# Perceptions and attitudes of young university students about Venezuelan migration in a Colombian border city

**Gladys Adriana Espinel Rubio[1], Raúl Prada Núñez[2], Cesar Augusto Hernández Suárez[3]**

[1]Dpto. Pedagogía, Andragogía, Comunicación y Multimedios, Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander, Cúcuta, Colombia.  gladysespinel@ufps.edu.co

*https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8796-9257*

[2] Dpto. Pedagogía, Andragogía, Comunicación y Multimedios, Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander, Cúcuta, Colombia. raulprada@ufps.edu.co

*https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6145-1786*

[3] Dpto. Pedagogía, Andragogía, Comunicación y Multimedios, Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander, Cúcuta, Colombia. cesaraugusto@ufps.edu.co

*https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7974-5560*

**Abstract**

The purpose of the research was to identify the perceptions and attitudes of university students in the main border and receiving city of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, to validate the tendency registered in several studies and surveys where discriminatory and xenophobic practices were evident. Through an instrument made up of 35 questions and applied to 216 young people between 16 and 28 years of age, it can be concluded that despite the information they receive from the media, university students understand that the decision to migrate was motivated by adverse situations that Venezuelan people face in their country, putting their survival at risk. This opens the possibility of designing and implementing strategies that promote economic integration, but also cultural integration, based on diversity, respect as a value and recognition of the other not only from the media scenario but also from the communicative action itself.

**Keywords:** Colombian-Venezuelan mobility, media, discrimination, xenophobia.

## Introduction

According to the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR, 2020), Venezuelan migration is the second largest in the world, second only to Syrian migration. The mass media and international humanitarian aid agencies have called it in different ways, according to their ideological stance: diaspora, exodus, phenomenon, and crisis, among other categories, which undoubtedly account for a way of giving meaning from the language to the situation that more than 7 million people are going through.

After the closure of the border between Colombia and Venezuela, in 2015, the number of migrants of that nationality in the country began to grow from 2018 and remained sustained until 2021, not even the COVID-19 pandemic, nor the mobility restrictions imposed to curb its spread, nor the economic crisis that this generated in the host communities, slowed down their departure.

In Venezuela, the Human Development Index fell from 71st place in 2016 to 96th place in 2019, in addition to the increase in crime and the deterioration of the general security situation of the population. The psychosocial factors that lead Venezuelan people to migrate are in percentage figures the following: they are: 72.3% insecurity; 70.8% desperation for what is happening in the country; 63.1% hunger; 62.9% due to high levels of stress daily; 58.8% uncertainty for not knowing what is going to happen; 56.3% lack of medicine for medical treatment (Bermúdez *et al.*, 2018)

In addition, there are the economic reasons expressed as follows: 82% in search of new and better job opportunities; 70% to help a family member economically; 58% do not see a prosperous future in Venezuela; 44.9% do not have enough money to pay the rent and 39.4% cannot maintain their quality of life, (Bermúdez *et al.*, 2018).

The main destinations of Venezuelan migratory flows are South America such as Ecuador, Peru, Argentina, and Brazil, but Colombia, has become the main recipient and transit zone. Based on the Colombian Migration Report (2022), as of February 2022, 2,477,588 Venezuelans were residing in the country. Of these, 333,806 were regularized through the Temporary Protection Statute; 1,231,675 in process; 617,069 authorized and 295,038 irregulars.

Ninety-five percent of Venezuelans enter Colombia through the Simón Bolívar international bridge located in Cúcuta, Norte de Santander, where this research was carried out.

Until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020, an estimated 35,000 people crossed the border each day. Of these, close to 90% were a pendular population, that is, they entered and returned to Venezuela the same day or within the following two or three days to obtain food, medicines or visit relatives, while the remaining 10% did not return to their country, but settled in Cúcuta (or in some of its municipalities in the metropolitan area) or traveled to other cities in the country (mainly Bogotá) or other countries.

Currently, the Colombian regions hosting the largest number of migrants from Venezuela are Bogota (DC) with 495,236; Antioquia with 344,223 and Norte de Santander with 253,911.

Upon arrival, Venezuelans are exposed to situations of violence and discrimination in the victim/victimizer dyad. In their research, Espinel *et al.* (2021) point out that the economic conditions of the host city (in the case of Cúcuta) and the behavior of migration in Colombia, permeate the positions that are configured in the narratives of the media and turn in society since these play a fundamental role in the formation of public opinion, as well as the perceptions and attitudes of Venezuelan citizens.

Studies on the contents, discourses, representations and imaginaries that the mass media recreate about migrants in receiving societies evidence that these are narrated from risk and dangerousness (Lotero-Echeverri *et al.*, 2020; Castellanos & Prada-Penagos, 2020; Ordóñez & Ramírez, 2019; Arévalo & Ruíz, 2019; Ramírez, 2018; Aliaga *et al.*, 2018).

These perceptions are also assumed by different actors with leadership roles in such communities as found by Restrepo & Jaramillo (2020) affecting the formulation of public policies that promote attention, orientation and referral to migrants, as well as their economic and social integration. This responsibility is delegated to the National Government, as happened in Colombia, and to humanitarian aid organizations since budgets are insufficient even to attend to the local population in vulnerable situations.

These difficulties are mainly evident in the border areas, as they have been lagging behind the rest of the country. According to the World Bank (2018a), these municipalities register important gaps in terms of economic development and access to basic services and are areas where poverty is slowly reduced, despite government efforts in strengthening institutionality and increasing investments.

The National Council for Economic and Social Policy (CONPES 3805, 2014), explained that the unemployment rate in border departments is five percentage points above the national average; in

addition, informality is 80%, that is, 20% more than the country's average. It also found that border municipalities have an average Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index (UBN) of 52.81%, while border departments have an index of 47.75%, which places them in inequality compared to the national average of 27.78%. This indicator reaches values above 80% in border departments such as Guajira et al. (p. 20).

Faced with this scenario, this research set out to identify the perceptions and attitudes of university students from five public and private institutions regarding Venezuelan migration. The initial hypothesis was oriented to affirm that, despite their insertion into the educational system at the undergraduate level, young people would reaffirm discriminatory and xenophobic perceptions and attitudes as had been evidenced by the study funded by Oxfam in 2019 in which the host communities of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru were hostile to migrants (Malax, 2019).

To delve deeper into the origin of these perceptions and attitudes, the media through which they receive information, the use and quality of the information were also identified; finally, the recognition of communication strategies developed by different NGOs and cooperation agencies to decrease discrimination and xenophobia was inquired.

To achieve these objectives, a survey was designed and organized into three items: 1. Perceptions and attitudes towards Venezuelan migrants; 2. Quality and use of information; and 3. A total of 35 questions were constructed based on a classroom project with young students taking the Communication and Politics course in the Social Communication program at the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander.

Once the instrument was perfected, taking into account the perceptions and attitudes of the students themselves, it was submitted to the judgment of experts (an academic specialist in international migration and the leader of the communication process of an international cooperation agency in Norte de Santander). The suggestions made were incorporated into the survey.

The application of the survey was carried out online in 2021 since at that time the on-site presence in Cúcuta had not been re-established.

## Narratives, discourses and perceptions about migration and migrants

Narratives play an important role in communication and persuasion, as they allow agents to convey complex ideas in an accessible and convincing way. In addition, they offer stories that achieve identification with the characters (Igartua, 2008), and are emotionally attracted to situations and contexts that would otherwise be distant or abstract, or that generate a total rejection.

In this way, narratives can unite and separate people, but also in generating feelings of affinity, solidarity and belonging to a group. "These distinctions can give rise not only to symbolic notions of Us and Them but also influence and legitimize social boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, thus determining differential access to civil, social and political rights" (Boswell *et al*., 2021, p. 8).

Research in Communication Sciences has studied the effects of basic narrative characteristics, such as degree of fictionality and medium of presentation, on people's opinions, and has determined that such fictionality does not override the effects of the narrative, as people are naturally inclined to believe and may not actively engage in undoing the creation of the story world, therefore, the verisimilitude of the information constitutes a fundamental element for the creation of representations and imaginaries from these narratives (Boswell *et al*., 2021).

The analysis of news about migration and minorities has shown that the construction of the story goes unnoticed and that laypeople reproduce in everyday language the stereotypes conveyed by the information (Van Dijk, 2005). There is no evidence to suggest that the medium of presentation affects the persuasiveness of narratives "instead, the effect of informational framing (which emphasizes certain aspects of reality and relegates others to the background) on individuals' opinions is much stronger (Scheufele 2004)" (Boswell *et al*., 2021, p. 13).

Research on the influence of the media in shaping perceptions and attitudes about migration in Colombia is emerging. This is explained because after studying immigration in the country based on censuses of 200 years of republican history, it was determined that until 2015 it was of low intensity

(Mejía, 2020, p. 18). Therefore, phenomena such as xenophobia had not been addressed because its identification was difficult to trace; however, from that date on, Venezuelan migration transformed the panorama.

Understanding xenophobia as hatred, suspicion, hostility and rejection towards foreigners, it is evident that its expressions are materialized in everyday life. Malax-Evhevarria (2019) presented in her study "*Si, pero aquí no. Perceptions of xenophobia towards migrants from Venezuela in Colombia, Peru and Ecuador*" how these are exposed to xenophobia, sexist and stereotypical narratives. The report makes it clear that the emergence of these sentiments, "fuels the social fracture of the host countries... as well as significantly increases the risks and vulnerabilities of women and girls" (p. 17).

Taborda *et al*. (2021) show that, although recent opinion polls show an increase in discriminatory or xenophobic attitudes towards the Venezuelan population in Colombia in the context of the migration crisis, perceptions of discrimination held by migrants are not direct in a generalized manner, but they are constant subjects of indirect discrimination.

Indirect discrimination is mediated by social class and economic resources, being evident in interactions with the State and stereotypes promoted through the media. This then affects the satisfaction of needs in terms of compliance with norms and processes, which are usually neutral and legitimate, by the fact of having another nationality.

In this sense Balibar (1991, as cited in Piñeres, 2017), states in this regard:

This combination of practices, discourses and representations in a network of affective stereotypes is what makes it possible to witness the formation of a racist community (or a community of racists among whom imitation ties reign) and also how, as in a mirror, individuals and collectivities targeted by racism (and its objects) are forced to perceive themselves as a community (p. 32).

On stereotypes, as the main discursive strategy of colonialism, Bhabha (1994) proposes that it underpins the ideological construction of otherness. "It is a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always in place, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated..." (p. 91) as if something that does not need proof, needs to be proven in discourse.

At present, these stereotypes fall on foreigner. Here the category of immigration comes into operation, Balibar and Wallerstein (1991), as a substitute for the notion of race and a catalyst for the disintegration of class consciousness. This is why, for Bhabha (2007), the articulation of forms of difference: racial and sexual, "is crucial if one holds that the body is always simultaneously, albeit conflictingly, inscribed in both the economy of pleasure and desire and the economy of discourse, domination and power" (p. 92).

This being the case, if discrimination is exercised, it lowers the costs of production and the political costs of making demands, so racism and sexism seek to keep people within the labor system and not expel them by attributing lower skills to them so that their labor power is more economical.

These discourses are produced in everyday conversations, television programs and news, as well as other genres; with the difficulty of being visible as they are assumed as normalized and full of common sense, and in practices that occur due to social differences and privileges, especially in Colombian society with slow social mobility and with little immigration in the two centuries of republican history (Flórez, 2019).

In the study, Klimenko *et al*. (2020) on social perceptions towards the phenomenon of Venezuelan migration in Sincelejo (Colombia), the variable of infidelity obtained higher scores, indicating the tendency of respondents to consider that, particularly, Venezuelan migrants are potentially responsible for the problems of infidelity in couples in the locality.

This result coincides with the findings of Mojica-Acevedo and Espinel-Rubio (2022) who determined through the analysis of viral memes in sociodigital networks, how these are considered as a threat and temptation: "...they turn migrant women into bodies of desire and sexually objectified that becomes a

social valuation and moral judgment: the lover and the prostitute that makes sense in the framework of their status of the migrant person" (p. 41).

The aspects of citizen security, public order and employment opportunities also showed high levels of negative perception by the participants in the work of Klimenko *et al*. (2020), reaffirming the notion of threat to the security of the resident population in this Colombian region.

Thus, identifying the perceptions and attitudes of young university students regarding migration in the Colombian border city with the largest reception and transit of Venezuelan people, based on their media consumption, constitutes an opportunity to understand how narratives and discourses permeate their opinions, contributing or not to the configuration of stereotypes that promote discrimination or xenophobia in a capital city with deep historical, social and economic relations with Venezuela (Mojica *et al*., 2020).

It also guides NGOs and international cooperation agencies in the design of their communication strategies aimed at mitigating the impacts of direct and indirect discrimination against migrants, for a population and age group that will probably occupy in the medium term the administration of public affairs, business leadership and the generation of opinion in their organizations and even within the families that make up their families (Mojica *et al*., 2020).

## Method

This research adopts a positivist approach to carry out a cross-sectional descriptive analysis following a field design since the researchers do not intervene in the responses of the informants. A systematic process was used for the collection of data to use for statistical processing to obtain percentages, frequencies or the realization of diverse graphic representations tending to contribute to the characterization of the subject under study (Rodriguez, 2003).

The population of interest corresponds to university students in five institutions of higher education located in Cúcuta, the capital of Norte de Santander - Colombia. This city is characterized by being on the border with Venezuela and is an obligatory passage during the exodus of people from that country. For the selection of the sample, non-probabilistic sampling was used under the voluntary sampling technique (Martínez, 2012), given that all students enrolled during the second semester of 2021 were invited to be informants, obtaining a response from 311 students, but of these, only 216 filled out the form completely.

Concerning the instrument, the questionnaire was used since the data can be collected in "a less profound and impersonal way than the face-to-face interview" (García, 2003, p. 2). A total of 35 questions were constructed based on a classroom project with young students taking the Communication and Politics course in the Social Communication program at the Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander.

After refinement, taking into account the perceptions and attitudes of the students themselves, the questions were submitted to the judgment of experts (an academic specialist in international migration and the leader of the communication process of an international cooperation agency in Norte de Santander). The suggestions made were incorporated into the instrument to be faithful to the concepts related to the categories of migration, discrimination and xenophobia.

Due to the situation of non-presence in educational institutions because of Covid-19, an online version of the questionnaire was created and its link was subsequently sent to the institutional e-mails of each student, accompanied by a cover letter explaining the motivations of the research and inviting them to provide their sincere opinion on the subject.

This questionnaire includes 30 questions with a closed response option; as it does not conform to a Likert scale, statistical validation processes are not applicable.  It was available from October 11 to November 30, 2021. After this time, the data were downloaded into an Excel file and subsequently exported to SPSS v25 software, with which the respective descriptive analyses were carried out to generate the information presented below.

**Results**

Regarding the characteristics of the profile of the informants, a slight predominance of the female gender was identified, where approximately 70% are between 16 and 21 years of age, mainly from strata one, two and three in 83% of the cases. Regarding the academic affiliation of the informants, an almost equal approximation between public and private institutions was identified (Table 1).

**Table 1**

*Research Informant Profile*

| Variable | Dimensions | Frequency | Percentage |
|---|---|---|---|
| Genre | Female | 115 | 53.2 |
| | Male | 101 | 46.8 |
| | Total | 216 | 100.0 |
| Age range | Between 16 and 18 years old | 23 | 10.6 |
| | Between 19 and 21 years old | 128 | 59.3 |
| | Between 22 and 24 years old | 50 | 23.1 |
| | Between 25 and 27 years old | 11 | 5.1 |
| | 28 years and older | 4 | 1.9 |
| | Total | 216 | 100.0 |
| Socio-economic stratum | One | 35 | 16.2 |
| | Two | 76 | 35.2 |
| | Three | 69 | 31.9 |
| | Four | 24 | 11.1 |
| | Five | 12 | 5.6 |
| | Total | 216 | 100.0 |
| Educational Institution | Francisco de Paula Santander University | 81 | 37.5 |
| | University of Pamplona | 35 | 16.2 |
| | Simón Bolívar University | 75 | 34.7 |
| | University of Santander | 22 | 10.2 |
| | Universidad Libre | 3 | 1.3 |
| | Total | 216 | 100.0 |

**Informants' perception of the migration process**

When higher education students were asked about the relevance and dosage of the information transmitted by the media on the migration process in Colombia, it was found that two out of three people said they agreed that the information is sufficient. This aspect led to inquire about the frequency with which they access the various media to find out what is happening with the Venezuelan situation (as the UNHCR calls it), to which it was identified that 85% are interested in the subject, 44% of them do so once a week while 41% are informed daily.

This led to the question of the media that has most addressed this issue. According to their order of importance, 80% of the informants identified social networks, television and the Internet as the three media that provide the most journalistic coverage of mixed Venezuelan migratory flows in Colombia and Latin America.

Then the question arose as to which media do they trust the most to inform themselves about migration. The 40% prefer the media that make use of the Internet such as official web pages, websites of international or national newspapers, and international newscasts, among others; followed by 25% who resort to the traditional media such as the press (El Tiempo and El Espectador), radio (La W or Blue Radio) and television (on Channel One), as can be seen in all the above mentioned, national coverage prevails.

It is highlighted that the totality of the respondents, express distrust of the quality of the local media (at the city level) and 85% choose to resort to international media such as CNN because they affirm that channels such as Caracol or RCN are biased due to the interests of their owners.

In view of this situation, it is important to clarify that cooperation agencies and NGOs have developed manuals for the responsible coverage of migration; among others, Puentes de Comunicación: Cómo cubrir la migración y el refugio venezolanos (Efecto Cocuyo and DW Academy); Nuevas narrativas migratorias para reemplazar el discurso del odio (Fundación Por Causa); Pistas para contar la migración (Consejo de Redacción); Cobertura mediática de la migración basada en el derecho intermacional y en evidencias (OIM): Checklist For a journalism against stigmatizing narratives (UNHCR - FLIP); all offer alternatives where the use of language, the selection of sources and the very construction of the note does not re-victimize a population that has already suffered enough affectations in their place of origin.

Training has also been offered to journalists from various media in the city. In the research carried out by Barbosa *et al*. (2021) entitled "Journalistic treatment of Venezuelan migration in five cybermedia of Venezuela, Colombia and Ecuador (2017-2021)" it was possible to conclude that the media have been transforming their frames on the subject, with such changes being more evident after 2018. It is presumed that this is the result of the guidance received.

When advancing in the process of characterizing perceptions, it was possible to identify that approximately 66% of the respondents consider that migrant communities have been negatively stigmatized by the media, as shown in Table 2, this perception is unanimous regardless of the educational institution where the informant is enrolled.

**Table 2**

*Crosstabulation of Opinion by University Regarding Stigmatization of Migrant Communities*

| Educational Institution | Do you consider that migrant communities are negatively stigmatized in the media? | | | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | No | DK/NA | Yes | |
| Universidad Libre | | 0.8% | 0.5% | 1.3% |
| Universidad de Santander | 2.1% | 1.0% | 7.1% | 10.2% |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Universidad de Pamplona | 2.8% | 23% | 11.1% | 16.2% |
| Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander | 7.6% | 6.5% | 23.4% | 37.5% |
| Universidad Simón Bolívar | 6.8% | 4.2% | 23.7% | 34.7% |
| Total | 19.3% | 14.8% | 65.8% | 100.0% |

Approximately 80% of those surveyed suggest that three main concepts that approach a migrant person, the most recurrent is associated with what they seek in their migratory process, which corresponds to opportunities that guarantee a better quality of life for them and their families; while the next two in priority are associated with the possible causes of this migratory phenomenon, which are associated with the fact that in their country they are unable to obtain the means, opportunities or resources that allow them to live comfortably, freely and with civil guarantees (Figure 1).

When asked in greater detail about the reasons that have triggered the migration process to Colombia, 87.5% of respondents suggest that mainly the following aspects are listed in order of importance: lack of economic opportunities, lack of food and medicine, corruption in the country and the rampant violence by state agencies that operate legally or, in most cases, outside the law with the complicity of law enforcement agencies. In this sense, the responses are in line with the findings of Vargas (2018); Márquez and Delgado (2014) and Delgado (2014) who express that due to the dynamics of expulsion, Venezuelan migration is considered forced, with causes such as hunger and malnutrition; crisis and political blindness; violence and loss of the value of money and income (Aliaga, 2021; Herrera, 2021).

**Figure 1**

*Concept of the migrant in the opinion of respondents*
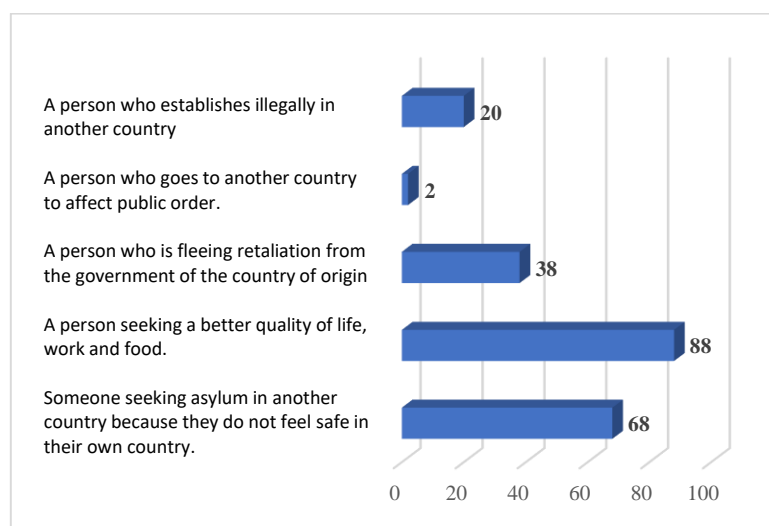


Continuing with the characterization of the opinions of university students on the Colombian migratory phenomenon, three major dimensions were identified in their opinions: (a) they affirm that migration favors the displacement of people from their usual context, this for various causes among which violence, increased insecurity (robberies, political persecution), corruption of the rulers that ends up affecting the daily life of the inhabitants stand out; b) the exodus of people has been motivated by the need to seek better life opportunities in aspects such as health, employment, education or the simple satisfaction of basic needs such as having access to basic services such as electricity, water, internet, among others; c) the arrival in the city of Cúcuta of a large number of Venezuelan citizens has generated

in many people feelings of rejection since they are associated with situations such as the cheapening of labor or the increase of insecurity in the city.

However, there is constant recognition that their exodus is because they are fleeing unworthy conditions in their country.

**Figure 2**

*Main words associated with migration*
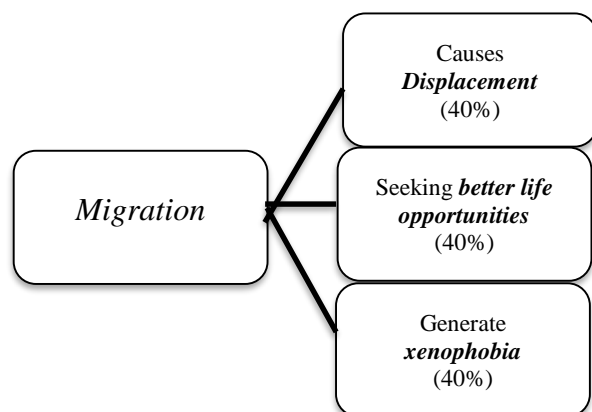


These three major dimensions can be verified when respondents were asked about the type of information they would like to receive about the migration process, to which 41% are interested in knowing the duties and rights of migrants and returnees to the country; 32% want to know about employment indicators and their relationship with the number of migrants along with the routes of care for this population; and finally, 21% are interested in knowing about the incidence of migrants in theft, kidnapping and other crimes.

This can be confirmed when asking the respondents if they consider that migrants can contribute to the progress of the city or the country, it was determined that approximately 63% of them consider that there is a benefit for this population. Continuing in this line of argument, 82% of those surveyed affirm that when they see a migrant in the city they perceive him as a person in search of opportunities to get ahead, while the remaining percentage emphasize that they see in this population a potential delinquent.

As can be seen, in the opinion of those surveyed, two positions stand out regarding the migrant population: those who see them and treat them as peers, contrast with those who discriminate against them. These two postures were observed when the informants were asked about the way they related to migrants; approximately 75% responded that regardless of their gender, they were treated with dignity and respect, while the remaining percentage stated that they avoided relating to migrants because they were afraid of them.

This position of rejection towards migrants could be caused by the news disseminated by the media since in the opinion of 53% of those surveyed, the information they receive from the media corresponds to reports of increased insecurity, robbery and other adverse situations, which increases the level of distrust when being on the street and encountering an immigrant.

The percentages are co-related to the findings of Arévalo and Ruíz (2019) who after the analysis of the discourses, narratives and imaginaries produced by the press in Boyacá (eastern Colombia) about the flow of Venezuelan subjects in need of international protection (PNPI) to Colombia in the period 2016-2018, concluded that the media constructs a representation of the PNPI that transit through the territory as zombies. Cross-border mobility is narrated as an invasion that threatens, a hunt for the local population.

On this point, Arévalo and Ruíz (2019) discuss the figure of the Homo Sacer, proposed by Agabem (1997), which refers "to a person who, being banished from his political community, is reduced to

simple biological existence (nuda vida) and, being unprotected by the juridical-political body, can be killed" (p. 168).

Ordóñez and Ramírez (2019) also reflected on the media and political construction of the image of the Venezuelan immigrant who threatens public health and safety in Colombia, pointing out the contradictions between both discourses. Thus, the solidarity assumed as an exceptional act by the State and the Colombian society was transformed in the popular language "as a failure that threatens the body politic, and Colombian compassion is repaid with the disease, social disarticulation and the threat of castrochavismo" (p. 64). Migrants are represented as a matter out of place, therefore, the country cannot consider Venezuelans either as brothers or as part of the national order.

Table 3 shows that about 72% of those surveyed say that the arrival of migrants in Cúcuta has affected the city's economy, and of this percentage, about 53% say that their relationship with them is indifferent. In this sense, when the perception of the Colombian government's management of the issue was explored, it was determined that 75% say that the decisions taken have been inefficient concerning what this social phenomenon implies, in contrast with 22% who believe that Colombia has been a humanitarian ally in the social crisis experienced by Venezuelan citizens.

**Table 3**

*Cross Table on The Relationship With The Migrant Concerning The Economic Affections In The City Migrants*

| | | Do you believe that migrants in Cúcuta have affected the city's economy? | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| ¿Considera que su relación con los migrantes es? | Good | 11.6% | 18.5% | 30.1% |
| | Indifferent | 16.6% | 52.8% | 69.4% |
| | Violent | | 0.5% | 0.5% |
| | Total | 28.2% | 71.8% | 100.0% |

71% of those surveyed said that the social problems of our country are not only due to the arrival of migrants, since the needs in health, education, security and labor have been difficulties that have been present in the history of Colombia and are not exclusively due to them. However, close to 40% of those surveyed do not agree that part of the money collected in taxes and paid by all Colombian citizens should be used to help migrants when there are regions in the country that demand this help as a priority.

This feeling deepens more in places with precarious economic situations as are usually border areas (World Bank, 2018b; Valenzuela, 2012). In line with Mojica *et al*. (2020) borders face a polyphony of senses, where the ambivalence between stigmatization from the problematic and oblivion, is a constant; as well as, from the encounter where the lines between the national and the perceptions between the us and the others are dissolved.

Table 4 analyzes the behavior of two priority aspects in the opinion of the respondents, which correspond to their field of work and its impact on the context. It could be determined that 55% of the informants recognize immigrants as a threat in their labor linkage process to the productive sector, in contrast with 37% who affirm that they are not a threat and that, in case they could have the power to hire them, they would do it without any problem.

**Table 4**

*Crosstabulation of Whether You Would Hire a Migrant vs. Whether They Are a Threat When Looking for a Job*

| | | Do you consider migrants as a threat to employment? | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| If you were the owner of a company, would you employ a migrant person? | No | 7.9% | 26.4% | 34.3% |
| | Yes | 37.0% | 28.7% | 65.7% |
| | Total | 44.9% | 55.1% | 100.0% |

In moving forward with the process of attention, orientation and referral that migrants receive, there are organizations other than the Colombian State that have supported them in this social crisis and their passage through our country to other Latin American cities. In this regard, the respondents identified four major allies in this process: UNHCR, the Pastoral Social, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the Jesuit Refugee Service, which in their order group 90% of the opinions.

**Figure 2**

*Percentage of lack of knowledge of various strategies that are implemented with migrants in the city of Cúcuta.*
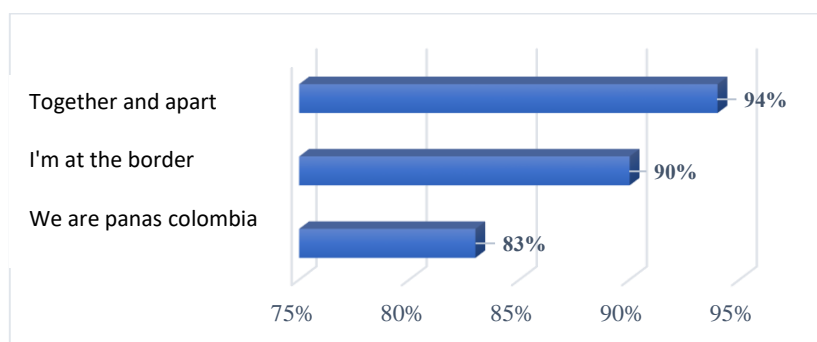


Figure 2 shows that at least 80% of the informants are unaware of the various care, orientation and referral strategies that have been implemented for these people.

These results are striking since both international cooperation agencies and NGOs make efforts to reduce the vulnerability of migrants and refugees through various programs and projects. According to the portal *Estoy en la frontera* (I am at the border), there are currently 36 organizations in the city in charge of providing attention, orientation and referral to migrants.

Part of this task is also carried out by the Secretariat of Borders and International Cooperation of Norte de Santander and other secretariats of the Mayor's Office of Cúcuta, which promotes integration and the restitution and effective enjoyment of their human rights. However, as Aliaga (2021) points out, these processes will only be successful to the extent that they favor economic and labor inclusion, as well as social and cultural integration processes with mechanisms that contribute to interculturality and recognition of diversity, reducing discrimination and xenophobia.

This proposal invites to a process of mutual understanding that allows the recognition of differences, integrity and dignity, including the value of diverse cultures from the communicative action. In this sense, it was explored among the informants whether they had relatives living abroad (in countries other than Venezuela) to verify the capacity to recognize diversities and the possibilities of transnational mobility. In this regard, 56% said they did (Spain, United States, Mexico, Canada and Chile) and of this percentage, 43% had never traveled outside Colombia. The relationship between Colombia and

Venezuela was then verified, identifying that 51% have relatives living in Venezuela and of these, 35% have visited a city in that country in the last five years.

These figures reiterate the strong relationship that has historically existed between these two Latin American countries and the tendency of Colombians to emigrate, related to the internal armed conflict, which included Venezuela as the main destination since the 50s of the twentieth century, also encouraged by the oil bonanza.

Finally, the group of informants was asked if they knew the difference between a migrant and a returnee or refugee, to which it was observed that 57% said they were clear about the conditions that a person must meet to belong to each of these categories, while 21% said they were not clear about these concepts.

**Table 5**

*Cross Table in Knowledge Of The Difference Between A Migrant And A Returnee Or A Refugee*

| | | Do you know the difference between a migrant and a returnee? | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | | No | Yes | Total |
| Do you know the difference between a migrant and a refugee? | No | 21.3% | 5.6% | 26.9% |
| | Yes | 153% | 56.9% | 72.2% |
| | Total | 36.6% | 62.5% | 100.0% |

According to the National Center of Historical Memory (CNMH), in 2013, Colombia ranked eighth worldwide in terms of the origin of refugees after countries such as Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Myanmar and Iraq. In fact, in the Americas, Colombia is the first country with the largest number of refugees with an estimated total of 396,600 in neighboring countries, with Venezuela being the main recipient of displaced persons (CNMH, 2014).

These data propose a reflection on the historical transformations that lead to cross-border mobility and imply the creation of new narratives on migration by revaluing the contributions that migrants can offer to their host communities.

**Conclusions**

By identifying the perceptions and attitudes of the university students of the main border city and recipient of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, the intention was to validate the tendency of various studies and surveys where discriminatory and xenophobic practices were evident; however, the results obtained do not show the predominance of perceptions or attitudes associated with direct or indirect discrimination.

Despite the information they receive from the media, university students understand that the decision to migrate was motivated by the adverse situations that Venezuelans face in their country, putting their survival at risk. In this sense, the responses do not reveal racist attitudes but do reveal some stereotypes associated with class, although all respondents are located in the lower socioeconomic strata.

However, it can be affirmed that the student's perceptions and attitudes are related to sensitivity towards the migratory phenomenon, the recognition of difference and cultural diversity. This offers a facilitating scenario for the implementation of strategies that promote the integration of Venezuelan migrants with a view to the generation of inclusive public policies that allow the guarantee of rights.

The perception of 88 percent of those surveyed that Venezuelan migrants are seeking to improve their quality of life, allows inferring empathetic attitudes on the part of the age group participating in the research, especially because they are going through the formative process for the construction of their life project.

Contrary to what may occur in other regions of the country, the close historical relationship between Colombia and Venezuela permeates the perceptions and attitudes of the young people surveyed, thus revaluing the idea of the binational and cross-border that before 2015 characterized the daily life of the inhabitants of Cúcuta.

## References

Agamben, G. (1997). *Homo sacer. El poder soberano y la nuda vida.* Pre-textos.

Agencia de la ONU para los Refugiados. (2020). *Tendencias globales desplazamiento forzado en 2020.* ACNUR. https://www.acnur.org/60cbddfd4.pdf

Aliaga, F. A. (2021). Causas de la migración forzada de Venezuela a Colombia. *AULA Revista de Humanidades y Ciencias Sociales, 67*(2), 67-77.

Aliaga, F., Baracaldo, V., Pinto, L., & Gissi, N. (2018). Imaginarios de exclusión y amenaza en torno al inmigrante venezolano en Colombia. *Temas y Debates,* (36), 661-83. https://doi.org/10.35305/tyd.v0i36.415

Arévalo, G. A., & Ruíz, A. L. (2019). Revictimización de la movilidad humana en la prensa boyacense. *Diálogos De Saberes,* (51), 153-174.

Banco Mundial. (2018a, 19 de septiembre). *Según el Banco Mundial, la pobreza extrema a nivel mundial continúa disminuyendo, aunque a un ritmo más lento*. Banco Mundial. https://www.bancomundial.org/es/news/press-release/2018/09/19/decline-of-global-extreme-poverty-continues-but-has-slowed-world-bank

Banco Mundial. (2018b, 02 de noviembre). *Migración desde Venezuela a Colombia: impactos y estrategia de respuesta en el corto y mediano plazo*. Banco Mundial. https://www.bancomundial.org/es/events/2018/10/25/migracion-desde-venezuela-a-colombia

Barbosa, A. A., Cárdenas, B. A., Blanco, J. S., Chacón, K. M. Mosquera, M. A. (2021). *Tratamiento periodístico de la migración venezolana en cinco cibermedios de Venezuela, Colombia y Ecuador (2017-20219)* (tesis de pregrado), Universidad Francisco de Paula Santander.

Bermúdez, Y., Mazuera-Arias, R., Albornoz-Arias, N., & Morffe, M. A. (2018). *Informe sobre la movilidad humana venezolana. Realidades y perspectivas de quienes emigran (9 de abril al 6 de mayo de 2018).* Servicio Jesuita a Refugiados (SJR).

Bhabha. H. K. (2007). *El lugar de la cultura.* Manantial.

Boswell, C., Smellie, S., Maneri, M., Pogliano, A., Garcés, B., a Benet-Martínez, V., & Güell, B. (2021). *The Emergence, Uses and Impacts of Narratives on Migration. State of the Art*. BRIDGES Working Papers.

Castellanos, J., & Prada-Penagos, R. (2020). Representaciones de los migrantes venezolanos en los diarios fronterizos colombianos. *Estudios sobre el mensaje periodístico, 26*(3), 915-926. https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.65508

Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica. (2014). *Cruzando la frontera: Memorias del éxodo hacia Venezuela. El caso del río Arauca*. CNMH. https://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/descargas/informes2015/nacion-desplazada/cruzando-la-frontera.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Política Económica y Social. (2014). *Documento CONPES 3805. Prosperidad para las fronteras de Colombia*. DNP. https://colaboracion.dnp.gov.co/CDT/Conpes/Econ%C3%B3micos/3805.pdf

Delgado, R. (2014). Globalización neoliberal y migración forzada: Una Mirada desde el sur. En: C. Blanco, *Movilidad humana y diversidad social en un contexto de crisis económica internacional* (pp. 31-50). Trotta.

Espinel, G. A., Mojica-Acevedo, E. C., & Niño-Vega, N. C. (2021). Narrativas sobre mujeres migrantes venezolanas en un diario en línea de la frontera colombiana. *Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico, 27*(1), 95-109. https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.71471

Flórez, F. (2020). ¿Una imagen es más racista (o clasista) que mil palabras?: "los otros" desde un enfoque semiótico cognitivo y fenoménico. *Revista de Antropología y Sociología: VIRAJES, 22*(1), 37-57. https://doi.org/10.17151/rasv.2020.22.1.3

García, T. (2003). *El cuestionario como instrumento de investigación/evaluación*. Centro Universitario Santa Ana. http://www.univsantana.com/sociologia/El_Cuestionario.pdf

Herrera, G. (2021). Migraciones en pandemia: nuevas y viejas formas de desigualdad. *Nueva Sociedad,* (293). https://nuso.org/articulo/migraciones-en-pandemia-nuevas-y-viejas-formas-de-desigualdad/

Igartua, J. J. (2008). Identificación con los personajes y persuasión incidental a través de la ficción cinematográfica. *Escritos de Psicología - Psychological Writings, 2*(1), 42-53.

Klimenko, O., Peláez, S., Pacheco, L., & Ríos, Y. (2020). Percepciones sociales frente al fenómeno de migración venezolana en una muestra de los habitantes de la ciudad de Sincelejo, Sucre, año 2019. *Revista Psicoespacios*, *14*(24), 81-96. https://doi.org/10.25057/21452776.1338

Lotero-Echeverri, G., Romero-Rodríguez, L. M., & Pérez-Rodríguez, M. A. (2020). Migración masiva venezolana en Colombia: estudio de news framing en cibermedios de referencia. *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura, 63,* 1-18. https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3280

Malax-Evhevarria, A. (2019). *Sí, pero no aquí, percepciones de xenofobia y discriminación hacia migrantes de Venezuela en Colombia, Ecuador y Perú*. Oxfam Internacional. https://oxfamilibrary.openrepository.com/bitstream/handle/10546/620890/bp-si-pero-no-aqui-251019-es.pdf?sequence=8&isAllowed=y

Marquéz, H., & Delgado, R. (2014). *Migración forzada y desarrollo alternativo*. Instituto de Altos Estudios Nacionales.

Martínez, C. (2012). *Estadística y muestreo.* Ecoe ediciones.

Mejía, W. (2020). Cifras de la inmigración a Colombia: magnitud, origen, localización y sexo, 1819-2015. En: F. A. Aliaga & A. Flórez (Ed. Acad.), *Dimensiones de la migración en Colombia* (pp. 25-70). Universidad Santo Tomás.

Migración Colombia. (2022, febrero). *Distribución de venezolanos en Colombia.* http://fronteraysociedad.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/Migracion-Colombia-Distribucion-de-venezolanos-en-Colombia-febrero-2022.pdf

Mojica, E., Aliaga, F., & Espinel, G. (2020). Metodologías participativas en la construcción de políticas públicas migratorias en la frontera colombiana. *Si Somos Americanos. Revista de Estudios Transfronterizos, 20*(2), 116-137. http://doi.org/10.4067/S0719-09482020000200116

Mojica, E. C., Espinel, G. A., Herrera, M. L., & Camargo, A, C. (2020). Dimensiones de La Migración Pendular Colombo-Venezolana: Caso Cúcuta-San Antonio Del Táchira. En: F. A. Aliaga & A. Flórez (Ed. Acad.), *Dimensiones de la migración en Colombia* (pp. 305–323). Ediciones Universidad Santo Tomas (USTA).

Mojica-Acevedo, E., & Espinel-Rubio, G. (2022). Belleza E Incursión Militar En Los Memes Tras El Anuncio De Un Gobierno De Transición En Venezuela. En: *Narrativas de Whatsapp, memes y gestión comunicativa. Experiencias de investigación desde el Oriente Colombiano*. Ecoe Ediciones.

Ordóñez, J. T., & Ramírez, H. E. (2019). (Des)orden nacional: la construcción de la migración venezolana como una amenaza de salud y seguridad pública en Colombia. *Revista Ciencias de la Salud, 17* (Esp), 48-68. http://doi.org/10.12804/revistas.urosario.edu.co/revsalud/a.8119

Piñeres, J. D. (2017). *Lo humano como humano ideal regulativo. Imaginación antropológica: Cultura, formación y antropología negativa.* Universidad de Antioquia, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales y humanas. Fondo Editorial FCSH.

Ramírez, L. M. (2018). Representaciones discursivas de las migrantes venezolanas en medios digitales. *RALED Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios del Discurso, 18*(2), 43-58. http://doi.org/10.35956/v.18.n2.2018.p.42-58

Restrepo, J. E., & Jaramillo, J. (2020). Percepción de líderes sociales y representantes de organizaciones públicas y privadas sobre la migración y los inmigrantes venezolanos en el municipio de Maicao (La Guajira, Colombia). Migraciones. *Publicación del Instituto Universitario de Estudios sobre Migraciones,* (49), 119-145. https://doi.org/10.14422/mig.i49.y2020.005

Rodríguez, J. (2003). Paradigmas, enfoques y métodos en la investigación educativa. *Investigación educativa, 7*(12), 23-40.

Taborda, J. C., Acosta, M., & García, M. C. (2021). Discriminación en silencio: percepciones de migrantes venezolanos sobre la discriminación en Colombia. *Revista Desarrollo y Sociedad,* (89), 143-186. http://doi.org/10.13043/DYS.89.5

Van Dijk, T. A. (2005). Nuevo racismo y noticias. Un enfoque discursivo. En: M. N. Rosa & N. Benach (Eds.), *Inmigración, género y espacios urbanos. Los retos de la diversidad* (pp. 33-55). Edicions Bellaterra.

Valenzuela, J. M. (2012). *Sed de mal. Feminicidio, jóvenes y exclusión social.* Colegio de la Frontera Norte.

Vargas, C. (2018). La migración en Venezuela como dimensión de la crisis. *Pensamiento Propio,* (47), 91-128.