

Adaptation Attitudes, Optimism, and Intergroup Relations among Migrant and Hosting Populations in Latin America. Case of Venezuelan Population Exodus.

-Extended abstract -

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Introduction

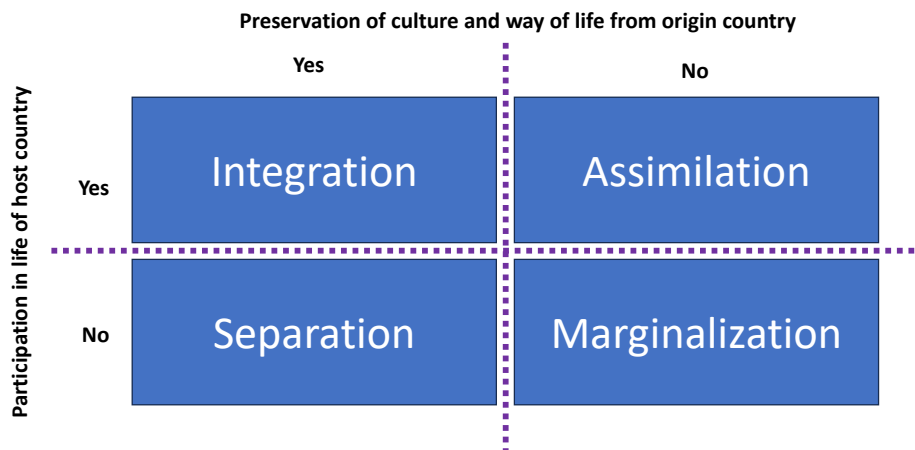
This study focuses on the unprecedented exodus of Venezuelans in recent years, prompted by economic deterioration, a collapsing health system, and political instability (Mazuera-Arias et al., 2020). By August 2023, the global population of Venezuelan migrants and refugees had reached **7.71 million**, with 6.56 million finding settlement in Latin America and the Caribbean (R4V, 2023). The aim of this paper is to explore adaptation attitudes of Venezuelan migrants and their Peruvian neighbors living in Peru - one of the top destinations of population exodus from Venezuela, with migrant population of 1.5 million people. We also investigate importance of *optimism* and *intergroup relations* between native and migrant populations for the adaptation attitudes. Analyzing adaptation in this context, we want to contribute to evaluation of possibility of global migration crisis caused by outflow from Venezuela that could destabilize the whole migration system in Latin America in case positive adaptation strategies cannot be implement in this region.

Our study is based on bidimensional adaptation/acclulturation model proposed by Berry in which adaptation refers to “the ways in which an acculturating individual (or group) wishes to relate to the dominant society“ (Berry 1992). The dimensions of adaptation in the model are (1) maintenance of heritage cultural identity and (2) maintenance of relationship with the hosting population. Based on these two dimensions, Berry distinguishes four adaptation strategies (see Figure 1): (a) *integration* in which migrant population keeps their cultural identity but is highly interested in relationship with a hosting society, (b) *assimilation* in which group wants to lose its cultural identity adopting a host country culture and is highly interested in relationship with this group, (c) *separation* in which migrants want to keep their culture and do not want to have relations with a host society. (5) *marginalization* in which migrants refuse their heritage culture but they do not want to have relations with host society. Similarly, host society members' acculturation expectations can be defined by similar dimensions as the ones

that determine minority members' acculturation strategies (Berry, 2001): approval of immigrants' culture maintenance and expectations of regular contact of minority members with the host group.

The positive outcomes of adaptation in a host society can be reached when both sides - migrant and native population – have *integration* or *assimilation* attitudes. Piontkowski et al. (2000) also emphasize that both groups should reach consensual level of concordance in terms of the attitudes. This means that attitudes of host community match with the attitudes of the immigrants. If this is not reached, a *culture-problematic* or a *contact-problematic* discordance occurs that can lead to conflict and become a pushing factor for migration not only for immigrants but also for a native population.

Figure 1. Adaptation strategies in Berry's model



In the paper we test hypothesis that optimism is an important factor for positive adaptation attitudes both in host and immigrant populations. Optimism could be described as the perception of expecting positive outcomes of life events (Scheier & Carver 1985). Scheier and Carver (1985) suggest that individuals who are more optimistic tend to react better to stressful situations and they adapt easier. We argue individuals with higher level of optimism have a more successful acculturation attitudes as migration is a stressful life event.

Following the intergroup theory (e.g. Piontkowski et al 2000), we evaluate if intergroup variables have an impact on adaptation dimensions formulated by Berry. We test if perceived similarity to other group (e.g. Hogg 1992), contact with other group (Allport 1954; Pettigrew 1971), perceived vitality of an immigrant group (Currie & Hogg 1994), self-efficacy (Allard & Landry, 1992) and assessed outcome of immigration (Bobo, 1983) is related to adaptation attitudes among native and migrant populations.

Data & Method

For our analysis we use data from our own survey among 300 Venezuelans and 200 Peruvians at age 18+ living in Peru conducted in a research project “*Migration Crisis in Latin America – coping and adaptation strategies of Venezuelan migrants and their families and the risk of global migration crisis [MICLACAS]*” funded by National Science Centre in Poland [UMO-2021/41/B/HS4/01680]. For Venezuelan migrants, we used a random spatial sampling in areas with high concentration of Venezuelan migrants (grid level, based on ENPOVE-2022 study conducted by Peruvian National Institute of Statistics and Information (INEI)) and quotas related to age, sex, education, and district. Peruvian neighbors were selected in the spatial proximity to Venezuelan migrants to fill predefined quotas, and because of this group is not representative for the Peruvian population. The data from survey are enriched by information gathered during in-depth interviews with 30 Venezuelans and 30 Peruvians residing in Lima (Peru).

We use descriptive statistics presenting adaptation attitudes and estimate several logistic regression models to verify importance of optimism and intergroup relations on adaptation attitudes in two dimensions specified by Berry. To verify the hypothesis of the study, we select two dependent variables. First one (called *keep culture*) is an indicator of acceptance of keeping heritage culture of Venezuelans (question – Venezuelan sample: *In my opinion, we should try to live in this country as we are accustomed to as Venezuelans*; Peruvian sample: *In my opinion, we should let Venezuelans live in our country as they are accustomed to*). The second variable is an indicator of acceptance of participation in life of Peruvian society (variable: *social engagement*) (question – Venezuelans: *In my opinion, we Venezuelans should try to participate completely in the Peruvian life*; Peruvians: *In my opinion, we should let Venezuelans completely participate in our life*).

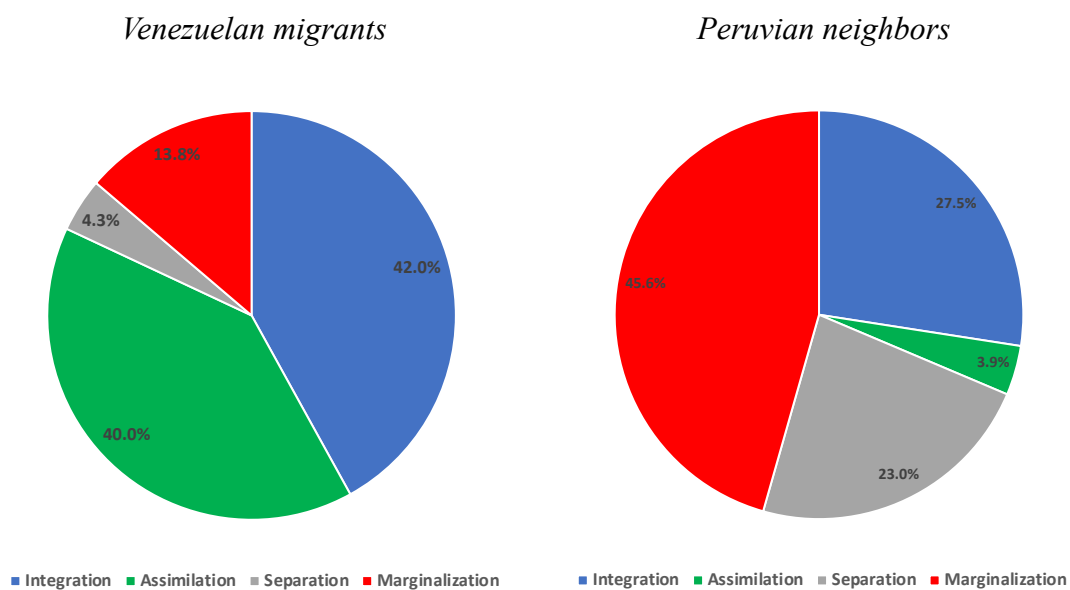
We measure optimism using a well-accepted instrument proposed by Scheier, Carver and Bridges (1994) called *Revised Life Orientation Test (LOT-R)*. It is a 10-item measure assessing dispositional optimism within two subscales: Optimism and Pessimism. Optimism is assessed by three items, as well as pessimism, whereas four items have function of fillers.

To evaluate importance of intergroup relations, we use a set of intergroup of variables proposed by Piontkowski at al. (2000). Additionally, we include a set of individual-level control variables to improve the comparability of individuals with different socio-economic origins: age, sex, educational level, and migration status.

Results (tentative)

The findings show a large difference in adaptation attitudes between Venezuelan migrants and their Peruvian neighbors residing in Peru (see Figure 2). Venezuelans are very positive towards living in Peru. Around 82% of respondents show positive attitudes - *integration* (42%) or *assimilation* (40%), whereas Peruvians prefer rather negative strategies. Around 46% have *marginalization* attitudes and 23% are *separationists*. Only around 30% neighbors accept Venezuelan migrations, but mostly they are *integrationists* but not *assimilationists*.

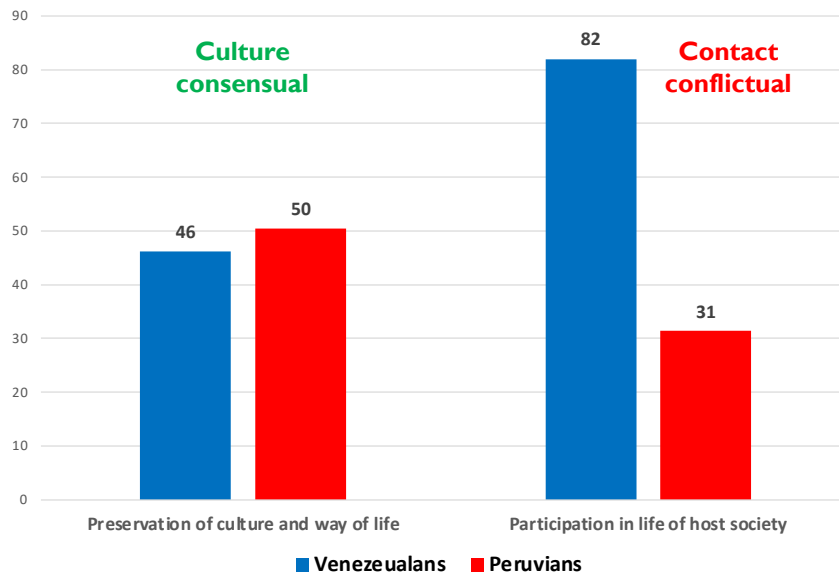
Figure 2. Adaptation attitudes among Venezuelans and their Peruvian neighbors in Peru



Source: own calculations based on MICLACAS survey in 2023.

Our analysis of dimensions of adaptation attitudes reveals that the attitudes in the cultural dimension are more similar among groups under consideration - around half of Venezuelans and Peruvians agree that immigrants should keep their culture - than in the contact dimension (Figure 3). Eight out of ten Venezuelan respondents support that they should try to participate completely in Peruvian life. Whereas only 31% of Peruvian neighbors want Venezuelans to be integrated fully in the Peruvian life. Thus, the second dimensions could be treated as a conflictual area in a migrant-native relationship in Peru.

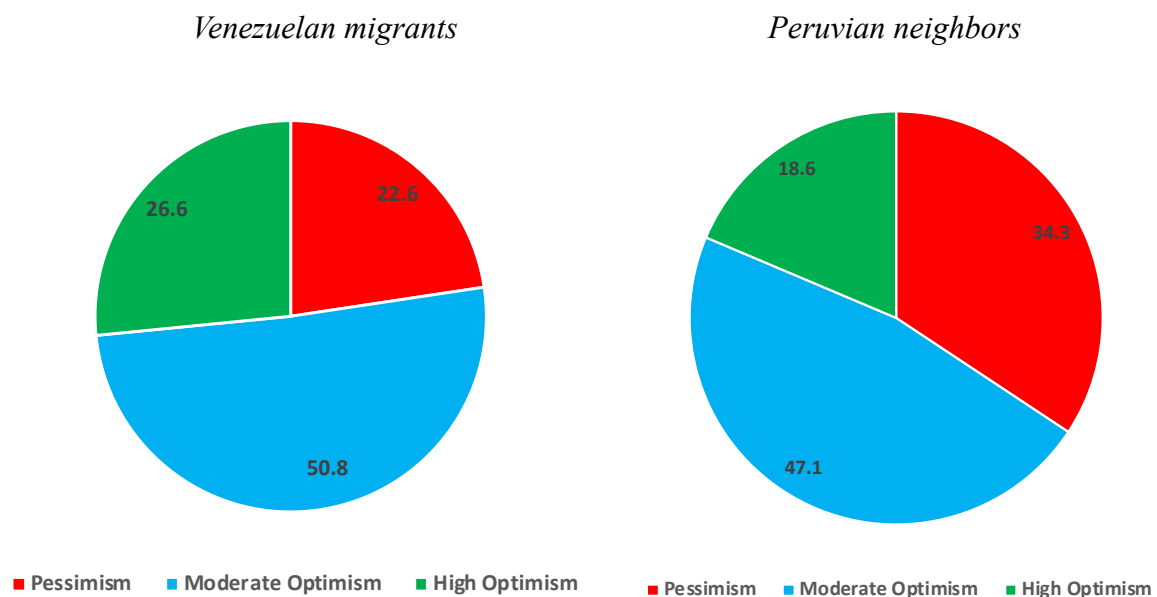
Figure 3. Share of respondents with preference of preserving culture and participation in life of host society among Venezuelans and Peruvian neighbors.



Source: own calculations based on MICLACAS survey in 2023.

Both populations have a similar distribution of level of optimism with around half of population that can be classified as *moderately optimistic* according to the LOT-R measurement (Figure 4). However, among Peruvian neighbors there are significantly more pessimistic people than among Venezuelans – 34% vs. 23%.

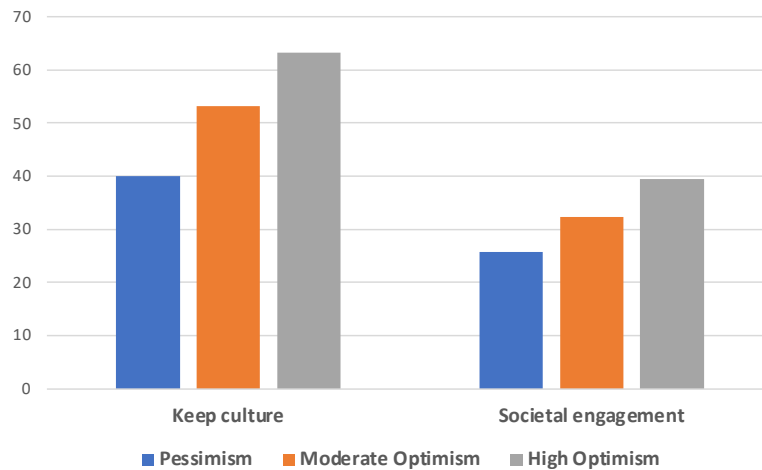
Figure 4. Level of optimism among Venezuelan migrants and their Peruvian neighbors



Source: own calculations based on MICLACAS survey in 2023.

Figure 5 shows share of Peruvian respondents who agree that Venezuelans should keep their culture and be engaged in Peruvian societal life by level of optimism. There is a clear positive relationship between these two variables. More optimistic Peruvians are more likely to accept that Venezuelans keep their culture living in Peru and also that they should be engaged in life of the Peruvian society.

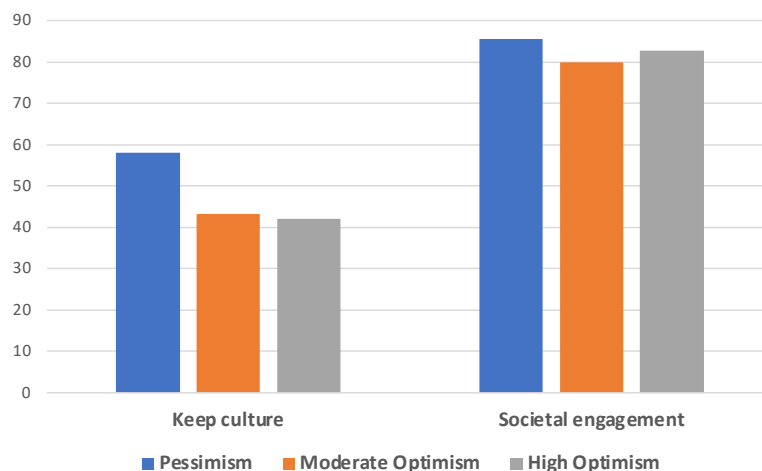
Figure 5. Adaptation attitudes (2 dimensions) by level of optimism among Peruvian neighbors



Source: own calculations based on MICLACAS survey in 2023.

The different relationship can be found among Venezuelan respondents (see Figure 6). Among more pessimistic immigrants, there is a significantly higher share of those who wants to keep their culture in comparison to those more optimistic (moderately or highly). Whereas optimism does not have significant effect on attitudes towards social engagement. The level of acceptance is high, above 80% respondents, in all three subgroups.

Figure 6. Adaptation attitudes (2 dimensions) by level of optimism among Venezuelan migrants



Source: own calculations based on MICLACAS survey in 2023.

Our models confirm these descriptive findings. Among Peruvians, likelihood of acceptance of Venezuelan culture and acceptance of social engagement in Peruvian life is positively associated with level of optimism of respondents (measured by LOT-R optimism score) even controlling for intergroup relations variables and socio-economic characteristics (see Table 1). In case of Venezuelans, level of optimism seems to be negatively associated with acceptance of keeping heritage culture, but not significantly related to acceptance of social engagement.

Additionally, we find that multidimensional perception of similarity between Venezuelans and Peruvians is significantly associated with adaptation attitudes both among Peruvian and Venezuelan populations, and that socio-demographic characteristics seems not playing a significant role in adaptation attitudes.

Table 1. Main results of the logistic models

Independent Variables	Group	Dimension	Model 1A		Model 1B		Model 1C		Model 1D	
			b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
<i>Main Characteristics</i>										
Optimism scale (LOTR)	Peruvians	Keep culture	0.108 ***	0.040	0.174 ***	0.050	0.115 ***	0.041	0.160 ***	0.052
		S Engagement	0.097 **	0.042	0.134 ***	0.048	0.107 **	0.045	0.142 ***	0.053
	Venezuelans	Keep culture	-0.073 **	0.032	-0.069 **	0.033	-0.069 **	0.033	-0.067 **	0.033
		S Engagement	-0.023	0.041	-0.013	0.043	-0.020	0.042	-0.011	0.044

Source: own calculations based on MICLACAS survey in 2023.

Note: Model 1A – incl. only optimism score, 1B- incl. intergroup variables, 1C – incl. socio-demographic variables, 1D – incl. intergroup and socio-demographic variables

Conclusions

We found significant differences in adaptation attitudes between Venezuelans migrants and their Peruvian neighbors residing in Peru. Venezuelans seems to be prone to more positive adaptation in Peruvian society whereas their Peruvian neighbors prefer to marginalize or separate migrants from Peruvian life. This situation can lead to an increasing conflict between native and migrant populations with more xenophobic behaviors towards migrants and become a push factor for further Venezuelan migration in the future.

Optimism seems to play a significant role in adaptation attitudes of Venezuelan migrants and Peruvian neighbors. This relation should be explored more as a key factor of successful integration of migrants in a hosting society.

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