

## UNWELCOMED NEIGHBORS: MEDIA COVERAGE AND THE SPREAD OF HATE TOWARDS MIGRANTS IN LATIN AMERICA

*Vizinhos indesejados: cobertura midiática e disseminação de ódio contra os migrantes na América Latina*

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### Abstract

During the last decade, Latin America has witnessed an unprecedented massive current of migration flows. This migration crisis has been well documented by the local and international press. This article focuses on the reporting of the internal migration crisis in Latin America, particularly how the media has negatively framed migrants. The main objective focuses on understanding how Latin American newspapers have covered the internal migration flows? And what kind of frames promote a negative image towards migrants? As final outcomes will show, it is possible to observe how local newspapers have promoted an adverse vision towards migrants based on traditional stereotypes and prejudices.

**Keywords:** media framing; hate discourse; Latin America; migration crises; social polarization; digital media.

### Resumo

*Durante a última década, a América Latina tem sido testemunha de um fluxo massivo e sem precedentes de migração interna. Esta crise migratória tem sido bem documentada pela imprensa local e internacional. Este artigo se centra na cobertura jornalística sobre a crise migratória interna na América Latina, especialmente em como os meios de comunicação têm enquadrado negativamente os migrantes. O objetivo principal da pesquisa foca-se em duas principais perguntas: De que maneira os jornais latino-americanos têm coberto midiaticamente os fluxos migratórios internos? Que tipo de enquadramentos promovem uma imagem negativa dos imigrantes? Como será observado neste artigo, a cobertura midiática dos jornais locais tem promovido uma visão negativa dos migrantes centrada em estereótipos e preconceitos tradicionais.*

**Palavras-chave:** enquadramento midiático; discurso de ódio; América Latina; crises migratórias; polarização social; meios digitais.

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## Introduction

In the last ten years, Latin America has experienced an increment of internal migration movements. Countries such as Mexico, Colombia, Argentina, and Brazil which have traditionally been migrant-sending states, are now dealing with an influx of people from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, and Central America. All these people, even entire families, are leaving their countries escaping from repression, violence, scarcity, and, in recent years, from the adverse economic conditions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. By now, about 5.5 million Venezuelans, 1.7 Haitians and 1.7 Cubans live overseas, most of them in a Latin American country (IOM, 2022). Cuba, for example, according to some analysts, is experiencing the most important emigration in its history (Vicent, 2022).

This migration crisis stands a serious challenge for national authorities and international organizations: the lack of infrastructure and resources to relieve refugees, inefficient and outdated regulations to process asylum applications and humanitarian visas, inexperience to properly assist migrants during their journey, along with the traditional problems associated with criminality and corruption (Bosquet, Samaniego, 2024). At times, the situation has triggered incidents between the migrants and the residents: shelters have been attacked or destroyed by the locals who blamed the newcomers for instigating social disorders, committing felonies, and stealing jobs (France 24, 2018, p. 24; Cambero, 2022). This complex setting has worsened with the irruption of the COVID-19 pandemic which has brought negative economic outcomes, relenting or even stopping the asylum applications in refugee camps in Mexico or Panama, forcing migrants to remain for months or years waiting for the approval of their requests and being at risk of getting sick or robbed because of the deplorable and overcrowded conditions inside the shelters (UNHCR, 2022).

Furthermore, the perspective in 2024 for migrants living in refugee camps in Mexico or in transition to this country is getting more difficult. On one side there is growing repression from US authorities in the US-Mexican Border and the recurrent use of disproportionate force by the Mexican police in the southern border (El País, 2022; Forbes, 2024). On the other side, migrants are becoming pawns exploited by Mexican and US politicians. Mexican president Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador uses them as bargaining chips to negotiate with the US government (Cortés, 2022). Republican governors Ron DeSantis in Florida and Greg Abbott in Texas have employed refugees as “political weapons,” illegally sending them by bus and airplane to New York, a state ruled by a democratic governor (Gessen, 2022). In addition, the US authorities have prioritized the requests of Ukrainian and Afghan refugees who are enjoying a faster process than Latin American petitioners, despite many of them having waited for years (Kanno-Youngs, Jordan, 2022). This has caused complaints about the latent application of a double standard based on refugees’ nationality (Shoichet, 2022).

In recent years, the Biden administration has implemented novel regulations to discourage the arrival of more refugees to the US-Mexican border. At the end of 2022, The United States concluded the program “Quédate en México” (*Stay in Mexico*), through which migrants could apply for refugee status at the US-Mexican Border. All new applicants must send an application in their homeland and enter the United States by plane (Viña, 2022). Next year, in 2023, the US administration ended the application of the “Title 42” settled during the COVID-19 emergency, which bestowed migration authorities with special powers to immediately expel refugees without due legal process, based on a sanitary security principle. However, the measures are tightening. On June 4, 2024, US president Joe Biden signed an executive order that allows authorities to

accomplish immediate deportations to those who were not able to comply with the asylum requirements (France 24, 2024). Before the infeasibility of arriving in The United States, migrants are facing the dilemma of asking for asylum and establishing themselves in Mexico or returning to their countries.

This complex situation has caused an increment of xenophobic sentiments among Latin American host countries<sup>1</sup>. In recent years, a particular form of Trumpism has permeated the rhetoric in Latin America: immigrants have been blamed for being dangerous people who trigger social disturbance and commit felonies (He, 2017; France 24, 2018; BBC, 2019). This hostile rhetoric has instigated attacks on refugee camps in which the locals have destroyed shelters and migrants' possessions, such as in Pacaraima (Brazil) in 2019 and Iquique (Chile) in 2021. Amid this problematic background, the media has become both an essential tool for promoting migrant relief and, paradoxically, a space to spread hate toward the newcomers. Sometimes, the media has shown the maltreatment that immigrants receive from authorities (Barragan, 2022). But in other cases, it has been a platform to disseminate negative frames about immigrants, portraying them as criminals (Melella, 2017) and parasites (Torre Cantalapiedra, 2019). The spread of this news has boosted social anger and hate, the newcomers are usually the object of verbal attacks (BBC News Mundo, 2022), exploited by governments as public scapegoats (Culpi, Mèrcher, Pereira, 2021) and bargaining chips for political negotiation (Ortega Velázquez, 2020).

This article focuses on the reporting of the internal migration crisis in Latin America, particularly how the media has negatively framed migrants. The main objective focuses on understanding how Latin American newspapers have covered the internal migration flows? And what kind of frames promote a negative image towards migrants? As final outcomes will show, it is possible to observe how local newspapers have promoted an adverse vision towards migrants based on traditional stereotypes and prejudices.

## Theoretical framework

Economic crises, social polarization, and disenchantment from traditional media and political institutions have shaped the second decade of the new millennium. These adversities have triggered the resurgence of extreme right ideological parties and politicians who have catalyzed a general feeling of resentment and increased their popularity thanks to a discourse based on confrontation, biased facts, and hate towards minorities such as migrants (Cohen, 2019; Foa, Wilmot, 2019). These political movements have recently achieved important electoral victories in The United States and Europe. Countries such as Sweden and Italy are witnessing the strength of far-right political parties. These electoral victories were not possible without the popularization of social platforms and smart devices, which have provided a global, cheap, and flexible public sphere to disseminate a political agenda based on hate speech as a rhetorical weapon to attack dissidents and gain supporters (Castaño-Pulgarín *et al.*, 2021). Social media platforms have become ideal spaces for sharing political ideas and organizing civic movements. But, at the same time, Twitter or

<sup>1</sup> Here I follow the distinction among xenophobia and racism provided by the IMISCOE (International Migration Research Network). Racism is related with credence of preeminence among races, xenophobia are the prejudice and fears associated with people labeled as foreign. In the case of Latin America, as it will be possible to observe in the analysis section, hate is based more on xenophobic prejudices (adjectives traditionally associated with nationalities) than on racism. This mainly because Latin Americans shared, in many cases, ethnic similarities such as the skin color or the biotype. However, this assertion does not mean that racist incidents do not occur, even at a local level, as is the case of indigenous or Afro-Latin Americans when arriving to a mestizo community, for example.

WhatsApp are used to spread misinformation and hate discourse. The presence of hate discourse in digital media has been examined as a political weapon to attack opponents during political campaigns (Lim, 2017). Some studies have highlighted how the circulation of negative opinions on Twitter against immigrants during the 2015 migration crisis in Europe and the Brexit referendum has boosted the irruption of Islamophobic incidents (Kreis, 2017; Evolvi, 2018). Some scholars have pointed out how hate encouraged secessionist movements and exacerbated ethnic division (Chiluwa, Taiwo, Ajiboye, 2020). Other studies centered their reflections on how politicians have taken advantage of an open discriminatory discourse towards migrants and religious minorities to gain sympathizers in developed economies such as Australia (Sengul, 2019; Bates, 2022).

Since 2015, migration crises have become a main political, economic, and social issue in Europe, the USA, and, recently, in Latin America. In this context, social media has become a special sphere to spread xenophobia and racism (Georgiou, Zaborowski, 2017). Migrants have been portrayed in European media, particularly in Austria, France, Germany, and the United Kingdom, as criminals or burdens (Joris *et al.*, 2018). They are usually the subject of bitter jokes (Hakoköngäs, Halmesvaara, Sakki, 2020; Filibeli, Ertuna, 2021). However, this trend does not mean that there was no hate towards migrants before the migration crises (Rybina, 2014; Galvañ, Giménez, 2020; Yantseva, 2020), but the phenomenon has been exacerbated in recent years. Even in cases of cultural and religious affinity among the locals and migrants, as has happened with the Syrian refugees in Turkey, other issues besides racism and Islamophobia, such as nationalism have arisen (Onay-Coker, 2019; Tol, 2019). This is what has happened in Latin America with the migration crises, although the locals and newcomers share many cultural affinities such as language and religion and many cases ethnicity, the daily interaction is not absent of conflicts and the irruption of hate rhetoric based on xenophobic prejudices (Nossa *et al.*, 2021; Mesias-Herrera, 2022).

This work focuses on the study of hate and its relationship with the media, more precisely on how local newspapers promote hate towards migrants in Latin America. In terms of this paper, hate is considered not as an isolated feeling that emerges spontaneously but as an element that nourishes social conditions and conflict among groups (Sternberg, Sternberg, 2008). Regarding the hate towards migrants, its origin is strongly linked with a combination of adverse social and economic conditions in the receiving countries and traditional stereotypes -that is, preconceptions, prejudice, and qualifications- associated with the newcomers (Kopytowska, 2017; Yakushko, 2018). In times of adverse economic situations and social polarization, as in the present, minorities are susceptible of being targeted as the “people’s enemy” by politicians and the media, which employed a biased discourse to promote xenophobic and racist feelings among the locals as a form to justify repression and the violation of their human rights (Makari, 2021).

This study will follow the traditional definition of framing “to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Then people’s opinion regarding public affairs, in this case migration, is susceptible to being influenced depending on how the media portrays the topic (Becker, Scheufele, 2009). It is through the composition of news (what to include, omit, or highlight) and how the information is presented to the public (using a particular color, text size, publishing the text along with a particular multimedia element) that journalists, editors, big corporation media and lobbyist groups exert power. This leads straightforwardly to the importance of examining how a newspaper covers a theme and frames information to influence people’s opinions on controversial public issues (Rowling, Jones, Sheets, 2011).

Recent studies on Latin American internal migration coverage have shown how Ecuadorian newspaper coverage has promoted a negative vision by highlighting, when covering criminal events, the nationality of the suspects (Pugh, Moya, 2020). Other studies stressed how the newspapers frequently employ the term “illegal” when reporting news about migration, besides there being no certainty if the acts committed by the migrants constitute a legal misconduct or not. This frame attempts to imply a direct link among the migrants, most of them from Venezuela, as delinquents (Yncierte González, 2021). It is possible to find the same tendency in the Colombian press which frequently demonizes migrants by employing terms such as “strange, evil, and dangerous.” (Aliaga Sáez *et al.*, 2022, p. 33). In the case of Haitians, Bonhomme and Alfaro (2022), established how media coverage, particularly in Chilean TV news programs, reinforces traditional stereotypes associated with migrants such as “conflicting people” or as a “plague” that causes problems in local communities. In Mexico, Haitians have been the subject of a coverage that remarks the negative aspects of their presence in the country: as an economic burden, people that want to steal Mexican jobs, or as a sanitary menace that spreads diseases such as AIDS or Ebola (Méndez-Fierros, Ortiz Márquez, 2022).

## Materials and Methods

This paper focuses on how Latin American newspapers frame the internal migration crisis. This migratory movement encompasses people from Venezuela, Haiti, Cuba, and Central America, but in recent years, it has been possible to find citizens from far countries such as India, some African countries, and Syria, which are trying to reach the US-Mexican border as well. As mentioned, we are centered on two main aims: a) to describe Latin America’s media coverage of internal migration, and b) to analyze the media frames used to provide a negative image towards migrants.

Data collection centers on gathering online news published by national media in Mexico, Colombia, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, Panama, Chile, Argentina, and Brazil, which are, according to the latest report of The IOM (2022), the most important receiving countries of internal migration in Latin America. The data covers<sup>2</sup> a period from 2015 to 2023. The sample consisted of 54 news pieces (units of analysis) selected from the highest circulating journals in every country<sup>3</sup>. The criteria selection of the sample is based on representativity and geography. Many reports were discarded because they only echoed incidents that occurred in other countries and were already covered by the local press. For contrasting reasons, the news pieces were equally selected from newspapers with diverse editorial lines (See Table 1). A system of codification consisting of letters and numbers was established to identify every newspaper. For example, A1 for “Infobae,” where “A” corresponds to the country to which the media outlet belongs to and “1” identifies the newspaper. The data was then examined to highlight the most relevant topics and frames.

<sup>2</sup> The 2015 year represents a breaking point regarding migration. It is highlighted in academia as the year that the asylum requests in Europe reached a refugee influx only compared to WWII (OECD, 2015). However, the media coverage brought into this migration crisis, obscured the beginning of a similar phenomenon in Latin America. Between 2015 and 2019, “the number of international migrants residing in the countries of Latin America has increased from an estimated 8.4 million to 12.8 million in 2019 – an increase of over 50%. (Inter-American Development Bank, 2021)

<sup>3</sup> Data collection focused on collecting news from different ideologies. In some cases, however, it was difficult to determine the editorial line since the newspapers’ websites do not mention it. This information was consulted using indirect sources, such as the newspaper’s official entry in Wikipedia. Many times, the term in Spanish employed to describe the line does not correspond with a similar word in English or does not have the same meaning. In these cases, the word in Spanish is published in parentheses. The symbol (----) was introduced when it was impossible to find a specific mention of the editorial line. To select the most important newspapers in every country, this study follows the ranking proposed in “4International media and Newspapers” website: <<https://www.4imn.com/topLatin-America/>>.

**Table 1 - Newspapers in Latin America**

| Number | Country            | Newspaper        | Editorial Line (As it appears in their Wikipedia Entry) | News pieces |
|--------|--------------------|------------------|---|-------------|
| A1     | Argentina          | Infobae          | Right   | 2           |
| A2     | Argentina          | Clarín           | Right   | 4           |
| A3     | Argentina          | Página 12        | Left  | 2           |
| B1     | Brazil             | O Globo          | Right (Conservador)                                     | 3           |
| B2     | Brazil             | Estadao          | Right   | 2           |
| B3     | Brazil             | Jornal do Brasil | Centre-Left   | 2           |
| C1     | Chile              | La Tercera       | Right (liberal- conservador)                            | 4           |
| C2     | Chile              | El mostrador     | Centre (Pluralismo)                                     | 2           |
| C3     | Chile              | Publimetro       | ----  | 2           |
| D1     | Colombia           | El Tiempo        | Centre  | 3           |
| D2     | Colombia           | El Espectador    | Centre-left   | 1           |
| D3     | Colombia           | NoticiasRCN      | Centre-Right  | 2           |
| E1     | Costa Rica         | La Nación        | Centre-Right  | 3           |
| E2     | Costa Rica         | La República     | ----  | 3           |
| F1     | Dominican Republic | Diario Libre     | ----  | 4           |
| F2     | Dominican Republic | Listín Diario    | Centre-Right  | 2           |
| G1     | Mexico             | Reforma          | Right   | 3           |
| G2     | Mexico             | Milenio          | Centre  | 2           |
| G3     | Mexico             | La Jornada       | Left  | 3           |
| H1     | Panama             | La Prensa        | Right   | 3           |
| H2     | Panama             | La Extrella      | ----  | 2           |
| H3     | Panama             | El Siglo         | ----  | 2           |

## Results

### ***a) National media coverage of migration in Latin America***

Regarding migrants' nationality, Venezuelans were mentioned 139 times, Haitians 12 times, Cubans three times, Nicaraguans three times, and the rest, who were unspecific nationalities, five times. This fact is not surprising since Venezuela (5.5 million), Haitians (1.7 million), and Cuba (1.7 million) top the list of countries where more people have migrated to the region.

Venezuelans monopolize the media coverage even when the subject of the news is other migrants, such as Haitians or Nicaraguans, because the term "Venezuelan" appears alongside them. This could be explained since the Venezuelan migrants have dispersed across South America, Central America, and México. Until recently, they could travel to many Latin American countries without a visa. On the contrary, Haiti and Cuba are islands that limit the ways to leave the country, and the nationals enjoy fewer migratory permissions, which Venezuelans used to enjoy more. In addition, the main objective of these migrants is to move to the United States and find a way to regularize their situation (IOM, 2022). Therefore, most Cubans and Haitians attempt a straighter path across The Darien Gap, where they join other migrants, such as Venezuelans, Indians, and Africans, in their journey to the North. Yet, it is possible to find news related to Haitians that have



permanently settled in those South American countries such as Brazil (ACNUR, 2023). Others, however, have just remained for some months while they gather resources to continue their travel (Dain, Batalova *et al.*, 2023). The media coverage of migration centers on the following topics.

### *i) Labor and social conditions*

This topic embraces news about how Venezuelans and Haitians struggle to settle in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile (A1, A2, B1, B3). The media coverage emphasizes how migrants fight to find a job. Most of them are low-wage employees, such as waiters or delivery drivers. However, other migrants have even opened businesses like traditional food restaurants and pubs, or they labor as professionals providing medical or consulting services. They have been able to forge solidarity chains to improve their living conditions and even continue celebrating their familiar festivities at a distance (B3, D1). In the case of Haitians living in Chile, they have even married locals (C1) and settled permanently in the country. Despite these successful cases, the media coverage has well echoed the perils and difficult situations many newcomers face (A3, B1, B2, D3, E1, D2): sleeping on the streets because of the overcrowded shelters, the difficulties of finding a job and taking care of their health during the pandemic or trying to enroll their children at public schools. In the end, besides some news that show migrants settling and prospering, most of the newcomers eventually continue their journey to the US-Mexican border, trying to apply for asylum status (B2, G1). Most of them take the dangerous path through the Darien Gap in the Colombian-Panama border, facing hazardous conditions across the jungle and being susceptible to rape, murder, or death because of the hostile terrain and extreme weather.

### *ii) Harassment*

News has also paid attention to the discrimination that the newcomers suffer, who are susceptible to physical maltreatment, the violation of their human rights, and even getting robbed by local authorities (G3). Other reports inform the violent acts towards refugee shelters as retaliation against crimes allegedly committed by migrants (F2). Some news highlights criminal incidents in which Venezuelan citizens were killed (C3), one of them of homophobic connotation in Colombia (D2). Throughout the analysis of this coverage, it is possible to discover another kind of discrimination in Latin America that has appeared in Europe and the United States, and this is the use of migrants as a political weapon. Here, it is possible to observe how local and national authorities illegally deport people or are even reluctant to receive their nationals. This has happened with the Nicaraguan government which has denied the entrance of their residents deported by Costa Rican authorities (E2) or Haitians deported from the Dominican Republic, who were not able to enter their country since the Haitian government shut down the border gates (A3). There have been cases where local authorities in Argentina have illegally relocated migrants from one province into another (A3), as has happened with some authorities in the US.

### *iii) Criminality*

This topic gathers a series of news in which migrants are suspects of performing illegal acts. This and the next topic, migration controls, are strongly related. They are the themes that received more mediatic attention. Criminality has become the ideal pretext for national authorities to raise migration controls. The news usually employs the word “suspect” or “potential delinquent,” but, as it will be possible to observe in the section dedicated to “news framing,” the news is usually framed to imply the responsibility of the foreigners without a previous careful criminal investigation. Among the topics, it is possible to observe crimes related to homicides (A1), violent

robbery (A2) (E1), criminal gangs, and social disturbance (C3) (D1) (E1). There is a predisposition to publish migration statistics: information related to the number of migrants that have arrived in Panama (H1) and Chile (C2), but also studies reporting criminal statistics and the participation of migrants in illicit activities (C1). News from Colombia, Costa Rica, and the Dominican Republic presents information that associates the increment of migrants with a significant rise in criminality. Other coverage highlights the necessity of reviewing the migratory status of foreigners due to the increase in delinquency (A2) and the deportation of people considered high-risk criminals (H2).

#### *iv) Migratory controls*

Along with criminality, migration controls are among the most important issues Latin American newspapers cover. It gathers topics that highlight the authorities' efforts to manage the migration flows (C2) (E2) and how the countries will eventually raise new migration requirements to stop illegal immigration (E1). The most popular strategy is to require visas for Venezuelans, Cubans, and Haitians (A2) (F1) (H1) (G3), the instrumentalization of massive deportations (F1), and the denial of entry at airports. It is possible to perceive in the media coverage a strengthening of migratory measures not just in the United States, migrants can no longer apply at the US-Mexican border (G1), they must return to their countries or apply to get temporary permission to remain in Mexico (G2) (H1). However, in other countries, such as Brazil (B2) and the Dominican Republic (F2), both have settled regularization programs, but at the same time, they have implemented tougher methods to inhibit the arrival of new migrants (B2) (F2). However, many people are starting to return to their country due to the new regulations implemented by the US since they could enter the North American country (H1).

### ***b) Frames and media coverage of migration in Latin America<sup>4</sup>***

| Frame         | Number | Newspaper Code  |
|---------------|--------|---|
| Normalization | 7      | B1, B3, A2, C1, B3, C1, A1.   |
| Victimization | 17     | H3, D3, F1, F1, G3, G3, D1, D2, E1, D3, G2, G3, A2, A3, A3, B2, B1. |
| Burden        | 13     | H1, C3, C2, E2, H1, E1, G1, H1, G1, G2, G1, B2, G1.                 |
| Threat        | 17     | C3, E1, E2, E2, F1, F1, F2, H3, C2, D1, D1, A1, A2, A2, B2, C1, C1. |

#### *i) Normalization*

When considering the normalization frame, it is possible to notice how migrants are depicted as positive when they appear as hardworking and self-improving people. There are headlines such as “Cheguei da Venezuela com uma mala e uma bicicleta. Hoje tenho meu consultório em Curitiba”<sup>5</sup> (I arrived from Venezuela with a suitcase and a bicycle. Today I have my office in Curitiba) (B1) or “los mil y un trabajos de venezolanos en Chile” (the thousand and one jobs that Venezuelans have in Chile) (C1). Five news articles of the sample describe how migrants persevere to become employed and settle in the host country (A1)(A2)(B1)(B3)(C2). This positive vision could be interpreted in two ways: as a moral model, the “good migrant,” of how newcomers must behave in the country or as an attempt to mitigate hate towards migrants. There are, however, other news related to criminality, as it was possible to read in the following passages, in which migrants are

<sup>4</sup> This categorization is based on a modified version of the model proposed by (Amores, Arcila-Calderón, Blanco-Herrero, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> The original versions of the extracts are presented as published, even preserving the misspellings or special jargon.



blamed for causing social disturbance and delinquency. These contrasting frames accentuate a Manichean vision of migrants. One was labeled as honorable, the other as unwelcome.

### *ii. Victimization*

Victimization encloses all those situations where migrants are portrayed as vulnerable, needy, or suffer abuse from authorities or the local population. It has served to echo migrants' discontent about their situation and to denounce abuses and maltreatment. Here are some examples, "Autoridades en silencio por muertes de cubanos" (Authorities in silence for deaths of Cubans) (H3), "Las terribles historias de los venezolanos que acampan en San José" -Costa Rica- (The terrible stories of Venezuelans camping in San José -Costa Rica-) (E1). These examples show how victims receive little attention from authorities when they are subject to a crime or suffer maltreatment. These acts do not generally receive a proper investigation. Nonetheless, at the same time, this coverage reproduces a negative view since the headlines usually employ the word "illegal" or "undocumented," referring to breaking the law, denoting a person who does not have the right to be in the country. Here are some examples "Migración deportó 11,949 extranjeros ilegales en septiembre de 2022" (Immigration officials deported 11,949 illegals in September 2022) (F1) (G3) and "Albergues saturados por la oleada de venezolanos" (Shelters saturated by the wave of Venezuelans). Note here the explicit use of the word "oleada" (wave), denoting an uncontrollable flow of people. In the following sentence, it is possible to observe a series of negative stereotypes such as "ignorance," "the employment of black magic" or "having a retrograde behavior" associated with Haitians and even Africans. "Estos grones brutos, que todavía practican la magia negra, que todavía creen que los albinos están poseídos por el demonio" (These black brutes, who still practice black magic, who still believe that albinos are possessed by the devil) (A2).

### *iii. Burden*

This frame appears in 13 news reports. It refers to those representations where migrants appear as inconvenient or burdensome to the authorities and locals. They are usually depicted as people whose presence in the host country brings more negative outcomes than potential benefits. Under this frame, migrants from countries such as Venezuela or Haiti are no longer considered victims or refugees who need support and relief but as potential burdens. These sentiments are reflected well in this reader's commentary: "Y porque Mx – México- tiene que recibir a esos mugrosos" (And why does Mx -Mexico- have to receive those filthy people) (G1), and this extract from a migration functionary's testimony: "No es justo que a Costa Rica le siga tocando todo el trabajo de atender a poblaciones migrante" (It is not fair that Costa Rica continues having to carry with all the work of caring for migrants) (E2). Some news highlights the difficulty of dwelling migrants that are not able to continue with their travel to North America and get stranded. "Migrantes venezolanos varados en Panamá serán enviados a albergue de Gualaca" (Venezuelan migrants stranded in Panama will be sent to the Gualaca shelter) (H1).

The burden frame, as the threat frame, serves to justify the rise of migration controls such as visas and accelerate migrants' deportation without any warrant. Some testimonials go further and declare that these actions are not repressive and arbitrary acts but an intent to protect migrants from becoming beggars or street hawkers. As illustrates the following extract from the news pieces: "-no imponer medidas- es invitarlos a que terminen viviendo hacinados, en un gueto" (not to impose measures - is to invite them to end up living overcrowded, in a ghetto) (C3), or the new procedure is "more human" than the past one "Este nuevo proceso es ordenado, seguro y humano", dijo,

“no se presenten en la frontera” (“This new process is orderly, safe and humane,” he said, “do not show up at the border”) (G1).

#### *iv. Threat*

The analysis of the threat frame, along with the burden one, offers an optimal view of how a particular coverage could bias the public perception of a controversial issue such as migration. Migrants are no longer victims or people who require a human response to relieve their needs but uninvited persons who cause inconveniences and potential threats to the locals. This topic appears in 17 news pieces, the largest in the analysis. It embraces the coverture of incidents in which migrants are depicted as threats (F2). In this coverage, newspapers usually highlight in the news headlines the suspect’s nationality, even if locals are involved in the incident (C3) (H3). When a group of more than a hundred bikers organize a non-official motorcycle parade to celebrate Halloween 2022 in Santiago de Chile, the central information focused on seven to ten suspects of Venezuelan nationality “Detienen a 7 venezolanos tras ‘Caravana Halloween’” (Seven Venezuelans arrested after ‘Halloween Caravan’) (C3). Other ways of providing a partial version of the facts are when the media categorically declared in the headline the responsibility of the migrants in the incident, but in the text uses other terms less compromising, such as “suspects,” “investigated,” or “implicated” (A1). In the end, the information provided in the news does not sustain an undoubtful connection of the migrants in the criminal incident.

As in the case of the burden frame, framing migrants as threats helps authorities justify the commission of illegal and controversial actions such as banning travelers from certain countries or the construction of protection walls. This mention does not refer to Donald Trump in USA, but to the actions implemented by the government of Daniel Ortega, the leftist president of Nicaragua, “El ‘Muro de Contención’ nicaragüense consiste en ‘no permitir el ingreso y circulación de drogas, incautación de activos proveniente de actividades ilícitas, o el establecimiento de organizaciones del crimen organizado por nuestro territorio nacional’” (The Nicaraguan ‘Containment Wall’ consists of ‘not allowing the entry and circulation of drugs, the seizure of assets from illegal activities, or the establishment of organized crime organizations throughout our national territory’) (E2). Another typically biased coverage is to provide ambiguous data from “statistical studies” to imply the arrival of migrants with the rise of criminality (A2) (C1) (C2) (D1) (E2). The news analyzed in this study tend to publish partial information about the surveys, sometimes they avoid mentioning the total number of the people questioned, and where and how this instrument has been applied. Such as, “La incidencia de haitianos en hechos delictivos en los últimos años se ha masificado” (The incidence of Haitians in criminal acts in recent years has become massive) (F1) or “Tema inmigrantes al rojo: un 75% de los chilenos cree que se debe restringir la inmigración” (The immigrant issue is trending: 75% of Chileans believe that immigration should be restricted) (C2).

## **Discussion**

By now, the world is immersed in an intricate context shaped by the social and economic effects caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine, and the political polarization among other factors. As it has been possible to observe in this work, the Latin American newspapers analyzed have not been immune to this influx. On the contrary, in many cases, they have provided a negative frame towards immigrants. Comparing these narratives of hate in the United States, Europe, and Latin American media, it is possible to perceive some similarities. In Europe, for example, migrants are depicted in media as people who do not deserve the same human rights as

locals (Rybina, 2014), burdens that abuse the asylum system and the generous welfare benefits (Joris *et al.*, 2018), invaders and parasites that cause negative social impacts (Siapera, Papadopoulou, 2021). The media framing of migrants in the USA has similar topics as well. Migrants are depicted negatively, particularly regarding their impact on the economy and as potential threats; the media usually highlights when migrants are accused of committing criminal activities (Abrajano, Hajnal, Hassell, 2017; Farris, Silber Mohamed, 2018). All those negative visions about migration have been reflected in Latin American media. It has resounded negative frames that are frequent in the EU and USA coverage: migrants as burdens and threats. In times of economic depression and disbelief towards traditional institutions, minorities such as migrants have become, under the media and political discourses, ideal subjects to blame. By now, scapegoating has become a popular political strategy employed by politicians in the US (Sawyer, 2023) and the European Union (ECRE, 2023) to transfer public responsibility for social tribulations to a minority. Besides the cultural, historical, and contextual differences, the arguments provided by Governor Abbot in Texas to prosecute and deport migrants to other states are not so different from those provided by Colombian authorities under Ivan Duque's presidency to deny health assistance to migrants during the COVID-19 pandemic. All the hate narratives about migrants depict them as the "number one public enemy."

The biased coverage under which migrants are negatively portrayed in Latin America as lawbreakers and burdens is nourished by local prejudices and preconceptions about Venezuelans, Cubans, Haitians, and others, but from external influences as well. Here, it is possible to mention the rise of the far-right in the United States with Donald Trump using symbolic imaginaries such as the "Wall," an element that has permeated migration rhetoric in the Dominican Republic and Nicaragua, for example. In Europe, the rise of far-right political movements, such as VOX in Spain and PEGIDA in Germany, in whose agenda migrants are the subject of a hate rhetoric that is widely available on the Internet, particularly across media with the diffusion of hate memes and verbal aggression towards migrants tagging them as "criminals, thugs, scum, invaders, and terrorists" (Kreis, 2017).

Hate has ubiquitously consolidated as a popular strategy to gain electoral approval, evade public responsibility, justify maltreatment, and attack minorities' human rights (Martikainen, Sakki, 2021). Negative frames promote the dehumanization of migrants, who are no longer people who are living in difficult conditions, but as threats and lazy persons who only want to take advantage of the situation, abuse welfare, and steal jobs from nationals. This rhetoric is an excuse to implement illegal and arbitrary measures such as the deportation and discrimination of travelers at airports (Nochebuena, 2023). When dwelling on migration movements, and because of the lack of integral solutions, authorities have raised migration controls, such as imposing a visa or forcing refugee applicants to return to their country and send the submission there (Selee, 2023). One of the main arguments employed by officials to impose these new regulations, as it was possible to observe in this work, is to protect the migrants. This, of course, does not match with the facts. These measures do not necessarily decrease the migratory flows or protect the travelers. On the contrary, these kinds of actions trigger corruption and public abuses when citizens apply for a visa at the consulates. New migration routes have been established, but they are more uncontrolled and dangerous. Migrants are now forced to take a more clandestine and riskier path under the control of criminal gangs, where they are susceptible to being robbed, raped, or converted into "mules," or forced to carry drugs with them.

As it was possible to observe in this article, the actual migration crisis in Latin America has been a disruptive and unprecedented phenomenon that has put institutions, social welfare, and local coexistence under pressure. However, before the impossibility of properly dealing with this issue, the complex situation has overwhelmed public resources causing social tension in the host communities. The newspapers in Latin America have often covered this problem under a framed vision, which triggers resentment, distrust, and animosity toward the newcomers. This biased rhetoric has served as an endorsement to harass people in a very vulnerable condition. This has happened, paradoxically, in a region conformed by traditional migrant-sending countries, whose nationals are usually the subject of discrimination and harassment in the USA and Europe.

### Declaration of interest statement

The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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