



Faculty of Legal Sciences

School of International Studies

**Evaluation of Employment Outcomes of the
“Educa Sin Límites” Program for Venezuelan
Participants Residing in Cuenca-Ecuador**

Projecto prior to obtaining a Bachelor’s Degree in International
Studies

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This graduation work is dedicated to my parents,
Juan and Liliana, for being the driving force that
motivates me to become a better person every day. I
love you—without you, I am nothing.

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and Sofía Monserrath de los Milagros, for being the
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this research was to evaluate the impact of the “Educa Sin Límites” program on the working life of Venezuelan migrants living in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador. Through a quantitative applied research with a correlational scope, we sought to determine the effectiveness of this international cooperation project. The theoretical muscle that supports the research is based on the theory of human security, which conceives the individual as a subject of rights under the responsibility of the States and the international community. The results revealed a positive and significant correlation between the independent variables analyzed and the improvement of the working life of Venezuelan migrants. Specifically, a high correlation was found with acquired skills (0.573**), job placement (0.734**), seed capital (0.709**) and digital skills (0.460**). In conclusion, the research suggests that the “Educa Sin Límites” program was effective in the specific context of Cuenca, Ecuador. Finally, future lines of research aimed at establishing causal and explanatory relationships, as well as promoting improvements in related public policy, are identified.

Key words

- Migration, International Cooperation, Digital Skills, Quality of Life, Venezuela.

Evaluación de resultados laborales del programa “Educa Sin Límites” de los participantes venezolanos radicados en Cuenca-Ecuador

RESUMEN

Esta investigación nace con el propósito de evaluar el impacto del programa "Educa Sin Límites" en la vida laboral de migrantes venezolanos radicados en la ciudad de Cuenca, Ecuador. A través de una investigación aplicada de corte cuantitativo y alcance correlacional, se buscó determinar la efectividad de este proyecto de cooperación internacional. El músculo teórico que soporta la investigación se fundamenta en la teoría de la seguridad humana, la cual concibe al individuo como sujeto de derechos bajo la responsabilidad de los Estados y la comunidad internacional. Los resultados revelaron una correlación positiva y significativa entre las variables independientes analizadas y el mejoramiento de la vida laboral de los migrantes venezolanos. Específicamente, se encontró una alta correlación con las habilidades adquiridas (0.573**), la inserción laboral (0.734**), el capital semilla (0.709**) y las competencias digitales (0.460**). En conclusión, la investigación sugiere que el programa "Educa Sin Límites" fue efectivo en el contexto específico de Cuenca, Ecuador. Finalmente, se identifican futuras líneas de investigación orientadas a establecer relaciones causales y explicativas, así como a promover mejoras en la política pública relacionada.

Palabras clave

- Migración, Cooperación Internacional, Habilidades Digitales, Calidad de Vida, Venezuela.

Evaluation of Employment Outcomes of the “Educa Sin Límites” Program for Venezuelan Participants Residing in Cuenca-Ecuador

1. Introduction

Migration is a phenomenon of great significance on a global scale, generating major challenges for both countries of origin and receiving nations. In recent decades, various regions around the world have experienced significant migratory flows, one of the most notable being the exodus of Venezuelan citizens to multiple destinations, including Ecuador. A considerable number of these migrants have entered host countries irregularly, often without the opportunity to apply for asylum. This situation severely limits their employment opportunities, frequently relegating them to the informal sector and exposing them to labor exploitation, insecurity, discrimination, and violence. In response to this issue, various projects and programs have been implemented to provide training for migrants and thereby mitigate their conditions of vulnerability.

The city of Cuenca, Ecuador, recognized by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site since 1999 and considered the third most important city in the country due to its historical and colonial value, has become an attractive destination for foreigners and people in human mobility, both documented and undocumented. The visible presence of Venezuelan migrants in public spaces, often experiencing homelessness and vulnerability, is a reality. In this context, the University of Azuay designed and implemented the program "Educa Sin Límites" ("Education Without Limits"). This initiative focused on training migrants in various productive skills, with the goal of providing the knowledge necessary to generate employment through entrepreneurship. Upon completion of the program, it is necessary to conduct an evaluation to determine the effectiveness of its strategies and their relationship to the improvement of the labor quality of life of Venezuelan migrants residing in Cuenca.

1.1 Objectives

The general objective of this degree project is to evaluate the outcomes of the “Educa Sin Límites” program on the working live of Venezuelan migrants residing in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, through applied research aimed at determining the effectiveness of the international cooperation project.

The following specific objectives were derived from the general objective:

1. To describe the objectives and strategies employed by the “Educa Sin Límites” program.
2. To evaluate the participants’ perception of how useful the skills acquired through the program have been in their working lives.
3. To determine whether the program has positively contributed to the integration of Venezuelan migrants into formal employment activities.

1.2 Theoretical framework

The Venezuelan migration crisis is a long-standing issue that has been unfolding for several decades, with its origins tracing back to 1983. That year is considered the end of Venezuela’s period of social and economic prosperity, which had been driven by the boom in the oil industry. The event known as “Black Friday” marks a turning point in the country’s history, as the Bolívar experienced a significant devaluation against the U.S. dollar, destabilizing the Venezuelan economy and ushering in a period of crisis and uncertainty. One of the main consequences of this situation was the emigration of Venezuelans. In the years that followed, the situation deteriorated further to the point where maintaining a decent standard of living became nearly impossible for citizens, as access to essential resources and services such as food, healthcare, and education became increasingly difficult. In response to this crisis, Hugo Chávez came to power in 1999 and implemented his “21st Century Socialism” model, which led to the weakening of democracy and its institutions. Freedom of expression was also significantly restricted. After Chávez’s death, Nicolás Maduro took office and decided to continue his predecessor’s legacy and model, further deepening Venezuela’s crisis and triggering the largest wave of emigration of Venezuelan citizens (Ribas, 2018).

Hugo Chávez based his economic model on the profitability that oil brought to the country, as well as on the expansion of the State's role in the economy, particularly through the implementation of "21st Century Socialism." During the oil boom in Venezuela from 2004 to 2012, Chávez's government launched a large number of social projects aimed at redistributing wealth and reducing the widespread poverty affecting the country. As a result, the State invested significant amounts of money in educational programs, strengthening the healthcare system, and providing subsidies to specific sectors, with particular emphasis on the oil sector, which accounted for 95% of Venezuela's exports. State intervention in the country's economic affairs led to a weakening of the system. Expropriation became a key practice, with the government taking control of companies across various sectors under the justification of promoting productive sovereignty. However, due to poor management, many of these companies ended up bankrupt or saw a sharp decline in domestic production. Chávez's economic model combined state intervention with socialist ideals, prioritizing the State as the sole actor in key economic areas and contributing to the country's deindustrialization. Furthermore, the lack of product diversification made oil the country's only source of income to finance the numerous projects undertaken by the government, which in turn led to growing debt and a high fiscal deficit (Romero, 2013).

Nicolás Maduro assumed the presidency in April 2013, and the legitimacy of the electoral process was immediately questioned. In 2014, citizens began leaving the country, primarily due to the political context they were facing. The main destinations were the United States, Colombia, and Peru, as many began to be persecuted by the government. Those targeted by the Maduro regime included politicians, activists, and journalists who opposed the elected government. The initial wave of persecution was focused mainly on the segment of the population with significant financial power, political influence, or intellectual standing. Later, the government expanded its focus beyond the key leaders of these groups and began targeting any citizen, whether or not affiliated with a political party. Anyone who publicly expressed discontent with the government was oppressed by the regime (Loudor, 2018).

Likewise, during this year, protests began to emerge against the government due to its failure to implement policies that could improve the quality of life for citizens, who were increasingly affected by rising crime and violence rates. The government decided to suppress these demonstrations, which took place between February and April, resulting in 43 people killed and 1,864 people detained, according to the Public Prosecutor's Office. Starting in 2016, the number of emigrants increased exponentially. Emigration was no longer limited to academics or middle-class individuals seeking better living conditions, it also began to include citizens fleeing in search of basic living conditions that their country could no longer provide, either because those resources no longer existed or were accessible only to those with high purchasing power. This was largely due to the collapse of the country's extractivist economic model. By 2017, the number of emigrants and their main destinations were as follows: Colombia (500,000), Brazil (32,000), Argentina (60,000), Chile (108,503), Peru (32,183), Panama (79,990), Mexico (35,331), the United States (321,000), and Ecuador (61,138), demonstrating that migration was no longer limited to neighboring countries but had expanded to others across Latin America and North America (Ribas, 2018).

To understand the massive mobilization of Venezuelan emigrants, it is crucial to understand Nicolás Maduro's economic model. From the moment he was elected as head of state, he sought to maintain the model implemented by his predecessor. However, Maduro's government had to face the shortcomings of the previous administration and the collapse in oil prices. Venezuelan oil sales plummeted, and PDVSA's (Petróleos de Venezuela) oil production dropped from 2.8 million barrels per day in 2013 to less than 500,000 barrels in 2023. As the country lost its main source of income, the national currency began to be printed without any backing to support its value, which led to hyperinflation starting in 2017, reaching a rate of 1,000,000% by 2018. As the currency lost almost all of its value, it was gradually replaced by the U.S. dollar, resulting in an informal dollarization of Venezuela. People began to make purchases and transactions in dollars, even though the Bolívar remained the official currency. Additionally, Nicolás Maduro allowed a partial economic opening, permitting the continued circulation of the dollar with the intention of turning it into a new economic foundation to prevent total collapse. However, he did so without formally acknowledging to the international community that Venezuela had become a dollarized country; something that contradicts the socialist ideology behind his policies of wealth redistribution and rejection of private property (Romero, 2013).

International relations theories must be taken into account to address certain questions that arise regarding Venezuelan migration, among them the world-systems theory, which classifies countries into three categories: core, semi-periphery, and periphery. The periphery represents the most precarious position a nation can occupy, as it remains at the mercy of more developed countries. In peripheral nations, migration becomes an inevitable and natural consequence of the human pursuit of better opportunities. In the case of Venezuelan citizens, this pursuit led them to migrate to other Latin American countries. This is partly

because, as neighboring nations, they are perceived to be more welcoming, which facilitates access to better living conditions (Massey et al., 2008).

Likewise, a relatively new theory is that of human security, which emerged in the 1990s within a context where the world had already experienced two world wars and tensions between capitalism and communism. This theory introduced a new understanding of security; no longer focused solely on the state, but on the individual. It presents a multidimensional approach that goes beyond inter-state relations and instead focuses on human needs and ways to ensure that people can live the best lives possible, safeguarding their fundamental rights such as life, food, health, and education. The traditional concept of defending the nation is left behind in favor of a broader approach: ensuring the existence and dignity of the human being. As a result, governments and both international and national institutions choose to cooperate to guarantee human dignity. In the context of human mobility, this translates, among other things, into projects aimed at integrating migrants living in informal conditions into more formal settings (Zavaleta, 2015).

Another term to consider, which acquires different interpretations depending on the field of study, is humanization. In the field of international relations, this concept refers to the prioritization of individual interests over those of the state. The interpretation suggests that, in situations of conflict or vulnerability, the rights and freedoms of individuals must prevail. This principle is supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted by the United Nations (UN). This international instrument commits States to protect and promote the rights inherent to every person, simply by virtue of being human. It stands as a fundamental pillar in promoting a global community that recognizes the dignity and intrinsic value of every individual (Pastor, 2009).

On the other hand, the perspective of critical migration theory offers a new approach to how migratory processes should be understood. This theory questions the legitimacy of migration controls and the institutions responsible for enforcing them, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM) or individual states through their migration policies. As a result, migration is seen as a response to confront these systems of domination. It is argued that migration controls only perpetuate and worsen global inequalities and, above all, function as structural forms of exclusion against individuals. The historical background of these controls is closely tied to colonialism, capitalism, and racism. Migration control is thus referred to as a system of “global apartheid,” which limits opportunities for disadvantaged countries and keeps wealth concentrated in developed nations. Critical theory challenges the role of states and organizations, and advocates for the abolition of migration controls and the reaffirmation of free mobility as a fundamental human right (Georgi & Schatral, 2011).

As Sigala (2024) wrote, migration involves the movement of people across borders, generally in response to economic, political, or social circumstances. In times of crisis, such as a pandemic, governments may tighten their migration policies, restrict access to rights such as asylum, and redefine the responsibilities of the countries involved in managing migration flows. Measures may include border closures or, on the contrary, the opening of other countries to receive migrants.

In Hayashi's (2025) line of thought, immigration is the process of arrival and settlement of people in a country different from their place of origin, generating social and cultural transformations in the host nation. From this perspective, changes in national legislation can occur, as was the case in Brazil, where Japanese immigration sparked intense debates during the 1930s and 1940s, influenced by eugenic and cultural theories. The parliamentary debate reflected tensions between radical ideas and new interpretations of immigration, delving into both economic and cultural dimensions.

According to Pérez-Arellano et al. (2024), emigration is the process by which a person moves from their country of origin to another country, either temporarily or permanently. In this context, emigrants may maintain political ties with their home country, as seen through transnational voting, where they participate in legislative elections and elect representatives from extraterritorial districts. This implies the host country's responsibility to guarantee the political rights of emigrant citizens. Thus, emigration does not necessarily mean a complete political disconnection from the country of origin.

Migration can be classified in different ways depending on the reasons why people decide to leave their country of origin. It can be voluntary, which involves freely moving to another territory in search of better job, education, or personal opportunities, often with a predetermined timeline to plan and carry out the relocation. Involuntary migration occurs when people are forced to leave their homes urgently due to conflict, persecution, or the dire conditions in their place of origin, usually without any time for planning. Most of the time, it happens spontaneously, preventing individuals from taking the necessary measures to carry out the relocation (Avendaño & Aguilar, 2014).

When referring to voluntary migration, there is a sub-classification within this type that relates to the reasons why people choose to migrate. From an economic perspective, individuals decide to relocate in search of better job opportunities and higher wages. This is often driven by factors such as high unemployment rates in their home country, currency inflation that leads to a loss of purchasing power, or the desire to move to countries known for having stable and well-paying labor markets. From a social perspective, migration is motivated by the desire to achieve better living conditions, ones that their country of origin cannot provide. Another common motivation is family reunification, where individuals migrate to reunite with relatives who have already relocated. The final aspect to highlight is educational. People choose to migrate voluntarily in pursuit of better educational opportunities at institutions recognized internationally (Armijos-Orellana et al., 2022).

In the case of involuntary or forced migration, it follows a similar framework to voluntary migration, in which classification is based on the reasons why people decide to migrate. Given that global warming is a reality, its consequences are tangible; evident in the number of people who have been forced to leave their homes due to natural disasters such as floods, droughts, hurricanes, or tsunamis that endanger their lives. Similarly, environmental crises have made land unsuitable for farming, often the primary livelihood for many families; or have caused severe water and air pollution, making it impossible to ensure an adequate quality of life. Additionally, internal conflicts, ranging from armed clashes with guerrilla groups and terrorist attacks to government oppression of its citizens—are another major cause of migration. The main goal for those who flee their countries is to preserve their own lives and the lives of their loved ones (Canelón & Almansa, 2018).

In line with the above, migration can occur in different forms. On one hand, there is irregular (or undocumented) migration, in which individuals move to another place and remain there without legal status; that is, without permission from the state to reside in the new territory. On the other hand, there are those who migrate through legal channels, one of which is under refugee status. This status is requested by the migrant and granted by the host country. Refugee status is given to individuals who have been forced to leave their country due to life-threatening circumstances or persecution.

Refugees are individuals who have been forced to leave their country due to persecution based on race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group, or political opinions or ideology. Refugee status may also be granted due to extreme environmental conditions in their country of origin, where both their lives and safety are at risk. They acquire refugee status through a formal process in which they submit an asylum request to the host country, with their protection grounded in international law, specifically as established by the 1951 Geneva Convention. On the other hand, undocumented (or irregular) migrants are individuals who relocate for economic, employment, or family reasons and do not fall under the protection of international law, as their migration has occurred through informal or unauthorized means (Lacomba, 2020).

Migrants face various challenges in their new places of residence. Among these challenges is discrimination against migrants, known as xenophobia, which manifests as the rejection of foreigners by the native population. When national resources begin to be perceived as strained due to the presence of foreigners, citizens may express their disapproval and demand that the rights of the “native” population be prioritized over those of migrants. This rejection can escalate to the point where people demand that the government enforce their removal, restrict their entry into the country, or limit the rights they are granted in the host state, all with the aim of safeguarding the interests of the affected population (Cea, 2005).

The main organization responsible for managing all aspects related to migration is the International Organization for Migration (IOM), which is tasked with promoting humane migration and ensuring that it is carried out in a way that is safe and beneficial for all parties involved. The IOM was established in 1951, initially known as the Provisional Intergovernmental Committee for the Movement of Migrants from Europe, in response to the massive displacement of people caused by World War II. It was not until 1989 that it adopted the name International Organization for Migration, and in 2016 it became a related agency of the United Nations system. Today, some of the organization's key functions include fostering international cooperation to ensure the dignity and well-being of people in situations of mobility, raising awareness about the various dimensions of migration, and developing programs to address the challenges that human migration entails (IOM, 2022).

Through the IOM, international cooperation is promoted to develop projects in favor of migrants, alongside other international organizations that focus their efforts on collaboration to achieve better outcomes. International cooperation on migration is understood as the efforts or actions carried out by various actors; such as states, international organizations, or non-governmental organizations, to safeguard the integrity of migrants and provide support throughout their migration processes. This support may come

in the form of financial assistance, the distribution of essential supplies, or the creation of effective laws that support migrants (Chaves-Bogantes et al., 2024).

According to the findings of Pécoud (2018), international cooperation on migration focuses on the management and global governance of the phenomenon, approaching it as a normal aspect of global dynamics and recognizing its spillover effects on the sustainable development of nations. Organizations such as the United Nations and the International Organization for Migration promote frameworks aimed at achieving orderly, safe, and regulated migration, in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), with a particular emphasis on migrants' rights and their economic contributions through remittances and temporary migration programs. It is important to note that significant challenges remain, such as the reluctance of states to share their sovereignty, often driven by the need to balance their economic interests with the protection of human rights.

In this line of reaffirming international cooperation, Rodríguez (2020) argues that migration has a positive effect on promoting sustainable development, integration, and the protection of migrants' human rights. Based on this premise, global partnerships are needed to promote safe and orderly mobility that benefits both countries of origin and destination. Such cooperation contributes to reducing inequalities and strengthens local economies by improving migration governance through humanitarian and inclusive policies. Within this framework, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration gains relevance. Nations aim to manage migration flows through synchronized strategies that ensure the inclusion and well-being of both migrants and host societies.

In the context of the European Union, as Arce (2024) states, international cooperation on migration promotes the development of inclusive and sustainable policies that prioritize safe and orderly mobility. In this way, actions have been implemented to support integration and the protection of rights, aimed at strengthening border control and detecting human trafficking, while also promoting intergovernmental agreements to share responsibilities and improve migration governance. Funds have been allocated for the integration of migrants and for humanitarian assistance, marking a significant contribution to the social and economic development of the countries involved in migration.

However, international cooperation on migration is also viewed by some as insufficient in its scope. According to Ruiz (2019), the international migration regime is not adequate for the effective management of migration flows. An unresolved tension has been observed between individuals' right to leave their country and states' right to refuse their admission. This has led to an increase in irregular migration and resulted in critical humanitarian situations. Beyond the initiatives promoted by the United Nations; such as the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration, the lack of consensus among nations hinders the development of effective and efficient solutions to the current migration challenges.

Within this perspective, Salinas de Frías (2021) highlights the insufficient international legal protection of irregular migrants and victims of human trafficking. This shortfall stems from the systemic challenges and inequalities faced by developing nations, which; despite making progress, have had little impact on ensuring the free movement of people. Other contributing factors in this context include humanitarian crises, which have led to unsustainable and complex migration flows that demand greater understanding and stronger international protection for affected individuals, supported by an adequate legal framework.

2. Literature Review

Venezuelan citizens must face a series of challenges in their migration process, one of the main issues being the violation of their basic human rights, such as access to education, healthcare, and decent employment. This is compounded by difficulties in obtaining documentation that would regularize their status, making it harder for them to remain in their host countries and depriving them of the basic conditions necessary for human development. Due to the economic hardship faced by many Venezuelan migrants, they are often forced into informal labor activities that only perpetuate their economic vulnerability and prevent them from accessing better wages (Fernández-Sánchez et al., 2022). In the area of education, host countries often struggle to admit migrant students due to their irregular status. In addition, language and cultural barriers may also create complications. Many children and young people who wish to access education encounter several obstacles and experience discrimination because of their migrant status or nationality (González, 2024). Another major issue faced by many Venezuelan migrants, especially those in highly vulnerable situations, is exposure to unsanitary conditions in their shelters or workplaces, which leads to the spread of diseases among both children and adults. The most concerning issues include child

malnutrition and illnesses caused by bacteria or viruses that weaken their immune systems (Vargas-Machuca et al., 2019).

A study on the nutritional status of Venezuelan migrant children in the Tumbes region of Peru was conducted by the Regional Health Directorate (DIRESA) in collaboration with UNICEF, using a descriptive methodology to address the lack of research in this area. Data collection was carried out in two phases, in August 2018 and March 2019, revealing that a large proportion of children suffer from issues such as acute and chronic malnutrition, anemia, and diarrheal and respiratory diseases. In response to this situation, UNICEF and DIRESA Tumbes, with the support of the NGO PRISMA, have implemented aid programs aimed at protecting child health, establishing health and nutrition modules that provide specialized care. Through this joint effort, the goal is to improve the nutritional status of Venezuelan migrant children and reduce the prevalence of these conditions (Vargas-Machuca et al., 2019).

The study by Arboleda et al. (2024), in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency, examines the labor dynamics of Venezuelan migrants in micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the Aburrá Valley, Colombia. This research highlights the lack of studies that quantify the impact of Venezuelan labor on local economic growth, despite its considerable potential for the entrepreneurial sector. The analysis addresses obstacles such as the lack of regularization among migrants, which limits their access to better employment opportunities and social stability. It also identifies that prejudice and a lack of information about available jobs leave many migrants unaware of productive employment opportunities. Finally, the study criticizes previous research for focusing mainly on the number of migrants, rather than exploring their lived experiences or proposing effective solutions to address their needs or their potential contribution to the development of local MSMEs.

Programs carried out by international organizations in support of migrants are not limited solely to the labor sector; they also aim to address other critical areas such as nutrition, health, psychological support, and overall assessment of migrants' living conditions. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed the global dynamic, particularly for migrants, who had to halt their journeys in search of shelter to protect themselves from contracting the dangerous disease. Venezuelan migrants who arrived in Ecuador shortly before the pandemic tend to have a lower socioeconomic profile compared to those who arrived in previous years, making them even more vulnerable. This situation demands that the highest priority be placed on reducing risks in order to guarantee a dignified quality of life. Combined with the impact of COVID-19, this scenario prompted international organizations and foundations to take action in response to the lack of governmental support from the Ecuadorian state, which, due to the overwhelming number of refugees, has had to limit the measures it can take (De La Hoz Suárez & Panchi Castro, 2020).

International organizations have taken on the role of protectors of Venezuelan migrants, seeking ways to assist them during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through international cooperation, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) provided shelter for homeless migrants, food assistance, free medical and psychological care, and the necessary resources to equip numerous shelters in order to accommodate more people. The IOM also supported the Livelihoods Strengthening Program, as well as other social programs. The IOM was not the only international organization involved; others included the Venezuelans Abroad Foundation Ecuador (FUNVEX-EC), the Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), among others. Each played a role in supporting Venezuelan migrants in vulnerable situations, contributing in different ways (De La Hoz Suárez & Panchi Castro, 2020).

The political context in Venezuela prompted the migration of individuals involved in political affairs; such as activists and journalists, toward countries like the United States, Colombia, and Peru, as they were persecuted for their activities in defense of freedom rights. It is known that in 2015, the migration wave intensified due to the worsening living standards and quality of life in Venezuela, triggered by the decline in oil barrel prices as a result of external shocks. By 2017, Ecuador had become one of the main destinations for Venezuelan migrants, with a reported inflow of 61,138 individuals. In 2022, according to the National Institute of Statistics and Census (2022), Ecuador hosted 231,686 Venezuelans (Instituto Ecuatoriano de Estadísticas y Censos, 2024).

According to the International Organization for Migration (IOM), as of August 2024, the number of Venezuelan migrants in Ecuador was approximately 445,000 people. Of these, 79% are between the ages of 18 and 39. About 62% are in an irregular migratory situation, while 35% have regular status, and the remaining 3% are either recognized as refugees or are asylum seekers. Among the most urgent needs of these groups are: support for income generation and employment, assistance with documentation, legal assistance, medical care, entrepreneurship training, and regularization. It is also important to note that the study reveals 33.1% of respondents reported having experienced some form of discrimination.

Additionally, 10.9% indicated they were aware of some type of gender-based violence along the migration route, with physical violence being the most frequently reported.

According to the reports provided by Eng. María Fernanda Rosales, the “Educa Sin Límites” program at the University of Azuay (UDA) in Cuenca, Ecuador, aims to provide training in various areas and skills in order to facilitate the integration of participants into formal employment. These training sessions were carried out in different fields such as food processing, electricity, and textile design, and took place on the UDA campus, beginning in September 2022 and concluding in July 2024. The core focus of the program is to support both nationals and foreigners in situations of mobility; including Colombians, Peruvians, Russians, and Venezuelans; in accessing better job opportunities while also helping to mitigate discrimination and xenophobia. The program originated from a grant competition called the “Living with Dignity” Fund, and it is part of a larger binational project between Ecuador and Peru titled “From Displacement to Integration.” This larger initiative gave rise to the “Educa Sin Límites” program in collaboration with the University of Azuay as a way to focus the efforts of various cooperating organizations within specific contexts.

The initiative directly addresses a problem faced by many people in situations of human mobility; namely, informal employment and the inability to access better job opportunities. For this reason, the “Educa Sin Límites” program focuses on the socioeconomic inclusion of migrants through technical training and official certification endorsed by the Ecuadorian government. To launch the program, a selection process was required. A call for applications was made through social media and in coordination with migration agencies to promote awareness of the workshops. Then, using a Google Forms application, information from the applicants was collected in order to select those who met the minimum requirements: being at least 18 years old, having completed at least primary education, being in a situation of mobility without restrictions (regardless of irregular or undocumented status), and having access to the internet to attend virtual classes. The final selection was made after reviewing the applications, and those who were accepted were officially notified.

According to the reports provided, the main objective of the program was to train both migrants and members of the host community in technical skills that would enable them to start their own businesses or access better job opportunities. This objective was accompanied by a certification component aimed at facilitating their entry into the labor market, as well as supporting the social integration of migrants. Social integration was promoted through psychological assistance offered by the program and educational activities designed to reduce the social gap between Ecuadorians and migrants. To meet the program’s stated goals, various strategies were implemented to support migrants; such as blended (semi-presential) training sessions, with 70 hours dedicated to hands-on instruction at the University of Azuay facilities. Each practical session was held in a different university laboratory, depending on the course being taught, and was complemented by theoretical instruction delivered through virtual classes. In addition, all study materials and equipment needed for the practical sessions were provided by the program. Beyond training, the program also offered psychological and medical support to both migrants and the host community.

Among other strategies implemented was the support provided to the children of both migrants and members of the host community. To this end, a childcare service was established, allowing participants to leave their children in a safe space while attending the courses. Medical and psychological support was also offered to the children, helping to reduce the vulnerability many of them faced due to their situation of mobility. In addition, the program made a significant effort to raise awareness about its impact by investing in advertising services, including social media and traditional media outlets.

It is important to mention that the selection criteria were based on the vulnerability condition of each migrant, applying the methodology proposed by ChildFund, which primarily helps identify levels of migrant vulnerability. The assessment form used was key to determining this vulnerability. Approximately 600 individuals were interviewed, and data were collected on their migratory status, educational level, length of residence, and whether or not they owned a business. From this group, 300 people were selected, of whom 298 successfully completed the training process. The accompanying statistics revealed that 77% of participants were women, 22% men, and 1% identified as belonging to the LGBTIQ+ community. Regarding migratory status among foreigners, 88% had regularized their stay in Ecuador (possessing an identification card), while 12% remained undocumented. Additionally, 82% lived in urban areas and 18% in rural areas. In terms of age, 11% were young people between 18 and 26 years old, 81% were adults aged 27 to 59, and 8% were seniors over 60. Notably, 19.4% of participants held a Venezuelan ID card, while 10.1% had a Venezuelan passport. The participants’ ages ranged from 18 to 72 years, with an average age of 41. In 2024, when the evaluation process for the “Educa Sin Límites” program began, it was only possible to work with a non-probabilistic, purposive sample of 70 migrants.

The main organization responsible for funding the program is the European Union (EU), a regional integration bloc made up of 27 countries from the European continent. Its goals include ensuring peace, stability, sustainable development, the eradication of poverty, and cooperation for the protection of human rights. The EU has various funding instruments for international programs, such as the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI), aimed at supporting economic growth and poverty reduction in regions across Africa, Eastern and Southern Europe, and other continents. Additionally, the European Development Fund (EDF) is another mechanism created to support developing countries, particularly in Africa, the Caribbean, and the Pacific, through the financing of infrastructure projects and institutional strengthening. One project developed by the EU was the “Living with Dignity” Grants Fund, carried out in collaboration with the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS), with the goal of efficiently coordinating joint efforts to promote solutions to issues related to displacement (Garrido & Tocón Pastor, 2024).

The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) is the entity responsible for overseeing the implementation of projects funded by the EU, forming the EU–UNOPS partnership. This UN agency aims to facilitate development, infrastructure, and sustainability projects in various countries around the world, acting as a key link between the public and private sectors by implementing programs that promote cooperation, efficiency, and transparency in sensitive or critical areas. To carry out the execution of the projects and programs it leads, UNOPS seeks collaboration with various actors, including governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), among others (Sousa Valdés & Flores Castro, 2021).

Another cooperating partner involved in the program was ChildFund International, an organization that is part of a global alliance dedicated to improving the living conditions of children and adolescents in situations of vulnerability; in this case, due to displacement from their countries of origin. To achieve its goals, ChildFund International partners with local organizations to implement programs that are sustainable and beneficial to the community (Veliz León et al., 2023). In this instance, it collaborated with the University of Azuay (UDA) to support the children of both national and foreign participants, providing them with assistance in both health and psychological care, and even facilitating their integration into the country’s educational system.

3. Methods

This section outlines the methodological strategy for the topic: Evaluation of Employment Outcomes of the “Educa Sin Límites” Program for Venezuelan Participants Residing in Cuenca, Ecuador. The research was based on the positivist paradigm, which, according to Comte (2004), asserts that knowledge is valid and true when it derives from empirical observation and the scientific method. The study followed a quantitative approach, collecting and analyzing numerical data to identify patterns, associations, and causal relationships. The methodology was developed through the application of a survey technique using observable variables measured on a Likert scale, designed to capture the opinions, attitudes, or behaviors of a specific group. A validated instrument was applied, with both content validity and internal consistency of the items measured. As stated by Hernández and Mendoza (2018), empirical data collection and analysis enable the establishment of bivariate correlations among research factors. The aim was to evaluate the strength of association between the independent variables and the improvement of the working lives of Venezuelan migrants residing in Cuenca (Espinal–Zapata et al., 2018).

The research was correlational, as it analyzed bivariate relationships to determine whether associations exist, without establishing causality. It was cross-sectional and non-experimental, as it examined the variables at a single point in time without deliberately manipulating them, and the data collected were not subject to evaluation over time (Hernández & Mendoza, 2018). The research subjects were Venezuelan migrants residing in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, who had participated in the “Educa Sin Límites” training program at the University of Azuay. The finite population consisted of approximately 100 study subjects, with a sampling frame provided by the program coordinators. This was a non-probabilistic, purposive study with a census approach, as the selection of participants was not based on randomization but rather on a predefined criterion. The researcher deliberately selected the subjects based on specific profiles relevant to the research. No sample was drawn; instead, all elements of the population were included (Rositas, 2014).

The method used was the scientific method, based on the search for bilateral associations between the research variables. The survey technique was applied, and the instrument used was a questionnaire, which included a header identifying the institution responsible for the study, the objective of the survey, and general instructions for the application of the instrument.

The body of the questionnaire consisted of observable variables measured on a Likert scale, which defined each research variable, as well as control variables that allowed for the characterization of the study subject. The questionnaire included five response options: 1 – strongly disagree, 2 – disagree, 3 – neither agree nor disagree, 4- agree, and 5 - strongly agree. An annex to the instrument was the informed consent form, which participants were required to read and sign (Nuñez–Ramírez et al., 2025).

Content Validation of the Instrument

The content validation of the questionnaire is a qualitative feedback process regarding the wording of the items and their relevance in measuring the conceptual definition of the factors. This was carried out through expert opinion, considering the professional profiles of both internal staff from the University of Azuay and external professionals from outside the higher education institution. The judges' validation form included four scoring options: 1 – irrelevant, 2 – somewhat relevant, 3 – relevant, and 4 – highly relevant. This allowed the alignment of the items both in terms of grammatical wording and their applicability with the conceptual definition of the factors. The judges' scores were totaled and averaged. Items that received an average score equal to or greater than 3.5 out of 4 were considered pertinent and relevant. Items scoring below 3.5/4 were eliminated. As a result, of the original 75 items, 49 were retained and used for the pilot test (Rincón et al., 2025).

Reliability of the Measurement Instrument

The internal consistency of the items was measured using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, with 0.6 set as the threshold to be achieved after the pilot test was conducted with 30 study participants. For the implementation of the pilot test, collaboration was established with Engineer María Fernanda Rosales, coordinator of the "Educa Sin Límites" program, to invite Venezuelan citizens who had participated in the program. A formal invitation was written, asking them to complete a survey regarding the improvement in their working lives following the training program. The message was sent via the WhatsApp groups created by the program, organized by the specific training area in which participants had been enrolled at the University of Azuay. A classroom with a capacity of 40 people in the Faculty of Legal Sciences was reserved to receive the participants. Coordination with the program coordinator ensured that the Venezuelan citizens were able to enter the university premises to complete the questionnaire (Rositas, 2014).

The Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used, and Cronbach's Alpha was calculated for each of the research variables as well as for the overall scale. Nine items were removed using the "Cronbach's Alpha if item deleted" option, which allowed the instrument to be refined to 40 items that constituted the final version used in the survey administered to the study participants. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ranging between 0.7 and 0.9 was achieved for the research variables, which is considered acceptable to excellent. The overall scale yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.952, which is considered excellent. This indicates that the instrument has internal consistency for measuring the conceptual definitions of the research variables (Sanclemente et al., 2025).

Table 1
Reliability of the theoretical model based on Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient

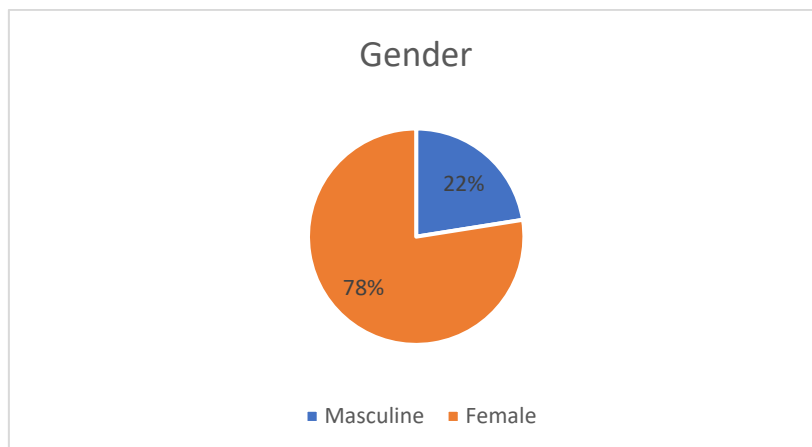
	Pilot test items	Final Cronbach's Alpha
Independent Variables		
X1 = Acquired Skills	10	0,898
X2 = Job placement	8	0,766
X3 = Seed capital	8	0,968
X4 = Digital skills	10	0,959
Dependent Variable		
Y1 = Improvement in working life	4	0,934
Cronbach's Alpha of the Overall Scale	40	0,952

4. Results

Characterization of the study subject

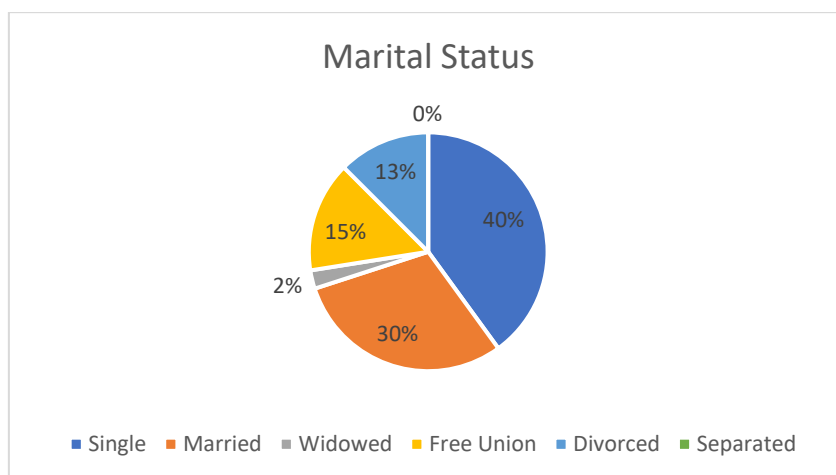
The study subject is the Venezuelan migrant who benefited from the “Educa Sin Límites” program. The majority are women, representing 78%, which supports the program’s gender-focused approach, followed by 22% male participants, contributing to the program’s inclusive nature.

Figure 1
Gender



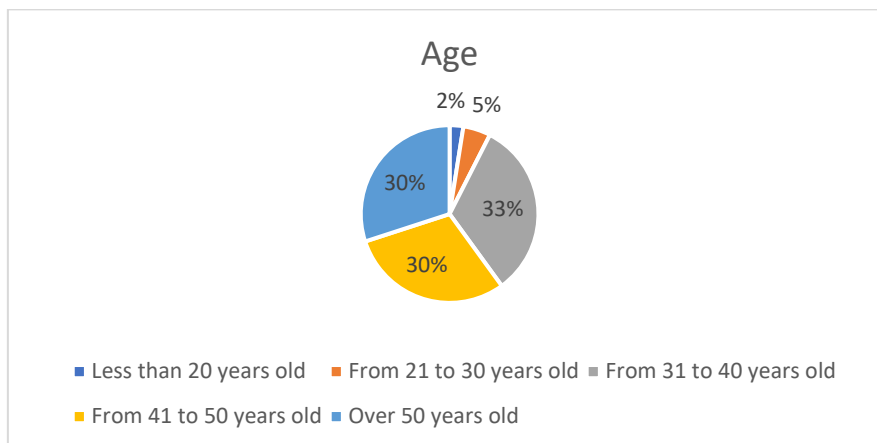
Forty percent of respondents reported being single, followed by 30% who indicated they were married. The remaining 30% fall into other civil status categories. The data demonstrate the diversity of the study group, which may suggest the need for differentiated support schemes; economic, emotional, and socio-educational. Additionally, there is a segment of the migrant population that has not yet formally established a family structure. On the other hand, there is also a significant proportion of individuals who migrate with their families and aim to socially adapt to a context different from their country of origin.

Figure 2
Marital Status



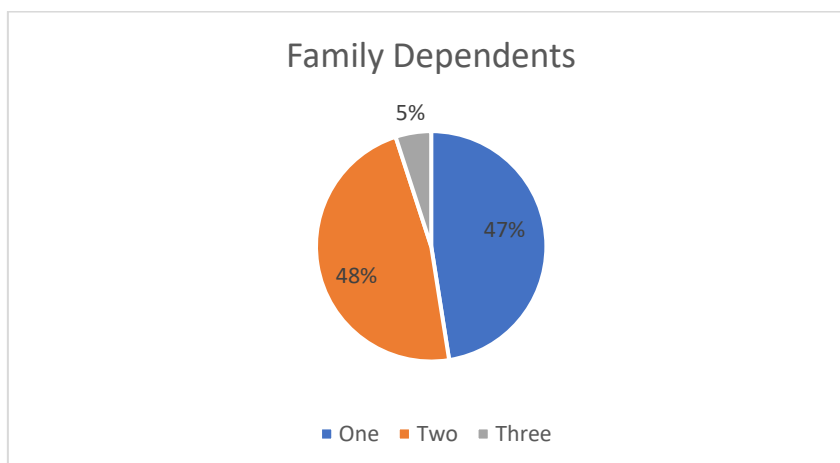
The Educa Sin Límites program served a migrant segment composed of adults of working and training age, with strong motivation to stabilize their migration status and create opportunities for labor market integration. The age ranges and percentages reflect this: 33% were between 31 and 40 years old, and 30% were between 41 and 50 years old. There was also a significant presence of older adults, with 30% of participants over the age of 50, highlighting the need for targeted retraining efforts and increased emotional and psychosocial support.

Figure 3
Age



Approximately 95% of Venezuelan migrants have at least one dependent, revealing that the vast majority migrate with family members and carry the corresponding responsibilities of supporting them. In this context, the study subject is not only seeking personal survival but also assumes the role of provider for their immediate accompanying family unit.

Figure 4
Family Dependents (Number of Children)



Parametric Test

In order to analyze the distribution of the data, a parametric test was applied using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, as the sample size was greater than 50 observations. The results show that 4 out of the 5 research variables are statistically significant, with test statistics below the p-value of 0.05. However, in the case of job placement, the test statistic was higher than the p-value of 0.05. It is concluded that the distribution is non-parametric, meaning that the majority of the data do not follow a normal distribution. Therefore, it is recommended to apply Spearman’s non-parametric correlations.

Table 2
Parametric Assumption Test

Research Variables	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Statistic	g1	Sig.
Avg_ImprovementInWorkingLife	0,175	70	0,003
Avg_AcquiredSkills	0,203	70	0,000
Avg_JobPlacement	0,103	70	,200*
Avg_SeedCapital	0,198	70	0,000
Avg_DigitalSkills	0,144	70	0,037

* This is a lower bound of the true significance
a Lilliefors Significance Correction

X1: Acquired skills versus improvement in migrant's working life

When referring to acquired skills, we are talking about the abilities a person develops through practice, learning, and experience in various activities, where previously acquired theoretical knowledge is applied in practical situations. Training is a way to help individuals gain such skills, as it teaches them how to use tools, solve problems, communicate more effectively, or produce a specific good or service. This allows those involved to perform more flexibly across different fields (Pozo-Camacho et al., 2023).

The improvement of the working life quality of Venezuelan migrants involves a shift in how the work environment is understood and managed; viewing it not only as a variable of study, but also as a method and movement aimed at optimizing working conditions and individual well-being. This aligns with the historical conception of Quality of Work Life (QWL) as a way of thinking about work and organizational structure in favor of the workers (Cañas & Álvarez, 2019).

X2: Job placement versus improvement in migrant's working life

The job placement of migrants refers to the process of integrating migrant individuals into the labor market of a host country, facilitating their access to decent employment and professional development opportunities. The following case helps illustrate how migrant job placement relates to the improvement of their working lives. In Chile, economic, political, and social growth significantly boosted the migrant labor force, particularly in key sectors such as air transport. This phenomenon led the government to plan the expansion of the Arturo Merino Benítez International Airport, creating more job opportunities that could improve migrants' working conditions. In this context, the integration of foreign workers into airport-related companies, such as Andes Airport Services, emerges as a determining factor for their stability and professional development in the country. Through semi-structured interviews, the research explored the experiences of migrant workers, revealing that, although they initially faced barriers in the Chilean labor market, they found in the company a more inclusive and respectful work environment, supported by an active labor union (Barría, 2020).

X3: Seed capital versus improvement in migrant's working life

Seed capital for migrants is initial funding aimed at supporting migrants in the creation of their own businesses, facilitating their economic autonomy and integration into the host country. Seed capital plays a fundamental role in improving migrants' working lives by providing access to essential financial resources needed to start their own ventures. This type of funding, targeted at individuals with limited employment options, enables migrants to develop their productive skills and participate independently in the local economy. Moreover, by promoting labor autonomy, seed capital contributes to the economic stability of migrants, who often face significant barriers in the labor market. In this way, seed-funded projects not only promote self-employment but also strengthen the social and economic integration of migrants (Larrarte-Castañeda & Humberto-Arévalo, 2024).

X4: Digital skills versus improvement of migrant's working life

Digital skills for migrants are abilities in the use of digital technologies that facilitate their adaptation, employability, and access to services in the host country. The relationship between job skills and the improvement of migrants' working lives lies in their ability to acquire specific competencies that enhance their employability and performance in the workplace. Just as digital skills improve teaching performance, migrants' job competencies; such as proficiency in technological tools and communication skills, support their integration and adaptation to the demands of the labor market. The improvement of these skills contributes to greater job stability and better growth opportunities, which in turn positively impacts their quality of life and personal development (Barrientos, 2019).

Y: Improvement in working lives

The improvement of working life in the context of Venezuelan migrants residing in Ecuador refers to the set of conditions that facilitate their integration and stability in the labor market. This includes access to formal employment, fair working conditions, social security, and opportunities for professional development. Its enhancement depends on inclusive migration policies, the reduction of institutional

barriers, and social acceptance. Such improvement has an impact on their overall well-being by reducing vulnerability and promoting economic autonomy (Barbieri et al., 2020).

Empirical evidence gathered by the researcher

From the field study, it was found that Prom_AcquiredSkills has a correlation coefficient of 0.573 and a statistical significance of $0.000 < p\text{-value of } 0.05$. Consequently, the research hypothesis is not rejected: Prom_AcquiredSkills has a strong correlation with Prom_ImprovementinWorkingLives among Venezuelan migrants who are beneficiaries of the "Educa sin Límites" program.

In this regard, after applying Spearman's non-parametric correlations, it is confirmed that Prom_LaborInsertion is very strongly correlated with Prom_ImprovementWorkingLife (0.734; Sig. $0.000 < p\text{-value of } 0.05$). The variable Prom_SeedCapital, with a bivariate correlation of 0.709, is very strongly correlated with Prom_ImprovementWorkingLife among Venezuelan migrants residing in Cuenca, Ecuador, who are beneficiaries of the "Educa sin Límites" program, at a statistical significance level of $0.000 < p\text{-value of } 0.005$.

Considering the theoretical background, there is statistical evidence to state that Prom_DigitalSkills has a correlation of 0.460, which indicates a moderate correlation with Prom_ImprovementWorkingLife among Venezuelan migrants, at a level of 0.003, which is lower than the p-value of 0.05 and therefore statistically significant.

The consolidated results of the non-parametric correlations are presented below, showing that the independent variables are moderately, strongly, and very strongly correlated with the dependent variable. This finding is essential to affirm that, from a theoretical standpoint, the factors were carefully selected, and at the level of the "Educa sin Límites" program, there is statistical evidence to support that the strategies implemented to improve the working lives of migrants; through acquired skills, labor insertion, seed capital, and digital competencies, were both relevant and appropriate.

Table 3
Non-parametric correlations

			Correlations				
Spearman's Rho	Prom_ImprovementWorkingLife		Prom_ImprovementWorkingLife	Prom_AcquiredSkills	Prom_JobPlacement	Prom_SeedCapital	Prom_DigitalSkills
			Correlation Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient	Correlation Coefficient
			1,000	,573**	,734**	,709**	,460**
		Sig. (2-tailed)		0,000	0,000	0,000	0,003
		N	70	70	70	70	70
	Prom_AcquiredSkills	Correlation Coefficient	,573**	1,000	,424**	,608**	0,294
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000		0,006	0,000	0,066
		N	70	70	70	70	70
	Prom_JobPlacement	Correlation Coefficient	,734**	,424**	1,000	,577**	,621**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,006		0,000	0,000
		N	70	70	70	70	70
	Prom_SeedCapital	Correlation Coefficient	,709**	,608**	,577**	1,000	,580**
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,000	0,000	0,000		0,000
		N	70	70	70	70	70
	Prom_DigitalSkills	Correlation Coefficient	,460**	0,294	,621**	,580**	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	0,003	0,066	0,000	0,000	
		N	70	70	70	70	70

** . Correlation is significant at the 0,05 level (2-tailed).

Nota: en esta tabla las correlaciones no Paramétricas

5. Discussion

Building upon the previously discussed arguments and drawing from the perspective of Massey et al. (2008) regarding World Systems Theory, which classifies countries into three structural categories, it can be understood that Venezuela is positioned as a peripheral country, due to the economic, political, and social crisis experienced by its citizens. As a result, many Venezuelans are compelled to migrate in search of better living conditions; with Ecuador, considered a semi-peripheral country under this theory, becoming a destination for many. Therefore, based on the results obtained, it is found that the situation of Venezuelan migrants residing in Cuenca, Ecuador, has improved compared to their initial conditions upon arrival, as evidenced by the positive bivariate correlations.

However, due to the large number of Venezuelan citizens who have been forced to leave their country, Ecuador, still considered a developing nation, has had to adapt to a new reality for which it was not adequately prepared. As one of the countries with the highest influx of Venezuelan migrants, the Ecuadorian state was compelled to implement measures to regulate entry. Nevertheless, these efforts proved largely ineffective, as the number of undocumented migrants continued to rise. This situation gave rise to new challenges within Ecuador, including a growing sense of rejection and xenophobia among the local population toward foreigners. Semi-peripheral countries are generally not equipped to accommodate large-scale migration flows, as they often lack the institutional and economic resources necessary to ensure an adequate and orderly migration process in the context of mass displacement.

Due to the ineffectiveness of Ecuadorian state migration policies, questions have arisen regarding how to address and compensate for these shortcomings. In this context, and in line with the ideas proposed by Georgi & Schatral (2011) within the framework of critical theory, migration processes themselves should be reconsidered, and borders should be open, since it is these very borders that perpetuate and intensify migration. If state borders were open, Venezuelan citizens would be able to move freely among different countries in search of better opportunities, rather than being forced to remain in a single country due to the complex bureaucratic and legal obstacles involved in crossing from one nation to another. Critical theory emphasizes that national migration policies often serve as mechanisms that reinforce the vulnerability of migrants, allowing powerful and resource-rich countries to retain control over who enters their territories, while less developed or developing nations are left to manage the influx of migrants from regions with higher levels of poverty.

The ineffectiveness of migration controls in response to the Venezuelan migration crisis is also attributable to the inability of regional organizations to take meaningful action. The Andean Community of Nations (CAN) should be at the forefront of addressing this issue, given the significant impact the crisis has had on its member states: Ecuador, Colombia, Peru, and Bolivia. Although Venezuela withdrew from the bloc following its announcement in 2006, the consequences of its internal crisis have extended to neighboring countries. The organization's stance has been limited to acknowledging the existence of a problem and asserting that it is the sole responsibility of each member state to address it through their own domestic policies. However, there has been no serious consideration of the need to create regional initiatives aimed at mitigating the effects of this migration crisis, nor any proposal to establish binding or mandatory measures that member countries should adopt to respond in a coordinated and effective manner.

The actions of the Andean Community (CAN) in the field of migration are fundamentally limited to its policy of free movement for citizens of member states, exempting them from visa or passport requirements. However, Venezuela's withdrawal from the bloc means that its nationals are not covered by these provisions, which could otherwise significantly reduce territorial access barriers for migrants. Moreover, there is a clear trend among member states toward implementing unilateral responses to the Venezuelan migration crisis, as exemplified by Colombia's Temporary Protection Status (EPTV) and Peru's Temporary Stay Permit (PTP). Within this context, the CAN demonstrates limited effectiveness in addressing regional humanitarian crises, confining itself to a declarative role that acknowledges existing challenges and calls for cooperation, yet without articulating a concrete action plan that reflects institutional commitment or regional coordination.

The limitations of the Andean Community (CAN) in addressing the Venezuelan migration crisis stem largely from the divergent positions of its member states regarding the Venezuelan government. Bolivia, not being a primary destination for Venezuelan migrants, has expressed limited concern over their mass exodus. This stance has contributed to hindering the adoption of common policies aimed at confronting the crisis, further influenced by Bolivia's ideological alignment with the Venezuelan regime. The absence of a unified migration policy among CAN member states in response to Venezuelan migration highlights the bloc's restricted reach and limited capacity to influence this critical area. This fragmentation

undermines the potential for a coordinated regional response and reinforces the perception of CAN as an institution unable to effectively address pressing humanitarian and migratory challenges in the region.

What the concept of the theory of humanization critiques is that, in times of crisis, countries tend to prioritize the defense of their national sovereignty over the protection of individuals' safety and interests based on their condition as human beings. It argues, therefore, that states have an obligation to prioritize the value of life and human dignity above territorial or political concerns. Critical theory aligns closely with the theory of humanization, as both challenge the way in which countries impose restrictive barriers to regulate the entry of migrants. Such practices often result in the irregular entry of individuals and the neglect of their basic needs by the host states, contradicting the foundational premise that states should act as guarantors of individual rights and freedoms. Instead, what becomes evident is a trend toward restricting rather than safeguarding those rights.

Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the significant role played by international organizations and national institutions in improving the labor conditions of Venezuelan migrants who participated in the "Educa Sin Límites" program. As noted by Zavaleta (2015), it is the responsibility of states, national institutions, and the international community to ensure the well-being of individuals by upholding and enforcing their rights. In this regard, the initiative led by the European Union and UNOPS to launch the competition that resulted in the large-scale project "From Displacement to Integration" deserves special mention. This project, developed jointly by the Ecuadorian and Peruvian governments, aims to support people in situations of human mobility. Equally important was the role of the University of Azuay, a national private institution that aligned its efforts to support both national and foreign individuals in their integration into the formal labor market. In this way, these organizations contribute to the fulfillment of the previously discussed concept of human security. However, it must be emphasized that further resources and efforts are still required to expand the reach of such programs, ensuring that their impact is not limited to a small group of beneficiaries but extends to a broader population.

The main limitation of the "Educa Sin Límites" program lies in its restricted reach. Despite the high demand reflected by the large number of applicants, the limited availability of spots prevented the inclusion of many individuals; some of whom may have had a greater need for training. Thousands of Venezuelan citizens currently reside in the city of Cuenca, Ecuador, and for this reason, it is not possible to draw generalized conclusions about the labor conditions of all migrants. However, the program serves as tangible evidence of the efforts made to change people's realities, even if only within a small group. The limitations of these efforts to improve migrant conditions are closely tied to their dependence on external support provided by various organizations. The institutions behind the program are currently seeking new sources of funding in order to train another group of migrants. This highlights a broader issue facing international cooperation projects: their reliance on the political will and support of states or sponsoring organizations, which makes them vulnerable to policy shifts that could lead to their cancellation or non-renewal.

Although efforts to support migrants are commendable, it is also evident that they will always be insufficient, as it is impossible to assist the entire population. Nevertheless, the "Educa Sin Límites" program has become a benchmark in the field of international cooperation due to the tangible results it has achieved. Similar to the program described by Vargas-Machuca et al. (2019), which provided medical assistance to Venezuelan migrant children suffering from chronic malnutrition; a consequence of the precarious conditions they endured during their journeys and the unstable employment situations faced by their parents, "Educa Sin Límites" went beyond offering basic training. Aligned with the human security framework proposed by Zavaleta (2015) and the humanization approach of Pastor (2009), the program sought to address the broader needs of migrant citizens. In collaboration with the University of Azuay, a childcare service was established to support the sons and daughters of migrant participants. In addition to childcare, the program provided psychological support and free medical care, services which were also extended to the parents. These complementary measures gave "Educa Sin Límites" a humanitarian focus, reinforcing its role not only as an educational initiative but also as a comprehensive support mechanism for vulnerable migrant families.

6. Conclusion

This research aimed to demonstrate, through reliable statistical evidence, the correlation between acquired skills (0.573**), confirming that the objective of providing training in various areas and competencies to facilitate participants' entry into formal employment was achieved. In this regard, labor insertion (0.734**), seed capital (0.709**), and digital skills (0.460**) have significantly contributed to the improvement of the labor conditions of Venezuelan migrants who benefited from the "Educa Sin Límites" program implemented by the University of Azuay. Indeed, the independent variables are significantly

associated with the dependent variable at a p-value lower than 0.05, indicating statistical significance. These empirical findings are consistent with the existing literature, which portrays the improvement of Venezuelan migrants' labor lives as a complex reality shaped by the interaction of several variables, including motivation for migration, labor integration, discrimination, professional recognition, job satisfaction, and work commitment.

The skills acquired during the migration process facilitate labor market integration by enabling access to jobs that align with migrants' qualifications. In this regard, the “Educa Sin Límites” program provides sufficient evidence to assert that the economic precariousness faced by Venezuelan migrants, often forced into informal, low-income activities, can be reversed. Seed capital emerges as a crucial factor in overcoming structural obstacles such as the lack of recognition of academic degrees or labor discrimination. This essential component enables autonomous entrepreneurial ventures, enhancing labor independence and directly contributing to improved living standards and quality of life. Moreover, digital competencies, serving as cross-cutting tools, expand employment opportunities by being closely correlated with individuals' perceptions of the labor market, as well as with levels of professional recognition, career growth, and commitment to work.

From this reality, it is worth discussing how the “Educa Sin Límites” program offered multiple avenues to strengthen the security of Venezuelan migrants by providing them with tools to achieve local economic sustainability. The findings of this study, supported by statistically significant variables, could serve as a basis for the development of local legislation. Specifically, it would be appropriate to recommend, as a citizen-led initiative, the drafting of a municipal ordinance that establishes regulatory frameworks to support Venezuelan migrants residing in Cuenca. Such an ordinance could be built upon the key variables studied; such as labor insertion, seed capital, digital skills, and human security, thereby promoting inclusive, evidence-based policy at the cantonal level aimed at reducing vulnerability and fostering socioeconomic integration.

A call to action is urgently needed for the Ecuadorian State to fully assume its role as guarantor of rights, particularly in light of the support already provided by other institutions and organizations working to reduce the vulnerability of Venezuelan migrants due to their migratory status. Ecuador must ensure the implementation of programs that facilitate the social and economic integration of migrants within its territory, rather than merely allowing entry without guaranteeing minimum living conditions. Similarly, regional organizations such as the Andean Community must be urged to take an active role in the creation of binding mechanisms that provide comprehensive support to migrants affected by the Venezuelan crisis. This is not an isolated issue; it is a regional reality that affects not only Venezuelan migrants but also the broader Latin American community. Coordinated and sustained action at both the national and regional levels is essential to uphold human dignity and promote inclusive development.

The main limitation of this research lies in its correlational scope, which, although it incorporates exploratory and descriptive elements, it does not reach a fully analytical-explanatory level. This sets the groundwork for a longitudinal research line aimed at explaining the variance of the dependent variable based on the theoretical framework established in this study, using the current variables that satisfy the assumption of linearity. Future studies could benefit from employing advanced statistical techniques such as exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis, multiple linear regression, or structural equation modeling to deepen the understanding of the relationships between variables. Additionally, the mobility of several Venezuelan participants—either returning to their country of origin or relocating to other cities in Ecuador—made it impossible to survey the entire intended population. This, combined with a lack of response from numerous participants, resulted in a final sample of only 70 respondents out of the 100 initially projected.

7. References

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1

Informed Consent

Informed Consent

We want to ensure that the individuals surveyed as part of the thesis project “Evaluation of Labor Outcomes of the Educa Sin Límites Program for Venezuelan Participants Residing in Cuenca, Ecuador” are fully informed about the implications of participating. Please check the boxes below if you believe you have all the relevant information. If not, please let us know.

- ☐ I have been informed about the topic and objective of the project.
- ☐ I agree to participate in the questionnaire.
- ☐ I understand that the questionnaire will take approximately 15 minutes, though it may take more or less time.
- ☐ I am participating voluntarily.
- ☐ I understand that I may refuse to answer any item, for any reason.
- ☐ I understand that I may withdraw from the questionnaire at any time, for any reason.
- ☐ I understand that the information provided will be used exclusively for academic purposes.

Participant's name	Signature

Date: March 7th, 2025

Appendix 2
Instrument

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS JURÍDICAS
CARRERA: ESTUDIOS INTERNACIONALES

The measurement instrument is designed to gather field data for the thesis project titled “**Evaluation of Labor Outcomes of the Educa Sin Límites Program for Venezuelan Participants Residing in Cuenca, Ecuador.**” Therefore, it is very important that you answer the questionnaire as honestly as possible. All information collected is anonymous and confidential. Before proceeding to complete the form, please take the following into account:

- a. Read each statement carefully.
- b. For each statement, indicate how much you agree with what is expressed.
- c. Answer all statements, even if they seem similar.
- d. Erase any mark if you change your mind about a statement.
- e. Be as honest as possible in your responses; do not answer based on what you think is expected.
- f. Do not skip any questions; answer them one by one.

The instrument measures the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete all the questions.

Place a mark in the box that corresponds, keeping in mind the following scale:

- 1 Strongly disagree
- 2 Disagree
- 3 Neither agree nor disagree
- 4 Agree
- 5 Strongly agree

X1 Acquired Skills

Definition: Abilities that a person develops through practice, learning, and experience in various activities, in which previously acquired theoretical knowledge is applied in practical situations. Training is a way to help individuals obtain these skills, as it teaches them how to use tools, solve problems, communicate more effectively, or produce a good or service. This allows participants to perform with greater versatility across different fields (Pozo-Camacho et al., 2023).

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
1	You developed new skills that allow you to perform your job more effectively.					
2	You are able to effectively apply the knowledge acquired during the training to your working life.					
3	You feel more confident using tools and resources related to your field of work.					
4	You have improved your ability to solve problems in the workplace.					
5	The training has helped you improve your performance in specific tasks at your job.					
6	You feel more prepared to face the challenges of the job market.					
7	You acquired new techniques that make your daily work easier.					

8	The training has enabled you to increase your efficiency in the production of goods or services.						
9	You are now able to identify and apply strategies to improve your job performance.						
10	You feel more motivated and committed to your professional development after the training.						

X2: Job Placement

Definition: The job placement of migrants is the process of integrating migrant individuals into the labor market of a host country, facilitating their access to decent employment and professional development opportunities (Barría, 2020).

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5	
11	You currently have stable employment in Cuenca.						
12	You have managed to improve your income since participating in the training program.						
13	You feel integrated into your work environment and have a good relationship with your coworkers.						
14	You are aware of your labor rights and know how to assert them in your workplace.						
15	You have been able to access formal employment since completing the training.						
16	The training you received helped you improve your skills to obtain employment.						
17	You have been able to establish networks that have facilitated your job search during or after the training program.						
18	You believe your employment situation has improved after the training.						

X3: Seed Capital

Definition: is initial funding aimed at supporting migrants in the creation of their own businesses, facilitating their economic autonomy and integration into the host country. Seed capital plays a fundamental role in improving migrants' working lives, as it provides access to essential financial resources needed to launch independent ventures (Larrarte-Castañeda & Humberto-Arévalo, 2024).

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5	
19	You have received initial funding to start your own business as a result of the “Educa Sin Límites” training program.						
20	You have used the seed capital effectively to grow your business.						
21	Your business has generated sustainable income from the initial funding received.						
22	You have received guidance on how to manage and optimize the use of the seed capital.						
23	You consider that the process of accessing the seed capital was clear and accessible.						
24	Thanks to the initial funding, you were able to expand your business or diversify your products/services.						
25	The seed capital has facilitated your integration into Cuenca’s labor market.						
26	You feel satisfied with the impact that the seed capital has had on your business and your working life.						

X4: Digital Skills

Definition: These are abilities in the use of digital technologies that facilitate migrants' adaptation, employability, and access to services in the host country. The connection between digital competencies and the improvement of migrants' working lives lies in their ability to acquire specific skills that enhance their employability and performance in the workplace (Barrientos, 2019).

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
27	You know how to write and send professional emails.					
28	You are able to create and edit documents in programs such as Word, Excel, or Google Docs.					
29	You know how to use digital platforms to search for jobs in Cuenca.					
30	You feel comfortable using videoconferencing applications such as Zoom, Google Meet, or Microsoft Teams.					
31	You are able to carry out procedures and transactions online, such as requesting documents or making electronic payments.					
32	You understand the importance of digital security and apply basic measures to protect your information online.					
33	You are trained in the use of digital tools to improve your job performance.					
34	You are able to manage and organize your time using digital applications such as calendars or task managers.					
35	You use e-commerce platforms or social media to sell products or services.					
36	You believe that your digital skills have improved your employment opportunities in Cuenca.					

Y: Improvement of Working Life

Definition: the improvement of working life refers to the set of conditions that facilitate their integration and stability within the labor market. This includes access to formal employment, fair working conditions, social security, and opportunities for professional development. Its advancement depends on inclusive migration policies, the reduction of institutional barriers, and social acceptance. Improved working conditions have a direct impact on overall well-being, helping to reduce vulnerability and promote economic autonomy (Barbieri et al., 2020).

No	Items	1	2	3	4	5
37	Compared to your situation before participating in the training program, you now have more stable employment.					
38	You have managed to reduce your economic vulnerability thanks to greater job stability.					
39	You feel more economically autonomous and are better able to meet your basic needs.					
40	You believe that your quality of life has improved due to your progress in the labor field.					

Participant's general informacion

Current Activity	
Number of Dependents (how many children do you have?)	
Participant's gender	<div> <div>Masculine</div> <div>Female</div> </div>
(Mark with an x)	
Marital Status	
Single	
Married	
Widowed	
Free Union	

Divorced			
Separated			
Age	1) Less than 20 years old () 2) From 21 to 30 years old () 3) From 31 to 40 years old () 4) From 41 to 50 years old () 5) Over 50 years old ()		
Thank you for your collaboration			