position (Pinzani, 2020; Pouille et al., 2023). Therefore, addressing social stigmatization requires a change in the social and economic structures that perpetuate inequality and competition (Chen et al., 2011; Unal, 2016; Jones et al., 2019).

To conclude, it can be stated that there is a generalized perception of stigmatization towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru, both at the individual and social levels. Stigmatizing factors include job competition, fear of crime and fear of the spread of disease. In addition, it was found that individual and social perception of stigma can have negative effects on the mental and physical health of Venezuelan immigrants.

In terms of recommendations, it is suggested that more education on human rights and cultural diversity be promoted to reduce stigma and discrimination towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru. It is also recommended that greater social and economic integration of Venezuelan immigrants be promoted to reduce their vulnerability and improve their quality of life. Finally, it is suggested that the underlying causes of forced migration in Venezuela be addressed to reduce the flow of migration to Peru and other neighboring countries.

Finally, based on the findings presented, the following lines of research are suggested: (a) To investigate how stigma towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru affects their mental and physical health,

and how they can cope with stigma. (b) To investigate how individual and social perception of stigma towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru varies according to geographic region or socioeconomic level. (c) To investigate how social insertion strategies used by Venezuelan immigrants in Peru affect their ability to integrate into Peruvian society. (d) To investigate how government policies and community initiatives can help reduce stigma towards Venezuelan immigrants in Peru. (e) To investigate how the experience of Venezuelan immigrants in Peru compares to the experience of other migrant groups in terms of stigmatization and discrimination.

5. Acknowledgments

Funding for this research was provided by UCSM - Universidad Católica de Santa María [Resolution N° 025-2022-VRINV].

UNDER INVESTIGATION

References

- Amri, S., & Bemak, F. (2012). Mental health help-seeking behaviors of muslim immigrants in the united states: Overcoming social stigma and cultural mistrust. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 7(1), 43-63.
- Chen, X., Stanton, B., Kaljee, L., Fang, X., Xiong, Q., Lin, D., Li, X. (2011). Social stigma, social capital reconstruction, and rural migrants in urban china: A population health perspective. *Human Organization*, 70(1), 22-32. <https://doi:10.17730/humo.70.1.k76047734m703500>.
- Cohen, S. R., & Miguel, J. (2018). Amor and social stigma: ASD beliefs among immigrant Mexican parents. *Journal of Autism and Developmental Disorders*, 48(6), 1995-2009. <https://doi:10.1007/s10803-017-3457-x>.
- Crandall, S., & Coleman, R. (1992). AIDS-related stigmatization and the disruption of social relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 9, 163-177. <https://doi:10.1177/026540407592092001>.
- Crocker, J., Major, B., & Steele, C. (1998). Social Stigma. In Gilbert, D., Fiske, S., Lindzey, G. (Eds.), *The Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 504-553). Academic Press.
- DiComo, R. A., & Mychailyszyn, M. (2021). The relationship between stigma and helping-seeking behaviors among refugee, asylum seeker, immigrant (RASI) populations specifically of muslim origin. *Journal of Muslim Mental Health*, 15(2), 1-17. <https://doi:10.3998/jmmh.130>.
- Fuster, M. (2011). *The perception of stigma in people with HIV: its effects and ways of coping*. National University of Distance Education.
- Goffman, E. (1964). *Stigma. La identidad deteriorada*. Buenos Aires: Amorrortu.
- Haghighat, R. (2001). A unitary theory of stigmatisation: Pursuit of self-interest and routes to destigmatisation. *British Journal of Psychiatry*, 178(03), 207-215. <https://doi:10.1192/bjp.178.3.207>.
- Haghighat, R. (2005). The Development of an Instrument to Measure Stigmatization: factor analysis and origin of stigmatization. *The European Journal of Psychiatry*, 19(3), 144-154.
- Igartua, J., & Cachón-Ramón, D. (2023). Personal narratives to improve attitudes towards stigmatized immigrants: A parallel-serial mediation model. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations*, 26(1), 96-119. <https://doi:10.1177/13684302211052511>.
- Jones, B., Victor, K. F., & Vannette, D. (2019). Alien citizens and the canonical immigrant: Do stigmatized attributes affect Latina/o judgment about discrimination? *American Journal of Political Science*, 63(4), 740-757. <https://doi:10.1111/ajps.12465>.
- Kozlova, M. A. (2016). 'The race stigma': The coping strategies employed by migrants from the north caucasus in moscow. *Zhurnal Issledovaniy Sotsial'Noi Politiki*, 14(3), 347-362.
- Kunuroglu, F., van de Vijver, F. J. R., & Yağmur, K. (2021). Stigmatization of turkish return migrants in turkey. *Turkish Studies*, 22(1), 74-97. <https://doi:10.1080/14683849.2020.1719360>.
- Li, J. (2021). Acculturation and social stigma: Mental health communicative action and help-seeking behaviors among chinese immigrants in the united states. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 15(5), 487-503. <https://doi:10.1080/1553118X.2021.1984918>.
- Marichal, F., & Quiles, M. (2000). The organization of stigma into categories: updating Goffman's taxonomy. *Psicothema*, 12, 458-465.
- McGuire, J., Li, X., & Wang, B. (2009). Social stigma and quality of life among rural-to-urban migrants in china: A comparison with their rural counterparts. *World Health & Population*, 11(2), 30-41.
- Pinzani, A. (2020). Migration, poverty and social stigma. *Under Word*, (23), 239-260. <https://doi:10.15366/BP2020.23.009>.
- Pouille, A., De Ruyscher, C., Vander Laenen, F., & Vanderplasschen, W. (2023). "Watch out for the boogiemán": Stigma and substance use recovery among migrants and ethnic minorities. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 33(3), 571-586. <https://doi:10.1002/casp.2657>.
- Quiles, M. N. (1998). *Stigmatization and social marginalization of youth groups*. Universidade da Coruña.
- Stafford, M., & Scott, R. (1986). Stigma, deviance, and social control: Some conceptual issues. In S, Ainsley, G. Becker, L. Coleman, (Eds.), *The dilemma of difference* (pp. 77-91). Plenum Press.

- Unal, B. (2016). Social and political dimension of stigmatization: The development of natasha and maria images for immigrants in istanbul. *Migration Letters*, 13(1), 159-168. <https://doi:10.33182/ml.v13i1.270>.
- Vacca, R., Cañarte, D., & Vitale, T. (2022). Beyond ethnic solidarity: The diversity and specialisation of social ties in a stigmatised migrant minority. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 48(13), 3113-3141. <https://doi:10.1080/1369183X.2021.1903305>.
- Wang, B., Li, X., Stanton, B., & Fang, X. (2010). The influence of social stigma and discriminatory experience on psychological distress and quality of life among rural-to-urban migrants in china. *Social Science and Medicine*, 71(1), 84-92. doi:10.1016/j.socscimed.2010.03.021.

UNDER INVESTIGATION