

# Social Network Influences on Human Migration

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**ABSTRACT:** *We in this work have described the effect of international emigration of Ecuadorians in literature published over the last three decades. We model the theoretical framework derived from social and human sciences such as economics, sociology, psychology and, communication, as well as the bibliographic research so that the research in the work will be a completed one. We have addressed the issues in three different perspectives such as family disintegration, a decline of health in migrants and their families and the negative influence on the educational system, especially in children of migrant students. We found that there is a vast literary recreation of the consequences of the emigration of Ecuadorians to “better” land, as it is shown along the development of this paper. We are confident that we can deliver the users with real outcomes of the international migration.*

**Keywords:** Cultural Identity, Ecuadorian Story, Family Disintegration, School Performance, Health Emigrant

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## 1. Introduction

The migration of the inhabitants of the geographical space that currently occupies the Republic of Ecuador is a sociological phenomenon of a permanent nature since this started to happen. Immediately after the independence from the Spanish empire, the disintegration of Gran Colombia and the constitution of Ecuador as a sovereign, free and independent state, on May 13th, 1830, the first population census was carried out. Results show that more 80% of the population lives in the Sierra region, 15% in the Costa and less than 5% in the Amazon region. Over the years, socioeconomic changes and the government policy regarding land occupation in the three natural regions of Ecuador, generates a gradual increase in internal migration, first from the Sierra towards the Costa and then, to the Amazon region. Furthermore, it is important to mention that the internal migration originates from rural areas and small towns to the three main cities: Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca.

Not only internal migration has had consequences but also Ecuadorian international migration has a striking long history. Such is the case that, as a result of the crisis in the production and exportation of straw hats, this flow of people increases since 1947. Also, during the sixties and seventies, the US government opens the frontier and many Ecuadorians emigrate to the northern country in pursuit of a better future due to the severe economic and political crisis Ecuador was living in the late

twentieth century and early twenty-first century.

Among the preferred destination were countries such as the United States of America and Spain, the latest still gives shelter to a great number of Ecuadorians. During this time, it also occurred what it was called “emigration stampede”, where a large amount of Ecuadorians emigrates to Chile, Venezuela, and Canada, and simultaneously to the Iberian nations.

Naturally occurring, the sociological phenomenon of migration is happening at the same time. This phenomenon has been recreated in the most diverse expressions of the artistic dimension of culture: music, painting, theater, filmmaking and literature in its various genres: poetry, essays, novels, short stories, narrations, and chronics. Regarding the representation of internal migration, three groups of stories stand out in the Ecuadorian documents: the seven narrative texts that recreate the interprovincial and interregional migration from the city and province of Loja; six stories about the migration from rural areas and small towns in the province of Guayas, the coastal region in general and even other provinces of the Sierra to the city of Guayaquil; and six stories that recreate the migration from the countryside and small villages in the mountains to the cities of Quito and Cuenca [15].

A representation of international migration in the Ecuadorian story began in the thirties of the previous century; however, it was not since the seventies and especially in the early years of this century, in direct line with the greater quantity qualitative significance of this social phenomenon in Ecuador, that written stories come to light. This millennium, we can even speak of the narrative sub genre of migratory story, with the help of three unabridged books, seventeen stories that recreate emigration to the United States, eighteen to Spain and four to other countries in Europe and the rest of the world [15].

Despite the significant number of stories about migration, there is still proposed a very few analytical works that deserves our attention. Thus, for the stories that recite the internal migration, it is worth highlighting the contribution of Martha Rodríguez Albán who argues that in literary works of Ecuadorian narrators in the fifties of the twentieth century little would have done the euphoria of the discourse of progress. She goes on saying that it was not an illusion seeing poor migrants from rural areas and small towns massively reach the main cities of Ecuador [13].

Raul Serrano Sánchez, from the perspective of the migrant subject, contextualizes, presents, describes and analyzes with great emphasis on the thematic and metaphorical dimension of twenty stories about the international migration of Ecuadorians towards the most developed nations in the northern hemisphere [18]. Having chosen short stories as the object of interest, as well as the main topics which were selected in a free and concise manner, and an outlined or implied group of ideas, this analytical work along with similar themes [14,16] became one of the most immediate antecedents and basic reference for the development of this analytical essay. This aims to analyze the effects of international migration of Ecuadorians selected as a narrative corpus of study. For its development, it was guided by the hypothesis previously formulated, which stated that in the stories studied, there is evidence of a wide and detailed representation and literary recreation of the three consequences of international migration of Ecuadorians previously mentioned.

Based on the theoretical perspectives derived from social and human sciences, and the use of bibliographic methodology documentary, it is concluded that there is a fruitful recreation of the phenomenon under investigation which results are presented on three headings: family disintegration, a decline of health in migrants and their families, and the negative influence on the educational system, especially in children of migrant students, it is hoped to provide readers with real outcomes of the international migration.

## **2. Methodology**

By the nature of the research conducted, the methodology and characteristics of bibliographic and documentary research, it was pertinent to collect the required information in Ecuador along with the most important University libraries in the cities of Quito, Cuenca and Loja. In Madrid, the archives of the libraries at the Universidad Complutense de Madrid were researched, especially the Humanities Library “María Zambrano” and libraries of the faculties of Philology, Philosophy, Geography and History, Education and Political Science and Sociology. The type of literature reviewed corresponds to the parameters established within the literary analysis, development of the academic activities, the obligation to select variables and literary relationships in terms of family disintegration and the power of persuasion and forcefulness of the phenomenon of migration.

The analysis started from an initial reading of all Ecuadorians stories that represent and recreate, the literary and sociologi-

cal phenomenon of internal and international migration. In a second step, we proceeded to the reading of works from various perspectives of social and human sciences, both the migratory process in its different phases as the features of the identity of the migrant subjects. In a third step, a new analytical, comprehensive and critical view of the stories written in international migration works, which were selected as an object of study. These steps were considered in order to extract the textual citations, which were taken as the most representative and relevant basis for the development of this work. The analytical development is explained in the following pages.

### 3. Family Disintegration

There is a generalized approach that one of the most negative consequences of international migration of Ecuador is family disintegration since the outward has contributed to the marital and familiar instability. As it is evidenced by the results of investigations, which make it clear that “since 1999, separations and divorces have suffered a vertiginous (...) increase. This increase mostly comes from women and men who have immigrated to Spain. Legal separation procedures are performed ever since” [10]. The most unfortunate of this family disintegration are the minor children of migrants who were left alone in Ecuador. The amount of them left in abandonment is very numerous, because 31% of men and 27% of migrant women in Spain have children under 20 living in Ecuador; with the hope of family reunification, which is not always crowned with success [12].

However, we must also bear in mind the critics given to the international migration of Ecuadorians as one of the main causes of the disintegration of families. In this social and family distortion, mass media have played a decisive role, especially the press, whose pages insist on the stigmatizing figure of migrants and the “abandonment” of their family, violating basic principles of moral, religious and loyalty, and involving national and patriotic sentiments. These facts were pointed out in the newspaper *El Universo* of Guayaquil [11].

Also, questions have been raised regarding the sexist thought toward women in the immigration problem. The negative impact on the family integration has been given to the women who have left the country. This is masked under the fact that the absence of women from the household has led to the destruction of homes, the cease of family bonds, the impact on the lives of sons and daughters who remain in Ecuador [19].

From this perspective, after analyzing the stories, it is easy to place international migration of Ecuadorians as the main cause of forced separation of spouses, especially those who have turned to the United States, where it is very difficult to obtain a visa. In other words, the family disintegration is produced as a result of the physical and indefinite separation of the members; as the omniscient narrator of one of the testimonial narratives of Galo Galarza Dávila, referring to an immigrant who was forced to leave his wife in the Andean town in Ecuador, where he was originally from:

He spent three months in that strange, disproportionate, unreal city and could not find a friend, a loved one (...). She was not given a visa and had to stay in Alausí, missing and longing for him with the same desperate force he misses her and desires her right now, in this vast and alien city, full of too beautiful and unattainable women [4].

Despite an improvement in the economic situation of Ecuadorian migrants and their families, it is important to state that this is not a fact that deserves to be analyzed. It is the welfare of household members the issue that is intended to be examined and not the accumulation of money. Therefore, it is concluded that in many cases, more important than the money generated by the multiples jobs done, it is the right care that should be lavished on children that should be considered. This care should be thought especially when they are in a stage of life in which they must attend school and train as professionals and humans, as it is shown in another testimonial narration written by Galo Galarza Dávila:

My wife and I, struggling to provide a better life for our children, began to work as slaves, from sunrise to sunset; believing somehow that we were giving our children all the support they needed. My son Ivan (QDG), died a month ago, at the age of 23 years, a victim of AIDS as a result of their addiction to different drugs. An addiction that he practiced for four years while living on the streets [4].

In the emigration of Ecuadorians (especially people from Loja) to Spain, the breakdown of couples and family disintegration is one of the most common consequences, as depicted in the works of short stories that have been written about this socio-

logical phenomenon. Thus, in the story “I do not have to mourn” by Carlos Carrión Figueroa, the main character states a case of international migration. Carrión mentions the story of a husband that anxiously waits for his elusive and distant wife in a corner of the Plaza Puerta del Sol. He remembers the many times she has left him stood without acknowledging the previously agreed appointments: “I’m stuck here with a beer under the strawberry tree, waiting for Maribel. This is the sixth time. I was ignoring that this day could have been my destiny. We said at 3 in the afternoon and it already is 4 pm” [1].

Times of endless and futile hopes induce the character to think and speculate about his unhappy life as an immigrant in Spain: “I think of everything to not think of myself since I came to Madrid. I am a simple drunk chasing his woman; rather begging his woman to let me see her and she does not” [1]. Multiple thoughts lunge his mind, increasing the doubts about the presence of a third person in the love life of his wife Maribel: “I was poisoned, living with the suspicion of another man”. Until a countryman tells him the sad news that changes unobjectionable suspicion into a reality: “the man, who knows her, comes and says to me that he saw Maribel with a Spanish man in the English Court. He left me shocked: I, do not tell fucking jokes; the man forgives the Bróder, but not kidding: it’s the fucking truth” [1]. However, this irrefutable fact when he asked the unfaithful wife about it, she gets angry and answers, “you too jealous, you are an asshole” [1].

On another occasion, he called her on the phone. He heard the laughter of a man, and immediately assumes that he is the man with whom she betrays him. In a very macho attitude of the culture of the country, which until recently considered a wife as a mere object of exclusive property of the husband, decides to kill her because he could not bear to see her in the arms of another man, “she is not for me nor for anyone, what the hell! Because only killing her, I will be at peace, and I’ll stop mourning like a sissy! Neither for me nor anyone!” [1]. This decision to eliminate his wife, although we do not know for sure the beginning or the end of the story, is about to be consummated. The narrator, in a scene that gives the name of the title of the story, after an interminable and intense minute of imagining the best moments of joy and happiness during a weekend with his adored wife. In a masterful display of narrative potentialities of temporary games [7]. In a demonstration of apparent domestic violence machotype, just shoots his gun against Maribel’s humanity “I have the gun in hand (...) and listen with horror, disbelief dry firing and the cry of hatred or stupor at the mouth of Maribel and I see her huge eyes, her body bending” [1].

Regarding this same emigration route, in the narration of “Angel and Luisa” by Gladys Rhodes Godoy, the story of a marriage of Ecuadorian immigrants is told. Angel and Luisa were a couple that a few days after arriving to Spain find a job in the service area of a family. “Angel would be the driver, gardener and whatever else he had to do, and Luisa would be in charge of all the housework and care of the family of two seniors and four children” [12]. With the money saved, after a few years, they both returned to the place of origin and the long-awaited purchase house. However, the desire to have a car drives Luisa to emigrate again but this time alone and for two additional years; not foresee that now the cost of the new migratory trip will be the destruction of home and family breakdown that seemed so solid for years of cohabitation after:

Six months after the agreed deadline, she discovered by chance that her husband had not bought the vehicle and that his absences at home were increasingly frequent. Her questions were answered evasively and did not mention about his return. Her heart sensed the reason for the detachment and reason showed her that her efforts had been in vain. Without telling anyone, she returned to her homeland to check disappointed that there were no savings and no marriage [12].

#### **4. Health of Migrants and their Families**

On several occasions, emigration is a potentially traumatic experience, which can generate the appearance of psychosomatic disorders of various kinds as, digestive symptoms, can not “digest”, the immigration experience respiratory symptoms (the new medium “chokes”), circulatory symptoms (the environment and demands produce “oppression” in the arteries and heart). “They may be prone to accidents such as attempts suicides. In other cases, instead of somatic symptoms, hypochondriacal fears and fantasies are observed” [5].

Among Ecuadorian immigrants in the United States, because of the difficulties they have to endure, some cases have reached even suicidal ideas; since for them, life has lost all meaning. As it is recreated in one of the testimonial narrations of Galo Galarza Dávila, in which the protagonist narrator mentions suicide thoughts on more than one occasion:

... I swear that come at times a wild desire to hurt myself, to jump out of this window and land onto the pavement, but this

thought is only restrained by my guaguas<sup>1</sup> they still need me (...) but for me, life is worthless. What is life being in a foreign country, without knowing anyone, not speaking the languages spoken around here, no one's family, without a friend, with this horrible weather that forces us to spend locked in the house like a prison [4].

In the story "The boar at the bar," from Eliecer Cardenas Espinoza, the main character of this fictional story, an Ecuadorian immigrant suffers because of his girlfriend Camelia Balboa leaves him to go to live with her "friend" from Honduras. He loses all meaning and purpose in life; therefore, suicidal thoughts emerge too:

I just want to find that woman and tell her that life is so stupid and unfair, just that, nothing more. And now? I do not know what I am going to do. Back to my country or return to New York and throw myself into the Hudson River from the Brooklyn Bridge where many times, Camelia and I walk together [2].

In the story "The night does not end," Raul Serrano Sanchez also addresses the problems of rootlessness and loneliness that affect the protagonist. Suicide linked to death thoughts are present, "here, using a knife or any other weapon as a tranquilizer is a temptation that helps to deal with day and night. But, as I anticipated, would I ever wake up rolled as a baby" [15].

Regarding the deterioration of health among Ecuadorian immigrants in Spain, there are two stories that represent and recreate this issue. In "Roll of bells in Madrid," by Raul Vallejo Corral, Jaime the protagonist, engaged in prostitution in the capital of Spain. Unaware of using right protection, he becomes infected with AIDS. Jaime is confident, hoping that only 20% of this would be spread, but the doctor of the Spanish police tests him positive, and communicate it at the airport of Madrid. This news seems not to bother him as it should have been. Not even the acknowledge or a certain death approaching, because more important is the "joy" of knowing that he is going back to his native Guayaquil: "Conchita comes to you, 'Jaime, you got infected', she is weeping and gives him an envelope with the result of the medical examination (...). You keep it in your pants pocket where Conchita gave it to you, and no longer hear the bells" [18].

In another analysis, it is also mentioned that those who have experienced the pain of emigration, know that health is the most precious gift that must be care as a real gem in the destination country. Immigrants need to consider that they are no provided with social insurance jobs and remember the fact that they are not allowed to lose their jobs, since it is the only possibility of economic support for themselves and their families, whether they are in their own countries or in a foreign land. For this reason, it is valid to mention the phrase of a woman from Loja in Madrid, who mentions "If you want to keep a job / it is prohibited illness". This problematic situation clearly demonstrates that the Ecuadorian immigrants are regarded many times as a working machine and that "while this machine is healthy, all would work well." The truth of this statement is evident in the story, "The bus" by Gladys Rhodes Godoy. This story, tells the story of an Ecuadorian immigrant who falls out of the bus while going to work and therefore she arrives late at work. When she gets at her work, seriously injured, the boss simply fires her without hearing any explanation: "the lady very upset by her delay and looking her up and down did not accept explanations. Instead, she asks her to leave and to call back when she is fully recovered. She emphasizes that at home, the servants could not stay in those condition" [12].

## **5. The Consequences in the Educational System**

Ecuadorian international migration has also affected the educational institutions, and therefore the students. In a higher percentage place of the migrant population, it can be concluded that 16% of middle school students are children of parents who left Ecuador, a number that increases up to 30% for schools who have organized statistics [17]. In the educational area, there is no new among the children of immigrants the following school behaviors, "performance descends steeply, increases dropouts, boys and girls are more aggressive or timid, they begin to have serious behavioral problems and lose the ability to concentrate" [17].

The condition of children of migrants is most evident on occasions when educational institutions held an event in which parents, mothers or legal guardians must be present:

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<sup>1</sup> Affective way of referring a newborn. By extension, it is used effectively with children and teenagers or even youngest.

For these young people, “the other” is made up of their peers, young people who do have their parents here. The development of us / them is mainly evident in a given space-time, such as in the days of delivering the marks’ reports in schools, or in the celebrations of Mother’s or Father’s Day. These dates have become real spaces of violence among children of migrants [6].

According to the literary representation in one of the stories analyzed, one of the negative consequences of international migration coming from the southern provinces of Canar and Azuay become evident in educational institutions, where there are irreconcilable rival groups of student, as reported by the National State of Migratory Destination,

In the schoolyard, anywhere, they had been defining three groups of boys who hardly spoke to each other. Miguel knew what means to be his friends when one day he wanted to be invited to a game of volleyball (...). “You can not play with us,” they said; “You’re not Venezuela”. The burly looked hostile and asked where his father was. “In New York,” Miguel said. “If I were nuevayorano<sup>2</sup> I would meet with the nuevayoranos because if you go where canadeños<sup>3</sup> they will leave you to play with them.” And Miguel knew it was so, that Venezuelans despised and envied a bit to nuevayoranos. That Canada quarreled with Venezuelan and feared the strength and number of New York (...). But Miguel did not feel comfortable with the group not chosen by him but, fatally, by the father [3].

A close look at the content of the meetings held in educational institutions has shown significant percentages of migrant groups of children that collapse and stumble to find spaces that would represent them [8]. Groups in open struggle and direct confrontation with children of families of middle-class non-migrants. An example of this statement is the participation in elections of the student council of a prestigious school in the city of Cuenca, “there was a list (with good children) and the other list with children of migrants, and for the first time, the children of migrants won the elections. A shootout occurred that night in one of the celebrations of winning” [9].

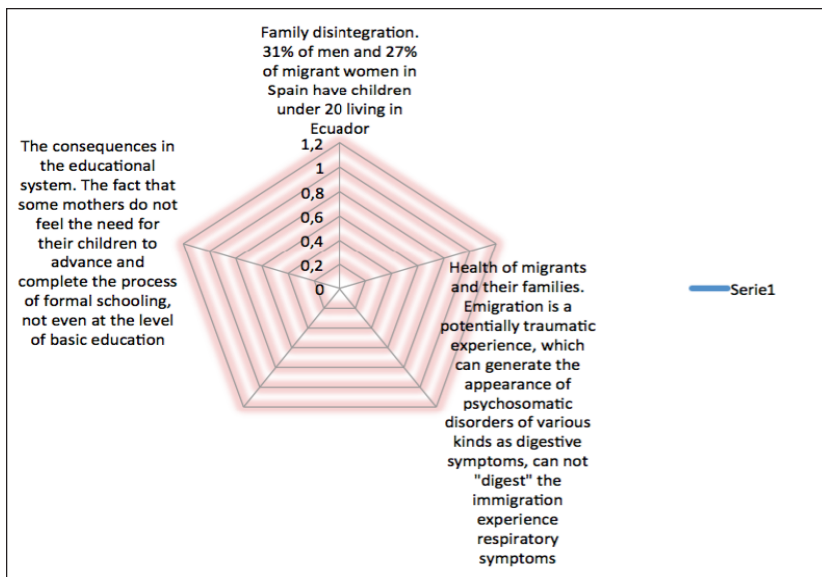


Figure 1. Repercussions of international migration

The most questionable impact of the International Migration of Ecuadorians is the fact that some mothers do not feel the need for their children to advance and complete the process of formal schooling, not even at the level of basic education. Most of them are satisfied with the money they receive from their husbands, who are migrants in the United States. They along with their offspring feel this because:

<sup>2</sup>Way of referring to the children of Ecuadorian immigrants who have gone to work in New York City.

<sup>3</sup>Colloquialism used by children and adolescents in educational institutions where the children of Ecuadorian immigrants have chosen Canada as a destination country.



... finally, after all, they think, it is better to have the dollars their parents sent them because studying was no avail. The tall lanky teacher in school was able to convince them to come back to school going from house to house, a few women let their children return to school. But a few did not [3].

This underestimation of the many benefits of formal education as a key of any sample of social development, of a healthy community, family or individual stated in the stories analyzed in this report, is perpetuating the subordinate position. That is to say, it is not only for the migrants and their immediate family environment, but for the whole Ecuador that the situation seems to continue creating unskilled labor force and, therefore, a vulnerable and underdeveloped country.

## 6. Conclusions

Among the most important consequences of the international migration, family disintegration stands out because of the physical separation of the household members. Especially if one of the parents is the one who leaves the country. This situation ends up in divorce and abandonment of small children, who are cared by grandparents, uncles, older siblings, other relatives, and even friends or neighbors. An evidence of this reality is the main characters of the stories of Carlos Figueroa Carrion, Galo Galarza Dávila and Gladys Godoy Rhodes.

Another consequence is the decline of the health of the immigrants. Those affected by Ulysses Syndrome or other psychosomatic disorders of various kinds, linked to the abandonment of place of origin and their loved ones. Health difficulties also hit the relatives of the immigrants, both in the country of departure and destination, if they have managed to reunify. Examples of this were mentioned in the stories of the main characters from the short fiction works of Eliecer Cardenas Espinoza, Galo Galarza Dávila, Gladys Rhodes Godoy, Raul Vallejo Corral, and Raúl Sánchez Serrano.

These problems and social limits are imposed by the international emigration of Ecuadorians as we have seen in the analyzed stories; even when the emigration to the United States has not reached the quantitative dimensions of the late twentieth century and early XXI.

The consequences of international migration are very evident in the educational system since the departure of Ecuadorians has affected educational institutions and, especially, children of immigrants. The latest feel unmotivated to attend and pursue formal education adopting inappropriate behavior and decreasing their school performance. There were also examples of these situations recreated in the iconic children story “The Gaps are the Eyes of the Earth,” by Eliecer Cardenas Espinoza.

Future lines of research in this field are related to the educational system, the impact on children, parents and teachers and the socio-cultural conditions of international migration

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