

UNIVERSIDAD SAN FRANCISCO DE QUITO USFQ

Colegio de Ciencias Sociales y Humanidades

**FAMILY SEPARATION DUE TO MIGRATION CAUSED
BY THE DOLLARIZATION OF 2000 IN ECUADOR,
FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF A DAUGHTER OF
MIGRANTS.**

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Relaciones Internacionales

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RESUMEN

La crisis económica de los años noventa desencadenó en la dolarización ecuatoriana el 9 de enero del 2000, lo que acarreo una serie de sucesos sociales, económicos y políticos que quedarán marcados eternamente en la memoria colectiva ecuatoriana, el más tangible y polémico, fue la migración. Millones de familias se separaron y muchas de ellas siguen en búsqueda de una reunificación familiar 23 años después. Este texto se centra en un grupo vulnerable invisibilizado, que son los hijos de migrantes que son dejados atrás en los países de origen, aquellos niños que son obligados a migrar en condiciones precarias y los desafíos que sufren los migrantes especialmente indocumentados en búsqueda de la reunificación familiar, dentro de este análisis se destacan violaciones a los derechos humanos y las consecuencias en el crecimiento y desarrollo de niños, niñas y adolescentes al estar lejos de sus principales cuidadores y lo complicado y tardíos que son los procesos de reunificación familiar en la mayoría de los casos. Este análisis tiene el fin de ser una llamada de atención al sistema internacional para pensar en este grupo vulnerabilizado de menores cuyos derechos son violados gracias a la migración de sus padres. Desde la perspectiva única de la autora que vivió estos procesos en carne propia.

Palabras Clave: Migración, Separación Familiar, Derechos Humanos, Separación Impuesta, Reunificación Familiar, dolarización.

ABSTRACT

The economic crisis of the 1990s triggered the dollarization of Ecuador on January 9, 2000, which led to a series of social, economic, and political events that will remain forever in Ecuador's collective memory, the most tangible and controversial of which was migration. Millions of families were separated and many of them are still searching for family reunification 23 years later. This text focuses on an invisible vulnerable group, which are the children of migrants who are left behind in the countries of origin, those children who are forced to migrate in precarious conditions and the challenges suffered by migrants especially undocumented migrants in search of family reunification, within this analysis highlights human rights violations and the consequences on the growth and development of children and adolescents to be away from their primary caregivers and how complicated and late are the processes of family reunification in most cases. This analysis is intended as a wake-up call to the international system to think about this vulnerable group of children whose rights are violated due to the migration of their parents. From the unique perspective of the author who experienced these processes firsthand.

Keywords: Migration, Family Separation, Human Rights, Imposed Separation, Family Reunification, dollarization.

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Acknowledgements and Dedication

Dedicatoria

Más que mi abuelita, fue mi mamá. Como un día se lo prometí, cada logro llevara su nombre. María Rivas.

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Introduction

“What if I couldn't – carry memories? Left too quickly, no packing” (Guiñansaca 2023). The dollarization is a milestone that has been marked in the collective memory of the Ecuadorian population, this process, driven by the severe banking crisis, the lack of confidence in the national currency "sucre", the flight of capital, among many other factors, caused significant changes in the reality of many Ecuadorians and their families. This process was presented as an alternative to stabilize the serious economic crisis in which the country was immersed, reduce the high interest rate, stabilize the exchange rate, and promote investment and development. Several authors claim that, although it was "effective" in the medium term, it brought some monetary stability by combating fiscal indiscipline and remittances sent by migrants that helped stabilize the Ecuadorian economy in a shorter period. In the short term, it generated notable consequences reflected in the increase in the unemployment rate and a significant reduction in the purchasing power of the population, leading many household heads to migrate legally and illegally to other countries in search of a better future and opportunities for themselves and their families, generating family separation. Although many people migrated with the firm objective of reuniting with their families in the shortest possible time, 23 years after this event, many migrants are still waiting to see their families once again.

Mass migration due to dollarization had a significant impact on the traditional Ecuadorian family composition by generating transnational families, which had consequences on the lives of migrants and mainly on the children of migrant minors, who remained in the country of origin, often in situations of vulnerability. Migration is a complex but difficult phenomenon to define according to the International Organization for Migration (2023), since it is used as a generic term in international law

that defines a person who moves away from their habitual residence temporarily or permanently, within or outside their country, this term includes a number of legal categories such as persons whose situation or means of movement is not defined by international law, for example, undocumented migration. This analysis and theoretical contribution dives into the deeper layers of post-dollarization Ecuadorian migration, exploring its relationship with family separation from the unique perspective of one who has directly experienced its consequences and processes.

We will start with a theoretical reflection on the dollarization of 2000 because of the economic crisis that triggered a wave of migration and remittance economy with positive and negative consequences. The interrelation of these events will be analyzed by highlighting the economic and social consequences, as well as exploring how they have affected family structures to answer the question: How did the dollarization of the year 2000, the latent economic crisis and migration impact the traditional composition of families in Ecuador? Subsequently, human rights frameworks will be explored from international legal tools such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child that establish fundamental principles to address this issue and prevent unjustified family separation by answering the question "What are the human rights violations experienced by Ecuadorian migrants and their families, especially in terms of family reunification? Similarly, the human rights violations of undocumented migrants will be addressed as another layer of complexity in this iceberg, as they face additional challenges often made invisible by their legal conditions, from a humanitarian and non-discrimination perspective, by advocating for the fundamental rights of a person regardless of their legal or migratory status. A theoretical reflection will also be made by examining psychological and social studies and theories to address the consequences and impact of family separation on children and adolescents, as well

as empathizing with the complexity of reunification processes that can often be traumatic, We will discuss restrictive migration policies and even, as the indigenous migrant poet Sonia Guiñansaca points out, "discriminatory" policies that criminalize and stigmatize migrants with anti-immigration rhetoric, contributing to family separation and perpetuating unjust stigmas. To understand how the separation imposed by migration affects psychologically and socially the development of children. The text also addresses migration from a gender perspective, highlighting the specific challenges faced by migrant women and children, especially undocumented migrants, as a latent problem that cannot be ignored in this context.

Finally, family separation due to migration will be addressed as a relevant and persistent problem that has been ignored, underscoring the importance of beginning to act by the international system. The following scholarly breakdown and critical analysis seeks not only to unravel the complexities of migration and its impact, but also to highlight why family separation merits urgent attention from the international system. It is intended as a space for reflection and to highlight the need for compassionate approaches and solutions that respect the human rights and fundamental rights of families affected by migration.

Context

The dollarization of 2000 has been impregnated in the Ecuadorian collective memory as a historical moment that for many was necessary and for others was a moment of decisions that would change the lives of millions of Ecuadorians and their families. It all began in the 1990s, when Ecuador entered one of its greatest economic and financial crises, which led to the collapse of the banking system in 1999, "the sucre", the currency of the time, was devalued to such an extent that it caused uncontrollable inflation. Former President Jamil Mahuad and Julián Yosovitch made the

decision to change the national currency to the US dollar on January 9, 2000, in order to attract foreign investment, stabilize the country's economy by eliminating the risk of devaluation of the sucre and improve access to international credit “se señala ésta es resultado de causas internas y externas, tales como, la inestabilidad política de los últimos años, la guerra con el Perú, el impacto del fenómeno de "El Niño", las crisis internacionales y la suspensión de las líneas de crédito a las economías emergentes, entre las cuales se cuenta el Ecuador” (Espinosa 2000, 1). This change in the Ecuadorian economy implied that prices, salaries, current and savings accounts suddenly changed to U.S. dollars, provoking a series of economic and social reactions from the population.

The immediate reaction of the people who felt their purchasing power affected by the conversion of sucres to dollars was protests and demonstrations “a principios del año 2000, excedía 21.000 por dólar; y para el final de la primera semana del 2000 estaba entre 24.000-25.000 por dólar.” (Acosta et al. 2000, 72). There were people who lost all their material goods and savings for their old age, education or medical care, there were even those who took their own lives in a desperate act because they saw no possibility of stability in the future and although there is no specific data linking dollarization with the increase in the suicide rate in the early 2000's, it can be speculated that it was an aggravating factor towards this problem. Many others left the country and their families to build a better future for themselves and their loved ones.

In the long term, it can be said that this brought relative economic stability to Ecuador, the US dollar has become characteristic of the Ecuadorian economy and a key factor in the first decades of the 21st century to attract foreign investment and a cushion against global inflation caused by COVID-19, even so, if analyzed on a macroeconomic scale at a Latin American level, foreign investment has not kept up as strongly as

expected, at the beginning of August 2023, Ecuador climbed as the second country in Latin America with the highest country risk index, only below Venezuela and above Argentina. The country risk is a financial indicator of a country's debt and external debt compliance, it is also used to evaluate the investment risk in a particular country, the higher this index is, the less attractive it is for foreign investors to invest in such countries. According to Vilhena (2003), although the country risk measured by the EMBI+ index has decreased, in the general framework, it has increased by 600 basis points from time to time (p. 195). On the other hand, economic stability is not something that was seen on an immediate macroeconomic scale:

“En el año 2001, el país tuvo un déficit en la balanza comercial no petrolera: US\$ 1.953 millones; en el 2002 el desempeño de la balanza comercial fue negativo y el déficit registrado alcanzó un récord de US\$ 2.805 millones, por el aumento de las importaciones; en tanto que para el período enero - julio del 2003, la balanza comercial no petrolera registró un déficit de US\$ 1.245 millones” (Vilhena 2003, 195).

This event, which occurred 20 years ago, is a clear mirror of the country's current economy.

On the other side, Ecuadorian migration since 2000 due to dollarization is another factor that breaks down into a set of social, economic, and political circumstances “en el 2000 se registró un número de 121.112, es decir que, en 10 años, la población emigrante se había triplicado. Esta era mayoritariamente ciudadana (69.9%), predominaban los hombres (61%) y lo que es más importante, provenía principalmente de hogares no pobres (68.3%)” (Valle 2005, 149). Socially, we can measure not only international but also national labor emigration of farmers to the city, family separation in terms of men and women who left their families behind and family reunification of

Ecuadorians who migrated years later to reunite with their relatives who were already in other countries, there are people who even 23 years after this event are still in immigration proceedings in search of a reunion. Within this, other psychological and social factors are broken down, such as the lack of paternal or maternal care in raising a child and how this affects the child's development, extended family in charge of raising children and adolescents who in many cases perpetrate physical, sexual, and psychological violence, consumption of illicit substances by children of migrants, increase in the crime rate in sending and receiving countries, etc.

Economically, remittances or sending money to Ecuador is something that was facilitated by those who emigrated, this contributed and continues to contribute to the country's economy, and for Ecuadorian families to improve their quality of life and their internal consumption power, benefiting several national microeconomic factors such as trade and local industry and reducing the poverty rate as it became easier for the receiving families to acquire food, education, housing, clothing, medical care, etcetera. This has a long-term impact on Ecuador's human capital. Remittances allowed the opening of new businesses, the construction of new homes and investment in smaller and larger scale projects for those migrants who returned to the country and their families, it also allows a greater flow of foreign exchange to Ecuador, strengthening international reserves and stabilizing the exchange rate and finally reduced the rate of forced migration, such as the one currently occurring in Venezuela.

Politically, post-dollarization Ecuadorian migration has allowed the migration policies of receiving countries to change in favor of the struggle for human rights and family reunification, allowing millions of Ecuadorian families to have a better quality of life and be reunited, but it does not apply in all cases. Although circumstances have improved, it is something that is still in constant progress, and there are still flaws in the

system that have claimed the lives of millions of people, not only Ecuadorians. Migration has different connotations, such as the legal migrant who emigrates with an investor or work visa from his country and the migrant who crosses by land transport or walking through the fearsome and wild jungles of Panama and Honduras such as the Darien jungle, known to be one of the most dangerous migratory routes in the world. All this to reach "the American dream" often putting their lives and the lives of their families, many of them minors, at risk. The current political and security crisis in Ecuador has led thousands of Ecuadorians to make the difficult decision to leave behind everything they know. According to current statistics and facts, it can be speculated that a migration wave equal to or stronger than that of the 2000s is coming, which is a wake-up call to the international system to take measures to address family separation in the light of human rights. Within this framework, it is important to point out that there are no real tools that statistically measure the rate of undocumented migration from Latin American countries such as Ecuador to the United States; if there are no figures, it is more difficult to act.

In this context, it is important to point out two human rights instruments that are extremely important in this analysis: the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the International Bill of Human Rights. The CRC was signed by the United States in 1995 and although it has not been ratified, there was an initial commitment to the rights of children and adolescents, Ecuador signed the CRC in 1990 and ratified it in the same year. Similarly, the United States signed the International Bill of Human Rights, which consists of several key documents, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1945, and ratified the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in 1992, although the

signing of a treaty is not binding, ratification is a tool that makes the country formally agree to be bound by the terms of the treaty.

Justification

As the daughter of migrants, from a very young age I knew that my life was divided between two countries and that at some point I would have to leave behind everything I knew to fulfill that "American dream" for which one day my mother migrated. As previously mentioned, there are several connotations regarding the quality of migration of a person, in my case, I go with something safe, with documents that allow me to enter a foreign country as a subject of rights and be protected by the law, unlike my mother, who as an illegal migrant had to fight for those rights and mine for years. On May 26, 2001, my mother Monica Moya decided to emigrate to Italy under the promise of a well-paid job and with the firm hope of taking her daughter and mother with her in a few years. This is the idea that many migrants have when they leave their countries, but very few manage to realize this dream. It was not until 19 years later that she was able to return to Ecuador to meet her daughter for the first time and say goodbye to her mother for the last time. That is the reality of those who migrate between dreams and hopes, but the circumstances, migratory realities and rights systems frustrate or postpone these dreams, as in the case of my mother who, in the end, emigrated again to the United States from Italy, in view of the reality with new promises and objectives that took almost two decades to culminate.

There are several factors that lead a migrant to leave her country, in this case as in the case of many migrants in the 2000s, it was the dollarization and the lack of opportunities that, coupled with her status as a single mother, left her no choice but to go in search of a better future for her, her mother and her daughter. Many people found themselves at the same crossroads after having lost almost all of their savings thanks to

the collapse of the banking system and the closing of several banks that triggered a set of factors that led to dollarization, dollarization made Ecuadorian products such as agriculture and manufacturing less competitive in the international market, The quality of life of millions of people was affected thanks to fiscal austerity as a government measure to stabilize the currency exchange rate, which affected areas such as health and education, many economic sectors were affected to a lesser and greater extent, decreasing family income in a micro and macroeconomic sense. Although Mahuad's long term objective with dollarization was to stabilize the Ecuadorian economy, in the short term during the adjustment period, it hurt millions of middle and lower class families especially, driving them to emigrate to countries with "stability" and although many others only saw an opportunity to get out of the uncertainty of a country characterized by its constant economic and political crises, there were those who, for the most part, left their families with the promise of returning or taking them with them someday, promises that were broken soon after, leaving widows and widowers behind, there were those who, for the most part, left their families with the promise of returning or taking them with them someday, promises that were broken soon after as they did not even make it across the border alive leaving widows, widowers and orphans in their wake and many others who, like my mother, had to wait decades to return to what they once called home.

While I was lucky enough to be raised by a wonderful grandmother and aunts who played the role of mother and father to me, and I never lacked anything material or emotional, this is not the case for thousands of children who, like me, are growing up or grew up far from their parents due to migration. Many of these transnational families, left their children in the hands of those who did not fulfill the role of caregiver, but on the contrary, they impose physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, encouraging many

vulnerable children to become victims of crime, trafficking and consumption of illicit substances, human trafficking, etc. Not having a mother or father figure present due to migration also affects various branches of their psychological and emotional development, leading to feelings of abandonment, depression, and anxiety. For those who manage to migrate with their parents as minors, they must adapt to cultural shocks such as adapting to a new culture, language, and societies different from what they were used to. In these environments, they may experience racism or discrimination due to their migrant status, as well as academic pressure due to a new educational system and in another language. And finally, the economic impact is intrinsically linked to the success of the migrant parent, which can be negative or positive as long as the parent sends remittances to the country of origin, in many cases of abandonment, In many cases of abandonment, parents stop sending remittances after a while by their own decision or thanks to the lack of work in the destination country, which prevents them from providing adequate economic support for their children, causing the caregivers to take care of the child's needs or not, and although they are protected by the state, the foster care system for abandoned children in Ecuador has left much to be desired throughout history.

On the other hand, many of the migrants who left Ecuador migrated without documents to validate them, many others migrated with tourist visas and many others had expired the documents that validated their migratory status and even their existence, as in the case of my mother who for more than 10 years lacked any document to validate her existence. These migrants face various difficulties and situations that should be of concern to the international system, such as limited access to public services such as health or education, especially in the United States, the high cost of the same added to their lack of documents puts their health and welfare of them and their

families at risk, in 2023, the state of Florida under Republican Governor Ron DeSantis, imposed laws that prevent free movement and effective medical care to those without documents, limiting or eliminating their human rights. The risk of detention and deportation to their countries of origin is something they must live with every day, driving a car, access to immediate medical attention, or asking for a job, puts their realities at risk every day, generating fear, uncertainty, social exclusion, anxiety, etc. They are also victims of discrimination and labor exploitation, working 15-hour days, without any legal protection, nothing of what they have really belongs to them if they do not have social security to back them up. There are several Ecuadorians who have had to live on the streets of the United States or in precarious housing, under a stigma and discrimination for being undocumented migrants.

That is why I hope to contribute with valid theoretical aspects that will sensitize the international system to the need to create laws that protect migrants. It is unusual to exist in a place where you even pay taxes and contribute to the human capital of a country, working days of even 15 hours or more and not being able to access even a state ID that validates your existence because you do not have a visa and children like me, cannot see their parents for decades, waiting for a reunion that in many cases does not happen until they are adults or never. For this qualitative research, tools such as phenomenological reflection will be established to reflect on my life and personal experiences to understand migration in depth, auto ethnographic interview as a method of self-exploration, personal narrative to present personal anecdotes within the problem, case study model to analyze experiences of close relatives and specific situations and narrative approach and family dynamics to interview my relatives and analysis of family behavior.

Research questions**Central question:**

Why is family separation due to migration a relevant issue for the international system?

Ancillary questions:

How did the dollarization of 2000, the latent economic crisis and migration impact the traditional composition of families in Ecuador?

What are the human rights violations suffered by Ecuadorian migrants and their families, especially in terms of family reunification?

How does the imposed separation due to migration affect psychologically and socially the development of children and adolescents?

Research objectives

The main objective of this research is to analyze how migration caused by the dollarization of 2000 in Ecuador, caused family separation at the national level and how this affected the development of the children of migrants who stayed in the country and could not be reunited with their families, are in the process or were reunited with them after many years. This analysis will have a mainly social approach. This problem is relevant in the international system since it involves the healthy development of children and adolescents, with emotional deficiencies that can lead them to drugs, excesses, pregnancies, rapes, etc. The flow of money from one country to another and whether this really compensates for family separation, the human rights violations that migrants go through before, during and after their migration process. In addition, it is planned to investigate the problems that mainly undocumented migrants, both children and adults, suffer when crossing the border and the challenges they face to be reunited

with their families when crossing the border to the United States and finally analyze how the international system deals with this problem.

Literature review

Introduction

This document is structured as follows: the first section corresponds to a state of the art on the dollarization of 2000 in Ecuador and how this caused family separation at the national level affecting the development of the children of migrants who stayed in the country. It is followed by a social, psychological, and economic analysis of the problems suffered mainly by undocumented migrants, both children and adults, when crossing the border with the United States and concludes with an analysis and recommendations on how this is addressed in the international system to ensure the human rights of migrants. The first section of this paper was developed as a review of the academic literature and responds to the question How did the dollarization of 2000, the latent economic crisis and migration impact the traditional composition of families in Ecuador? The analysis highlights the most published topics by theme and includes a thematic bibliography (Annex 1). The second section (annex 2) responds to the question What are the human rights violations suffered by Ecuadorian migrants and their families, especially in terms of family reunification? Analyzing mainly the short- and long-term consequences of child abandonment caused by migration, from a social and psychological perspective. The third section will conclude by answering the question: How does the imposed separation due to migration affect psychologically and socially the development of children and adolescents? It required a survey of psychological and social information (Annex 3).

Literature review on how migration caused by the dollarization of 2000 in Ecuador affected family separation.

The literature review on dollarization in Ecuador and migration considers various levels of analysis and research. We considered academic articles and journals, FLACSO-Ecuador books, analysis produced by the state, NGOs, and independent authors. Academic production was sought through academic sources that include national and international texts. Priority was given to social and economic analyses because they reflect this problem in a more consistent way. Priority was given to texts from FLACSO-Ecuador since it brings together a collaboration of authors who analyze dollarization and migration from different social, economic, and political points of view. Similarly, academic articles issued by international organizations such as the United Nations and Ecuadorian articles that have previously analyzed migration because of dollarization were considered. Some considerations: 1) Evidently migration has had a significant effect in Ecuador which is reflected in Ecuadorian politics, economy and society and has been analyzed by authors who mostly highlight the inflow of remittances as a positive consequence but also highlight the brain drain and loss of human capital as a negative consequence 2) In turn, migration is intrinsically linked to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which links it to the international system and the United Nations since no matter what country or place a person is in, continues to be a subject of rights 3) There is a lot of literature on the consequences of migration in Ecuador analyzed from a national and international perspective and although it is not intended to include everything written about this problem. The aim is to conduct an in-depth social analysis to understand how migration is linked to family separation and its consequences. It is recognized that there may be studies and literature that address migration from other approaches that do not prioritize family separation, such as the

Venezuelan migration wave entering Ecuador, and may have been left out of this literature review.

In relation to terminology, priority was given to the term post-dollarization migration. However, for the literature survey, we reviewed writings that have used analogical terminology such as: Consequences of migration, remittance economy Ecuador, dollarization of 2000, economic crisis, Ecuadorian migration, advantages and consequences of remittance economies Ecuador: Consequences of migration, remittance economy Ecuador, dollarization in 2000, economic crisis, Ecuadorian migration, advantages and consequences of remittance economies, migrants' rights and family separation due to migration. Use the term post-dollarization Ecuadorian migration, considering that the most important migration wave in Ecuadorian history occurred in 2000-2001 after the official currency of the Republic of Ecuador changed to the US dollar, affecting Ecuadorian households microeconomically in a short period of time (Acosta et al. 2000).

The topics on Ecuadorian migration after dollarization with the most publications are the following: Dollarization, Urgent report, The contribution of remittances to the Ecuadorian economy, Consequences of Ecuadorian migration, Crisis, dollarization, and poverty in Ecuador, Child abandonment at a glance, Ecuador: the impacts of globalization and the conditions of the migration process, Ecuadorian migration transnationalism, networks and identities, Migration and migration policy in Ecuador in the period 2000-2021, Legal status and rights of undocumented migrants, Migration policies and transnational families: Ecuadorian migration in Spain and the United States. A more detailed review of each thematic axis follows.

How the dollarization of 2000, the latent economic crisis, the remittance economy, and the consequences of migration triggered the violation of human rights.

The analytical framework for many analyses of family separation due to Ecuadorian migration is that of the human rights of migrants. The international human rights framework for migrants includes the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. The international framework of human rights of migrants serves as a starting point for the analysis of the consequences of migration on family separation as these international instruments establish that family separation of migrants should be an exceptional measure, carried out in accordance with the law and as a last resort in cases of crisis, especially if minors are involved and measures should be taken to ensure family reunification, family separation should be justified for legitimate reasons and procedures should be fair and free of violence. (UN Assembly 1989, 1-23). Family reunification of mainly illegal migrants between Ecuador and the United States is carried out by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the Ecuadorian Consulate in the United States, immigration lawyers and NGOs such as "United We Dream". In turn, it is fundamental to consider that the legal status of a person influences the ability of an individual, state or any NGO to reunite with his or her family, U.S. immigration policies and regulations vary and restrict migrants in irregular system. As the famous author of critical theory and human rights, Giorgio Shani (2014, 591-609), mentions it, who has rights? who argues that, if you are not a resident of the host country, you have no rights. There is no one to turn to in case your rights are violated, your freedom of belief and free movement are limited, and

minorities do not fit in, in short, it goes deep that a person as a migrant loses his or her rights¹. In turn, it is the determining framework and conceptual justification for the analyses conducted. In an economic context, dollarization was an alternative to the economic crisis to stabilize the economy and reduce the interest rate, but this caused prices to rise arbitrarily, there was a higher unemployment rate and many people opted to leave the country (Acosta et al. 2000). This brought with it advantages such as the remittance economy as a positive impact on reducing poverty by providing additional income to families and allowing them to access necessities, but it also created an external dependency which can be counterproductive (Acosta, Lopez and Villamar 2005). Other studies seek to understand where the problem arises in depth and how it brought with it a wave of massive migration of Ecuadorians abroad and the advantages and disadvantages of this phenomenon, highlighting family disintegration and the violation of various human rights as the main consequences (Sotomayor et al 2019, 458-464).

From the most cited texts and references on migration and its consequences in Ecuador, we can find necessary debates that analyze viable alternatives towards a sustainable improvement in the living conditions of people in Latin America, referring to an economic and social context that drives Latin Americans to migrate (Larrea 2009, 8). On the other hand, there are studies that reveal the social and physical abuse suffered by women who migrated to the United States, especially those who traveled

¹ Although his research article focuses on the Muslim population in France and the vulnerabilization of their rights due to stereotypes and prejudices, it serves as a good starting point to understand the vulnerabilization of migrant rights in foreign countries. It also suggests three strategies for the incorporation of migrants: Exclusion: refers to the incorporation of migrants in selected sectors and outside the market of the host country. When the job ends, they return to their country of origin. Assimilation: refers to the process by which migrants are expected to assimilate into the dominant culture if they are to be accepted as citizens. Multiculturalism: is where integration processes are seen as bidirectional and work differently for different groups. It differs from assimilation because it recognizes the social reality of ethnocultural groups.

undocumented, and their rights were violated, also recognizing the unusual migration of mothers with children or married women without their husbands, encouraging family separation. After dollarization 49.40% migrated to Spain and 26.70% migrated to the United States of which the majority were men, it also highlights that, from 1995, female migration began to gain strength in Quito, Guayaquil, and Cuenca (Gratton 2016, 31-55). Similarly, the United Nations Development Program analyzes migration and migration policy in Ecuador in the period 2000-2001, highlights the different forms of human mobility, the main features of the labor insertion of the immigrant population in the country, the evolution of migration policy according to the different dynamics of emigration, immigration and refuge for Ecuadorians, and raises the potential of the local space for the implementation of social inclusion policies (Herrera 2022, 1).

Human rights violations of inducements migrants and family reunification

There is a vast literature about undocumented migrants in the United States which is related to several human rights violations, family separation and the obstacles that migrants suffer for family reunification. Among the rights mainly violated are the right to personal liberty and security, the right to non-discrimination, the right to family unity due to the forced separation of families (by deportation, detention or being left in the country of origin), rights to education and medical care and the right to freedom from torture and inhuman or degrading treatment (IACHR, 2013), likewise, the literature analyzes cases such as Hoffman Plastic Compounds vs. National Labor Relations Board considering the rights of the worker, equality and non-discrimination since they had been violated (IACHR, 2013). International organizations such as the Latin American Faculty of Social Sciences, FLACSO, presents many analyses on Ecuadorian migration policies, the effects of transnational families and Ecuadorian migration, in addition to being the most cited in this field. For example, in Spain and the

United States, migrants who wish to reunite with their families go through a long migration process governed by the policies of those countries, for which the person must first have a work permit or permanent residence, something that, in most cases, migrants lack (Herrera, 2008).

There are also literatures that compile the role of women in the migratory process, recognizing the growing presence of this identity since 1964, when the family reunification law was stipulated in the United States, and in 1986 after the approval of the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), also known as Simpson-Rodino. But this did not mean that their rights were fully safeguarded (Morales 2004). Research by various authors has recorded various expressions of violence against female migrants as well as proposals to immigration reforms in the United States to legitimize the violation of the rights of the migrant population, especially women and minors (Morales 2004). Most academic texts that consider family reunification focus on migration issued by Central American countries such as Mexico or El Salvador, as a consequence of the recent migration wave in the 21st century, which serves as a starting point to analyze Ecuadorian migration, there are some analyses that distinguish a large number of undocumented migrants and their permanence outside the law since persecutions have reached record levels and many migrants are forced to break ties with their places of destination. (Massey et al. 2009, 102) Thanks to reforms in key immigration processes, since 1986 millions of Latinos have been able to obtain green cards or work permits and therefore be able to begin the process to apply for their spouses, children and relatives, processes that can take between 2 to 6 years (Massey et al. 2009), something that continues to apply to this day, but there are still other millions of Latinos who have not been able to access this government assistance and remain outside the law, in this analysis will be considered as a vulnerable population. On the other hand, there are

several academic literatures that recognize the migrant as a concern to public safety, taking into account crime rates, burden of public services, politics and rhetoric and economic factors, distinguishing the proposal to build a concrete and steel wall on the border between the United States and Mexico as a measure to strengthen American sovereignty and prevent the violation of the human rights of undocumented migrants (Brown 2015). This academic text is recognized as one of the most cited of its kind.

Psychological and social consequences of child abandonment due to migration.

One of the predominant themes in the existing literature on migration in Ecuador is the impact of migration on the lives of children and adolescents (Noboa 2009; Petit 2003; Liwski 2008), as well as, from a more scientific framework, the psychological consequences of child abandonment in the short and long term (López and Prieto 2004; Rodríguez, Aguiar and García 2012). For example, Lopez and Prieto's undergraduate thesis analyzes the consequences of child abandonment from psychoanalysis, highlighting the short- and long-term emotional problems for an abandoned child such as a deep feeling of abandonment, depression, anxiety, sadness, post-traumatic stress, and difficulties in establishing healthy, intimate, and trusting relationships (2004). On the other hand, the study "The impacts of globalization and the conditions of the migratory process by Sandra Noboa in Ecuador highlighted the consequences of family restructuring and the effects on intra-family relationships in the short and long term in the emotional life of a minor, effects such as stress, sexual abuse, gangs, antisocial behavior, school dropout, etc. (2009). The impacts of migration, the vulnerability of migrants' rights and public policies on children, their families and their rights has been one of the topics prioritized by international studies by international organizations such as ECLAC, IOM, IACHR, OAS, OHCHR, UNICEF, etc. (Petit 2003, 2). It is

emphasized that migration can have a significant impact on families, especially when children are abandoned because one or both parents migrate, causing family instability, disappearance of family references, risk of social abandonment, risk of human trafficking, stress and depression of mothers, informal work and low pay, and child labor (Petit 2003, 3-4).

The migration of children and adolescents under a human rights approach is a topic that has also been addressed by different academic authors and international organizations (Liwski 2008). It is recognized that migration is not a right, but a multidimensional process full of risks and opportunities for states, individuals and communities, which includes minors. This has been reflected in the international framework as a real concern of the OAS through its Special Rapporteurship on Migrant Workers and their Families (AG/RES. 1404 XXVI-O/96 and AG/RES. 1480 XXVII-O/97) and the Inter-American Program for the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of Migrants, including Migrant Workers and their Families (AG/RES. 2141 XXXV-O/05). 2141 XXXV-O/05) (Liwski 2008, 1). Although migrating is not considered a universal right, developing fully in one's own country is, and this has been denied to millions of Latin Americans and Caribbeans from a very early age, impacting their lives (Liwski 2008), this can be seen reflected in studies related to child abuse by various authors who, in addition to being the most cited of their kind, address the issue in relation to the international framework with studies conducted by international organizations (Tovar et al. 2016; Rodríguez et al. 2012). These studies define child maltreatment and its types as: physical, sexual, psycho-emotional and abandonment or neglect, according to UNICEF 40 million children under 15 years of age suffer violence, abuse and neglect and it is estimated that 150 million girls and 74 million underage boys have been abused and sexually exploited and many of them were in a

situation of abandonment, these figures increase significantly over the years (Tovar et al. 2016), a great academic example of the consequences of child abuse is the academic article by Yahira Rodriguez, Bertha Aguiar and Iraida Garcia, who highlight that children who were abused and abandoned in their childhood experience emotional problems, problems relating to other people, behavioral problems and social adaptation increasing the risk of being arrested or committing criminal acts, functional problems in the neural composition of their brains, sexual problems such as dysfunctional sexuality, teenage or unwanted pregnancies and higher rate of sexually transmitted diseases, problems of revictimization and intergenerational transmission (2012).

A positionality and reflexivity statement

Dollarization had a profound impact on the national economy, influencing Ecuadorian migration in various ways, one of the most prominent effects was family separation. Migration is a controversial topic that stems from the aspiration of people to leave their realities in their countries of origin, the lack of opportunities or to seek a better life for themselves and their families, but migrating is a process full of challenges and complications that are often overlooked by states and individuals. Although there is much literature and research on the personal experience of migrants in situations of vulnerability within the host country or during the migration process, very little is said about the experience of the children of migrants who are abandoned or left behind in the country of origin at the hands of their extended family or the process of family reunification, which can even be traumatic. The migration of Ecuadorians in 2000, mostly to the United States, Italy and Spain resulted in the separation of many families, parents, siblings, spouses, and children who remained in the country of origin with the promise of being reunited in a few months or years with their families in a more stable place with better economic conditions. As can be seen in texts written by Ecuadorian

migrants such as Claudia Pedone (2005) "tu siempre jalas a los tuyos"² (105-146). That is the dream of every migrant, but unfortunately, most of the time it does not turn out that way (Jokisch & Kyle 2005, 57-70). There are also perspectives and stories from those who live it under their gender or ethnicity (Meñaca 2005, 305-334) (Guaiñansaca 2023).

From the perspective of a single mother's daughter who emigrated to the United States in 2001 thanks to the economic crisis and the lack of opportunities brought about by dollarization, who also maintained an undocumented immigrant status for nearly 10 years and had to submit to the almost absolute loss of her rights, as well as trying to stay on the social sidelines for years to avoid deportation, who also experienced complications and limitations that directly and indirectly affected her life and that of her family in Ecuador. As the daughter of a migrant and absentee father who eventually also immigrated to the United States. And as an Ecuadorian woman who was abandoned at 6 months of age with her extended family, thanks to migration, and who was not reunited with her mother until she was 19 years old and her father until she was 22 years old. I recognize a keen level of reflexivity given that I have experienced these processes of migration and family separation firsthand. My story reflects the long-term consequences of migration on people's lives and how it affects family relationships.

While my extended family did an exceptional job in raising me so that I was not exposed to antisocial behavior and my mother never stopped sending remittances to ensure my health, education and housing, that is not the case for most children who are left behind in the country of origin waiting to be reunited with their immediate family, this wait, as was my case, This wait, as in my case, took almost two decades and

² Translation: "you always pull your close ones"

frankly, I feel fortunate because there are people who despite the years were never able to reconnect with their relatives and eventually ceased to be part of their lives, there are those who lost their lives trying to cross the border illegally, many others who were deported and others who were left vulnerable and were subjected to physical and emotional torture. My parents separated shortly before I was born and although I do not remember my biological mother since we separated at a very young age, it had a profound impact on my life. Although my early years I did not understand very well the reasons behind her departure, I felt a deep void thanks to her absence in my day to day life, despite not remembering her I missed her emotional support and her presence in the important events of my life and although my grandmother, my uncle-in-law and my maternal aunts were present at every moment, the lack of a permanent and proper maternal and paternal figure during my upbringing left an emotional void that I only understood with time and growing up without the guidance and paternal love of a secure figure made me face numerous challenges. There comes a time when waiting and uncertainty become emotionally exhausting and although there are tools today that allow us to maintain communication, this was not the case in the early 2000s, but still this mechanism allowed me to stay connected with them, to know a little about their realities, challenges, and losses as they did mine, despite the distance. The impact of the reunion was another great challenge, when I finally had the opportunity to reunite with my mother and years later with my father, I experienced a number of emotions such as happiness with a strange mixture of absence and strangeness that thanks to my age, maturity and short experience I could channel in a healthy way, to begin a process of adaptation, but all this, in my adult life.

The United Nations organization that watches over our rights by the simple fact of being a person, recognizes the importance of the family in society and the physical

and emotional well-being of children, in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989 recognized the importance of the child to maintain relationships with both parents as well as the right to optimal development in all areas, this is also reflected in the SDG 3 on health and well-being that frames the psychological, physical and emotional development of children as fundamental to achieve this goal, there are also United Nations agencies that ensure this as UNICEF and WHO, have published reports and guidelines that determine the importance of the integral development of children by ensuring an environment conducive to their development and welfare as key components in the fight against child abandonment and the rights of children and adolescents.

My story of reuniting with my parents after almost two decades is a reminder of the importance of family ties, communication, emotional support, and healthy development that all children should have as a right, no matter where their parents are. It is also a wake-up call to think about those children who are currently exposed to physical and emotional abuse and psychological damage because they do not have a secure father or mother figure thanks to migration. In my case, despite the challenges and difficulties that family separation caused by migration brought to my life, I learned to be resilient, to adapt to changing situations and to value the importance of family unity as a right and to think empathetically about all the children who are abandoned around the world by their parents who go in search of a better future thanks to the political and economic crises that nowadays host the international system. When will there be an entity in charge of watching over and promoting the rights of this population group that very few of us sit down to think about when we consider the concept of migration?

This research was done to function as a voice that recognizes and highlights the importance of understanding the emotional complexity and human implications of migration, especially for children. It is important to understand that, in the context of Ecuador's dollarization as an economic process, it influenced the decision of many people to migrate in search of opportunities, breaking up homes and causing long-term consequences. From the perspective of a daughter of migrants, this situation was emotionally challenging, painful, and traumatic due to feelings of abandonment, loss and loneliness. Politics and economics are also important factors to consider as well as family unity in the migration process, making my story a manifesto of the need to address the impact of migration on the family and thereby promote policies and programs that protect the rights and welfare of children in these situations of abandonment to encourage family reunification before it is too late.

Even though many children go through this traumatic experience, little is said about them. Especially if their parents are undocumented, since there are immigration protocols and processes for family reunification if the person in question is a minor and their parents have a green card, obtained nationality or work permit within the United States, even so it is a process that can take years. But for those undocumented migrants who find themselves in a lengthy immigration process, trying to get their papers in order or lacking them because of their immigration process, the only option they must reunite with their family members is an illegal border crossing or they cross back into their country. Illegal crossing is full of risks and situations, especially for underage female children, as was the case of Anadith Reyes, an 8-year-old migrant girl who was denied an ambulance despite having begged for her life because of her medical condition and died in police custody in the United States on May 17, 2023, this is not the first time this has happened. Earlier this year, 17-year-old Angel Maradiaga from Honduras died

in a shelter in Florida run by the Office of Refugee Resettlement of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (BBS New World 2023). Republican politician Mauricio Farah stated on the X platform (Twitter) last July "Only perverted beings with rotten souls can commit a crime like this: US authorities found DNA from 67 men in the body of a migrant girl of only 8 years old, kidnapped by members of organized crime along with her mother, after her father was murdered. Because she screamed so much while being abused, the girl lost the ability to speak. This is the hell of the transit to the border, which demands our absolute solidarity towards migrants" (@mfarahg, X, July 17, 2023). This news had the support of ABC news Mexico according to the information provided by the police after intercepting the drug cartel guilty of this violation and although there are no official statements so far these are the terrors that migrate for a minor, invisible terrors that millions of migrants who go in search of the "American dream" go through every day. A situation that I could have been exposed to if my maternal grandmother had not stopped my mother from sending me illegally to the United States to reunite me with her at the age of 12 after my grandmother was detected with Alzheimer's and was mentally unfit to continue with my custody, a custody that my aunts happily took over, but this situation is experienced by thousands of children and unfortunately is invisible.

I want to invite you to think about what was the fault of Anadith, Angel or this girl who was allegedly raped by 67 men? I mean that this is a political issue that should be urgently addressed by the international system, as there have already been many minors who have been exposed to the violation of their rights and physical integrity. Apart from the right to have a dignified life and family full of opportunities, there are the risks that come with the absence of those who are their main protectors at an early age, or those risks that to fulfill a dream of a better future have to be paid even with life

or permanent trauma, especially for all undocumented migrants who have demonstrated good behavior and abide by the rules of the law, without causing any harm, simply working to achieve a better future, all have the right to be with their families. The past cannot be changed, but the present and the future can.

Discussion

How the dollarization of 2000, the latent economic crisis, the remittance economy, and the consequences of migration triggered the violation of human rights.

This theoretical approach focuses on the economic aspects of dollarization and Ecuadorian outward migration, analyzing how the adoption of the dollar as the national currency affected the country's economy, inflation, unemployment, and with-it migration, which brought with it the flow of remittances, and explores how national economic dynamics influence a family's decision-making in its microeconomy. This approach also brings with it the "remittance theory" that explores the role of remittances in the life and development of the children of migrants who stayed in the country allowing them access to education, medical care and real estate, despite the fact that most children and adolescents who were abandoned by their parents due to migration in their childhood seem to have difficulties during their development in a psychological and emotional aspect due to the lack of non-material goods. The dollarization of the year 2000 was an economic and political mechanism to attenuate the existing economic crisis burdened by a serious banking crisis, political instability and financial problems that the country had been dragging since the 1990s and took intensity in the first months of the year 2000, the lack of confidence and accelerated depreciation of the so-called "sucre" and the massive flight of bank capital led Jamil Mahuad to take the decision to dollarize the country on January 9, 2000. This decision strongly affected the economy and consequently, the composition of Ecuadorian families, unleashing a massive

migratory wave. According to several authors (Acosta et al. 2000), dollarization was an alternative to the economic crisis in order to stabilize the economy and reduce the extremely high interest rate that befell the Ecuadorian economy at the end of the 20th century. Although this alternative was effective in the medium term, in the short term it caused prices to rise arbitrarily, there was a higher unemployment rate and the purchasing power of the population was considerably reduced, which finally led to the largest migratory wave ever recorded in the history of Ecuador. According to these authors, adopting the U.S. dollar as the official currency allowed "stabilizing" the economy and controlling inflation. However, the transition was complicated and generated a series of social, political, and mainly economic consequences in the short term. The perspective presented is shared, supporting the idea that many families affected by the loss of income and the decrease in job opportunities opted for all or the head of the family to migrate out of the country in search of a better future, legally and illegally depending on the conditions available. Migration can have an important impact on family composition by causing separation, changes in traditional family roles and dynamics, generating transnational families and temporary or, in the worst cases, definitive separation.

On the other hand, there is also literature (Acosta et al. 2005), which refers to migration as an advantage in the Ecuadorian economy from a macroeconomic to a microeconomic level, thanks to the remittances sent by migrants to their families in Ecuador, allowing them access to health, education, food, and real estate in the best of cases. This was a factor that boosted the issuance of migrants and motivated the acquisition of goods and services as well as helped stabilize the economy in a shorter period, but it is also important to take into account that migratory flows face increasing restrictions and remittances may not continue to grow at the same pace. Also, the high

use of remittances implies that there will be low levels of foreign investment due to high interest rates and rigid fiscal policies, and finally, it also creates inequality in the basic basket of goods and property valuation. While this is a valid argument, since economic dependence on remittances has become a distinctive feature of many Ecuadorian families and has encouraged poverty reduction by providing additional income to these families, it also created an external dependence that in certain cases ended up being counterproductive since for many families, In addition, financial dependence on remittances can make a family more vulnerable to economic fluctuations and changes in the migrant's ability to send money periodically due to unexpected events such as job losses, migration policies or economic crises in the receiving country. Authors such as Larrea (2009) argue the need to improve living conditions in Latin American countries to avoid these massive waves of migration and, consequently, human rights violations (8-9), Another problem linked to the dependence on remittances is the disincentive for the development of sustainable sources of income in the community of origin, discouraging economic autonomy, as well as from a family perspective, the prolonged absence of a family member, in this case the provider, affects family and emotional relationships and connections such as the education of children and the lack of direct interaction with the migrant member. As a daughter of migrants, my economy was based for two decades on the receipt of remittances, I was able to experience all these advantages and disadvantages. The 2008 crisis in the United States caused economic problems in my home, I was on the verge of being expelled from my school for not being able to pay the monthly fees and we were in severe straits as we had no other source of additional income, likewise, most of my childhood and adolescence I developed a solely economic connection with my mother based on material things,

detaching myself emotionally from her until I had enough awareness to understand the structure of my transnational family.

Migration has had a significant effect on Ecuador and is reflected in Ecuadorian politics, economy and society, Sotomayor (2019, 458-464). He highlights as main consequences the brain drains given the emigration of skilled and unskilled workers as labor, family disintegration as most migrants leaves their loved ones creating emotional problems, the violation of several human rights especially of undocumented migrants through xenophobia and migration policies and provides information on cultural exchange reflected in the cuisine, music and daily life of the migrant returning to the country of origin. This text is important because it recognizes the overall impact of migration in key areas and demonstrates awareness of the negative consequences of migration beyond an economic perspective by emphasizing emotional and social aspects. Finally, it can be said that the dollarization of the year 2000, the latent economic crisis and migration impacted the traditional composition of families in Ecuador because migration, being a phenomenon intrinsically linked to the economic crisis, triggers the physical separation of families, altering the traditional composition and generating substantial changes in roles and responsibilities, the emotional challenges associated with migration should not be overlooked, family disintegration generates emotional tensions and adaptation problems, especially for those minors who often must deal with significant changes in their household roles or abandonment, understanding these impacts is crucial to embroider the complexities of the family reality in a context of Ecuadorian migrants in order to formulate strategies that promote the welfare of transnational families.

Human rights violations of inducements migrants and family reunification

This theoretical approach is based on human rights principles and focuses on how undocumented migrants of all ages have human rights that must be protected no matter where they are, analyzing the human rights violations that undocumented migrants suffer when crossing the border, especially the most vulnerable group, women and children, as well as other human rights violations such as detention, family separation and lack of access to health and education services in many cases. It also emphasizes international law by examining international norms such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child that seeks to protect migrants and migration policies within the international legal framework that regulates migration and family reunification, analyzing existing treaties and conventions that establish the rights of migrants, considering migration policies between the United States and Ecuador and how these may influence family reunification. The international framework of human rights of migrants is reflected in various legal instruments and international documents that serve as a starting point for the analysis of the consequences of migration on family separation. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, issued by the United Nations General Assembly (1989) in Article 9³, states that member states must ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will unless it is for the purpose of protecting the child from them, Article 10⁴, establishes the right of children

³ Article 9: 1. 1. States Parties shall ensure that a child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the parents are living separately, and a decision must be made as to the child's place of residence (UN Assembly 1989, 6).

⁴ Article 10: 1. In accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 1, applications by a child or his or her parents to enter or leave a State Party for the purpose of family reunification shall be dealt with by States Parties in a positive, humane, and expeditious manner. States Parties shall further ensure that the submission of such a request shall entail no adverse consequences for the applicants and for the members of their family. 2. A child whose parents reside in different States shall have the right to maintain on a regular basis, save in exceptional circumstances personal relations and direct contacts with both parents. Towards that end and in accordance with the obligation of States Parties under article 9, paragraph 2, States Parties shall respect the right of the child and his or her parents to leave any country, including their own, and to enter their own country (UN Assembly 1989, 6).

and their parents to enter territories for the purpose of family reunification, underlining the importance of maintaining family unity. These principles, which are also part of human rights and migrants' rights, are part of a broader framework of international and national standards that vary from state to state and seek to protect the rights of migrants and their families. But in practice, especially for undocumented migrants, it does not apply. As already mentioned, the legal status of a person influences the ability of an individual, state or NGO to reunite families, which begs the question, who has rights, as suggested by critical theorist Gregorio Shani (2004), does a person cease to be considered a person when migrating undocumented to another country, especially when migrating from the global south to the global north? The Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) states in Article 1: "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights." (72). It does not state that a person loses his or her "human" status for crossing a border with or without documents. Although a country keeps the right to the entry or exit of foreigners, illegal migration continues to be a latent problem that we cannot ignore and regardless of the migratory situation, human rights must be respected. Human rights are not granted or withdrawn according to the legal status of a person and cannot be denied simply because someone lacks legal documents, from a humanitarian aspect and from the principle of non-discrimination, it is important to recognize that undocumented persons suffer difficult situations and flee from dangerous conditions while in search of improving their lives and that of their families, in addition all persons have the right to due process of law with justice and equity as well as respecting the human rights of migrants contributes to prevent human trafficking. All migrants, including illegal migrants, have the right to have a family and family reunification in accordance with human rights and dignity, based on the principle that the family is the basic unit of society and forced separation due to the economic crisis infringes on these

fundamental rights. Moreover, it is an international obligation assumed by the states as in the declaration.

Gratton (2016), revealed studies on the social and physical abuse suffered especially by women who migrated to the United States as undocumented migrants, being exposed to sexual harassment, physical and verbal abuse, deprivation of their lives, forced separation from their children, etc. While also recognizing that female migration in the late 2000s in Ecuador was not the most common according to statistics. These statistics issued by the government consider only those who left the country "legally", but not those who found themselves in the difficult situation of migrating by land with the so-called "coyoteros", as suggested by Herrera (2022), highlighting the different forms of human mobility and the evolution of migration policy according to the different dynamics of emigration. The IACHR (2013), describes a wide range of human rights of undocumented migrants that are violated such as the right to family unity due to forced separation of families, deportation, detention or being left behind in the country of origin. Although there are proposals for immigration reforms in the United States to legitimize the violation of the rights of the migrant population, especially of women and minors, it continues to be an ongoing problem (Morales 2004). On the contrary, the growing wave of persecution against illegal migrants, together with xenophobia and the creation of laws in specific states of the United States, has caused the quality of life of many illegal migrants to be reduced, they have been deported or forced to move to other states and have been forced to break ties with their places of origin.

On the other hand, having documents in order with the law, does not ensure instant family reunification, since 2003 under the jurisdiction of the Immigration and Naturalization Service of the United States (INS), the USCIS (U.S. Citizenship and

Immigration Services), is responsible for family reunification of spouses, children and relatives, this process can take up to a decade according to the personal experience of people close to them, although the literature states that it can take between 2 to 6 years. To carry out this process, the migrant must have a green card, which according to Herrera (2008) most migrants do not get, but it is recognized that until 2009, 1986 million Latinos have been able to obtain green cards or work permits (Massey et al. 2009) and this is thanks to the management of the U.S. Congress encouraging family reunification. Family reunification is a long process that begins with the petition and approval by the USCIS, which takes several months and in special circumstances years, after approval the case is transferred to the state department, in the case of Ecuador, to the U.S. Consulate in Guayaquil to then enter waiting for available visas that have an annual limit and obtain an interview, finally the minor can enter the United States as a permanent resident. As mentioned, this process can take up to a decade. In my personal experience it took 6 years, the process started when I was 15 years old and I was able to travel out of the country for the first time, when I was 21, almost 22 years old. Also, thanks to my status as a minor without biological parents in the country, my mobility was limited only to the national territory, the law prevented me from leaving the country or visiting my mother or father.

It is important to understand the counterpart of why migrants, especially undocumented migrants, are not fully accepted in receiving countries. Crime and migration statistics are compiled by agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Department of Homeland Security. The text by Alarcón and Becerra (2012), entitled *Criminals or Victims? The deportation of Mexican migrants from the United States to Tijuana, Baja California*, does a great job of compiling numbers and percentages of foreigners removed by criminal status and by Latin

American country in 2010 according to the US. Department of Homeland Security. Of which, 2321 were Ecuadorians deported, 1635 were non-criminal and 686 were categorized as criminals (132). The year 2010 is an important year on this issue since it generated a hate speech at the international level about Latino in the United States. Based on the hypothesis that not all people are good, regardless of their nationality and that not all migrants migrate under the same conditions. It is recognized that just as there are those who contribute positively to the society and economy of the receiving country there are those who break laws and regulations and can become a national security problem, there are those who use public services without paying taxes creating overburden on local resources and services and some people even believe that allowing undocumented immigration undermines the rule of law and sets a precedent that could discourage respect for laws and regulations, etc. Brown (2015) refers to anti-immigration laws to regain U.S. sovereignty and avoid violating the human rights of undocumented migrants. While this is also a reality, one cannot start under the general prejudice that all migrants are criminals and, therefore, establish laws that encourage family separation and harm the whole group in general.

While migrating is not a universal right, fully developing in one's own country is (Liwski 2008). Leaving your family and everything you know is a decision that in most cases is taken as a last resort in the face of economic crises, given that states do not have the capacity to provide this right and quality of life. The human rights violations faced by Ecuadorian migrants and their families, especially in terms of family reunification, include the forced separation of families, violating the right of children not to be separated from their parents against their will, the mistreatment and violence suffered especially by undocumented women, xenophobia, criminalization, and discrimination. Affecting their right to life and to live with dignity. Although the conditions and

experiences of migrants may vary over time and depend on various factors such as government policies, it is noteworthy that migrants around the world face challenges related to the violation of their human rights such as discrimination and prejudice in receiving countries that affect their access to employment, health care, education and basic services, there have also been several cases of labor exploitation⁵ and finally legal and late immigration barriers lead to a longer family separation. Although not all undocumented migrants comply with the regulations of the law, the international system and national legislations cannot disregard those who have demonstrated good behavior and social contribution.

Psychological and social consequences of child abandonment due to migration.

This theoretical framework focuses on the psychology, child development and sociology of migration by focusing on the short and long term psychological consequences of child abandonment due to migration as well as examining how family instability affects the emotional and psychological development of children considering concepts such as attachment and separation anxiety as well as focusing on the social implications of migration and child abandonment affecting family relationships and cohesion and the emotional life of children, considering challenges faced by minors such as child abuse and risk of involvement in antisocial behaviors, school dropout and increased exposure to human trafficking. The impact of migration or physical abandonment of children and adolescents has been analyzed from different perspectives and by various authors (Noboa 2009; Petit 2003; Liwski 2008; López and Prieto 2004; Rodríguez, Aguiar and García 2012). It is highlighted that child abandonment generates

⁵ Hoffman Plastic Compounds vs. National Labor Relations Board (IACHR, 2013).

a deep feeling of abandonment, depression, anxiety, sadness, post-traumatic stress, and difficulties in establishing healthy, intimate, and trusting relationships. It also makes them more prone to stress, sexual abuse, behavioral problems, and social adaptation, increasing the risk of being arrested or committing criminal acts, antisocial behavior, school dropout, functional problems in the neuronal composition of their brains, problems related to their sexuality such as teenage pregnancy or promiscuity and sexually transmitted diseases, problems in the ability to establish healthy emotional relationships, intergenerational transmission, etc. (Rodriguez et al. 2012). The literature emphasizes that migration can have a significant impact on families, especially when children are abandoned because one or both parents migrate, causing family instability, disappearance of family references and traditions, risk of social abandonment, risk of human trafficking, informal and poorly paid work, and child labor. Child abuse has various connotations such as physical, sexual, psycho-emotional, abandonment or neglect, according to UNICEF 40 million children under 15 years of age suffer violence, abuse, and neglect annually, most are in a situation of abandonment (Tovar et al. 2016).

On the other hand, we have those children who are forced to migrate at a very early age, either because they migrate with their parents, lack a caregiver in the sending country or seek to be reunited with them in the receiving country. Such was the case of the Ecuadorian indigenous migrant poet, Sonia Guiñansaca (2023), with whom I had the opportunity to share in the presentation of her book "nostalgia and borders" at the suggestion of my thesis tutor. Sonia migrated forcibly at the age of five in the late 90's in a turbulent period for Ecuador and Latin America to join her undocumented parents in Harlem, New York and was an undocumented migrant for 21 years. They⁶ relate her

⁶ Sonia's pronouns

process of adaptation as traumatic, as a breaking point, asking herself, am I real? this activist in search of epistemic justice relates her life from childhood as a victim of bullying at school and the feeling of not fitting in, she refers to undocumented migrants as erased and forgotten by the discriminatory immigration system. They made a comment regarding the detention center for migrant families located in Texas, where according to the state, the families are only detained during the process of petitioning for political asylum for months, but what the state does not say is that the people there are treated as criminals, them says that outside that place you could hear children screaming and throwing papers back and forth with messages of help, them also says that they never knew what happened to those people. Them also relates that the reality of undocumented migrants is supposed to be one of persecution, harassment, and discrimination, as well as highlighting their resistance to the distance imposed by materializing their customs in order not to lose them, finally referring to immigration policies as "dehumanizing". Sonia's case is one of many cases of migrant children going through the process of imposed or forced migration. Thousands of migrant parents throughout history have taken their children to the receiving countries, even going over the law, aware of all possible risks, but taking them to be reunited with their families.

Although migration is a topic that has been explored by various national and international authors, how migration affects the physical and emotional development of children and adolescents who are left behind in their country of origin is a subtopic that remains on the margins, as well as the social, economic, and emotional effects and processes that children go through when they return to their families or parents. This provides us with an opportunity to develop a theoretical framework that can be presented to the international system to protect the rights of children and adolescents who were abandoned due to migration, and to promote family reunification. Imposed

separation significantly affects the psychological and social development of children as it generates deep feelings of helplessness, anxiety, sadness, stress and depression in the affected children, from a psychological point of view, child abandonment leads to difficulties that are reflected in the adult life of the child limiting their ability to adapt socially, as the literature points out, there may be problems in the neural composition of their brains which affects their ability to process cognitive and emotional experiences in a healthy way, although there are exceptions to these trends, the common denominator points to the need for a strong parental presence, which serves as a guide and contributes to the development of children during the most vulnerable stages of their lives, where they may be exposed to various difficulties. On the social side, the forced migration of parents generates family instability within and outside the transnational family circle, and the child is vulnerable to different forms of abuse such as human trafficking, child labor or physical and psychological violence due to the lack of his or her main protectors. Even when family reunification is achieved as "undocumented" children, the loss of identity, the feeling of not fitting in and exposure to a discriminatory migration system can profoundly affect the child's mental health into adulthood, like Sonia who despite resistance to the imposed distance demonstrates a persistent emotional impact. Childhood abandonment due to migration left deep traces in my psychological and social development, traces that are shared with thousands of children of migrants left behind in their country of origin and of those migrant children who had to go through adversities to have a family, when having a family should not be so complicated.

Everything described in the text above leads us to ask ourselves why family separation due to migration is a relevant issue for the international system. Migration, mainly of parents, motivated by economic crises, loss of income and lack of job

opportunities, as was the case with the dollarization and economic crisis of the late 90's in Ecuador. It generated substantial changes in roles and responsibilities, altering family dynamics and causing economic and social consequences. Migration, especially in the case of undocumented migrants, is surrounded by a series of human rights violations, most notably imposed family separation. The lack of recognition of civil and political rights, restrictive migration policies and discrimination affect family unity and contradict the principles established by international instruments such as the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child and have not been a relevant agenda item for the international system in recent times. Forced or voluntary separation from parents has significant effects on the social and psychological development of children. It is the children of today who will make the decisions of the future, who will be the workforce, who will bring with them innovative ideas for a more sustainable world and who, based on their present, will contribute to society at the level of their possibilities. Children are not to blame for the economic, political, military or social crises that have befallen the world since its beginnings, children have the right to grow in fullness with a family that allows them to develop physically, psychologically and cognitively in a healthy environment with their main protective figures and a state that watches over their intrinsic rights and their parents have the right to go out on the streets without being considered criminals just for being migrants. Although family separation is something that the international system cannot control in its entirety, it can promote measures so that states can take them in order to make family reunification possible and effective in a short period of time, so that both parents and children do not miss such a crucial stage in the life of a human being, so that never again will a girl see her mother for the first time at the age of 19. This is why ensuring the full development

rights of all children, regardless of their immigration status, socioeconomic status, or ethnicity, is a primary duty of the international system.

Conclusion

Borders are real and make the migrant's life precarious. This text addresses dollarization in Ecuador in 2000 as a basis for analysis to demonstrate the consequences of migration, especially in terms of family separation. Although dollarization was presented as an extreme measure in the face of the economic and political crisis caused by inflation, political instability and massive flight of bank capital, it helped stabilize the economy in the medium term, but it had immediate consequences that resulted in higher prices, higher unemployment and reduced purchasing power, generating the largest wave of migration in Ecuador's history and, along with it, social, political and economic consequences in the short and long term. Although the inflow of remittances sent by migrants contributed to stabilize the economy in a shorter period, it also generated a negative dependency of thousands of families. This text appeals to the economic and emotional challenges associated with migration. Migration has had a significant impact on Ecuadorian society, such as brain drain, family disintegration, various human rights violations and cultural changes or loss of culture itself. The loss of income and job opportunities led many Ecuadorians to migrate in search of a better future for themselves and their families, causing substantial changes in family roles, generating transnational families, temporary and even permanent separation.

The international human rights framework is essential to address the consequences of migration around family separation, highlighting the contradiction between human rights that seek to protect family unity and guarantee intrinsic rights and the reality, especially for undocumented migrants whose rights are violated. The lack of recognition of civil and political rights dehumanizes the migrant and has led to the

violation of the principles established by the Declaration of Human Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child due to forced separation. It is important to improve conditions in the countries of origin to avoid these massive waves of migration in the future, but at the same time migration from the global south to the global north is a prolonged and evident problem in the current framework of the international system, although we cannot deny the right of a person to migrate under the right of free mobility, we can generate national and international policies that ensure their human rights and avoid the social and physical abuse that migrants face, It also empathizes with the criminal situation presented through statistics in the United States, but emphasizes that not all migrants can be categorized in the same way, as is currently the case thanks to discriminatory immigration policies implemented in recent years in specific states of the United States. The text also highlights the importance of recognizing the rights of all migrants, regardless of their legal status. The text also discusses the challenges in the process of family reunification both legal through lengthy bureaucratic procedures and illegal with the risks that minors face in the illegal border crossing, illustrating such complexity through personal experiences and the emotional impact of these processes. Finally, it is argued that family separation due to migration is a relevant issue at the international level, as it can cause irreversible damage to the child, and it is extremely important to protect and defend the rights of children and adolescents by promoting family reunification to ensure their full development regardless of their immigration status. The narrative focuses on the personal experience of the author who, as a child of migrants, has experienced firsthand the challenges associated with migration, highlighting the importance of understanding the psychological and social impacts of migration on children due to abandonment and imposed separation. Family separation should be a relevant issue for the international

system to advocate for measures that promote family reunification in a short period of time.

Being a daughter of migrants, I never really knew what it meant to have a father or mother of my own, the image of them consisted of a voice over the phone and some pictures, I can never have that full feeling of belonging by calling my grandmother I rest in peace mom or my uncle-in-law dad. While they did a great job in my upbringing, as did my maternal aunt Veronica who I thank for motivating me day in and day out and being present during every stage of my development as an enthusiastic mother, and have been a source of light and inspiration throughout my childhood and my terrible adolescence full of changes, to my dad Cesar who showed me with actions what it really means to be a protective father and especially to my grandmother who gave me the best childhood in the world, who until her last moment stressed to me that if she could turn back time and take care of me again, she would. There will always be the experience of feeling like a guest. My family in general is very close and there is a lot of love, but I always felt like a guest living with my uncles and cousins, even now that I was finally able to live for a while with my biological mother and spend a couple of weeks with my biological father, the feeling of not belonging persists, I became a transnational guest, my parents missed out on my growth and I missed out on them. That is why, from my own experience, I recognize the need for every child and adolescent to grow up in a safe environment with their parents without having to separate from them, migrate forcibly, take cross-border risks, or lose the feeling of belonging due to migration because of the economic, military, political or social crises that occur in the world. Although in my case, as an adult woman I cannot change the past, I can give a voice to all those children who, like me, once wondered why mom or dad does not come to visit me. There are millions of children and adolescents who,

because of migration, are exposed to degrading treatment, bullying, physical and verbal abuse, exploitation, and that terrible feeling of not belonging, and it is time to think about them.

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