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# Population in Latin America and Public Policy Challenges in Times of Pandemic

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#### **Abstract**

The fears of governments at the beginning of the pandemic in relation to a global recession, together with the efforts for a recovery of economies, have shown serious effects in Latin American countries, at different levels according to data on economic and social issues from world organizations, which evidences the increase in internal inequality between countries; In addition, the disparity between emerging and advanced economies. The objective of this article is to analyze the areas of greatest impact in Latin America, taking into account the public policies adopted by governments. The methodology used is qualitative research applied through discourse analysis. The source for the research is obtained from the website of the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC), World Bank, United Nations, DSV: De Sammensluttede Vognmaend, information updated until September 2021, in addition to some articles related to the subject. The contribution of this research lies in finding the economic terms that could have greater effects from the analysis of public policies adopted in Latin American countries. It is inferred that the results show that the greatest effects occur in the following sectors: employment, education and economy (bank loans).

**Keywords:** Public policies; Pandemic; employment; education; economic stimulus; Emerging economies.

## Introduction

During the evolution of the pandemic caused by the so-called Covid-19 in Latin America and the world, multiple sectors of the economy experienced productive setbacks that led to bottlenecks increasing prices, because the demand continued for the economic palliative programs that governments gave at different levels, according to what Gómez expressed, et. to the; However, the aggregate supply contracted due to quarantines and mobility restrictions, which generates inflation, which is reinforced by the measures of governments to initiate the gradual reactivation of the economy and social inclusion within each region. This showed a greater proportion of a gap between economies, both domestically and internationally. With the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the global panorama was further complicated, increasing uncertainty, increasing prices, shortages of some goods and further contributing to the lack of coordination in the logistics chain. (2022)

Undoubtedly, the fear caused by the pandemic faced with health security measures and the forecasts of international organizations such as the Economic Commission for Latin

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America (ECLAC 2.020) and the International Monetary Fund (IMF, 2.020), regarding issues such as unemployment, the decline in women's participation in the labor market and the increase in informal jobs, became a reality for Latin American countries.

According to World Bank publications, the most marked problems occurred in emerging economies, since the economic fragility that existed in these countries was evident, showing that households and companies were not prepared to face a situation that will impact their incomes for such a long time (World Bank 2021). This led to significant impacts on employment, education and the economy (Brito, Prado and Finardi 2021).

The pandemic has affected various economic parameters, where it can be highlighted in the first place, the crisis that has arisen in unemployment rates in Latin America since decisions were made by governments in terms of health, generating difficulties due to the risk of contagion, due to quarantines and mobility restrictions. Additionally, resistance was created to consume some products and by the generation of pessimistic expectations by an economic crisis, whose end was not clear and extended as time passed, led economic agents to tend to increase their savings, therefore, decreasing their consumption, which affected that the economic contraction attacked with greater force leading to greater savings and lower consumption by households (Guerrieri, et. al, 2020) Both effects increased the conditions for lower production and less employment, which were further enhanced the greater the health measures adopted by the authorities to reduce contagion; also mentioned by (Eichenbaum, Rebelo and Trabandt 2021).

In Latin America, the measures and actions taken by governments regarding employment were particularly employment protection, elective work licenses, reduction of working hours, among others, implementing 248 actions in total by the countries of the Latin American region. According to ECLAC's Covid-19 Observatory in Latin America and the Caribbean (2022a), the country that adopted the most measures to cope with the employment crisis was Brazil, followed by Argentina, Colombia and Costa Rica.

The economic analyses carried out by ECLAC (2022b), the unemployment rate is reaching pre-pandemic levels in the region, participation rates would still be below those presented in 2019. Several countries in the region have recovered the number of jobs, although not necessarily the levels of remuneration. One of the countries that reports the lowest recovery in this area has been Chile, which stands out for the number of sanitary measures adopted, which would be consistent with the recently mentioned model (Eichenbaum, Rebelo and Trabandt 2021).

The measures to preserve employment and economic stimuli were not enough even to maintain poverty levels, which due to the way the pandemic affected employment and the daily work of the population, was a prediction that could be made as it was maintained. According to statistical data from ECLAC (2022c), one of the most notorious characteristics in the year was the generalized increase in poverty and extreme poverty indicators, reaching figures of 33.0% and 13.1% respectively. This means that 204 million people did not have enough income to cover their basic needs and that, of these, 81 million people lacked the resources to acquire a basic food basket. Some data from studies prior to the crisis had already shown that more than 50% of households in emerging economies in case of losing income could not sustain basic consumption for more than three months if they lost their income (World Bank 2021).

According to the United Nations (2020), in terms of gender, it has been women who have been mainly affected by Covid-19, caused by the fact that most of their jobs are in the informal sector and in the most affected sectors. In addition, measures such as the closure of educational establishments affect women to a greater extent, since socially they are still considered to be responsible for the care of children and household chores, for the most part.

Considering that people with a higher level of education were able to continue with their jobs telematically and that the lack of classes affects a greater proportion in terms of not being able to level up in terms of knowledge, even sometimes due to lack of access to electronic devices or Wi-Fi signal, it is feasible that in Latin America the inequality of income distribution will be even more pronounced if these difficulties are not considered in public policies. educational in the future.

The measures and actions at the national level, according to data found in ECLAC's labor observatory, show that 195 actions were taken on the subject by Latin American countries during the pandemic, with El Salvador occupying the first place followed by Chile and Costa Rica. El Salvador in relation to the right to education played an important role taking into account elements such as online or distance learning if schools were closed, affordability without distinction, quality of education and adaptation to the needs of students and society (Cavichioli and Ramos, 2021)

As expressed by Vallina, et al. (2020), education and its role in the formation of human capital is very relevant for the future economic development of the region, especially if extractive products are to lose preponderance over goods and services that are more related to intra-industrial trade, design and innovation.

Regarding the economy, the different policies developed by the governments of the countries in the world to face the effects at the beginning of the pandemic and in the short term, managed to show serious impacts especially in emerging economies, given that internal and intercountry inequality became notorious (World Bank 2021).

According to the Covid-19 observatory, in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1,029 actions were taken in the region, with Argentina in first place, followed by Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica. Among the measures taken to mitigate the economic crisis during the pandemic in both households and companies were those of a fiscal, monetary, business nature, price and quantity controls, economic stimuli, market regulation of personal hygiene and cleaning products, debt relief and suspension of credit payments (individuals and microentrepreneurs), among others.

As regards the suspension of credit payments, Subirats et. al (2015), states that they helped households and businesses not be forced to default. However, it was a measure that led to an over-indebtedness by governments generating abrupt risks in inequality by not being able to pay for public goods such as education and health. In addition to the above, O'Neill reiterates the importance of understanding that emerging economies have widely resorted to debt forgiveness, which puts the ability of some borrowers in the long term at risk. And this is how the economic fragility in the different countries of Latin America has been evidenced, such as the instability of the different financial sectors, the unsustainability of public debt and a huge gap between countries that have resources and the political margin to face the challenges that arise in a globalized world. (Cotarelo and Mori, 2019) (2021)

Regarding vaccines, according to the ECLAC Observatory, the country with the highest percentage of vaccinated population is Chile (90.42%), considering that its scheme has at least one dose more than that of the schemes of other countries, then it would be Argentina (83.2%) and Peru (82.75%). Chile was the first country that began to negotiate the acquisition of vaccines, even before they were available, created a series of alliances and was part of the clinical studies of several of them, being universal vaccination free, as evidenced by the positive externality they generate, since the herd effect is required for the contagion to stop spreading. (2022a)

This measure, together with defining the public and private system as one for pandemic effects and the demands that were made to set up care systems in intensive care units, the mobility of patients between regions according to the capacity of the entire hospital infrastructure, stressed the entire health system, but allowed it not to collapse as in other

countries, still developed, only in specific cases and practically a year after the pandemic. With regard to the negotiations, the baggage of the public system in these matters related to free trade agreements made it possible to speed up activities and, through these agreements, vaccines entered without payment of tariffs, reducing the cost of importing them Difficulties.

### Method

The analysis of the challenges to the countries of Latin America, taking into account the decisions of public policies, is carried out with qualitative methodology, with an interpretative hermeneutic analysis taking into account the proposals of Martínez, who exposes 4 steps: structuring, categorization, contrast and theorizing. The software used for the analysis was AtlasTi, version 9. (2006)

The analysis seeks to show which were the largest sectors in Latin America affected during and after the pandemic and the different aspects that were hidden and became notorious during the pandemic. The research was carried out following the model of Rodríguez, Gil and García, in which the initial part was the reflection on the sectors most affected in Latin American countries, considering the predictions made by ECLAC, about which would be the most affected region and the probable increase in social inequality in the region. The collection of information to carry out the analysis of the behavior of logistics in the face of Covid19, information collected from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) was used, building 17 documents related to the number of actions implemented by governments in Latin America on: Debt relief and suspension of credit payments, price control, economic stimuli, business policies, fiscal policies, monetary policies, regulation of markets in personal hygiene, restrictions on economic activity, employment, elective work leave, participation of women in the digital age, prohibition of dismissal of jobs, employment protection, reduction of working hours, schools and education, vaccination and vaccine map in Latin America. (1996)

6 World Bank documents are classified on recovery policies that are given by chapters as follows: economic impacts of the pandemic and the new risks to the recovery, Covid-19 and risks of bank balance sheets: Promoting transparency and facilitating the management of problematic loans, Restructuring the debt of companies and households, loans during recovery and beyond, Public debt management and Policy priorities for recovery.

The executive report of the United Nations (2020), entitled "The impact of COVID-19 in Latin America and the Caribbean", is reviewed. Subsequently, they collect data from the company DSV page: De Sammensluttede Vognmænd (The United Hauliers), taking as the updated information to September 2021, for this 15 separate documents are classified by country, the information contained in these documents are a summary of the coronavirus in aspects of international logistics in 15 Latin American countries.

In addition to the above, 31 articles are reviewed in the SCOPUS database related to the issues of covid19 and impacts in Latin America, highlighting general analysis, effects on health, education, culture, public policies, credit conditions, among other topics (World Bank 2021, Plá y Rosa 2022, Acosta 2020, Cruz Hidalgo and Mario 2021, Araujo Aguilar and Araujo Aguilar 2021, Passos et al. 2021, Araujo Barbosa, Leite dos Anjos and Salgado Azori 2022, Araujo Palmeira, Ben-Lignani and Salles-Costa 2022, Castañeda-Hernández and Rodriguez-López, 2020 and Aleucar Tranquilino et al. 2021).

With the above information, a coding stage is carried out that allows defining five groups of documents and 438 codes. Subsequently, we proceed to identify and create 3 networks designated as "Education", "Employment" "Economy", to allow the identification of variables by network. After this, the code administration table is obtained that allows to identify the relationship of rooting and density of each of the variables, evidencing the

connection and frequency with which it occurs respectively. To perform the density, the participation in the network of each of the components is taken into account, defining whether it is a cusa, part or there is an association between the variables. Finally, the link table and the Sankey diagram are analyzed, which is constructed using the groups of documents and the assigned codes differentiating by group of education, employment and economy for the construction of the networks.

Obtaining the results allows us to study behavior patterns and determine the existence of possible emerging variables, which indicate new parameters that explain behavior, which have the category of relevant determinants.

## **Results**

In this section and based on the results obtained, through the application of the AtlasTi9 software, product of the coding made in table 1, are the emerging codes with the general information obtained in this research:

Board 1. Frequencies affecting public policies

Factors of affectation	Proportion (%)	Cumulative proportion (%)	Factors of affectation	Proportion (%)	Cumulative proportion (%)
Employment	17.62	17.62	Monetary policy	1.55	88.6
Economic Stimulus	15.03	32.64	Argentina largest with 5 Prohibited Dismissal Sudden increase in	1.3	89.9
Business Policy	14.25	46.89	non-performing loans and bankruptcies of companies from the impossibility of meeting obligations	1.3	91.19
Education	12.44	59.33	Economic disruptions during the pandemic Heterogeneous	1.55	92.75
Vaccination	9.07	68.39	evaluation of the pandemic in Latin America	1.04	93.78
General actions	5.44	73.83	Learning impacts of Covid	1.04	94.82
Impact on global poverty and inequality	3.63	77.46	Psychological impacts on world population Imports high	1.04	95.85
Fiscal policy	3.37	80.83		1.04	96.89
Increasing inequality within and between countries	3.11	83.94	Urban poverty levels	1.81	98.7
Disparity between emerging and advanced economies	3.11	87.05	Rapid development in the digital age	1.3	100

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

As can be seen in the table above, the most determining factors affecting public policies are employment, education and the economy (Figure 1).

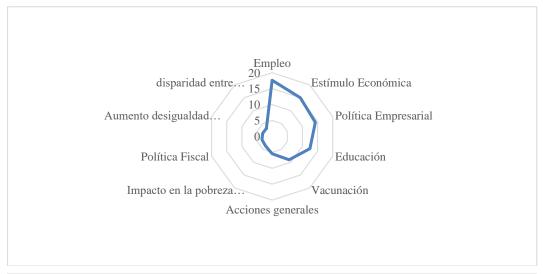




Figure 1. Proportion of the Incidence of Public Policy Factors (%)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

After having thoroughly examined the documentary material and taking into account the coding made in ATLASTi9 software, with the emerging categories, it was observed that one of the biggest problems during and after Covid-19 against the public policies defined by the different countries of Latin America was: employment, which is closely related to business policies where, At the beginning of the pandemic, declared quarantines were defined; which caused the closure of companies increasing the crisis and productive and commercial stagnation; In addition to the above, another public policy that affected was the closure of borders since the damming of merchandise led to an increase in the costs of raw materials for those companies that imported; loss of customers and sales due to non-compliance for exporting companies, among others.

However, it is possible to show a greater impact on small companies that failed to be resilient in the face of the crisis; In addition, governments in search of economic reactivation established business policies such as economic stimuli through low-interest loans or debt relief granting prudent time to repay; Even so, many small businesses were not able to support these loans and long-term aid, resulting in their bankruptcy. Additionally, there was a gap between the increase in unemployment and the definition and implementation of policies, which produces a period of great need among those who

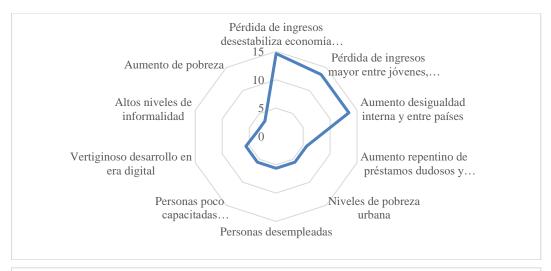
lose their jobs and cannot continue with their lifestyle, could even affect households of different socioeconomic levels. The reaction of governments is also delayed because the expected pandemic period was probably much shorter.

Board 2. Frequencies of affectations in the variable Employment

Factors of affectation	Proportion (%)	Cumulative proportion (%)	Factors of affectation	Proportion (%)	Cumulative proportion (%)
Loss of income destabilizes overall economy Greater loss of	14.61	14.61	Temporary unemployment rose	3.37	79.78
income among young people, women, self- employed and casual	13.48	28.09	Anxiety and depression in health care workers	3.37	83.15
Increasing inequality within and between countries	13.48	41.57	Rising unemployment	3.37	86.52
Sudden increase in non-performing loans and bankruptcies of companies from the impossibility of meeting obligations	5.62	47.19	Brazil Load Distribution Problems	2.25	88.76
Urban poverty levels	5.62	52.81	Crisis versus opportunity Disproportionate	2.25	91.01
Unemployed persons	5.62	58.43	income losses increased inequality	2.25	93.26
Low-skilled people faced greater losses Rapid	5.62	64.04	Unsustainable debt levels in the face of the crisis Women's	2.25	95.51
	5.62	69.66	participation in the digital age	2.25	97.75
High levels of informality	3.37	73.03	Land transport import/export imbalance	2.25	100
Increase in poverty	3.37	76.4	<del>.</del>		

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Taking into account the emerging factors for each of the categories, it can be seen in the previous table as the loss of income by workers in the different sectors, led to destabilize the economy, taking into account that a greater loss of income is shown among young people, autonomous and casual women, showing an increase in internal inequality and between countries, whose decisions from public policies opted for loans, leading to the impossibility of some companies to pay them and increasing the levels of urban poverty, in addition to unemployed and poorly trained people to face the crisis in a new era of digital development. This led to high levels of informality and increased poverty triggering anxiety and depression in workers.



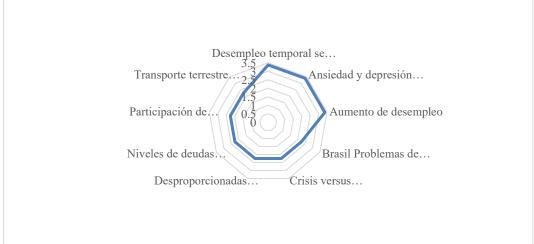


Figure 2. Proportion of the Incidence of Employment Factors (%)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Public policies in Latin America had a high impact on education and were related precisely to the issue of employment, given that many households decreased their income and decided to put a stop on the issue of education, taking into account that many schools and universities turned to the vertiginous development of the digital era seeking an adaptation to the changing conditions brought by the Covid-19 pandemic, for which access to new technologies was required for both teachers and students, for which it was necessary to make an investment in digital media that most families did not have, and in many cases the governments of the different countries did not have the necessary budget to reach remote places with internet signal and digital media, evidencing the gaps that exist and visualizing the increase in internal inequality and between countries; in addition to the above, leading to a setback in the 2030 agenda of the United Nations.

Below are the pop-up codes resulting from the group of related codes for education.

Board 3. Frequency problems in the education variable

Factors of affectation	Proportion (%)	Cumulative proportion (%)
Increasing inequality within and between countries	29,27	29,27
In line with the 2030 agenda for sustainable development	9,76	39,02

Low-skilled people faced greater losses	12,20	51,22
Rapid development in the digital age Adapting to changing conditions	12,20 7,32	63,41 70,73
Access to technology in virtual education	4,88	75,61
Impacts on English learning	4,88	80,49
New technologies for teaching	4,88	85,37
Women's participation in the digital age	4,88	90,24
Virtual platforms for teaching	4,88	95,12
Emergence of methodological tools	4,88	100,00

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Continuing with the impact on employment, positive elements can also be observed, such as a large participation of women in the digital age and the emergence of methodological tools that managed to rethink education in a globalized and changing world at all times.

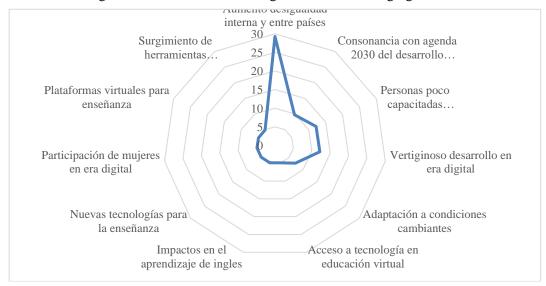


Figure 3. Proportion of Incidence of Education Factors (%)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

According to the results of the economic variable, it could be observed that it continues to be linked to the employment and education variable, respectively, where the loss of income and the lack of resources for educational institutions led to measures within fiscal and monetary policies that destabilized the economy in general of Latin American countries. increasing poverty levels, as shown in Table 4.

Board 4. Frequencies of affectations in economic factor

Factors of affectation	Proportion (%)	Cumulative proportion (%)
Economic Stimulus	31.28	31.28
Business Policy	27.37	58.66
Increasing inequality within and between countries	6.15	64.8
Monetary policy	5.03	69.83
Pandemic versus inequalities in the economic model	3.91	73.74
Fiscal policy	3.91	77.65

Urban poverty levels	3.91	81.56
Loss of income destabilizes overall economy	3.35	84.92
Disparity between emerging and advanced economies	2.79	87.71
Monetary policy	5.03	92.74
Sudden increase in non-performing loans and bankruptcies of companies from the impossibility of meeting obligations	2.79	95.53
Economic disruptions during the pandemic	2.23	97.77
Poverty in most countries of the region	2.23	100

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

Continuing with the group of the variable economy, the disparity between emerging and advanced economies was visualized, showing monetary and fiscal policies with greater strengths in first world countries compared to the economies of Latin American countries, evidencing inequality between countries especially in the income of the region that shows a high vulnerability to fall into poverty. being little resilient in the face of the different disruptions that occurred during the pandemic and that continue to occur in the face of other events.

Figure 4 below shows the summary of the parameters in the economic theme.



Figure 4. Proportion of the Incidence of Economic Factors (%)

Source: Authors' own elaboration.

## **Conclusions**

The population in Latin America faced great shortages due to different variables, especially employment, education and the economy, which were related to each other. It was observed in the employment variable, the loss of income had a strong impact on the countries, destabilizing the economy, increasing inequality and evidencing not only economic, but social and personal impacts, given that the loss of jobs led to the depression of individuals in most cases. Another evidence in this regard was the increase in informality, given the need to survive and the uncertainty of an uncertain future,

accompanied by greater social acceptance of this type of activity, given the need that families had in various areas and from different strata. Another activity that was developed was home delivery and the smaller companies that managed to overcome the crisis was mainly because they were able to transform themselves and make good use of social networks.

Now, according to what was expressed by Segovia, et. Regarding the education variable, the impact was also noticeable since the transformation of the educational model with face-to-face modality led the scientific and academic community to reflect on these changes in the short, medium and long term. (2022)

The need to have access to new technologies and the lack of resources on the part of students and even some teachers led to a greater visualization of the gaps that exist inside and outside the countries, all this related to the vulnerability of public policies (fiscal, monetary), within the countries of Latin America.

Finally, the economic variable showed that countries where governments made monetary decisions granting loans and forgiving long-term debts, led to many companies finally having to close, and that in the long term the economy of these countries was affected to a greater extent; Considering that such types of measures may be a short-term solution, but not when you have a pandemic with restrictive sanitary measures for a long time. It is worth mentioning the case of Chile, which, despite having a large part of its population vaccinated, has been one of the countries that has maintained for longer periods measures that affect the mobility of people, especially abroad, restricting the resilience of sectors such as tourism and entertainment.

Regarding future studies, this research could be complemented with a detailed analysis comparing the situation of each country, and how the pandemic continues to affect the different economies of the countries in the long term. It can also be combined with a qualitative analysis of the different parameters and sectors in order to deepen the analysis of the depth of the effects and their impact through mixed research. It would be interesting to monitor the policies adopted at the Latin American level in order to detect if they incorporate the problems and challenges detected in this study to properly guide and connect with long-term policies and that the consequences of the pandemic can be reversed in the medium term, without meaning that historical problems of the region increase its identity.

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