

Article

Perceptions and Media Representation of Ecuadorian Migrants in Mexico: An Analysis of Stereotypes and Sociopolitical Factors

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ABSTRACT

This study explores Mexicans' perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants, emphasizing their economic contributions, media representation, and associated stereotypes. Based on a quantitative methodology and descriptive design, 315 people from different regions of Mexico were surveyed. Economic reasons are the main cause of migration, and 75.5% consider that Ecuadorians generate little or no competition in the labor market. Media representation is perceived as neutral in traditional media and social networks, although a significant proportion rate it as negative. 57.1% are unaware of the recent diplomatic crisis between Ecuador and Mexico, although 63.4% consider its possible impact on migration. These findings show how media and sociopolitical factors influence the construction of stereotypes, limiting the integration of migrants. Greater attention to media narratives and the promotion of public policies that foster an inclusive environment are recommended.

Keywords: migration; stereotypes; media representation; Ecuador; Mexico.

RESUMEN

Este estudio explora las percepciones de los mexicanos hacia los migrantes ecuatorianos, enfatizando sus contribuciones económicas, representación mediática y los estereotipos asociados. Basado en una metodología cuantitativa y un diseño descriptivo, se encuestó a 315 personas de diferentes regiones de México. Los motivos económicos son la principal causa de migración, y el 75,5 % considera que los ecuatorianos generan una competencia laboral parcial o nula. La representación mediática se percibe como neutral en medios tradicionales y en redes sociales, aunque una proporción significativa la califica como negativa. El 57,1 % desconoce la reciente crisis diplomática entre Ecuador y México, aunque el 63,4 % considera su posible impacto en la migración. Estos hallazgos evidencian cómo factores mediáticos y sociopolíticos influyen en la construcción de estereotipos, limitando la integración de los migrantes. Se recomienda una mayor atención a la narrativa mediática y la promoción de políticas públicas que fomenten un entorno inclusivo.

Palabras-chave: migración; estereotipos; representación mediática; Ecuador; México.



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Introduction

The Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (2024) defines migration as a change of residence that involves crossing well-defined geographical or administrative boundaries. This phenomenon, far from being new, has played an essential role in shaping civilizations, promoting cultural and economic exchange between societies (Contreras-Ibáñez and Saldívar Garduño 2018). Despite changes in migration dynamics, the flow of people between regions continues to be a characteristic feature of contemporary globalized societies (Armijos et al. 2022).

Although research on migration tends to focus on the economic and social impacts of movements from developing to developed countries, flows between developing countries, known as South-South migration, have received considerably less academic attention (Blyde et al. 2019). In addition to its economic and social implications, another key aspect of migration is the perception that receiving societies have of migrants. These perceptions, shaped by historical, cultural, and social factors, can influence the experiences of migrants and the public policies designed to manage migration flows.

To understand the context of this research, between 2021 and 2023, Mexico experienced historic levels of both immigration and emigration (International Organization for Migration 2023). During this period, migration from South America to Mexico increased significantly, from 1% to 44%. Among the main nationalities registered in this flow are Ecuadorians, who face stereotypes and prejudices in the receiving country, which affects their social and economic integration. In Ecuador, the reasons for emigrating are deeply linked to economic factors (Torres-Toukourmidis et al. 2024). Likewise, the increase in migratory flows has had an impact on public perception and migration policies in Mexico (Cárdenas Alaminos 2023), generating debates on the challenges of intercultural coexistence and the recognition of migrants' rights. This context highlights the need to investigate how migration dynamics influence relations between local communities and migrants, especially those from countries with complex socioeconomic realities such as Ecuador.

Currently, Mexico has become a strategic point in South-South migration due to its geographical position. However, migration restrictions, such as the visa requirement for Ecuadorians in 2021, have generated tensions, limiting air travel but increasing detentions at the Mexico-United States border, which reached 120,000 cases by December 2023 (UN Migration Ecuador 2023).

This background highlights a gap in the literature on how Ecuadorian migrants are perceived in Mexico and the implications of these perceptions for their integration and public policy. Based on this context, the following research questions are established:

Research questions

1. What stereotypes prevail in Mexico about Ecuadorian migrants?
2. How are Ecuadorian migrants represented in the Mexican media?
3. What impact do these perceptions have on the social and economic integration of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico?
4. What cultural and social factors influence perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico?

In summary, this study is based on the need to understand perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico, a key issue in a global context where migration has become ubiquitous. This understanding is essential for several reasons. First, stereotypes associated with migrants affect their quality of life, influencing their access to the labor market and basic services. These stereotypes are deeply rooted in historical, cultural, and social factors that require systematic analysis (Olier and Spadavecchia 2022). Second, the media plays a



fundamental role in shaping collective perceptions, hence the importance of understanding the representation of migrants in these spaces, detailing their effect on the perpetuation of narratives (Chouliaraki 2017). In summary, this study addresses a gap in the academic literature, providing an empirical basis for describing Mexicans' perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico, focusing on their economic contributions, their representation in the media, and the stereotypes associated with them, responding to one aspect of the current challenges of South-South migration.

Theoretical considerations

Migration is classified into several categories according to different criteria: space (internal or international), time (temporary or permanent), and motivations (voluntary or forced). Internal migration refers to movements within a country's borders, such as between rural and urban areas, while international migration involves crossing geopolitical borders (Tsegay 2023). As Colangelo-Kraan and De-Santis (2024) point out, it is a geographical-ideological space of fulfillment based on models of existence and lifestyle produced by Western cultural industries. In Latin America, international migration flows have historically been directed mainly toward developed countries, motivated by the search for better job opportunities, family reunification, and political factors (Herrera and Sørensen 2017).

Among the types of temporary migration, circular and return migration stand out. Circular migration consists of repeated movement between the country of origin and one or more countries to take advantage of seasonal job opportunities (Sánchez-Montijano and García 2011). Return migration, on the other hand, is linked to specific activities, such as academic studies, after which migrants return to their places of origin. Transit migration is also a type of temporary movement in which people cross a country as part of their journey to another destination (León-Alberca and Cabrera 2024). However, when migrants fail to reach their goal, they often choose to settle in the transit country (Inzunza and Ghys 2024), as is the case in Mexico with those seeking to reach the United States.

On the other hand, forced migration is driven by social and cultural factors, such as persecution for sexual orientation, political ideology, or religious beliefs, as well as armed conflict and natural disasters (Mojica 2018). A historical example of forced migration is slavery during the colonial era, when millions of people were transported from Africa to America in conditions of extreme oppression (Sutcliff 1998). More recently, the conflict between Ukraine and Russia has led to a massive displacement of people seeking refuge in neighboring countries (Torres-Toukourmidis, et al. 2022).

The integration of migrants is deeply influenced by their legal status. According to Blyde et al. (2019), those with legal status in their destination country are more likely to adapt, as they have access to essential services such as health, education, and employment. These opportunities not only improve their quality of life, but also allow them to contribute to the economic and social development of their place of residence.

Conversely, migrants in an irregular situation face significant barriers that hinder their adaptation, perpetuating cycles of poverty and exclusion (Özden et al. 2018). These barriers can be understood as instruments of intimidation, which seek to preserve the space delimited by borders and the confines of a national territory, giving rise to phenomena such as the victimization of a people in the face of "invaders" and the naturalization of hatred as an effect of rejection, fear, discrimination, and stigmatization (Colangelo-Kraan and De-Santis 2024). In addition, they must overcome cultural, linguistic, and regulatory challenges, which can become factors of isolation if they do not have the necessary support to integrate.

Impact of migration on destination and origin countries

In receiving countries, migration can generate benefits, such as an increase in the young population and cultural diversification. According to data from UN Migration (2021), Asia accounts for 30.5% of the



international migrant population, followed by Europe with 30.9%, the Americas with 26.2%, Africa with 9.05%, and Oceania with 3.35%. Migrants also contribute to economic growth by increasing the consumption of goods and services, although the phenomenon poses social challenges related to integration and cohesion (Blyde et al. 2019).

In countries of origin, remittances have a significant positive impact, improving families' living conditions and strengthening investment in education, health, and entrepreneurship. In addition, returning migrants bring back knowledge and skills acquired abroad, enriching local human capital (Nieto 2012). However, migration also poses challenges, such as brain drain, which reduces the availability of highly skilled talent, and family separation, which can affect the emotional and educational development of children who remain in the country of origin.

Perception, stereotyping, and media representation of migrants

This research is based on the articulation of the concepts of perception, stereotype, and media representation, understood as interdependent analytical categories that allow us to understand how receiving societies interpret and signify migratory processes. These notions are particularly relevant in contexts where direct contact with the migrant population is limited and access to information is mediated by social, political, and media discourses (Chouliaraki 2017; Olier and Spadavecchia 2022).

On the one hand, perception is conceived as a cognitive and social process through which individuals interpret reality based on previous experiences, cultural frameworks, and available sources of information (Arauz et al. 2022). In the field of migration, perception does not respond exclusively to direct interaction with migrants, but is shaped by shared stories and media narratives that influence the host population's assessment of certain groups (Contreras-Ibáñez and Saldívar Garduño 2018).

A stereotype is understood as a simplified and generalizing social construct that attributes homogeneous characteristics to a specific group, operating as a cognitive framework that reduces the complexity of the phenomenon of migration and conditions social expectations regarding integration, job performance, and access to opportunities (Olier and Spadavecchia 2022).

Media representation refers to the ways in which the media and digital platforms construct and disseminate narratives about migrants, selecting approaches and interpretive frameworks that, in addition to reflecting social realities, also actively contribute to shaping them, influencing public perception and the reproduction of stereotypes (Villarroel and González 2023).

Perceptions of migrants in the workplace

The presence of migrants in labor markets has varying effects. In sectors mainly occupied by workers with lower academic qualifications, it can generate negative wage pressure. For example, in Chile, Contreras and Gallardo (2020) found that more than 50% of immigrants were employed in labor-intensive sectors such as retail, domestic services, and hospitality, affecting the incomes of less-skilled native workers. However, no significant negative impacts were observed among workers with higher levels of education. Despite having higher educational levels than natives, migrants tend to hold low-skilled jobs, which limits their professional and economic development (Grebeniyk et al. 2021). At the same time, their participation can facilitate the incorporation of native women into the labor market by reducing the domestic burden through accessible services such as cleaning and childcare.

For its part, the media plays a crucial role in shaping public perceptions of migrants, acting as an amplifier of narratives that directly influence social integration and migration policies (Willer et al. 2023). These media representations often associate migrants with a negative perspective, linking them to social



problems such as insecurity, unemployment, and the saturation of public services, which reinforces negative stereotypes and perpetuates discourses of exclusion (Leyva-Vázquez et al. 2023). In this sense, the media not only reflect realities, but also shape them, establishing hegemonic discourses that hinder the understanding of migration from an inclusive and human rights-based perspective (Villaroel and González 2023). These narratives are often linked to the construction of the cultural "other" as a threat to the social cohesion of the receiving country.

An analysis of media narratives about Central American migrants on social media revealed that they contribute to the construction of marginalized identities, using frameworks that emphasize their relationship with marginality and danger (Beltrán 2023; Pérez-Díaz and Aguilar-Pérez 2021). These representations have a direct impact on public perception, fueling xenophobic and racist attitudes that hinder the integration of migrants (Altamirano and Torres-Toukourmidis 2021). Currently, with regard to media representations of Ecuadorians in Mexico, there is no research that identifies trends and patterns correlating this mobility. In short, the review of media approaches highlights the need for an analysis of the impact of these narratives on public perception and migration policies, especially considering the context of socioeconomic crisis in countries such as Ecuador, which drives migration flows to nations such as Mexico. This approach would allow for the identification of communication strategies that promote more inclusive narratives aligned with a human rights framework, thus favoring media representation that contributes to the integration and respect of migrant populations.

In conclusion, this study focuses on analyzing Mexicans' perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants, focusing on their economic contributions, media representation, and associated stereotypes. These dimensions are critical to understanding the challenges and opportunities inherent in social and economic integration processes in receiving contexts. Public perception of migrants, deeply influenced by historical, cultural, and media factors, not only conditions their access to fundamental rights but also determines their position within the socioeconomic fabric of host communities.

By delving deeper into these variables, this work seeks to generate a solid empirical basis to inform the design of public policies and educational and communication intervention strategies. Such policies must address the deconstruction of social and media prejudices, promoting discourses that highlight the positive contributions of migrants and foster a narrative oriented towards respect for human rights. The role of the media is a central factor in this dynamic, given its power to shape collective perceptions and reproduce or dismantle latent stereotypes.

The findings of this research will also highlight the need to implement training programs that reinforce intercultural competence and respect for diversity in education systems. In a globalized context, where migration shapes plural and complex societies, education is a key tool for fostering environments of harmonious and equitable coexistence.

Finally, this study provides analytical and methodological elements that are not only relevant to the specific case of South-South migration between Ecuador and Mexico, but can also be extrapolated to other migration scenarios. By adopting a multidimensional and interdisciplinary approach, it contributes to a theoretical and practical framework that favors the articulation of inclusive, evidence-based policies that address the structural challenges of contemporary migration.

Methodology

The overall objective of this study is to determine the perceptions and stereotypes of Ecuadorian migrants by the Mexican population based on media representation and contextual influences. From this, the following specific objectives are derived: [1] to analyze the perceived reasons for Ecuadorian migration to



Mexico, [2] to evaluate stereotypes about the labor and economic impact of Ecuadorian migrants, [3] to examine the role of the media and social networks in shaping perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants.

Based on these specific objectives, this research established the use of a quantitative approach, defined by Creswell (1999) as the perspective for measuring social phenomena through objective data, which is essential for studying trends and relationships between variables, thus allowing for the statistical analysis of the perceptions of a representative sample of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico. Hence, the scope of the study is descriptive, conceptualized as the process of detailing the characteristics of a specific phenomenon, situation, or group. Its purpose is to identify and define attributes, traits, and profiles related to individuals, groups, communities, processes, objects, or other elements subject to investigation (Hernández-Sampieri et al. 2014). Meanwhile, this study aims to identify and characterize the perceptions and stereotypes that Mexicans have about Ecuadorian immigrants, highlighting how the media and social networks influence these social constructs.

To this end, a survey was used as the main data collection tool, consisting of 21 questions grouped into five main categories: demographic data, perceptions of Ecuadorian migration, stereotypes, the influence of the media and social networks, and the current situation in Ecuador and Mexico. The first category, demographics, included three questions that collected information on age, gender, and occupation, using predetermined options to ensure consistency in responses. The second category, perception of Ecuadorian migration, consisted of five questions designed to explore direct contact with Ecuadorian migrants, personal experience of this contact, perceived reasons for migration, expected length of stay, and the impact of migrants on the local economy. The third category, stereotypes and perceptions, includes three questions that assess perceptions of immigrant employment, workplace equality, and competition in the labor market. In addition, the fourth category, influence of the media and social networks, covers five questions that analyze the frequency of news consumption in traditional media and social networks, media representation of immigrants, and the perceived influence of these media on personal opinions. In relation to this category, the study makes an analytical distinction between traditional media and digital platforms, taking into account the structural, narrative, and circulation differences in the discourses that characterize each of these environments. In the case of traditional media, reference is made to the national print media, broadcast television, and news radio, understood as an institutionalized part of the media system, in which content production is governed by professional routines, hierarchical editorial criteria, and relatively stable news agendas.

Social media, on the other hand, refers to widely used digital platforms, particularly Facebook, X, and Instagram, where information on migration processes circulates through news content, institutional publications, political discourse, and material generated by the audiences themselves. Unlike traditional media, these platforms operate using algorithmic logic, encourage greater interaction between users, and present high exposure to fragmented and not always verified discourse, elements that specifically influence the construction of social perceptions and stereotypes.

Finally, the fifth category, the current situation between Ecuador and Mexico, includes five questions that probe respondents' knowledge of the diplomatic situation between Ecuador and Mexico, their assessment of the government's response and the perceived impact on the diplomatic situation between Ecuador and Mexico, and their perception of the effect on bilateral and internal relations.

The design of this survey underwent a structured process of piloting, validation, and reliability assessment. Initially, a pilot test was conducted with a subsample of 30 participants, equivalent to 10% of the total sample. This procedure allowed for the identification of areas for optimizing the clarity and relevance of the questions, resulting in adjustments aimed at improving the alignment of the instrument with the study objectives. The internal consistency of the instrument was evaluated using Cronbach's coefficient, which



reached a value of 0.88. This result ensures that the questions systematically measure the theoretical constructs proposed, complying with accepted standards in social research. The validity of the instrument was endorsed by a panel of eight academics from universities in Ecuador and Mexico, with experience in migration studies and more than ten years of experience. These specialists reviewed the relevance, consistency, and appropriateness of the questions in relation to the study objectives, strengthening the relationship between the instrument design and the conceptual framework. Additionally, an analysis of the pilot responses was conducted, which allowed for verification of the functionality of the proposed categories and evaluation of discrepancies in the interpretation of the items. This approach ensures that the instrument not only meets standards of reliability and validity, but also accurately captures the perceptions inherent to the phenomenon under investigation.

The sample size was calculated for a confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, which allowed for the selection of 315 participants for simple random sampling in four cities in Mexico: Monterrey, Guadalajara, Mexico City, and Chihuahua. This procedure ensured the representativeness of the target audience and the possibility of generalizing the results obtained. Once the instrument was optimized, the survey adhered to institutional ethical standards, guaranteeing levels of security and privacy and ensuring the comprehensive protection of the data collected. Similarly, the instrument was distributed electronically using Microsoft Forms, guaranteeing the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. The data were collected over a period of two months, from July 10, 2024, to September 10, 2024, which allowed for follow-up on the responses obtained. Subsequently, the data obtained were cleaned with respect to variables that did not require statistical significance, leading to the interpretation of the data presented below.

The statistical software R Studio v.4.4.1 was used to analyze the data obtained from the surveys, which allowed for descriptive and inferential analysis and data management. Chi-square tests were used to evaluate the associations between categorical variables such as the perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants and their representation in the media and social networks. Monte Carlo simulations were used to optimize the accuracy of these tests and ensure robust results with greater control over the dispersed data. To reduce the possible inflation of significance levels produced by Monte Carlo simulations, the Benjamini-Hochberg (BH) correction was applied, reducing the probability of type I errors. Chi-square tests with Monte Carlo simulations provide a deep and nuanced understanding of the factors that influence Mexicans' perceptions of Ecuadorian migration in their country.

Heat maps and logistic regression models were also used to visualize the relationships between variables, which facilitated the interpretation of the data and the quantification of the magnitude and direction of the correlations detected in the results. Taken together, this analytical approach made it possible not only to identify general trends, but also to unravel the complex dynamics that influence perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico, thus contributing significantly to the objectives of the study.

Results

Mexicans' perceptions and stereotypes of Ecuadorian migrants

To fully understand Mexicans' perceptions, it is important to consider that only 20.9% of the sample has had direct contact with Ecuadorian migrants (2.5% do so frequently) and a quarter of them are not sure if they have ever done so. They point to the economy (52.7%) as the main reason for migration to their country, being aware (29.8%) that many Ecuadorians only transit through Mexico with the aim of reaching the United States. Eleven point seven percent identify asylum as a cause of migration, while education (4.7%) and family reunification (0.9%) are cited as minor causes. Regarding the duration of migration, more than half of



Mexicans (56.1%) perceive Ecuadorians as long-stay migrants and 23.8% as permanent migrants. The vast majority (66%) consider that these migrants have no particular impact on the local economy, while 20.6% consider it positive or very positive.

As far as Mexican stereotypes are concerned, the lack of opportunities (61.2%) and the partial (42.5%) or non-existent (33%) competition that this generates in the labor market (E3) characterize perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants. Less than 1% believe that they have greater opportunities to find employment than Mexican citizens, and 23.8% consider these conditions to be equal. 40.6% disagree with the idea that Ecuadorian migrants do jobs that Mexicans do not want to do, compared to 19.6% who agree with this statement.

The analysis of the relationships between the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents, their experience of direct contact, and their perceptions of migration with the stereotypes consolidated in their imaginations does not offer relevant information regarding how Mexican citizens nuance the image of Ecuadorian migrants in their country. The Chi-square analysis shows the absence of significant relationships ($p < 0.05$) between the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents and the stereotypes regarding migrants, showing that factors such as age, gender, or occupation do not influence the perception of Mexicans.

Nor does direct contact, which includes the possibility of personal acquaintance and friendly relations, have a significant impact on the general perception of Ecuadorian migrants. In fact, the variables relating to perceptions of the causes and duration of migration show significant correlations with the stereotypes constructed around this phenomenon. Only the perception of the impact that Ecuadorians have on the local economy has a significant relationship ($p = 0.01$) with the stereotype regarding the competition they generate in the national labor market, although this relationship is weak and 75.5% of respondents consider the competition to be partial or non-existent.

Representation of Ecuadorian migrants in the Mexican media and its influence on the construction of stereotypes

Consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants is low or non-existent in most cases, regardless of the channel used. Both positions account for 70.7%, whether on social media (SM) or traditional media (TM), although the latter has twice as many users (6.3%) among those who say they frequently see news about Ecuadorian migrants. Similarly, there is a consensus on how these channels portray Ecuadorian migrants. The majority define it as "neutral" in the case of both the media (38.7%) and social media (39.3%), although a significant proportion consider it negative, with 33.3% (RMMC) and 30.4% (RMRS), respectively. Less than 5% consider that Ecuadorian migrants are portrayed positively by social media and traditional media (2.8%).

The influence of the scarce and negative representation of Ecuadorian migrants on communication platforms is confirmed by Mexicans themselves, who admit that traditional media (IFMC) and social media (IFRS) influence their perception of the phenomenon. In the first case, 33% say they are aware that the *mainstream* system influences their perception of migrants, and 42.2% consider it possible. With regard to social media, 32% say they are influenced, while 44.1% acknowledge this possibility. In both cases, less than 25% do not consider themselves subject to this influence.

The chi-square analysis of news consumption about Ecuadorian migrants, their representation in the media, and the influence that the media and social networks exert on citizens, together with Mexicans' stereotypes about the phenomenon, allows us to delve deeper into the different factors that influence the formation of perceptions and the construction of generalized ideas.

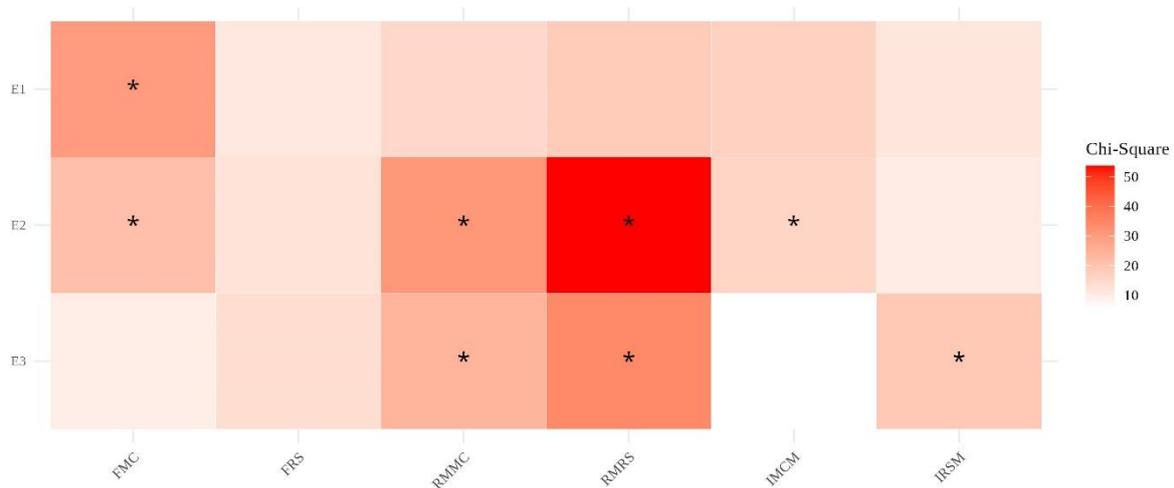


Fig. 1. Heat map of associations between stereotypes about Ecuadorian migrants, their representation in the media, and the influence of the media and social networks. Source: Own elaboration based on extracted data.

E1: They do unwanted jobs, *E2*: Equal job opportunities, *E3*: Job competition with nationals, *FMC*: Frequency of consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants in the media, *FRS*: Frequency of consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants on social media, *RMMC*: Portrayal of migrants in the media, *RMRS*: Portrayal of migrants on social media, *IMCM*: Influence of the media on perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants, *IRSM*: Influence of social media on perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants.

As shown in Figure 1, the strongest significant relationships ($p=0.009$) are between the representation of migrants on social media (RMRS) and stereotypes about equal opportunities (E2) and the competition that migrants generate in the Mexican labor market. In practice, social media contributes significantly to positioning the idea in the Mexican community that job opportunities for Ecuadorians, as well as the competition they generate in the national labor market, are scarce or non-existent.



Table 1. Relationship between stereotypes about Ecuadorian migrants, their representation in the media, and the influence of the media and social media

	FMC	FRS	RMMC	RMRS	IMCM	IRSM
E1	0.016*	0.52	0.26	0.17	0.05	0.24
E2	0.037	0.24	0.012*	0.009	0.031*	0.17
E3	0.39	0.20	0.022*	0.009	0.52	0.016

Significance level: *p.adj. <0.05, ** p.adj. <0.01, and *** p.adj. <0.001; n=315; $\alpha=0.05$

E1: They do undesirable jobs, E2: Equal job opportunities, E3: Job competition with nationals, FMC: Frequency of consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants in the media, FRS: Frequency of consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants on social media, RMMC: Portrayal of migrants in the media, RMRS: Portrayal of migrants on social media, IMCM: Influence of the media on perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants, IRSM: Influence of social media on perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants.

Source: Own elaboration based on data extracted

This result is replicated, albeit to a lesser extent, with the portrayal of Ecuadorian migrants in traditional media (RMMC), which shows a significant relationship ($p=0.012$) with stereotypes about equal opportunities (E2) and the competition that Ecuadorians (E3) generate in the Mexican labor market ($p=0.022$), which, in this case too, is considered partial or non-existent by more than 75%. News consumption in traditional media shows a weak relationship with stereotypes E1 and E2, so it is possible to affirm that these contribute to the consolidation of the idea about the scarce employment of Ecuadorian migrants in jobs unwanted by Mexicans, and the insufficient opportunities they have in the national labor market (Table 1).

News consumption on social media shows no relationship with stereotypes about Ecuadorian migrants, despite its recognized influence, which is associated ($p=0.016$) with the perception of little or no labor competition with migrants. The influence of the media, on the other hand, is significantly associated with the stereotype concerning equal opportunities and lab, which, as observed, is considered neutral or inferior by the vast majority of respondents.

Influence of the sociopolitical context on Mexicans' perception of Ecuadorian migrants

The diplomatic crisis currently unfolding between Ecuador and Mexico characterizes the phenomenon of Ecuadorian migration to this country. Although 57.1% of respondents say they are unaware of the diplomatic crisis, 59.6% believe that the existence of a political conflict affects relations between the two countries and, in some way, the migration of Ecuadorians to Mexico (63.4%), even though this is perceived as limited (42.5%). The Ecuadorian government's response to the assault on the Mexican embassy in Quito is considered inadequate by 57.1%, compared to 15.8% who support the institutional decision against their country, although 26.9% are uncertain about the situation, confirming that nearly a quarter of the population does not declare a definite position on these issues.



To understand how the sociopolitical context influences Mexicans' perceptions of migrants, an analysis was conducted of the relationships between these variables and the sociodemographic characteristics of the sample, perceptions of different aspects of migration, and stereotypes concerning Ecuadorians in their country.

Table 2. Relationship between the sociopolitical context and the sociodemographic characteristics, perceptions, and stereotypes of Mexicans regarding Ecuadorian migrants

	Age	Gender	Occupation	CD	PCAM	PDUM	SKIN	E1	E2	E3
CCD	0.011*	0.004**	0.004**	0.05	0.45	0.64	0.65	0.06	0.14	0.68
GOB	0.21	0.59	0.14	0.68	0.68	0.82	0.024*	0.004**	0.14	0.004
AFRP	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.68	0.82	0.29	0.29	0.06	0.017*	0.004**
AFM	0.68	0.68	0.45	0.59	0.80	0.84	0.45	0.17	0.68	0.007

Significance level: *p.adj. <0.05, ** p.adj. <0.01, and *** p.adj. <0.001; n=315; $\alpha=0.05$
CCD: Knowledge of the diplomatic crisis, **GOB**: Ecuadorian government response to the assault on the Mexican embassy in Quito, **AFRP**: Impact of the diplomatic crisis on relations between Mexico and Ecuador, **AFM**: Impact of the diplomatic crisis on Ecuadorian migration, **Age**, **Gen**: gender, **Occup**: occupation, **CD**: direct contact, **PCAM**: Perception of the causes of migration, **PDUM**: Perception of the duration of migration, **PIEL**: Perception of the influence on the local economy, **E1**: Perform undesirable jobs, **E2**: Equal job opportunities, **E3**: Job competition with nationals.

Source: Own elaboration based on extracted data

The Chi-square analysis (Table 2) shows strong significant associations ($p < 0.01$) between the stereotype of job competition generated by Ecuadorians (E3) and the variables concerning the Ecuadorian government's decision to storm the embassy in Quito (GOB), the impact of the crisis on relations between the two countries (AFRP), and the migration of Ecuadorians to Mexico (AFM). Both the Ecuadorian government's action and its consequences are associated with Mexicans' stereotypes about migrants, so the storming of the embassy has a significant relationship ($p=0.004$) with the belief about Ecuadorians occupying undesirable jobs (E1) and, to a lesser extent ($p=0.024$), with the influence of migrants on the local economy (PIEL). The relationship between the two countries (AFRP) shows a low association ($p=0.017$) with the perception of equal employment opportunities (E2), as if to indicate a possible change in conditions due to the current crisis of the governments in office.

The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents are associated only with variables related to knowledge of the diplomatic crisis between the two countries (CCD), showing a clear difference between the age, gender, and occupation of Mexicans in terms of their level of knowledge about the sociopolitical context. Lack of knowledge about the diplomatic crisis is concentrated among those under 25, particularly in the 18-25 age group (61%), who represent the majority of the sample, among women, 32% of whom say they are fully or partially aware of the crisis, compared to 57% of men, and among students, 39% are aware of the issue, compared to 50% of teachers and 57% of tenured professors.



Table 3. Relationship between the sociopolitical context and the frequency of news consumption, the representation of Ecuadorian migrants, and the influence of the media and social networks on the perception of Mexicans.

	CCD	GOB	AFRP	AFM
IRSM	0.56	0.49	0.10	0.21
IMCM	0.41	0.48	0.58	0.37
RMRS	0.68	0.012*	0.08	0.028
RMMC	0.54	0.016	0.028	0.11
FRS	0.11	0.10	0.041*	0.08
FMC	0.58	0.012	0.09	0.024

Significance level: *p.adj. <0.05, ** p.adj. <0.01, and *** p.adj. <0.001; n=315; $\alpha=0.05$

FMC: Frequency of consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants in the media, *FRS*: Frequency of consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants on social media, *RMMC*: Portrayal of migrants in the media, *RMRS*: Portrayal of migrants on social media, *IMCM*: Influence of the media on perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants, *IRSM*: Influence of social media on perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants, *CCD*: Knowledge of the diplomatic crisis, *GOB*: Ecuadorian government response to the assault on the Mexican embassy in Quito, *AFRP*: Impact of the diplomatic crisis on relations between Mexico and Ecuador, *AFM*: Impact of the diplomatic crisis on Ecuadorian migration.

Source: Prepared internally based on extracted data.

Finally, it is evident that direct contact with migrants (DC) is not associated with any of the variables related to the sociopolitical context, highlighting the greater influence of the media and social networks over direct experience in shaping Mexicans' perceptions of Ecuadorian migration in their country. Rather, the sociopolitical context seems to influence the way in which the media and social networks portray Ecuadorian migrants.

The chi-square analysis of the variables related to the role of the media and social networks with the sociopolitical context reveals the existence of significant associations ($p < 0.05$). As shown in Table 3, the Ecuadorian government's decision to storm the Mexican Embassy is moderately related to the representation of Ecuadorian migrants in traditional media ($p = 0.016$) and social media ($p = 0.012$). The frequency of news consumption on social media is associated with the impact of the crisis on relations between the two countries ($p = 0.041$), which in turn affects the representation of Ecuadorian migrants in traditional media ($p = 0.028$).

News consumption on these platforms, on the other hand, is associated with the impact of the crisis on migration ($p = 0.024$), which in turn affects the representation of migrants on social media ($p = 0.028$). In summary, the diplomatic crisis caused by the Ecuadorian army's assault on the Mexican Embassy in Quito affects both relations between the two countries and the migration of Ecuadorians to Mexico, which is



related to the consumption of news about Ecuadorian migrants and their representation in the media and social networks.

Discussion

This study confirms that perceptions of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico are shaped by a combination of social, economic, media, and political factors. Among the most significant findings, 52.7% of respondents identify economic reasons as the main cause of migration, while 29.8% believe that Ecuadorians use Mexico as a transit country to the United States. However, reasons related to education (4.7%) and family reunification (0.9%) are considered marginal, suggesting that perceptions are focused on more utilitarian aspects of migration, in line with the findings of Torres-Toukourmidis et al. (2024) regarding the causes that motivate Ecuadorians to migrate to another country. In terms of length of stay, more than half of the participants (56.1%) perceive Ecuadorian migrants as long-term, as opposed to those who consider them permanent (23.8%), with the result that long-stay migrants return to their country of origin. In contrast, permanent migrants obtain citizenship and intend to remain in the country, reinforcing the idea of prolonged integration into Mexican society.

Economically, 66% of respondents believe that Ecuadorian migrants do not have a particular impact on the local economy, while only 20.6% consider their influence to be positive or very positive. This data highlights a widespread perception of neutrality that could be associated with the low visibility of this population's direct economic contributions. In the labor market, 61.2% of respondents perceive that Ecuadorian migrants do not represent real competition in the Mexican labor market, and only 19.6% agree with the statement that migrants occupy jobs that Mexicans do not want. These results suggest that Ecuadorians are not perceived as a direct threat in terms of employment, although 75.5% consider that the labor competition generated by migrants is partial or non-existent.

Direct contact with migrants does not appear to have a significant influence on Mexicans' opinions about Ecuadorian migration, emphasizing the role of traditional and digital media in shaping their perceptions. Their opinions are nuanced by the diplomatic and ties between the two countries and the impact that, in their view, these may have on the flow of Ecuadorian migrants to Mexico. In particular, opinions about the Ecuadorian government's intervention in the Mexican Embassy in Quito influence their perception of the impact that Ecuadorian migration has on their country's economy and labor market, and on the opportunities that exist for these migrants.

In fact, the influence of the media and social networks emerges as a relevant factor. More than 70% of respondents say they rarely or never consume news about Ecuadorian migrants, although 33% acknowledge that the media influence their perception of migrants, and 42.2% consider this influence to be possible. In the case of social media, 32% of respondents identify its influence as direct, while 44.1% describe it as potential. This reinforces the idea that digital platforms play a significant role in the construction of stereotypes, especially around equal employment opportunities and competition in the labor market.

Conclusion

A notable finding is the media representation of Ecuadorian migrants, which is mostly considered neutral in both traditional media (38.7%) and social media (39.3%). However, a considerable proportion of respondents perceive this representation as negative (33.3% in traditional media and 30.4% on social media). These data indicate that, although there is no predominantly unfavorable narrative, the balance between neutrality and negativity may perpetuate latent stereotypes and limit the full integration of migrants into the host society.



The political and diplomatic context also influences perceptions. Although 57.1% of respondents say they are unaware of the recent diplomatic crisis between Ecuador and Mexico, 59.6% believe that this conflict affects bilateral relations, and 63.4% believe that it could have an impact on Ecuadorian migration to Mexico. Their perceptions of the crisis and its impact on Ecuadorian migration are influenced by the news that Mexicans consume in traditional media and social networks, and the representation of migrants in these channels. These opinions underscore the importance of the sociopolitical context in the construction of collective narratives about migrants.

Despite advances in understanding these perceptions, the study faced significant obstacles. Respondents' limited willingness to address sensitive issues and the exclusion of populations without access to digital tools affected the representativeness of the data. Likewise, the complexity of measuring phenomena such as stereotypes through exclusively quantitative methodologies poses challenges in terms of interpretive depth. A critical reflection on these results suggests that, while stereotypes toward Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico are not overwhelmingly negative, a narrative of indifference persists that can be equally limiting. This apparent neutrality, combined with the influence of the media, reinforces the need for specific interventions that promote an inclusive narrative.

For future studies, we recommend the integration of qualitative approaches that allow for the exploration of the individual and collective experiences of migrants and host communities, as well as the incorporation of more inclusive sampling strategies to ensure broad representativeness. In addition, it would be valuable to develop longitudinal research that evaluates the impact of political and media changes on perceptions of migrants. Finally, a more in-depth analysis of media content is suggested to identify how hegemonic discourses affect the social and economic integration of Ecuadorian migrants in Mexico. This analysis provides a robust empirical basis for the design of public policies and educational strategies that promote social cohesion and respect for diversity.

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