

MEASURING THE VENEZUELAN'S INTENTION TO EMIGRATE IN STUDENTS OF PUBLIC AND PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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Investigación

Abstract

This research measured the intention to emigrate of undergraduate students at Venezuelan public and private universities during the years 2017 and 2018. The objective was to understand the determinants that influenced their decision to radically change their lives at the time. We applied a nationwide survey to university students from those universities created before former President Chávez came to power in 1998. We sent an electronic format to 611 students from the 9 Venezuelan universities classified in the QS World University Rankings and was responded over 6 students and received was answers from 566 students. The most relevant finding is that 83 per cent of all interviewees intend to emigrate. If that intention becomes real, then Venezuela would be losing its most important capital, the intellectual one. The migration intention of future professionals and the consequent generational relay indicates that problems might arise in the sending and receiving countries.

Keywords: Intellectual Capital; Intention to Emigrate; Public and Private Universities; University Students; Venezuela

Midiendo la intención de emigrar de estudiantes de universidades públicas y privadas seleccionadas a escala nacional en Venezuela

Resumen

El propósito del estudio es medir la intención de emigrar de los estudiantes que se encontraban cursando estudios de pregrado en universidades públicas y privadas venezolanas durante los años 2017 y 2018. El objetivo principal del estudio es comprender los determinantes que influyeron en la la decisión de cambiar radicalmente sus vidas en el momento de ser entrevistados. Se aplicó una encuesta nacional a las universidades creadas antes de que el expresidente Chávez llegara al poder en 1998. Se envió un formato electrónico a 611 estudiantes de las 9 universidades venezolanas clasificadas en el QS World University Rankings, y fue respondido por 566. El hallazgo más relevante fue que el 83% de todos los entrevistados tenían la intención de emigrar. Si eso se proyectara a escala real, Venezuela estaría perdiendo su capital más importante, el intelectual. Se estudió la intención de emigración de los futuros profesionales y por tanto de la generación de relevo. Si una proporción importante de ellos emigra causaría problemas en los países de origen y recepción.

Palabras clave: estudiantes universitarios; capital intelectual; intención de emigración; universidades públicas y privadas nacionales; Venezuela

Mesure de l'intention d'émigrer des étudiants d'universités publiques et privées sélectionnées à l'échelle nationale au Venezuela

Résumé

L'objectif de l'étude est de mesurer l'intention d'émigrer des étudiants qui poursuivaient des études de premier cycle dans des universités publiques et privées vénézuéliennes en 2017 et 2018. L'objectif principal de l'étude est de comprendre les déterminants qui ont influencé la décision de changer radicalement de vie au moment de l'entretien. Une enquête nationale a été appliquée aux universités créées avant l'arrivée au pouvoir de l'ancien président Chávez en 1998. Un formulaire électronique a été envoyé à 611 étudiants des 9 universités vénézuéliennes classées dans le classement mondial des universités QS et 566 étudiants y ont répondu. Si cela devait être projeté à une échelle réelle, le Venezuela perdrait son capital le plus important, le capital intellectuel. L'intention d'émigrer des futurs professionnels et donc de la génération de remplacement a été étudiée. Si une proportion importante d'entre eux émigrent, cela causera des problèmes dans les pays d'origine et d'accueil.

Mots clés: étudiants universitaires; capital intellectuel; intention d'émigration; universités nationales publiques et privées; Venezuela

1. Introduction

Venezuela is a paradoxical case study and, therefore, relevant in the global migration issue because in the twentieth century, it was a net recipient country of immigrants and so far in the twenty-first century, it has become one of the largest senders of people in the world (De la Vega, 2005, 2010; Garbi, 1991; Valecillos, 1993). This fact is striking because, during the second half of the last century, millions of people from multiple nations arrived in this country in different waves, both from the Latin American and other continents. This meant the establishment of a process of crossbreeding (*mestizaje*) that generated an ethnic diversity that enriched that society and, most importantly, did not cause any xenophobia (Valecillos, 1993; De la Vega y Vessuri, 2008). On the contrary, the integration and contribution of foreigners contributed to the development of Venezuela, both with the skilled and unskilled labour force because those who did not possess technical or professional levels went on to perform menial jobs that at one time the Venezuelans did not want to do (Torrealba y Oropeza, 1988; De la Vega, 2005).

In these first two decades of the twenty-first century, Venezuela has become one of the countries with the highest emigration rate in the world, in per capita terms, only behind Syria. Statistics indicate that by 2019 Venezuela was the main sender of people in America, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the International Organization for Migration (IOM) (Response for Venezuelans -R4V, 2019). The emigration is attributed to political problems, specifically the Socialism of the Twenty-first Century, that Hugo Chávez Frías (1999-2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013- to date applied and had negative repercussions on the economic and social aspects (Bifano y Bonalde, 2018; Requena, 2019). Specialized multilateral organizations indicate that by December 2019, about 4.7 million people had emigrated from that country (R4V, 2019). Other studies estimate that the figures for 2018 already exceeded 5.5 million (Consultores 21, 2019). The most alarming thing about this process is that projections indicate that this forced migration will continue to increase (De la Vega, Puente y Sanchez-R, 2019).

From the perspective of what the topic of study means, research on mobility over the last three decades migration and diasporas has grown steadily (De la Vega Hernández y Barcellos de Paula, 2019; De la Vega, Puente y Sanchez-R, 2019; Kim, 2019; Pis-

arevskaya et al., 2019). The diversity of terms, where technology has been making great differences in the analyses, the proposition of models, including the new migration systems that examine the flows of people, require careful examination in the analyses (Ortega y Peri 2013; Bakewell 2014). In that sense, studies ranging from mapping-to-mapping migration (van Houtum y Bueno Lacy, 2019), through studies on international mobility of scientific personnel (Abel y Sander, 2014) to intra-boundary migration issues by land, air and sea (Massey, 2017; Pettit y Ruijtenberg, 2019), allow having an approach on the complexity of the topic. Finally, this study examined a subset of people living in Venezuela and focused on the undergraduate students at Venezuelan universities. The research purpose was to measure their intention to emigrate and to unveil, both the main causes and consequences of this recent phenomenon. In order to obtain the answers, a two section questionnaire was applied to them. The first part aimed at establishing the general socio-economic and political conditions of the country. The second, focused on establishing their intention to emigrate the research guiding question of this study is the following: What are the determinants that lead a significant number of university students in Venezuela to respond that they intend to emigrate from that country at the end of their studies?

1.1 Historical frame of reference of general immigration in Venezuela

Venezuela was a net immigrant-recipient country during the last 60 years of the twentieth century, and this meant, that at the end of that century, some sources determined that nearly 20 percent of the population living in that country was immigrant or descendant from them (Torrealba y Oropeza, 1988; Valecillos, 1993; De la Vega, 2003; 2005; 2014). One fact that should be considered when examining the immigration and the emigration process in Venezuela after the Second World War is that there are significant blood ties to people in other nations (De la Vega, 2005) because a significant number of immigrants developed their life projects in that country. Between the decades of the 1950s and the 1990s, the standards of living in Venezuela surpassed, in most cases, those of other countries of the region (Garbi, 1991; Valecillos, 1993). This process meant that, in most cases, there were descendants among, or with, immigrants. The evidence found in previous studies indicates that there was first, second, third, and even in the fourth generation descendants (De la Vega, 2014). Therefore, a sustained increase in the parental relationship between immigrants and born in Venezuela descendants, translates into a high percentage of the population

having the possibility of obtaining a second and even a third citizenship through the aforementioned ties (De la Vega, 2014). To be related to immigrants could predispose the individual to make a faster decision to emigrate if the general socioeconomic and political conditions of a country deteriorated, as has been the case in Venezuela. This argument is associated with close life stories about migratory processes and the probable fact of having family in (an)other country(ies) that could serve as support. This is known as in-tow migration (De la Vega, 2003). Immigration to Venezuela from several continents, and in different waves during the last century, fundamentally, after World War II came from Europe, America, and Asia, in that order. But Israelites, Syrians, Lebanese and Arabs, among others, also arrived (De la Vega, 2005). From Europe came Spaniards, Portuguese, Italians, Germans, and to a lesser extent Dutch, Czechs, Romanians, Hungarians, Slovenes, Russians, and Scandinavians, among others (De la Vega, 2014). From Latin America, they also arrived from most countries in different waves. Among the determining factors that prompted them to settle in Venezuela were: military problems (dictatorial regimes, basically in the southern cone of America); forced displacements, as in the case of Colombia, due to violence perpetrated by armed groups linked to drug trafficking and guerrilla warfare. Millions of people arrived from this last country in a wide window of time that extended for more than 40 years (between the 1960s and the end of the 1990s); and economic problems as in the case of thousands of Peruvians, Ecuadorians, Argentines, Chileans and Uruguayans. They all helped in different ways to the development of Venezuela. People from Asian countries arrived in lesser numbers. Of these Asian countries, China had the highest migratory flow to Venezuela. Data indicates that more than 200 thousand Chinese had settled in the country during the twentieth century (Instituto Nacional de Estadística, 1971; 1981; 1990; 2001; 2011). The relevance about these immigrations is the relationship with relatives in other countries that might serve as a link for the migratory return (De la Vega, 2005).

An example of the emigration process with immigrant ties can be seen by studying the first, second, third and even fourth generations of European descendants (ancestors) born in Venezuela. Those who obtain the nationality of origin of their European ancestors have the possibility of travelling without restrictions and can obtain visas for countries like the United States of America, Australia or Canada faster. In Latin America, the return of people to the countries of origin, or to a third destination, is due, to a high extent, to having links with relatives, friends or professional relationships. Repatri-

ation to the countries of origin became an opportunity, fundamentally because, nowadays, these countries present better general conditions than Venezuela. Evidently, a massive influx of people into any society without planning generates a multiplicity of problems.

1.2 Venezuela, from receiver to sender of people

Venezuela has gone from a receiver of people to a sender country so far in the twenty-first century. In the last 20 years, that country has been collapsing due to, fundamentally, bad management, of the last two governments (Bifano y Bonalde, 2017). A relevant fact of the recent emigration of Venezuelans is that a significant number of professionals were among the first waves of migration. The usual patterns of migration is that the people with less economic resources and low academic levels are the first ones who seek to leave but the first waves of Venezuelan migrants did not follow that pattern. (Pellegrino y Macadar, 2016).

On the other hand, nowadays the value of the emigrant is associated with the tangible and intangible knowledge they possess and the globalized market allow, in many cases, that those who have high academic levels get work in another country (Teplova y Sokolova, 2019; De la Vega, 2017). In this line of thought, it should be noted that land, economic capital or labour were the most important assets within what is known as the means of production has already been overcome. But intellectual capital has become the most relevant factor within an organization (Cézanne, Krafft, y Saglietto, 2018). In the specialized literature, some authors assert that the most important value in the knowledge society is this intellectual capital and it is also the decisive element to leverage the development of countries (Viedma y Cabrita, 2012) and therefore, countries use all the tools at their disposal to retain their national qualified workforce (Prieto, Pellegrino y Koolhaas, 2015). When a considerable percentage of the intellectual workforce emigrates, governments apply policies of reconnection with them using linkage programs. These programmes fall into the conceptual category of intellectual diasporas (Meyer y Brown, 1999; Meyer y Wattiaux, 2006).

This study examines the image of Venezuela from the recruitment of future professionals' viewpoint. The absorption of the intellectual capital is a matter of learning and credibility for a society and their absorption into the socio-institutional fabric is key (Bourgoin y Harvey, 2018). When their absorption is incomplete a massive forced exodus of professionals, and among them young people, is the logical result. And the negative consequences for the sender country will include develop-

ment problems. In Venezuela, the capacity for absorption of that knowledge was distorted, and as a result, there emerged difficulties that led to a systemic failure (De la Vega, Rodríguez-Montoya y Yaber, 2017). For example, a study conducted in the United States found that Venezuelan immigrants had the highest percentage of professionals of all Latin America, (Sanchez-R y Massey, 2014). The paradox of the massive exodus of Venezuelans in these first 20 years of the twenty-first century is that this country has obtained the highest foreign exchange income in history through the increase in the price of a barrel of oil, exceeding US\$100 for several years in the period under study (De la Vega, 2017; Requena, 2019). This finding means that this phenomenon has not been caused by an economic crisis or by natural events such as earthquakes, tsunamis, landslides, hurricanes or other similar incidents, or because of an international or internal (civil) war (Migali y Scipioni, 2019); it is the result of inadequate and long standing policies applied by the last two governments that decided to produce a drastic political and economic change, associated with the Socialism of the Twenty-first Century decreed by the former president Hugo Chávez Frias and deepened by the current president Nicolas Maduro (Bifano y Bonalde, 2017; De la Vega y Vargas, 2017).

The general socioeconomic, political and cultural conditions of Venezuela in 2018 affected all spheres of the society and are the worst of all Latin America (Encovi, 2018). These indicators also warn that the country is in the presence of the greatest crisis in its history. It is even comparable to the worst periods in the region, as in the case in Colombia, for example (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, 2018).

2. Methodology

2.1 Research line and instrument

This study is part of a research line that began in 2010. In the first part, we designed the instrument applied to the current research. The design steps were as follows: first, the selection and validation of the variables by a statistician. Second, two additional specialists from a survey firm validated the questions and the instrument's reliability. Third, students conducted twenty pilot tests to determine the necessity of further adjustments. Fourth, 153 students from public universities in the Venezuelan capital answered the questionnaire. We used the same instrument again without changes to the Labour Relations undergraduate degree course between 2012 and 2013 and to a sample of 300 students at two private universities in the Venezuelan capital. The third step, between 2015 and 2016, extended the research to 600 students from four other universities in the capi-

tal region: two public and two private. This new study used the same instrument and was scaled up to a total of the 9 selected universities that were classified in the QS World University Rankings. This organization measures the quality of the institution in multiple dimensions by region and country. The objective of widening the number of universities was to obtain a higher level of representativeness on a national scale.

In order to examine the validity of the instrument designed in 2010, called Survey to Measure the Intention to Emigrate of University Students, a new verification of each question was carried out and it was determined that they are still valid. The questionnaire used is divided into two sections. The first is aimed at finding out the interviewee's perception of the general situation in Venezuela, and the second is related to questions about the intention to emigrate.

2.2 Empirical strategy and data collection

This study is quantitative, following the positivist paradigm and its research design is transversal, non-experimental. The logic of the study is deductive, beginning with the literature review and its direct relationship with the research question posed. The scope is correlational and makes use of instruments validated in previous research. The steps to arrive at the final sample selection were as follows: 1) 611 surveys were collected; 2) 11 forms were eliminated because they were incomplete; 3) 35 surveys from a university not included in the QS Ranking were eliminated; 4) The final total of valid and tabulated surveys was 565. The surveys were conducted in five public and four private universities. The students surveyed were taking undergraduate degrees in several areas of knowledge: health, engineering, architecture, human development, and natural, social, economic, political, and juridical sciences.

The main method to identify the sample was the co-determination analysis and with this strategy the number of responses was multiplied using the electronic questionnaire. The second method applied was handled through the academic coordination of each Faculty in every university where contacts were established. Likewise, chair professors, school directors, lecturers and student unions were contacted. The purpose of the research and the characteristics that those surveyed should have in order to participate were explained to each group interviewed. i.e., they had to be regular undergraduate students of these institutions. Once these requirements were met, no additional filters were applied.

The instrument used was a self-administered questionnaire, that is, students were given the printed sur-

vey directly in the classrooms, or through Google Form from Google Drive link—previously agreed— which they could access by email on computers, tablets, and smartphones. Once all the questionnaires had been received, the data was processed with SPSS to generate the corresponding tables and graphs.

Table 1 shows the selection of the organizations under study. Only students enrolled in universities accredited in the QS World University Ranking, which uses quality indicators in various dimensions to classify them, were surveyed. In this case, nine Venezuelan universities were identified in this index for the year 2018: five public and four private (QS World University Rankings 2018, 2019).

Table 1 shows that only nine Venezuelan universities were classified in the QS Ranking at the time of data collection. For this study, the Universidad Tecnológica del Centro (UNITEC) was not included because it did not present data on the total number of students enrolled. In consequence, the questionnaire was only conducted at the remaining eight universities. The data indicate that the first four institutions classified are ranked among the first 100 universities in the Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) region. The other four are below the first 150. This can be seen as an estimated indicator of the theoretical quality of those institutions, which becomes a relevant issue in other countries where the valuation of the University is transmitted to their alumni.

Table 1. Total Universities Classified by the Qs Ranking

Category	University*	Ranking - Venezuela	Ranking - LAC
Public	Universidad Central de Venezuela	1	37
Public	Universidad Simón Bolívar	2	44
Private	Universidad Católica Andrés Bello	3	74
Public	Universidad de los Andes - Mérida	4	90
Public	Universidad del Zulia	5	151-160
Private	Universidad Metropolitana	6	171-180
Public	Universidad de Carabobo	7	181-190
Private	Universidad Privada Dr. Rafael Belloso Chacín	8	351+

Source: QS World University Rankings 2019. Own elaboration.

* The Universidad Tecnológica del Centro (UCAT) was not considered for this study despite appearing in the QS rankings because it did not report its number of students and was the last Venezuelan university in the ranking

Table 2. Total Universities and Sample of the Study by Knowledge Area

	Total Universities	Universities in capital region	Universities in other regions
Public universities	5	2	3
Private universities	3	2	1
Undergraduate students	238,624		
Sample	566		
Engineering	45%		
Social Sciences	15%		
Basic Sciences	10%		
Medical Sciences	5%		
Arts and humanities	1%		
Others	24%		

Source: Own elaboration.

Note: Sample statistically significant at 95% confidence and with a 4% margin of error using the following equation: where N= universe size, Z = normalized variance at 95% confidence interval and e = margin of error.

$$\frac{N * (Z * 0,5)^2}{1 + (e^2 * (N - 1))} = \frac{238624 * (1,96 * 0,5)^2}{1 + ((0,05)^2 * (238624 - 1))}$$

Table 2 shows the total number of universities selected, divided by type, private or public; by region, the capital or another state; by type of student (undergraduate) and their percentage distribution by

area of knowledge according to the UNESCO nomenclature. The verification equation of the confidence interval applied to the type of sample used was also included.

Table 3. Study Variables. Total: 566 Students Surveyed

Variables	
Year of study	2017-2018
Demographic profile	Sex
	Birthdate
	Age group
	Place of birth (city/town)
	Current nationality
	Second nationality
	Foreign parents
	City in which you studied last year of high school
Academic profile	University
	Type of university
	Faculty
	Career
	Date of admission
	Year currently attending
Country's perception	Definition of Venezuela in one word
	What you like most about Venezuela
	Feeling you associates with Venezuela
	What worries you the most about Venezuela
	Perception of the current and future situation of the country
	Level of opportunities to progress in Venezuela
	Actions to reverse this perception
Intention of emigration	Intention of emigration
	Activity you will perform
	Time you would go for
	Country you would go to (1st option)
	Country you would go to (2nd option)
	Reason why you choose that country
	With whom would you make the trip
	People known abroad
	Time abroad of those known
	Type of relationship with Venezuela when emigrating
	What would change the decision to emigrate
	Opinion of those who have emigrated
	Reason why they continue in Venezuela
	Opinion on the current situation of Venezuela
Total sample	566

Source: Own elaboration.

In Table 3, the variables and questions of the questionnaire used are presented. The form was developed with the aim of understanding the demographic and academic profile of the interviewees; the individual's per-

ception of the general situation of Venezuela at the time of responding, and the central section that deals with questions aimed at knowing whether or not the person had the intention to emigrate at the time of responding.

Table 4. Demographic Profile of Respondents

Demographic profile: 566 students surveyed					
Sex	Female		Male		
	45%		55%		
Age group	Under 18	18-21	22-25	26-29	30 or older
	26	329	203	39	13
	4.3%	53.9%	33.3%	6.4%	2.1%
Type of school the student attended the last year of high school	Public		Private		
	24%		76%		
Possession of dual nationality	Yes		No		
	23%		77%		
Parents born in another country	None		One of them		Both
	80.9%		14.5%		4.6%

Source: Own elaboration.

Table 4 shows the demographic profile of the students surveyed. These data allow assessing the importance that the potential loss of a significant percentage of future professionals has.

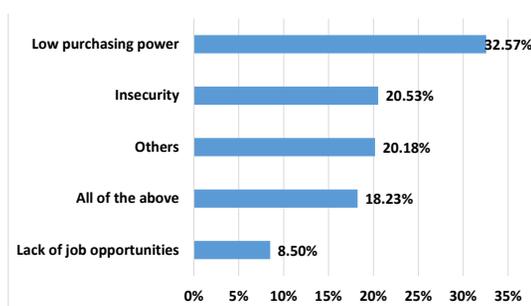
3. Results

This section presents the figures that allow analysing the responses to the questionnaire on the intention to emigrate of the group of students surveyed in the selected Venezuelan universities. The most relevant data were chosen applying a sequential logical model generated from the questions designed in the questionnaire.

3.1 Perception of the Country's Conditions

In this sub-section, we show the answers about the perception of the students about the situation in Venezuela at the moment. It is important to highlight this point because the socioeconomic and political situation of the country under analysis is deteriorating steadily.

Figure 1. What worries you most about the country?

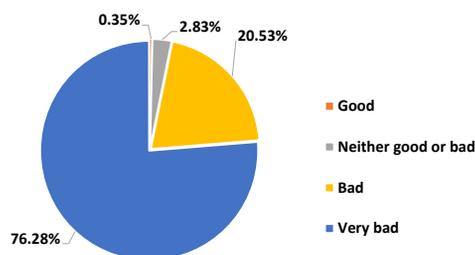


Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 1 illustrates the responses of the students on what concerned them most about the country: 32.57

percent indicated that the 'Low purchasing power' they or their family had was the factor that most affected them. This is related to the impossibility of obtaining jobs, the impact of hyperinflation that affects the acquisition of products, and the scarcity of necessities such as food and medicines. 20.53 percent of respondents indicated causes 'Other' than those indicated in the questionnaire as the problems that affect their standard of living and quality of life. Another 20.18 percent pointed to 'Insecurity' as the main cause that leads them to think about seeking alternatives to alleviate the difficulties faced by the country evaluated. 18.23 percent of those surveyed focused their response on the fact that multiple factors influence the critical situation in Venezuela. 8.5 percent answered that the 'Lack of job opportunities' is an aspect of high relevance because it diminishes the capability of envisioning a future that augurs possibilities of improving general living conditions. In short, these are problems that are not inherent to the individual but are part of the context and can be overcome with the implementation of public policies.

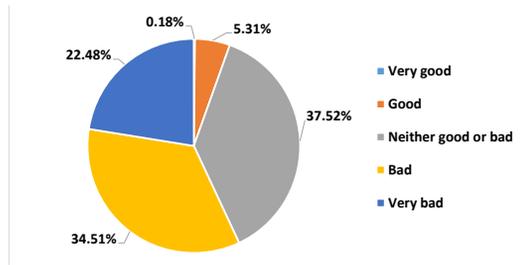
Figure 2. What is your perception about Venezuela's current situation?



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 2 shows the respondent's perception of the situation in Venezuela at the time of answering the survey. 76.28 percent of the students indicated that it was 'Very bad' and 20.53 percent as 'Bad'. This means that 96.81 percent of the total thinks that the general conditions of that country are serious. 3.19 percent indicated that the situation was 'Neither good nor bad'. It is striking that if there are answers such as 'Good' or 'Very good', none of the respondents selected them. This makes it possible to visualize a complicated panorama for the citizens of that country, even more so when they know the considerable natural resources available to that nation. Another aspect that negatively marked the collective unconscious of Venezuelans was the exceptional conditions, in terms of quality of life, that that country had during the last 50 years of the twentieth century.

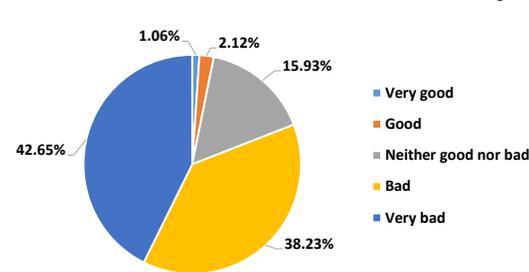
Figure 3. How do you assess the current situation of the country?



Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 3, the answers to the question of how they assess their current situation in the country are observed. 22.48 percent indicated that it was 'Very bad' and 34.51 percent said that it was 'Bad'. The sum of both gives a total of 56.99 percent. What is striking about the answers to this question is that 37.52 percent of the total number of students indicated that their situation was 'Neither good nor bad'. 5.49 percent said their situation was 'Good' and no one interviewed said it was 'Very good'.

Figure 4. Do you believe that young Venezuelans have a chance to thrive in this country?



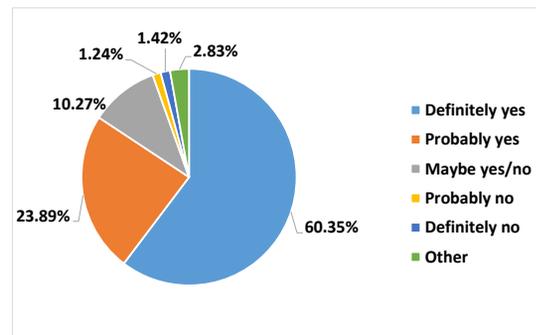
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 4 provides answers to the question of whether young people have a chance to thrive in Venezuela. 42.65 percent indicated that it is very low (Very bad); 38.23 percent said that it is low (Bad) and these two groups add up to a total of 80.88 percent that saw their future in that country under a negative perception. If we add that 15.93 percent indicated that they interpreted the opportunities as 'Neither good nor bad', then 96.5 percent of the total thought that there is no future. This refers to opportunities to finish their studies, get a job and acquire the basic goods to develop a full life. For its part, 2.12 percent marked the 'Good' answer to refer to the opportunities offered by a country like Venezuela and 1.07 percent of those surveyed marked the 'Very good' answer.

3.2 Intention to Emigrate

The intention to emigrate of the surveyed students is examined in Figures 5 to 8.

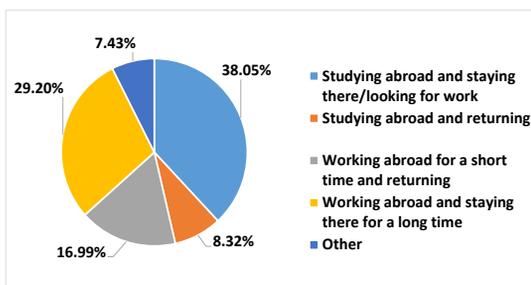
Figure 5. Do you intend to emigrate once you have completed your studies?



Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 5, 60.35 percent indicated that they have definitely thought about emigrating and 23.89 percent responded that they would probably do so. Both groups total 84.24 percent. If the 10.27 percent who responded 'Maybe yes/no' is added to that percentage, we would be talking about 94.51 students who say they have thought about emigrating. 2.83 percent marked 'Other'. Finally, only 2.66 percent responded that they have not thought about it. The percentages shown in the figure reflect a critical situation for Venezuela because more than 80 percent of those surveyed expressed the possibility of emigrating, given the general conditions of the country.

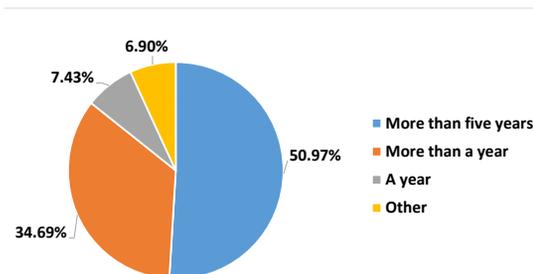
Figure 6. What would you leave for?



Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 6, 38.05 percent indicated that they have thought about going to study and then staying to work, considering not returning to Venezuela. 29.20 percent stated that they have thought about looking for work in another country and staying there for a long time. 16.99 percent marked the option 'Working abroad for a short time and returning'. 8.32 percent said they have thought about going to study and then returning and 7.43 percent selected the answer 'Other'. The total of responses obtained indicates that all the interviewees have thought about leaving Venezuela. The emphasis is on staying for a long time or returning after meeting the goal established of working or studying.

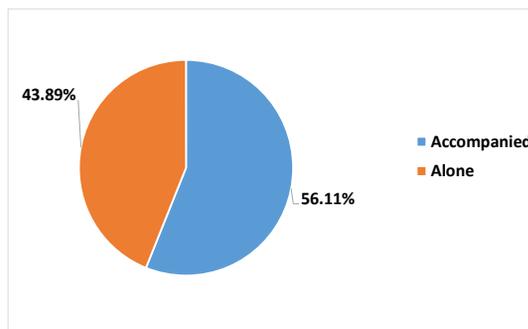
Figure 7. For how long do you intend to leave?



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 7 shows the trend in the amount of time that each of the interviewees estimates to be living outside Venezuela. 50.97 percent chose the answer 'More than five years.' 34.69 percent indicated 'More than a year'. 7.43 percent answered 'A year' and 6.90 percent answered 'Other'. The idea of emigrating for at least one year is expressed in 93.09 percent of the total responses.

Figure 8. Would you travel alone or accompanied?



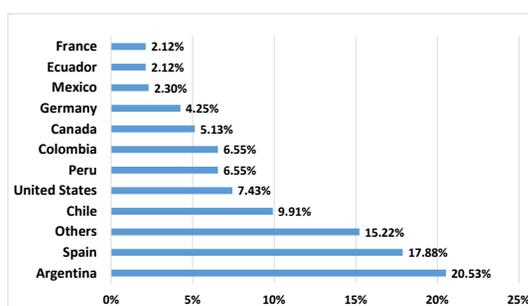
Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 8 presents the dichotomous response related to whether respondents would emigrate alone or accompanied. 56.11 percent selected the option that they would travel accompanied and 43.89 percent would do it alone. This means that a relevant percentage of those surveyed would migrate dragging along at least one more person.

3.3 Intention to Emigrate. Possible Countries and Reasons

Figures 9 to 12 present the chosen countries of preference of the interviewees when they have thought of emigrating. They also present the reasons and theoretical relationships that would motivate this process which involves a change of life.

Figure 9. To Which Country do You Intend to Go? (First option)

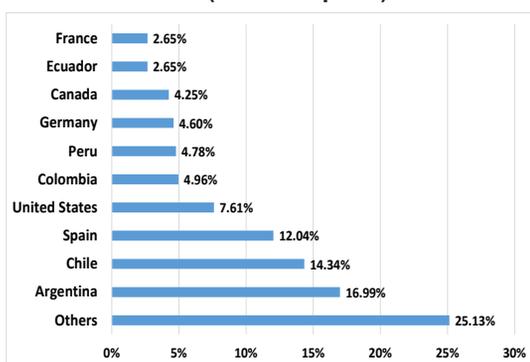


Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 9, students selected Argentina as their first destination with a 20.53 percent probability. The direct relationships with these answers are the language factor, the acceptance of Venezuelan professionals in that society, and the theoretical ease of the legalization process. The second destination country identified was Spain

with 17.88 percent and, in this case, the same condition of the language is fulfilled but not so much the ease of obtaining work, given the high rate of unemployment that this European nation has. In third place is the 'Others' option with 15.22 percent. In fourth place, Chile stands with 9.91 percent, another South American country that has offered facilities to Venezuelan professionals as a State policy. The fifth country with the highest percentage was the United States of America with 7.43 percent. These first five selections cover 70.97 percent of the total number of nations or answers as the first choice.

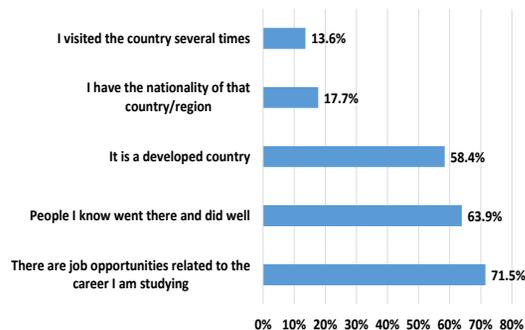
Figure 10. To Which Country do You Intend to Go? (Second option)



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 10 shows the second theoretical selection of students thinking about emigrating. It is noteworthy that with 25.13 percent, the 'Other' option was the most chosen. This may be due to not being clear about identifying a second destination, or not having enough information about the opportunities that exist in other countries. The second country chosen was Argentina with 16.99 and this response relates to the first option in Figure 9. The third selection was Chile with 14.34 percent. Both Southern Cone countries have offered better opportunities to study or work than other countries. In fourth place is Spain with 12.04 percent and one of its attractions is the language, the academic offer, and that it allows entry to the European continent. Fifth, the United States again appears as an option with 7.61 percent, similar to the previous graph. These first five options represent more than 70.12 percent of the total.

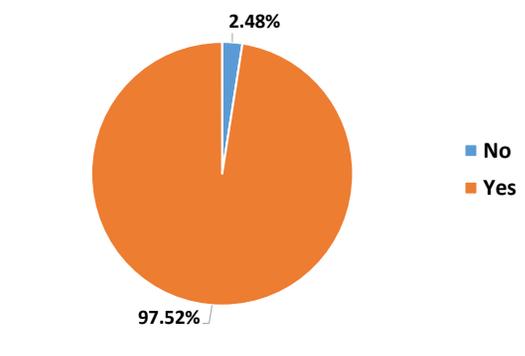
Figure 11. Why Would You Go to That Country?



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 11 shows the responses to the question Why are you going to that country? In this specific case, the interviewees could mark all or some of the answers. Therefore, 71.5 percent selected 'There are job opportunities related to the career I am studying' as a key aspect of the decision. 63.9 percent chose 'People I know went there and did well'. 58.4 percent indicated that the selected country was developed but, in this case, this response does not have a direct correlation with the percentages obtained in other figures on the destination country, for example, the selection in the first or second option of Argentina or Chile (see Figs. 9 and 10). 17.7 percent indicated that they have the nationality of the destination country or ease of mobility within a region (European Union); in this answer, it could be inferred that this group has a theoretical advantage due to this condition. Finally, 13.6 percent indicated that they have already travelled to that country and that they consider it a valid option if they finally decide to emigrate.

Figure 12. Do You Have Any Relatives/Friends That Have Left the Country?



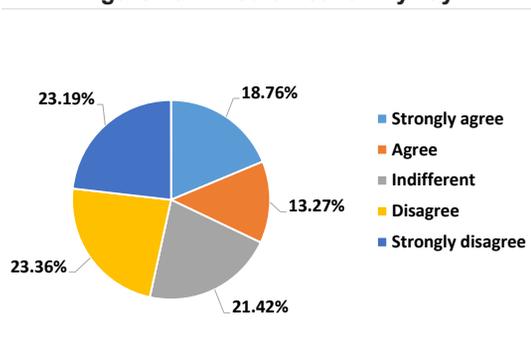
Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 12, the interviewees answered the question about having relatives or friends who have emigrated from Venezuela. 97.52 percent of those surveyed said 'Yes'. This percentage of response is an indicator that evidences the massive exodus of people who lived in Venezuela and have been forced to emigrate.

3.4 Is there a way to reverse this intention? On what does the decision to stay in Venezuela depend?

Figures 13 to 16 center on the issue of the possibility of thinking of staying in Venezuela and focus on analysing what that potential change of thought would depend on.

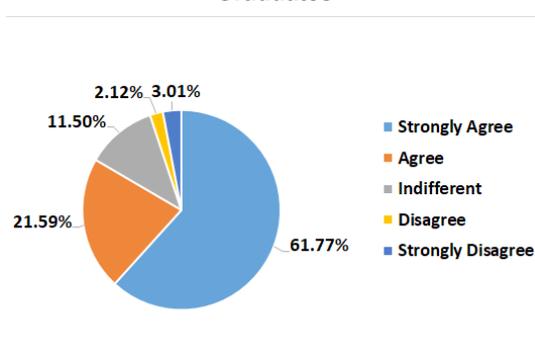
Figure 13. I Would Leave Anyway



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 13 shows the answers to the question 'I would leave anyway'. 18.76 percent indicated that they would 'Strongly agree' with maintaining the idea of emigrating after obtaining the degree and 13.27 percent selected 'Agree', which adds up to 32.03 percent of the total. It is striking that 21.42 percent marked the answer 'Indifferent' to such an important question. 23.36 percent responded that they disagreed with the question and 23.19 percent indicated that they 'Strongly disagree'. Both answers add up to 46.55 percent of the total. It could be inferred that this last group would be evaluating the events day to day before making a decision as important as emigrating. This has been a trend in migration measurement studies in general, given that the factors are associated with context assessment.

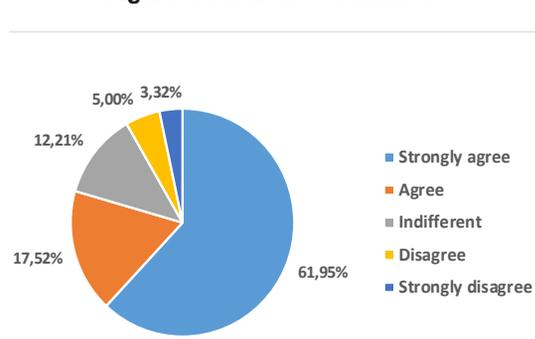
Figure 14. More Opportunities for Young Graduates



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 14 presents the responses to the work field and the potential opportunities they would expect to have upon completion of the studies. 61.77 percent of those surveyed said they 'Strongly agree' that they would think about staying in Venezuela if conditions improved, and 21.59 percent said 'Agree'. These two groups represent 83.36 percent of the total. What is relevant is that 11.50 percent marked the answer 'Indifferent', which indicates that 94.72 percent consider the change of the general conditions of the country assessed as a relevant option.

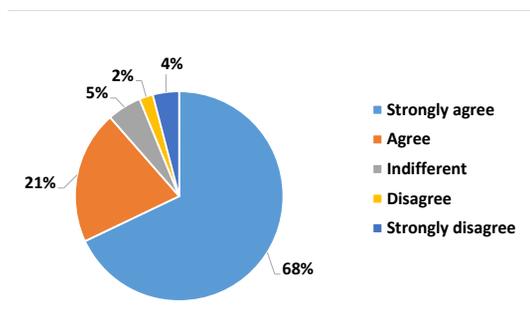
Figure 15. A New Government



Source: Own elaboration.

Figure 15 shows the responses aimed at finding out whether the key factor in the decision is a change of government. Once again, 61.95 percent stated that they 'Strongly agree' in reversing their intention to emigrate if that event occurs, and 17.52 percent indicated that they 'Agree'. These two groups represent 79.47 percent of the total. 12.21 percent marked the answer 'Indifferent' and it could be deduced that their decision does not depend on only that aspect. 8.32 percent answered 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree'.

Figure 16. An Improvement of the Socioeconomic Situation



Source: Own elaboration.

In Figure 16, the group of interviewees responds to the socioeconomic issue as a relevant element to change their minds and stay in Venezuela. 68 percent said they 'Strongly agree' with this situation and 21 percent marked the answer 'Agree', which adds up to 89 percent of the total. 5 percent said they were 'Indifferent' to the improvement of these conditions and only 6 percent disagreed or said they 'Strongly Disagree'.

4. Discussion

It should be emphasized that Venezuela was a recipient country for millions of immigrants, mainly during the second half of the twentieth century. The idea of emigrating was not established in the Venezuelan culture because the general conditions in terms of level and quality of life were superior to those of the Latin-American region.

When President Hugo Chávez Frias came to power in 1998, a radical change in the way of governing the country began; dividing the Venezuelan population and, in that context, an emigration process started. Today is the largest in the American continent and one of the three most important in the world.

It is atypical that in a short time more than 18 percent of the population of a country emigrates because a government implements a sustained set of political measures that go against development (Consultores 21, 2019). It is even more surprising that it happened when Venezuela received the highest economic revenues in its history through oil exportation. The exponential increase in the price of crude oil were due to the particular characteristics of the international energy context, even though President Chávez dismissed 62 percent of the major payroll of the national oil company known as PDVSA which at the time represented 39.860 workers (De la Vega, 2005; 2010).

Within the Venezuelan emigration process, a subset of emigrants has been the professionals who had recent-

ly obtained their academic degrees. For that reason, this study focused on knowing the expectations, defined as the intention to emigrate, of the student population that was in the process of obtaining their undergraduate degree certificates.

The first block of questions in the questionnaire was aimed at knowing the perception of the general situation in Venezuela at the time of the interview.

When examining the general topic of Figures 1 to 4, we can observe a coherent behavior regarding the negative view of Venezuela during the data collection period.

A revealing number was that 96.81 percent of the sample considered that the conditions at all levels and nationally were 'Very bad' or 'Bad'; they identified low purchasing power and insecurity as the main scourges affecting their quality of life; they rated their situation as 'Very bad' or 'Bad' in more than 56.99 percent of cases and 80.88 percent of them emphasized that they do not see personal progress opportunities under the existing conditions. The answers denote a dramatic situation that induces those living in Venezuela, particularly students, to think about migrating to theoretically seek better living conditions. The contrast between the current situation against the last 50 years of the twentieth century is quite significant.

In the second block of questions, the answers related to the intention to emigrate can be observed. The fact that 84.24 percent of potential professionals say they would leave the country is alarming. Even more so, when 85.66 percent of them indicate that they would do it for more than one year, and their strategy would be focused on trying to continue studying, in this case, postgraduate studies, or seeking to work to support themselves financially. The other factor to take into account is that more than 56.11 percent responded that if they decided to emigrate, they would not do it alone. When analyzing this set of answers, it can be seen that we are talking about a borderline situation. It seems that the country does not offer the minimum conditions to think about a future with possibilities to develop the acquired knowledge, in this case, by a young population that is significantly affected by socioeconomic and political conditions.

The third block of questions is related to determining the potential recipient countries of those students who have thought of emigrating and the reasons that support this intention. It was also corroborated if the group of interviewees had family, or knew people who had recently emigrated. The answers allow the identification of the first three candidate emigrating-countries selected: Spanish-speaking Argentina, Spain, and

Chile. Two South Americans and one European. The inference that supports this type of potential decision is based on language and the links with the immigration colony in the country. The Top Ten immigrants who arrived in Venezuela in the last century come from there. That means that in many cases there are consanguineous ties that facilitate the arrival. To these aspects, the possibility of having opportunities to get jobs in future professional careers is added. Some answers are linked to the fact that a percentage of those interviewed have relatives or friends who have settled in those countries and have done well. These conditions may be present and have weight when making a life-changing decision.

The last block of questions is aimed at finding out how to reverse a radical life-changing decision such as emigrating. In that line, what those reasons would be is also investigated. The general perception of students surveyed changes when they are given options, for example, a change of government; this is associated with potential socioeconomic improvements that means job opportunities and lower insecurity. This scenario allows inferring that the factors that lead to thinking about emigrating could be reversed in high proportion and progressively if the causes that generate this idea change, creating better living conditions and certain stability.

The answer to the central research question indicates there is a set of determinants that impact the intention of students to emigrate from Venezuela. Firstly, there is a generally negative perception on the part of the surveyed group about the continuous deterioration of that country from the socioeconomic and political conditions. Secondly, university students make up a conglomerate that is especially sensitive to the aforementioned problems, because they permanently evaluate the possibilities of getting a job at the end of their studies and aspire to achieve a decent life as a result, and that is not what they observe in Venezuela. Third, a relevant topic identified is that 17.7 percent of the respondents have dual nationality and, therefore, they think that they would have greater possibilities in the second country of citizenship. Fourth, the data allow inferring that a percentage of those surveyed would go from intention to the act of emigrating and the responses indicate that they would not return in the short or medium term. This allows us to highlight that Venezuela's problems are already structural and will not be solved quickly. Finally, this study brings to light the delicate situation of a vulnerable group that will similarly risk the development of the country under study, if the potential mass exodus of future young professionals were to be fulfilled.

5. Conclusions

Venezuela went from being a net recipient of people to being a sender (expeller) in a short period. The most striking fact is that the massive and forced exodus took place in the period of greatest economic prosperity in the history of Venezuela.

Venezuela is part of a small group of countries in the world that have not designed programs and instruments to identify and reconnect qualified personnel based in other nations to participate in projects aimed at its development. The process has been inverted, that is to say, both presidents have deliberately promoted strategies to massively drive out those people who have the highest academic levels.

Another negative factor of Venezuela's last two governments has been the official disinformation of the competent bodies regarding the publication of data on the migratory balances between countries. This has been the case since the year 2000.

The findings show that the progressive deterioration of Venezuela is linked to a set of bad governmental decisions and this is evidenced by observing the socioeconomic and political indicators that demonstrate the collapse of that country.

Studying a subset of potential migrants, such as undergraduate university students, to understand the reasons why they might settle in another country is key in a globalized world, fundamentally, when this subset of the population would be the theoretical future professionals who, under normal conditions, would be inserted in high proportion in the jobs that would generate progress for Venezuela.

The set of answers obtained based on the two sections of the questionnaire, namely, country situation and intention to emigrate, are homogeneous enough to relate and establish that they are coherent. This allows inferring that there is correspondence in the negative view of the current conditions of Venezuela, marked by serious problems that derive in minimum job opportunities for young professionals.

When 84.24 percent of the respondents indicate that they intend to emigrate from a country, as seen in Figure 5, the scenario presented can be catalogued as highly negative (catastrophic). Even more so if this exodus is promoted by the government itself, and worse still, if there are no mechanisms to geolocate and re-link with public policies the human capital that is settling in other nations.

This research focuses on demonstrating that Venezuela is a global case study due to the negative impact that this flow of people is generating, mainly, in Latin American countries, even reaching, in some cases, levels of im-

migration saturation. By relating this fact to the number of people of academic training ages, within this group are university students, a line is opened for new studies that investigate the impact generated by the displacement of millions of people towards other countries and to what extent these young people are inserted in their educational and professional systems or are wasted by the recipient countries. Another line of approach could focus on studying the loss of intellectual capital in Venezuela.

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