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DIASPORA OF VENEZUELAN MIGRANTS TO BRAZIL AND CHILE: SOCIAL INTEGRATION OR EXCLUSION

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ABSTRACT

The ongoing Venezuelan diaspora, 'the migration of despair', does not stop growing. Roughly 7,9 million Venezuelans have emigrated till 2026 due to the socioeconomic crisis and political persecution; one of the world's second largest displacement crises. Two of the countries that Venezuelans have chosen as primary destinations for migration have been Brazil and Chile. As of November 2025, in Brazil there were approximately 732,300 Venezuelan migrants and in Chile, by 2023, there were 669,400 Venezuelans corresponding to about 32.8% of the total foreign-born population. This article explores comparatively their reasons for migration to each country and the main factors that affect migrants´ vulnerability and social integration. This is an exploratory qualitative study, based mainly upon secondary sources and the analysis of interview narratives among ten migrants living in Chile. Results show many common trends between countries such as, access to precarious and ill-paid jobs, extended working hours, difficulties in social integration and the use of individual resilient strategies based upon personal and cultural traits. However, divergent experiences between countries include, among other: a higher degree of discrimination in Chile, a simpler registration process and social integration in Brazil, as well as, a larger number of undocumented Venezuelan migrants in Chile.

Keywords: Venezuelan migrants; Brazil; Chile; social integration; discrimination; diaspora; migration governance; migrants´agency.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Local economic crisis, violence, persecution and permanent political uncertainty, has led to a massive migration of Venezuelans, looking for better living conditions or mere subsistence. Roughly 7,9 million Venezuelans (approximately, 25% of the population) have emigrated till 2026, creating one of the world's second largest displacement crises. (UNHCR, 2024) and representing the full spectrum of the nation's social and geographic diversity (Devis Amaya & Palma-Gutiérrez 2023). The ongoing Venezuelan diaspora, called by some authors 'the migration of despair' (Paez & Penalver, 2017), does not stop growing.

In the last two decades, much of this migration was directed to other Latin American countries, partly due to the growth in the restrictions imposed in the Global North. This type of human mobility has been called South-South migration. One key factor in the Venezuelan massive

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diaspora is that protection to these migrants has been offered as part of the global establishment of 'buffer countries', in which migrants considered undesirable by the Global North are held. However, for Domenech (2013), the horrors provoked by the migration policies of advanced countries make invisible those implemented in the South-South migration context, where more subtle forms for the control of human mobility are implemented.

Due to the scale and complexity of Venezuelan migration at the regional level, governments tried to find collective and integrated responses. Grupo Lima (The Lima Group) was created in August of 2017 as a humanitarian and diplomatic mechanism to help restore democracy in Venezuela. In September 2018, there was another associated regional initiative, when eleven Latin American countries signed the Quito Declaration on Human Mobility of Citizens in the Region, against xenophobia and to protect migrants and other humans from trafficking. It is considered the main document for regional cooperation in relation to Venezuelan migration. Simultaneously, an appeal was made to the Organization of American States (OAS) to involve itself further in regional cooperation.

Two of the countries that Venezuelans have chosen as primary destinations for migration have been Brazil and Chile, according to R4V (the Inter-Agency Coordination Platform for Refugees and Migrants from Venezuela). As of November 2025, in Brazil there were approximately 732,300 Venezuelan migrants and refugees, out of which 147,000 had obtained refugee status – the highest number in the region- and 611,000 held residence permits (R4V, 2025). Massive flows started around 2017 in the Northern States of Brazil.

Massive growth of Venezuelan migration to Chile started as early as 2014. Approximately 669,400 Venezuelan migrants lived in Chile, corresponding to about 32.8% of the total foreign-born population, the largest migrant group in the country since 2019 (INE, 2023). The amount of total migrants in 2024 includes an important estimate of those in an irregular situation (107,223), 13% of whom at least were Venezuelans. However, these numbers might be underreporting this phenomenon due to lack of information.

2.0 MATERIALS AND METHODS

Many interconnected factors affect the social integration of migrants and refugees, among them: the socioeconomic and political conditions experienced before migration, the process of migration itself, the risky living conditions faced during transit, the level of welcoming experienced at the host country, the access to legal documentation, the pathways of socio-economic and cultural integration into the country of resettlement, the specific public policies designed to protect them, the open recognition of their rights, the support found in their interpersonal relationships, their capacity to mourn numerous losses, their level of collective organization and the daily level of isolation, exclusion, discrimination and/or racism faced by them. In the case of Venezuelans, arriving to Brazil and Chile in thousands, the vulnerability these factors generate becomes more acute till a humanitarian crisis was reached.

The notion of diaspora can be used as an all-encompassing descriptive label applied to large populations´ displacement processes (Carreño 2020; Troconis, 2021; 2025). It also shows the affective dimension involved when migrants shape and transform their identities and belonging. In Demir's perspective (2022) diaspora is closely related to translation, which can

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also show migrants´ exercise of agency in the host country, as acts of subjective and collective re-signification. Diasporas are 'sites of interaction' that bridge together cultural zones that are re-signified (Llinas Casas, 2025). The Venezuelan diaspora highlights the building of bridges of meaning between the culture of origin and that of resettlement. Sometimes new cultural aspects are added; sometimes they are subtracted or erased.

The Venezuelan diaspora has been governed differently within the Latin American Region. However, one characteristic prevails. Governance has become a global or regional project of management and control of the displacement of people, often supported by the standards and actions taken by international organizations within spaces of regional integration. In this form of governance, security and regulation tend to be emphasized over rights (Mármora, 2003; Domenech, 2018); it legitimises 'the human rights´ rhetoric' linked to efficient management and administration. Governance is oriented towards the regulated opening of borders, while the State channels and directs flows (Mezzadra & Nielson, 2016).

Governance actions rely upon border control and 'necropolitics' and make still more vulnerable the situation of this migrant population (Castro, 2020). Frontier necropolitics is an application to migration of the concept developed by Mbembe (2019). For this author, necropolitics goes beyond the instrumentalization of life, i.e. beyond biopolitics, as power takes place through different forms of control of bodies and populations or their destruction. It entails the fictitious building of an enemy, as well as, the blurring of social diversity, cultural specificities, human rights and citizenship (Hall, 2006).

The precariousness of living conditions – work, housing, access to health and education- becomes an important barrier to a human right´ and equality- based social integration of migrants. So do racist, xenophobic, discriminatory and excluding behaviours. Venezuelans face multiple barriers in their host societies, that function as multipliers within the humanitarian crisis in which they are immersed - as studied by different authors (e.g. Bustillos et al. 2018; Irons 2022; Olivieri et al. 2022).

However, Venezuelan migrants develop individual and collective resilience and resistance strategies towards unfavourable migration contexts and social discrimination. Resilience refers to the ability of an individual or a community to respond to different forms of shock, risk, adversity and disturbances in ways that enable social adaptation, renewal or transformation (Ungar, 2012). Resistance overtly opposes oppression and can also be expressed emotionally, at intrapsychic, subjective and intersubjective levels - in the forms of willpower, desire, and awareness. It self-defines group or nationality identities, through self-determination and public or political activism (Collins, 2008).

This study builds upon the concept of diaspora as translation, that of State governance as multifaceted and based upon changing forms of control and management, as well as, on migrants´ agency. The article elaborates substantively upon the socio-political context that Venezuelans were experiencing prior to migration, with the purpose of demonstrating the level of vulnerability with which most migrants have already arrived at the host societies. This not only reflects their prior socioeconomic difficulties, but also resembles the levels of violence and scarcity found in conflict or war zones (Andrade & Dahani, 2026).

The main aim of the present article is to analyse, the social integration of Venezuelan waves of migrants in two very different countries: Brazil and Chile. It sets out to explore the following interrelated questions:

- When, why, and how have Venezuelan migrants arrived and settled in Brazil and Chile?
- Which are the main factors that influence Venezuelans´ vulnerability and affect their social integration, most especially in relation to employment and public discrimination?
- What are the shared and differential characteristics of Venezuelan migrations in the two countries under study?

Methodologically, this is an exploratory qualitative study of a hypothetic deductive nature, based upon academic literature on Venezuela´s recent history, migration and refuge; on statistics produced by public and private institutions, on information from documents and news collected at the websites of government agencies and of key pro-migration associations, such as: in Brazil, CARITAS Pares, Mission Peace, the Migrant Pastoral and migrant collectives like: Association Venezuela Global. Similarly, in Chile, data was gathered from government websites and from those of the Jesuit Service for Migrants (SJM) and the Foundation for Social Help of the Christian Churches (FASIC), as well as migrant collectives such as, the Venezuelan Association of Chile (ASOVEN) and the National Coordination of Migrants. Online press information has also been selectively analysed. The analysis of the Brazilian case is based solely upon secondary data; while in Chile, it also involves selective observations from 10 semi-structured interviews carried out with Venezuelan migrants (See, section on Acknowledgements).

3.0 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Venezuela´s main socio-political events since Chavez´s government

President Hugo Chávez´s (1999-2013) charismatic populist government brought about a renewal of an oil-based rentier State model, with high oil prices allowing massive social policies to reduce inequalities and poverty, generating an expansion of State structures, public health and education, a reduction in food prices, as well as, enabling social and political participation (Lander, 2017). Chavez named this process as: 'Socialism of the 21st Century' - a blend of socialism, populism, nationalism, and Pan-American Bolivarianism which became widely popular (Wilpert, 2007)

The President launched 'Bolivarian Missions', large-scale social programs funded directly by oil revenues and bypassing traditional Ministries (Berjaud, 2019). The State seized control of strategic sectors, including telecommunications, electricity, cement, steel, and several major banks and food production plants. In 2003, Chávez established the control of foreign exchange to prevent capital flight and implemented strict price controls on basic goods to combat inflation, which eventually led to early signs of scarcity.

Politically, having a majority in the country's National Assembly, Chávez ignored the opposition´s views and proceeded to change dismantle Venezuela's democratic institutions (Polga-Hecimovich & Sánchez Urribarrí, 2024). The Constitutional Reform of 1999 had this aim. His 'socialist' agenda also involved installing loyalists in the judicial courts, integrating

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the armed forces into politics, dismantling independent media and appointing supporters to the Supreme Court, Electoral Council, and other independent authorities (Sylvia & Danopoulus, 2003).

Chávez won a second full term as President in 2006 with 63% of the vote and then formed the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) to unify his supporters calling for 'Socialism or Death'. The next year he initiated major media crackdowns i.e. a domination of the public through the use of State-led media (Atwood, 2006). He was then defeated at a National Referendum that proposed to abolish the presidential term limit. However, in 2009, he called for another referendum to abolish term limits for all elected officials, which passed with 54% of the vote, allowing him to run for President indefinitely. Between 2009 and 2012, there was an increase in the nationalization of firms and an expansion of the Communal Councils which reported directly to the central government. He had then established a solid hybrid regime that oscillated between a few 'left-overs' of populist principles and sheer authoritarianism.

Around the time that Chavez elected Nicolás Maduro as his follower and died in 2013, there was also an important fall in global oil prices, which provoked a profound loss of the social benefits obtained by low-income groups in previous years. Poverty and crime escalated to levels never imagined before. While 48% of domestic households had been in poverty in 2014, this proportion rose to 81.8% by 2016. Moreover, in 2014, the homicide rate was 91,8 per 100 000 inhabitants - the second-highest rate in the region (León et.al., 2016). With the increase in sex tourism and drug smuggling, Venezuelans became extremely fearful of becoming victims of human trafficking.

To deal with hyperinflation, he removed zeros from the currency twice and created the 'Petro' cryptocurrency tied to oil reserves. He also established a system of subsidized food boxes (CLAP) delivered directly to loyalist neighbourhoods (Weisbrot, 2018). Moreover, to mitigate the impact of international sanctions, in 2022, Maduro passed laws to create Special Economic Zones with tax incentives to attract foreign investment, particularly in the mining and tourist sectors and made more flexible labour, environmental and indigenous people regulations (Weisbrot & Sachs, 2019).

Since 2013, Maduro faced significant opposition with massive street protests taking place regularly between 2014 and 2019 (Lander, 2020). He led a more authoritarian government than that of Chavez based upon State-sponsored violence, making use of crimes against humanity including rape, murder, torture, and illegal detention (Scharifker 2018). The United Nations' Human Rights Commission described his behaviour as a tactic aimed at neutralizing, repressing, and criminalizing political opponents and those critical of the government (Galavis, 2020).

The opposition's growing influence resulted in a significant win, of at least two-thirds of Parliament, during the 2015 legislative elections. In response, military officials were more extensively integrated into national leadership roles and the detention of political dissidents increased. Subsequently, a series of fraudulent elections were mounted to choose representatives to: the National Constituent Assembly (ANC); the gubernatorial elections and the presidential elections of 2018 (Ellis 2017). Supported by the recognition of 50 countries -

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United States, Canada, and most of South America - and in an effort to unseat Maduro, the National Assembly appointed Juan Guaidó as the country's interim leader in January 2019.

Venezuela's sunken economy and high level of government corruption gave rise to massive insecurity regarding health care, education and employment, resulting in high levels of social violence and instability. A profound humanitarian crisis took place. United Nations officials claim that some 1.3 million Venezuelans who fled the country were suffering from malnourishment (Tharoor, 2018).

International independent observers have regarded the latest election, held on July 28 of 2024, as neither free nor fair. The local opposition was barred from running or repressed before, during, and after the elections took place (Renzullo, 2024). Maduro presented himself as having won the presidency, though no evidence was shown, while the true winner, was the former diplomat Edmundo González Urrutia, who had to seek asylum in Spain amid a climate of repression of dissent.

The present political landscape in Venezuela is totally uncertain. On January 3 of 2026, the United States launched 'Operation Absolute Resolve', a large-scale military operation that bombed a number of sites in Caracas. Maduro and his wife were captured by U.S. Special Forces and transported to New York to face charges of drug-terrorism and cocaine importation. Following this, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez assumed the presidency relying for legitimacy upon the pro-government Supreme Court of Justice. The U.S. administration initially declared that it would 'run' the country until a transition could take place. Meanwhile, the democratic opposition continues to push for a genuine transition. While some political prisoners have been released, the core institutions of the previous regime—including the military and the ruling PSUV party—remain largely intact (Agência Brasil, 2026). Internationally, the region´s leaders have expressed polarized opinions. Joint statements have been made by some countries, including Brazil and Chile, rejecting unilateral military intervention of a foreign country on national sovereignty as a violation of international law. Geopolitically, this intervention seems a very risky precedent for Venezuela and the region as a whole.

3.2 Venezuelan Migrants in Brazil

There are four stages of Venezuelan migration flows to Brazil, each with its own sociodemographic characteristics and demanding different forms of governance and regulatory frameworks (Baeninger, 2018a). The first wave takes place between 2000 and 2015 and it is formed by highly qualified workers. A proportion of 70% of them aim at living in State capitals, mainly, in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo (Demétrio & Domeniconi, 2018).

Many Venezuelans regarded Brazil as a 'possible' migration choice, having preferred to have settled in countries in the Global North. However, the last had become an unviable possibility because of increasing migration restrictions. Many migrants entered the country due to an availability of jobs resulting from the transference of transnational firms to Brazilian territory. In general, they were employed as, scientists, researchers, professors, administrators, executives and medical doctors, and also included two thousand University-level students. This wave was formed by 54 % of men (a total of 4,164 occupational registrations). Some migrants were eligible for visas under the Mercosur Agreement, to which Venezuela was

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associated between 2012 and 2016. Others obtained visas through the Programme 'More Medical Doctors' and the regularization of the rest of them was based on the Statute of Foreigners of 1980 (Law 6.815), article n. 13.

The second wave took place between 2016 and 2017 and it had two different modalities. It involved middle-class Venezuelans with a high qualification profile, as well as, more impoverished groups (Baeninger, 2018b). Some of the fist type of migrants had entered the country by the frontier and, out of their own will, settled in other Brazilian cities. Most of the impoverished Venezuelans sought asylum; the number of these requests rose to 61,681 in 2018. Xenophobia and violence against Venezuelans, as well as inadequate infrastructures for reception in the frontier cities of Pacaraima and Boa Vista, led to the articulation of a different type of governance –as will be discussed later on- and to the formation of institutionalized migrant networks (Da Frota Simões, 2018).

The National Council for Migration (CNIg), based at the Ministry of Labour and Employment, issued the Normative Resolution 126 to grant two years´ temporary residence permits to foreigners who had entered the country by land or were illegible for Mercosur visas (Jarochinski Silva, 2018). Visas were then approved for a total of 5,851 persons, corresponding to 75 % of those Venezuelans registered between 2016 and 2017. One of the several critiques to this resolution was that it was out of reach for a majority of migrants due to its high financial costs. Moreover, it only recognized migrants´ entries by land and lacked clarity about potential future renewals (Jarochinski Silva, 2018; Martino & Moreira,2020). Though occupational data for the majority of these migrants is incomplete, it has been estimated that the State of Roraima concentrated 64 % of them. By October 2018, 48 % of these migrants had remained in the country, while 23 % had returned to Venezuela by land and 29 % had migrated to countries like Argentina and Chile (Otero et.al., 2018).

Since 2018, the third was a much larger wave formed by an impoverished population that concentrated mainly at the States of Roraima and the Amazon. Many of these Venezuelans had crossed the frontier on foot. The State had to alter its governance policies to adapt to this more recent wave including different United Nations´ organizations and more than 100 NGOs in a leading role (Lussi, 2015; Mármora, 2010). Often, the 'humanitarian aspect' of this type of governance, consisting of, "care, cure and control", has been emphasized by the relevant literature. However, it also involved heavy investment in the systems for population registration, identification and monitoring (Agier, 2006; Mármora, 2010).

Given the vast critiques made to the norm 126, it had to be replaced by the Inter-Ministerial measure number 9. This last norm excluded the demand for migrants´ entry by land, modified the documentation required from indigenous people, guaranteed free access to documents for those proving insufficient economic resources and allowed to transform temporary into permanent residence after the two first years of holding temporary residence permits (Martino & Moreira, 2020). This regularization process involved more than 110 thousand Venezuelan migrants, representing 77 % of those registered between 2018 and March of 2020.

At the end of 2019, the National Committee for Refugees (CONARE) approved a massive regularization of all Venezuelan asylum seekers based upon the Statute of Refugees of 1997 and the Migration Law 9.474/1997 (Presidência da República & Casa Civil, 1997). This

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initiative was taken given the changes implemented in Brazil´s international policy (Castro, 2020). The recognition by Brazil of 'the serious and generalized violation of human rights in Venezuela', took place during the government of President Jair Bolsonaro, who radically opposed 'Bolivarian socialism'. Refugee status was granted to 37 thousand more Venezuelans until January 2020. This status substantively increased to a total of 53,197, though it prohibits international travelling – even to Venezuela- and deals very precariously with migrants´ human rights.

The National Migration Registry System (SISMIGRA), run by the Federal Police shows that, between 2018 and 2020, 20% of Venezuelan registered migrants were students, that children corresponded to 7.5% and that women represented between 45% and 48% of the total (SISMIGRA, 2020). Their most frequent occupations included those of: salesmen/women, mechanics, cooks and quarry workers, though many other jobs were not classified and while there were over seven thousand unemployed.

The fourth migration wave happened during the Covid-19 pandemic. In spite of the temporary closure of borders between 2020 and 2021, Venezuelans continued to migrate to Brazil. They carried out extremely risky journeys, crossed through illegal frontier corridors and often became irregular migrants within Brazil. They tended to arrive from Peru and other neighbouring countries (Baeninger et al, 2022).

Due to a public imaginary that considered these migrants as criminals, or else, attributed to them the expansion of Covid-19, social conflicts and violence with nationals increased substantively in Roraima. The low managerial capacities of the local government contributed to this situation. Roraima´s government xenophobia was expressed, for example, in the Original Civic Action 3121 when it requested the Federal Supreme Court (STF) to have the Federal Government assume total police and sanitary control of migrants and close the border with Venezuela – an untenable proposal that did not succeed (Milesi, et al., 2018).

3.2.1 The Welcome Operation (Operação Acolhida)

Since 2015, the human mobility at the frontier between Venezuela and Brazil intensified in an unprecedented proportion (Jarochinski-Silva & Albuquerque, 2021). Venezuelan Warao indigenous populations were detected living on the streets since 2016 in Boa Vista. Venezuelan families and groups of people of different ages were seen walking, along Highway BR´174, the 213 Km that connects the frontier municipality of Pacaraima to the capital Boa Vista. Approximately, six hundred deportations of undocumented Venezuelans –including Warao indigenous people from Venezuela - in charge of the Federal Police and the Civil Municipal Guard, took place between 2015 and 2016 (Sanjurjo, 2023).

Around 2017, economic resources were transferred by the Federal government to the Northern States and municipalities as emergency funding and used especially for the construction of shelters. The Federal Government also requested from the International Organization for Migration (IOM) the application of their Displacement Monitoring Matrix (DTM) Methodology, in order to identify the profiles of the Venezuelans in the State of Roraima.

State and municipal management were slow in the implementation of welcoming actions considering the agility that the situation required, at a time when between 800 and 1,000

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Venezuelan persons were crossing daily the frontier (Sanjurjo, 2023). Discrimination against Venezuelan migrants was reflected in, for example, the demand placed upon them to present documents unnecessary for their entrance and permanence in Brazil, as well as, the priority given to fill vacancies at the health and educational public services to Brazilians versus migrants.

There were a number of factors that accelerated the intervention of the Federal Government in the humanitarian crisis that created the Humanitarian Logistics Task Force in 2018 (Sanjurjo, 2023). There had predominated widespread chaos in the reception of a rapid flow of large numbers of Venezuelan migrants. Local institutions had shown low technical, logistic and coordination capacities to process financial resources received from the central government that included, for example, long delays in bidding processes. There had been scarce communication between the State government and the municipalities, as well as, many acts of violence between migrants and nationals,

The policy implemented was called Welcome Operation (Operação Acolhida) and it was organized by the Federal Government alongside the Armed Forces, i.e. in a civil-military collaboration. This implied a change in the previous form of migration governance and it became an extreme example of 'directed migration' (Baeninger et al., 2022). Policy ambiguities within it reflect its double nature, i.e. a compromise was made between the protection of migrants´ human rights versus the control of the frontier (Dias, 2014; Domenech & Dias, 2020; Feldman-Bianco, 2018).

This policy was implemented through the creation of the Federal Committee of Emergency Assistance (CFAE) and its several sub-committees linked to different Ministries. It also counted with the support of international organizations such as, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the IOM. Also, more than 100 NGOs contributed to this Operation, among them: the Institute for Migration and Human Rights (IMDH), the International Humanitarian Federation (FFHI), as well as, different Catholic and Evangelical Churches and institutions. Each of them took on different tasks, from shelter management to food distribution, among other. With federalization, substantive funding was also invested by external resources, e.g. donations from the United Nations agencies as a whole, the European Union, the United States, Canada and Japan (e.g. Ochab, 2020).

According to ACNUR (2022), the Welcome Operation had three-man axes of intervention:

(a) Border management: that consisted in ordering the migration flow, with the reception, identification, documentation, screening, vaccination and medical examination of Venezuelans. Human resources were expanded to carry out these tasks. Documentation provided involved immediate temporary residency or asylum-seeker status, along with a Brazilian identification card (CPF) and a work permit (CTPS).

(b) Welcoming: that involved the creation of twelve temporary shelters that provided three meals a day, personal hygiene kits, health assistance, Portuguese lessons, recreational activities for adults and children, as well as the protection and defence of rights, especially of more vulnerable populations, such as indigenous groups. For health-care, initially professionals from the Programme More Doctors were employed and subsequently, substituted by medical

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doctors from the Armed Forces and from the international organization of Doctors without Borders.

(c) Internal Relocation: that was aimed at preventing an overwhelm in the Northern States and promoting the social integration of migrants. This programme, with the support of the IOM, offered to migrants´ voluntary relocation through internal migration to other Brazilian sites with better living conditions and work opportunities.

According to Castro (2020), there were four modalities through which this relocation took place: (a) The institutional mode: public shelter to public shelter, i.e. Venezuelans were transferred from emergency shelters in Roraima to those in other States, lodged for up to four months and given support to find work; (b)The Family Reunification and Social Reunion modes: migrants were relocated to the sites of relatives living elsewhere in Brazil, friends and members of their social network who were willing to provide them with housing and living expenses; (c) the Job Vacancy Marked (VES) policy by which, through partnerships with the private sector, an employment opportunity and a signed work contract could be obtained. Gender disparities are revealed in this modality, as a majority of Venezuelan men, in the age-cohort between 20 and 44 years old, prevailed in relation to work contracts. Until August 2022, half of Venezuelans had been relocated through the Social Reunion mode and only approximately 10 % of them, through the employment contract modality.

By early 2024, over 132,000 Venezuelans, mostly men (53%), had been successfully relocated to more than 1,000 Brazilian municipalities (UNCHR, 2024). They were mainly redistributed to the Southern States of Santa Catarina, Paraná and Rio Grande do Sul plus the State of São Paulo. The largest volume of relocated migrants – a monthly average of between 2,000 and 2,500 people - corresponded to time periods before and after the Covid-19 epidemic.

Relocated male migrants were primarily engaged in jobs as production line feeders, slaughterhouse workers and building or maintenance workers. Women mostly worked in hospitality jobs or in cleaning and in retail, as store/market operators. A substantive proportion those relocated resourced either to entrepreneurship or looked for alternatives in the informal labour market, showing the educational and class gaps among Venezuelans migrating (Ministério Público do Trabalho, 2021).

In 2019, Bolsonaro´s Presidency led to a demobilization of the CFAE and a lack of Federal financial resources. Also, a series of ordinances were issued that generated a growth in irregular migration, an increase in summary deportation processes, a restriction of access to migrants´ rights, a limitation of migrants´ mobility within the country, i.e. a general migration policy based upon selectivity and securitization (Observatório ds Migrações Internacionais, 2019).

A high volume of financial and human resources was invested in this Operation and its beneficiaries were a large number of migrants and refugees. Though globally considered an innovative, efficient, advanced and unique form of governance, it also had many fragilities. In synthesis, it involved: (a) An institutional arrangement that was only temporary and of an emergency character. For example, it never satisfied the needs for adequate shelter, thus making it difficult for migrants to maintain autonomy and cultural traditions. People remained

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in shelters for over five years, while Venezuelan indigenous populations were excluded from the relocation policy; (b) The militarization of a humanitarian response was questioned for its excessive costs, for assigning the Armed Forces functions belonging to other public institutions and as inadequate in relation to international standards of humanitarian assistance (Vasconcelos & Machado, 2021). Moreover, the perspective adopted of frontier reordering could reinforce public association between migration and security or be regarded as designed against threats to national sovereignty (Jarochinski-Silva & Albuquerque, 2021) ; (c) A top-down decision-making structure that had almost no participation of its beneficiaries; (d) An operational dynamics based upon inter-institutional and international cooperation; (e) A persistent partial participation of Federal management and a low involvement of States and municipalities; and (f) The precarious occupations offered involved risky work in agroindustry and meat-packing and lacked any systematic monitoring of working conditions, increasing migrants´ vulnerability and exploitation (Castro, 2020).

3.3 Venezuelan migrants in Chile

During the 1990s and 2000s, Chile was characterised as one of South America's most politically and economically stable countries. It had positive macroeconomic indicators (especially in terms of growth and inflation control), improved social protection systems and high credibility about public institutions. The choice of migration to Chile among Venezuelans also largely depended on the international image of a socioeconomic 'oasis' projected by the Chilean authorities and international organisations (Somma et al., 2021). Chile´s 'exceptionalism' in Latin America included the creation of thousands of jobs while also increasing wages (Zenteno Torre; Salazar, 2021). This situation became very appealing to Venezuelans (Gomez, 2018).

Dazzled and drawn by this unrealistic vision of an 'oasis', Venezuelans were quickly disappointed by the harsh conditions of their lives in Chile. They were experiencing unstable mental and health conditions which went underreported, e.g. malnutrition, stress, and even trauma, before they left their country and during their long, exhausting and risky journeys on foot, often lacking food and water.

The nation, as a whole, holds a social self-image of a homogeneously 'white' and 'European' culture (Tijoux Merino & Córdova Rivera, 2015), in spite of the fact that Chile has a large aboriginal population. This unrealistic imaginary makes nationals prone to discrimination and stigmatization due to differences in Venezuelan migrants´ style and culture. Furthermore, in October 2019, an outbreak of public protests questioned the social inequalities of the 'Chilean model' and the political system´s lack of legitimacy (Acero & Zuleta Pastor, 2024 a).

The migration of Venezuelans to Chile skyrocketed in 2018 with the creation of a new visa – the Democratic Responsibility Visa (DRV) – and in 2019, President Sebastián Piñera, made it possible for Venezuelans to migrate to Chile almost without restrictions (Somma et al., 2021). Subsequently, the DRV restricted Venezuelan migration by requiring that migrants requested their documents at a Chilean Consulate´s foreign office, and ultimately, this kind of visa was suspended in 2020.

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A majority of Venezuelans - (between 60% and 70%) -settled in the Metropolitan Area of Santiago. They had the support of relatives or friends previously living in Chile who provided them temporarily with lodging, food, regulation tips and general orientation on cultural clues that could enable them to interpret the 'new' world (Moro, 2004).

The Venezuelan flow has been characterised at least by two different waves of migration. In the first, Venezuelan migrants differed from other foreigners in Chile due to their educational profile: a majority held university degrees (55,3 %), just above a quarter (27,6 %) had technical degrees, and 8,5 % had completed secondary education. In contrast, the second wave, which started gradually in 2015, has been of people with a lower economic status and level of training, as well as increasing irregularity (Zenteno Torres & Salazar, 2021). In 2024, the average schooling years for Venezuelans was 15,5 years – the highest among all foreigners- while that for Chileans was of 13,2 years (Dehays Rocha, 2024).

Despite their high educational qualifications, their occupational distribution often reflects a 'brain waste' phenomenon, where high-skilled professionals work in low-skilled jobs (Berríos-Riquelme, 2021). Only about 1 in 10 of these professional migrants have successfully revalidated their academic degrees in Chile through the Universidad de Chile or the Ministry of Education. This process is often expensive and time-consuming, leading many not to obtain jobs adequate to their professional credentials for several years after arrival (Acero & Zuleta Pastor, 2024 b). It is common to find Venezuelan professionals working in retail, hospitality or delivery services. When they do find adequate professional jobs, male engineers and digital specialists often work in Chile's mining and technology sectors and a significant number of women find jobs as nurses or teachers.

In 2022, Venezuelan´s participation rates in the labour market in Chile corresponded to 96% among men and 87% among women and 24% of Venezuelans mostly used mobile apps or web platforms to find work (SERMIG, 2022). Although Venezuelan migrants generally have higher employment rates than the native Chilean population, native Chilean workers earn on average approximately 30% more than them. Among them, underemployment, over qualification, longer working days and lower wages than nationals predominate (Polloni, 2024). Interviewees complain extensively about this situation.

Venezuelan migrants work in the primary sector, the gig economy, the service sector and some are professionals. Their occupational profile also shows a strong labour divide by gender. This reflects the social gender attributes to which women are subjected, making them often the sole unpaid care deliverers for the young and the old, as well as having the main responsibility for domestic tasks within the households. While many men work in construction, warehouse management, and freight transport within the primary sector, women concentrate in retail, beauty, personal care services, and domestic work.

Venezuelan migrants are the most active group among the total of migrants in Chile's digital platform economy (ILO, 2025). Men prevail in applications such as, Rappi, Uber, and Cornershop, jobs that become their primary source of income. Within the gig economy, women tend to become micro-entrepreneurs, engaging in the production of food, or else, in catering. They tend to use social media and other digital applications to sell self-made or industrial goods. This tendency allows them to maintain the flexibility required to perform care and

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domestic work jointly. Many of them only have access to informal market jobs, such as those of maids or cleaners without a labour contract, and informality at work is at least ten points higher for women relative to that of men. Within services, men engage in security and maintenance jobs while women mostly occupy hospitality-related jobs, such as those of waiters, hostesses, and hotel service workers (González-Agüero, & Burcu, 2024).

The general pay gap by gender in the Chilean labour market is in the order of 24 %, considering the minimum wage of 610.44 US dollars for 2025. In the case of Venezuelans, the average rate gap can be higher. There is also a gender gap related to earnings; while Venezuelan men with lower qualifications (e.g. incomplete or complete secondary schooling) can receive wages 10% to 15 % less than the minimum wage, women may earn only half of it. In the case of those with complete higher education the monthly salary gap per gender persists though it somewhat decreases. While women are sometimes paid slightly above the minimum wage, e.g. 637 US dollars, men can earn up to approximately 26% more than them e.g. 867.74 US dollars (Alvarez et al., 2020). Barriers to occupational integration partly involve, for men, the pressure to be family providers and the high costs of validating technical licenses (e.g. specialized driving or electrical permits). Among women, these barriers are related to the 'second and third' work responsibilities already mentioned, as well as lack of child-care support due to the loss of extended families and a lack of State protection.

Venezuelans suffer from 'a mourning of culture' or a de- stabilization of their identities, as well as the 'grief of social status' (Achotegui, 2020; Dejours, & Gernet, 2012).), which they mainly avoid confronting, putting up a positive front. They not only miss their extended families and leisure activities but also work in lower-skilled jobs than those they had in Venezuela. Interviewees emphasize that they dislike the host society's tendency towards hypocrisy, gossip and the criticism of others behind their back. As a resilient strategy, they tend to develop friendships exclusively within their own communities. Moreover, explicit harassment on the part of authorities (e.g. threats of deportation), are still features that characterise the present moment in Chile. Socially, Venezuelans also face high cultural stigma and discrimination attributed to their attitudes and ways of life: louder voices, extroversion, and fun-making versus the closed-up and quieter hosts who tend to keep to themselves.

Access to public education and health in legal terms are universal for migrants. However, Venezuelans are facing many barriers to access them, mainly, the difficulty to find school vacancies and a lack of culturally-oriented training on migrants´ behavioural and health differences among administrators, care-takers and medical doctors.

Resilient strategies tend to show a tendency to: (a) group among family or other compatriots to look for support and their own cultural expressions; (b) often disregard social maltreatment by not framing it as discrimination or else trying an "as if" it did not reach or hurt them; (c) often avoid deeper contact with Chileans and establish a distant type of friendly contact; and (d) be extremely respectful and/or subservient to Chilean´s way of life. Collective organization does not rank high among this group of interviewees, neither as a form of adaptive resilience or as resistance – except in one case - though this trend cannot be generalized due to the small size of the interviewees´ sample.

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4.0 SELECTIVE COMPARISONS BETWEEN VENEZUELAN MIGRATION TO BRAZIL AND CHILE

In this section of the article, a synthesis of the main similarities and differences of the Venezuelan diaspora between countries are briefly outlined.

4.1 Convergent Experiences

The Venezuelan population in Brazil and Chile share the characteristic that they have arrived at each country in waves with different profiles and qualification levels, often entering through the Northern States´ frontiers after long and risky journeys. In the case of Chile, exponential growth of this type of migration happened, at least, two years earlier than in Brazil.

In both countries, a large proportion of Venezuelan migrants are involved in precarious, low-paid jobs for which they tend to be overqualified, even within formal labour market occupations. Many other are dedicated to informal work or are self-employed, often with the support of digitalized platforms. Educational qualifications tend to be high in, at least, one third of these populations, with a substantive amount of migrants having completed University level degrees, and training times tend to be even higher than the average among nationals. However, the revalidation of foreign degrees is slow, cumbersome and difficult to attain.

Venezuelan migrants´ access to public services, such as, education, health and welfare, requires overcoming many obstacles and these are stronger in Chile. Instead, in Brazil, the Unique Cadastre (CADÚnico) -directed to families that live on a monthly rate of up to half the minimum wage per person – allows those registered to be considered as candidates for different social programmes, Meanwhile, in Chile, general availability of vacancies for schooling is low and public health facilities are unequally segmented by regions.

An obstacle to obtain satisfactory public health-care in both countries are long queues and delays in consultations, as well as that professionals and officials are often ill-prepared to deal with the cultural specificities of this population, or else, stigmatize it. However, when access is obtained, the Venezuelan migrants interviewed declared that treatments tended to be relatively satisfactory. Notwithstanding, when possible, these migrants resort to private health-care.

Venezuelans rely heavily either on their positive personal traits to succeed or upon their relatives and compatriots to build their main support networks. However, there is growing social involvement in migrant collectives, integrated solely by Venezuelans or jointly by different migrant nationalities. But collective association and networking functions in different ways in both countries. For example, as the Chilean State has become less welcoming, Venezuelan migrants have built strong internal community networks, thus creating a parallel support system that replaces State-led integration. They are also supported by leading and often religious pro-migrant organizations in both countries.

4.2 Divergent Experiences

In spite of these commonalities, the registration process and access to work contracts is simpler in Brazil than in Chile. However, in both countries, most specifically in the last one, migrants

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tend to often work longer working hours than those legally specified and these tend to include a large part of their weekends. Furthermore, in Chile, there is a substantive amount of undocumented or irregular migrants; though the degree of this phenomenon is difficult to estimate. Through the requirements of the last Chilean migration law of 2021, irregular Venezuelans have participated in thousands in a biometric registration process. However, they lack a clear panorama of the end of this regularization process.

The type of governance of the Venezuelan diaspora is very different between the two countries. The Federal Government-led and militarized operation in Brazil, with a strong involvement of international organizations and NGOs for the reception and relocation of Venezuelans, has not taken place in Chile. In the last country, these migrants were largely left to integrate into the host society drawing upon their own resources and networks. Massive refugee protection specific for this nationality was granted in Brazil early on during the humanitarian crisis, while in Chile the approval of refugee status has been almost null.

Discrimination and stigmatization of Venezuelan migrants as criminals and drug-traffickers does not systematically permeate public institutions in Brazil. In spite of this, there have been isolated social cases of physical violence against them and homicides, most especially, in the State of Roraima during the early period of massive arrivals. In Chile, fake news with that negative stigma about Venezuelans have been widespread by the mass media, often justified by the extension into the country of the activities of the well-known criminal gang called 'The Train of Aragua'. That type of reporting has substantially influenced the public at large, who also resents some of the cultural attitudes of extrovert Venezuelans. Stigmatization is often included within public authorities´ speeches, in spite of the existence of anti-discrimination laws in both countries, particularly regarding labour, racial and gender equity.

5.0 CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the initial questions of this study, it has been shown how the unstable, chaotic and often violent political and socioeconomic situation in Venezuela, difficulty in survival and access to food and medicine, have led different waves of Venezuelans to leave their country, taking different types of routes in their journey towards Brazil or Chile. Their choice of country for migration was influenced by the leadership of Brazil in the Region and the economic growth of Chile, as well as the exaggerated global reporting of those countries´ employment successes. Moreover, the presence of relatives, or other social relationships in the countries chosen for migration was another source of motivation, as well as the facilities for legal regularization. Venezuelans left their country of origin looking for the prospect of a better and more peaceful life, which was often not fulfilled. But the events previously lived in their own country have left in many of them psychosomatic traumatic marks, whether acknowledged or not.

Access to precarious and ill-paid jobs is quite extended in both countries, partly as a result of local labour market segmentation. However, the protection designed by State policies on employment and job training has been scarce, with more formal initiatives having been taken during the Brazilian "Operação Acolhida".

Venezuelan migrants have socially integrated somewhat more systematically in Brazil where there is less overt xenophobia, discrimination and criminalization against them, than in Chile.

They have faced stigmas and constraints by drawing on individual resilient strategies based upon personal traits, such as, good labour preparation, optimism, extroversion and minimization of the negative impacts of discrimination. There is also a tendency towards collective informal endurance and solidarity among compatriots. Lately, collective resistance and political confrontation have grown based on the organization of new migrant associations.

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