

Decision Making and Adaptation: An Analysis of Human Agency in Venezuelan Migrants in Funza, Cundinamarca

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Abstract

The Human Agency of Venezuelan migrants refers to their ability to make decisions and take actions in pursuit of a better life when migrating from Venezuela to other countries. This entails the capability to face challenges, adapt to new circumstances, seek opportunities, and take control of their lives, even in adverse environments. The results of this study focus on analyzing the influence of Human Agency in Venezuelan migrants, specifically examining how their experiences and decisions impact their adaptation process and participation in the community of Funza, Cundinamarca. The research adopted a mixed-methods approach with a descriptive depth, involving a sample of 140 Venezuelan migrants. Closed-ended Likert-type questions were utilized in a questionnaire, along with open-ended questions exploring specific aspects of their lives, such as their contribution to the local community in Funza and other factors supporting their Human Agency. The findings reveal a widespread and positive acceptance of adaptation strategies implemented by Venezuelan migrants. The majority express satisfaction with the practices adopted to integrate into their new environment, and a significant percentage perceives solidarity, receptivity, and positive acceptance from the community where they reside.

Keywords: Human agency; Venezuelan migration; resilience.

Introduction

The phenomenon of migration has been significant on a global scale in recent decades. In particular, the influx of Venezuelan migrants to various countries in Latin America has emerged as a significant trend and cause for concern due to its origins, primarily rooted in political factors. However, the repercussions for those experiencing this migration do not show substantial differences compared to other migratory causes (Gandini et al., 2020). Chaparro (2017) states that individuals displaced by political conflicts, as well as those affected by natural disasters, can experience significant psychological trauma due to the emotional impact of losing loved ones, the destruction of their communities, and uncertainty about their future. In this context of challenges and traumas, a notable quality emerges: the ability to make decisions and take action by migrants, both in general and specifically in the case of Venezuelans (Jiménez, 2022).

According to McAdam (2014), individuals displaced by natural disasters or affected by armed or political conflicts often experience the loss of their homes, resources, and support networks. This shared vulnerability exposes them to a range of challenges, such as lack of shelter, limited access to food and water, and exposure to adverse conditions

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(Barbieri, 2020). Individuals displaced in both situations often face difficulties in accessing basic rights, such as the right to housing, education, and healthcare, among others (Chaparro, 2017). This illustrates the importance of analyzing the phenomenon from the perspective of Human Agency. Despite adversities, these individuals demonstrate remarkable resilience and determination as they seek to improve their lives in new environments. The Human Agency of Venezuelan migrants is a key factor in their ability to adapt, overcome obstacles, and contribute positively to their host communities. Therefore, understanding and valuing this agency as a fundamental component of the migratory experience is essential (Ríos-Niño et al., 2023). This agency may vary from one migrant to another and can be influenced by various factors, such as the migration policies of the receiving country, the economic, social, and political situation in Venezuela, and the available support networks (Villarreal et al., 2023). Recognizing and understanding the Human Agency of Venezuelan migrants is relevant both for designing effective support policies and programs and for contributing to the development of host communities (Panchi, 2023).

This article addresses a topic of growing importance in contemporary society: the Human Agency of migrants, specifically Venezuelan migrants who have arrived in Colombia, generating a series of challenges and opportunities for both migrants and receiving communities. The perspectives addressed in the article - adaptation strategies, needs and contributions, and the perception of coexistence and well-being - seek to contextualize the capacity of individuals facing the condition of migrants. These perspectives explore how migrants adapt to their new environment, particularly in the context of Colombia, a South American country. The guiding question of this work is: How has Human Agency influenced Venezuelan migrants through their experiences and decisions during their adaptation process and participation in the local community? Thus, the research objective is to analyze the influence of Human Agency in Venezuelan migrants by examining how their experiences and decisions affect their adaptation process and participation in the community of Funza, Cundinamarca, Colombia.

Referential Framework

Human migrations are a phenomenon of great importance in the contemporary world for various reasons. Firstly, the growing disparities in economic and social development among different regions and hemispheres propel individuals to seek opportunities and a better quality of life in more prosperous places. This is related to globalization and economic interdependence, as workforce mobility has become a key characteristic of the global economy (Pereda, 2006). On the other hand, the increasing global difficulties, whether due to armed conflicts, natural disasters, or political crises, have also led to a rise in people's mobility in search of security and stability (Reina et al., 2018). In this context, the purpose of migration is to expand freedoms, involving adapting to new circumstances once individuals have migrated (Frigola, 2016). Therefore, Human Agency is related to the coveted freedom that allows individuals to define their own goals, values, and objectives, make decisions, and choose fundamental aspects of their lives, even when these choices may conflict with their own well-being (Restrepo-Ochoa, 2013).

Human Agency contextualizes the capacity of individuals to make decisions, take action, and exert control over their own lives and environment. It implies individuals' ability to take initiatives, set goals, make choices, and carry out actions that affect their situation and the world around them (Díaz-Gómez, 2023). According to Zafra and Kazmierczak (2023), Human Agency acknowledges individuals' capacity to influence their destiny, overcome obstacles, and actively seek well-being and personal fulfillment. It is a fundamental concept in fields such as psychology, sociology, and philosophy, as it helps understand how people interact with their environment and make decisions that impact their lives and society as a whole (Mastromarino, 2022).

The relationship between Adaptation Strategies in immigrants and Human Agency is fundamental to understanding how individuals face and respond to the challenges of migration.

Adaptation Strategies in Immigrants

One key aspect of Human Agency is individuals' ability to adapt to a new environment. According to research on migrants, a significant percentage of them report satisfaction with the adaptation strategies they have implemented, indicating that many have found effective ways to deal with the challenges they face in their new location (Madrid, 2022). These adaptation strategies are essential to help migrants cope with the transition, integrate into their new environment, and enable them to face challenges that arise in the process of adapting to a new culture, society, and context (Ferrer et al., 2014). According to the International Organization for Migration -IOM- (2013), adapting to new cultures, customs, and new meanings and social understandings brings out psychosocial factors. Likewise, according to Ojeda et al. (2008), migration is driven by the circumstances migrants have to face, considering it a psychosociocultural phenomenon that influences various aspects of migrants in their attempt to achieve optimal social adaptation and acceptance, forcing them to confront the changes that stress brings, which influences the development of cognitive, attitudinal, and procedural skills.

For Saltos and Márquez (2023), adaptation strategies are the actions and approaches that migrants use to adjust to a new environment, whether cultural, social, economic, or political. These strategies vary depending on individual circumstances, the migratory context, and the characteristics of the receiving community. Mendoza-Macías (2023) points out that migrants' adaptation often requires a significant exercise of Human Agency. Individuals must make decisions about how to face new challenges, interact with the host culture, learn new languages, and develop social networks in a different context than their own. Corcelet (2021) explains that Human Agency manifests in the choices and decisions migrants make to adapt. This may include decisions about education, employment, community participation, preservation of cultural identity, and ways of interacting with the host society. Similarly, Sandoval-Correa (2022) infers that Human Agency contributes to the empowerment and resilience of migrants in adaptation strategies; the ability to make informed decisions and adapt actively can strengthen individuals and communities facing migratory challenges.

Reception and Solidarity of the Local Community

A community that positively receives migrants can create an inclusive context that promotes Human Agency. The feeling of belonging and acceptance can encourage migrants to actively participate in local society, make informed decisions, and contribute to social cohesion (Maroto-Moya, et al., 2022). On the other hand, Rengifo and Antonella (2023) comment that the solidarity of the local community can offer opportunities and resources that support migrants' Human Agency. These resources may include access to health services, education, employment, and emotional support, providing migrants with the necessary tools to make decisions that benefit their well-being. However, the lack of reception or solidarity can pose significant challenges to the Human Agency of migrants. Discrimination, xenophobia, or a lack of community support can hinder migrants' ability to exercise their agency and fully participate in local society (Morales, 2022). Orellana (2022) emphasizes that the relationship between reception, solidarity, and Human Agency is reciprocal; migrants are not only recipients of support but can also positively contribute to the local community. Collaboration and cultural exchange can enrich both parties, strengthening social cohesion.

Needs and Contributions of Venezuelan Migrants

The relationship between the needs and contributions of Venezuelan migrants and Human Agency is complex and multifaceted (Molano-Gómez, 2022). By leaving their home

country, these migrants encounter various needs such as shelter, food, healthcare, employment, and emotional support, stemming from economic, political, and social crises in Venezuela. Astoyauri and Choque (2022) argue that Human Agency manifests when Venezuelan migrants actively seek solutions despite challenges. They can make strategic decisions, adapt to new circumstances, seek employment, and access local resources to improve their quality of life. Espasa et al. (2023) indicate that many Venezuelan migrants positively contribute to receiving communities by bringing cultural diversity, labor skills, talent, and effort to the local job market. Some even initiate initiatives to improve the well-being of the receiving society. Revelo-Paredes (2023) highlights that these contributions can have a positive impact on the local economy, generating income, paying taxes, and contributing to economic growth, thereby emphasizing Human Agency in seeking opportunities to improve their situation and contribute to the development of the receiving community. However, Ávila and Ariza (2023) point out the importance of recognizing that the Human Agency of migrants may face considerable challenges, especially if reception policies are unfavorable or if there are systemic barriers that hinder their integration.

Well-being and Quality of Life: Coexistence and Well-being

Well-being and quality of life are essential dimensions for evaluating satisfaction and happiness in individuals' lives (Salazar, 2022). The reasons for this lie in the fact that, firstly, health constitutes a key component of well-being and quality of life. Echenique and Tirro (2022), as well as Cuches-Flores and Culajay-Chávez (2022), argue that maintaining good physical and mental health significantly contributes to the overall sense of well-being, regardless of age, whether young or elderly. Additionally, financial stability is crucial to ensuring access to resources and services that meet basic needs, thus ensuring a quality of life. An adequate level of economic stability enhances the quality of life by providing security and opportunities for migrants in their new place of residence, positively impacting their lives

Methodology

The approach to the Human Agency of Venezuelan migrants in the municipality of Funza, Cundinamarca, was carried out through a mixed research paradigm at a descriptive level. This allowed for the collection of information to characterize the object of study and identify situations, attitudes, and specific characteristics that prevail in the daily activities within the society hosting Venezuelan migrants.

Regarding the qualitative aspect, with the aim of understanding and exploring phenomena from the perspective of Venezuelan migrants, two open-ended questions were formulated. These questions allowed for a deeper understanding of the context and the meaning of migrants' experiences and actions in response to perceived needs that could enhance their stay. Additionally, the contributions that, according to their capacities, they can make in the locality that has welcomed them were explored. According to Hernández et al. (2016), this seeks to capture the complexity and interrelation of different aspects of a phenomenon, examining the social, cultural, and historical context that influences participants' experiences.

In the quantitative realm, and in line with the requirement for objectivity from Ruiz (2003), which is considered essential to ensure the quality, reliability, and utility of results, a detailed description and statistical analysis were carried out using specialized techniques. These techniques were employed to illustrate and examine the data, identify possible patterns, and make meaningful inferences about the study population.

The research process revolved around the question: "In what ways has Human Agency influenced Venezuelan migrants through their experiences and decisions during their

process of adaptation and participation in the local community?" The process unfolded in various phases:

- **Determination of Data Collection Techniques:** This included document analysis, design, and application of the instrument.
- **Definition of Population and Sample:** Criteria were established for selecting migrants, focusing on those residing in the municipality of Funza, Cundinamarca.
- **Planning of the Data Collection Process:** An approximate period of six months was set, with Venezuelan migrant collaborators approaching compatriots both in person and via Google, obtaining information in a hybrid manner.
- **Description and Interpretation of Results:** The findings were interpreted, relating them to existing theory to contextualize and understand the results.
- **Preparation of the Final Report:** A report was drafted as the basis for this manuscript, following the standards of the journal.

Results

The following are the results of this research. The presentation of these results has been organized by themes:

Demographic Information of Venezuelan Migrants in Funza

Through the study, relevant information was collected about various aspects of Venezuelan migrants, such as their gender, age, length of stay, cities visited, and marital status. Thus, the sample consists of 85% women and 15% men. Among female migrants, 85% are in the age group of 18 to 24 years. Regarding men, their distribution is as follows: 32% aged 25 to 34, 34% aged 35 to 44, and 19% aged 45 to 54. Additionally, 4% of men over 55 years were found. This information is detailed in Table 1:

Table 1. Demographic aspects of the Venezuelan population

Gender	Age - Years	Length of Stay - Years	Visited Cities	Marital Status	
Women	85% 18 - 24	12% Until 6 months	5% In 1	45% Single	51%
Men	15% 25 - 34	32% 6 months to 1 year	19% In 2	32% Married	14%
	35 - 44	34% 1 a 2 years	4% In 3	14% common marriage	35%
	45 - 54	19% 2 a 3 years	15% In 4	4%	
	More than 55	4% 3 a 4 years	19% In 5	4%	
		More than 4 years	39% In 6	2%	

Concerning the current residency period, it was found that 12% of female migrants have stayed in the area for less than 6 months. In the case of men, 32% have maintained their residence between 6 months and 1 year. Additionally, 45% of female migrants have lived solely in the city they are in. As for men, 32% have resided in two cities. Regarding marital status, it was found that 51% of female migrants report being single, while 14% of male migrants consider themselves married, and 35% are in common-law relationships.

Adaptation Strategies of Venezuelan Migrants in Funza

The Venezuelan migrant population has shown notably positive acceptance, with at least 96% expressing satisfaction with the adaptation strategies implemented so far. Within this group, a significant 40% claim to be completely sure that they are carrying out successful actions.

Table 2. Adaptation Strategies Used by Migrants and Perception of Solidarity and Receptiveness of the Community Towards Them:

Criteria	Adaptation Strategies	Solidarity and Receptiveness
Totally disagree	2%	1,2%
Disagree	0%	8,2%
Undecided	7%	7,1%
Agree	51%	55,3%
Totally agree	40%	28,2%

These results indicate a widespread and firm acceptance of the practices adopted to integrate into their new environment. Of the remaining 9.1%, 7.1% are undecided, not providing a definitive statement about their migration experience in this area. Meanwhile, the remaining 2.4% shows signs of dissatisfaction, possibly derived from negative experiences that have impacted their perception.

Most migrants seem to have found adaptation strategies that are satisfactory, as reflected in the high percentage of those who agree. The presence of a percentage of undecided and disagreeing individuals suggests the possibility that some strategies may need to be reviewed or better communicated among this population to mitigate the gap indicating little satisfaction.

As for the opinion of migrants about the solidarity and receptiveness of the community towards them, it is noteworthy that 55.3% of the surveyed individuals agree with the perception of this situation in the community where they reside. Additionally, 28.2% fall into the "totally agree" category, while 7.1% are undecided. On the other hand, a minority, consisting of 9.4%, expresses disagreement. Thus, the majority of migrants perceive a favorable and understanding environment during their adaptation process. However, the existence of a relatively low percentage of undecided and disagreeing individuals poses the challenge of addressing the reasons behind this mostly negative perception to improve relationships and integration.

Contributions and Needs of Venezuelan Migrants

Among migrants providing information about their needs and contributions, the responses to the question "What do you consider to be your main needs in the municipality?" were reported. In general, migrants express their desire and willingness to contribute in various ways to the local community where they are. The ways in which they can contribute are related to education, work experience, collaboration on issues the community may not want to address, and participation in integration activities for migrants themselves. It is perceived that, although some migrants express limitations, such as a lack of resources, many are committed to being active and positive citizens in their new community. Their willingness to contribute highlights the importance of diversity and inclusion in social fabric.

The responses suggest that the commitment and willingness of Venezuelan migrants to contribute to the local community are evident through a wide variety of activities and efforts. Despite facing limitations, such as a lack of resources, many express a strong commitment to building an inclusive and diverse community. This commitment emphasizes the fundamental importance of diversity and inclusion in the social fabric,

highlighting that migrants' contribution not only benefits the local community but also enriches the overall experience of coexistence. The willingness to overcome limitations shows resilience and a desire to be active and positive citizens in their new reality.

In response to the question aimed at identifying access to additional services that Venezuelan migrants receive at the moment, "What do you consider to be your main needs in the municipality?" it was found that migrants in the local community have expressed a variety of needs and desires regarding additional services. Among the expressed needs are: seeking more information about organizations that offer support and resources, the desire for recreational and sports spaces for entertainment and well-being, demand for more accessible and efficient transportation options, subsidy programs for various needs, promotion of mutual respect in the community, access to medical consultation services, solutions related to housing, job stability, and more employment opportunities, a greater number of places providing migrant care, support for entrepreneurial initiatives, access to internet services, humanitarian assistance, assistance in document legalization, social integration, and obtaining permits, special education services, improvement of services related to nutrition and food, more opportunities for personal and professional development, and services that facilitate adaptation to the new community.

In the face of expressed needs arising from the experiences and desires of Venezuelan migrants in the local community, the complexity and diversity of the challenges they face in settling into a new environment are revealed. This panorama poses a significant challenge for local public policies, as it encompasses a wide range of aspects, from basic needs such as housing and healthcare to the search for job opportunities, social integration, and support for entrepreneurial initiatives. The importance of being respected, as well as promoting mutual respect and adaptation to the community in general, is highlighted.

Coexistence and Well-being

Regarding aspects related to the coexistence and well-being of Venezuelan migrants, at least 82.4% express agreement with the perception of experiencing positive acceptance from the local community. Within this percentage, 30.6% affirm with certainty the affectionate and well-intentioned attitude of the population toward the integration of migrants into the community. Unfortunately, a proportion corresponding to 17.7% of the respondents, of which 7.1% are undecided, has a negative perception regarding the promotion of inclusion.

In summary, the majority of migrants perceive positive acceptance from the local community. However, the fact that a percentage is in the category of undecided and disagreeing indicates a gap of little sympathy from the population towards Venezuelan migrants in the locality.

Table 3. Perception of Acceptance of Migrants by the Community Where They Are and Improvement of Well-being of the Family Since They Are in the Place

Criteria	Community Acceptance	Improvement of Well-being
Totally disagree	4,7%	1,2%
Disagree	5,9%	4,7%
Undecided	7,1%	5,9%
Agree	51,8%	61,2%
Totally agree	30,6%	27,1%

In relation to the perception of improvement in personal and family well-being since their stay in the locality, it is observed that 61.2% of migrants agree that the well-being of their

families has improved since their arrival. On the other hand, 27.1% express a definitive conviction regarding the positive impact on the quality of life of their loved ones. However, a considerable segment remains undecided on this matter, while another group, representing an average of 5.9%, clearly states that they have not experienced such improvement.

In summary, the majority of migrants perceive improvements in the well-being of their families since their arrival. The high proportion of those in agreement suggests that most experience positive benefits. Nevertheless, the fact that a considerable segment falls into the agreement category, along with a significant portion signaling a challenge for migrants, underscores the need to enhance strategies to capitalize on opportunities that strengthen and improve family well-being. The existence of this challenge emphasizes the importance of addressing and optimizing migrants' strategies to ensure a sustained and positive impact on their living conditions.

Discussion

The research findings reveal widespread and favorable acceptance of adaptation strategies implemented by Venezuelan migrants in Funza, Cundinamarca, Colombia. Most participants in this study express satisfaction with the practices adopted to integrate into their new environment, indicating a positive impact on their adaptation process and participation in the local community. However, the presence of a percentage of undecided and disagreeing individuals underscores the need to review and communicate some strategies more effectively to achieve greater conformity. This becomes especially relevant when considering that these strategies directly affect the quality of life of those who are now community residents. Exploring new perspectives and approaches can contribute to developing even more favorable life experiences for all involved.

Regarding the perception of community solidarity and receptiveness, most migrants perceive a favorable environment during their adaptation process. Despite this, the existence of a relatively low percentage of undecided and disagreeing individuals suggests the presence of challenges that need to be addressed to improve relationships and integration. These challenges could be addressed in different contexts, such as in education, where efforts could be made to raise awareness about migration, as well as in municipalities, where policies of solidarity toward migrants could be implemented, among other possible scenarios.

The analysis of migrants' needs reveals a diversity of challenges they face when settling into a new environment, from basic aspects like housing and medical care to the search for job opportunities and support for entrepreneurial initiatives. These results highlight the complexity of the challenges that must be addressed through local public policies that promote inclusion and mutual respect, thus fostering healthy relationships and mutual benefit within communities.

Regarding coexistence and well-being, most migrants perceive positive acceptance, but the presence of a segment in disagreement and indecision indicates the existence of gaps in the local population's sympathy towards Venezuelan migrants, suggesting elements of xenophobia from the region's population, warranting the implementation of policies that promote the common good and acceptance in the community. Likewise, although the majority perceives improvements in the well-being of their families, the presence of a considerable segment in disagreement emphasizes the need to improve strategies to take advantage of opportunities that strengthen and enhance family well-being. This progress could be achieved through the implementation of effective information channels that allow migrants to access knowledge about available aid, while facilitating municipalities in identifying emerging needs of this population.

This research highlights the importance of addressing identified challenges, improving the communication of adaptation strategies, and developing local public policies that encourage inclusion and mutual respect, thus contributing to a more harmonious coexistence and the overall well-being of Venezuelan migrants in Funza, Cundinamarca, Colombia.

Conclusions

Migration, a complex phenomenon affecting individuals for various reasons, poses a series of challenges that impact both migrants and the communities receiving them. Confronting and responding to these challenges is an essential part of the migration experience. How people address and overcome adversities during this process directly influences their ability to adapt and thrive in a new environment.

The reception and solidarity of the local community are crucial factors influencing the experience of migrants. A receptive and supportive community not only facilitates integration but also contributes to the building of harmonious coexistence. Collaboration between migrants and the receiving community can create an environment enriched by cultural diversity and mutual understanding.

Focusing on Venezuelan migrants, the duality between the challenges they face and the valuable contributions they can make becomes evident. Addressing these needs, ranging from shelter to access to basic services, is essential to ensure their well-being and quality of life. At the same time, recognizing and harnessing the skills and resources that migrants bring can enrich not only their lives but also the receiving society.

Well-being, quality of life, and coexistence are inseparable elements of the migration experience. Human agency plays a crucial role in migrants' ability to improve their well-being and quality of life, as well as in their contribution to the creation of cohesive and collaborative communities. It is relevant to mention that the analysis of human agency in Venezuelan migrants is multifaceted, covering adaptation, the reception of the local community, needs, and well-being.

Ultimately, addressing migration challenges involves a comprehensive approach that recognizes the interconnectedness between human agency, community response, individual needs, and collective contributions. By doing so, more inclusive and resilient environments can be built, benefiting all involved in the migration process.

Among the limitations of this study, it is noteworthy that the sample is limited to Venezuelan migrants in a single municipality in Colombia. Therefore, it would be beneficial to expand the research to other municipalities, allowing for the inclusion of a larger group of migrants and enriching the understanding of human agency derived from different migration experiences.

Finally, new lines of research emerge, focusing on delving into aspects related not only to human agency in Venezuelan migrants but also in migrants of other nationalities. Additionally, exploration of the elements contributing to a migrant not fully integrating into the welcoming community is raised, warranting a comprehensive analysis to generate supportive policies that promote the common good.

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