

Introduction

This summer, I carried out a research project to explore the main ideas reported in Peru's leading news outlet about Venezuelan migrants and how local people view them. My goal was to identify the shared dominant ideologies in Peruvian society and see if they matched with what I found in my literature review. I started by using content analysis to count how often specific themes appeared in the news articles. After that, I moved on to thematic analysis, which helped me understand the deeper meaning behind the words and phrases used. Combining these two methods gave me a clearer picture of the messages the media is spreading about Venezuelan migrants within Peru and on a global scale. This approach helped me see how these ideas shape people's thoughts about migrants.

Challenges

Right at the start of my research, I became overwhelmed and emotional as I had to scour the internet for literature reviews and articles. Because I had personal experience with Venezuelan migrants – walking from a small town of Otovalo to Quito, Ecuador, it made me remind myself how much privilege I carry. How much I want to give back to them after they saved my life from potentially getting robbed on the hike. It made me grateful for my experience to commend such research and have an amazing advisor who believes in the impact of my work. As this was my first time conducting independent research, I learned much throughout my research process. I strengthened my skills in research, database management, and overall organization. However, I faced numerous challenges along the way. One major hurdle was the length of my paper, which reached 65 pages. To keep the focus for this paper, I decided to exclude Colombia from my study, even though I have done extensive research. If I could go back in time, I would have efficiently counted my approximate word count because, in the end, I could

not delete any information gathered. However, this helped make my overall research topic and its arguments clearer and more concise, allowing me to concentrate on Peru's politics and media landscape.

I also spent a lot of time reviewing the literature. Since my research question was quite open initially, I researched a lot to find a focus or an issue to lay the foundations with. The more I learned about the political histories of Venezuela, Peru, and Colombia, as well as issues like xenophobia and media influence, the more I felt the need to dig deeper into its history and development. Since my research project is more theoretical, I aimed to cover everything comprehensively to ensure the research was thorough.

Researching the historical context of xenophobia was particularly challenging because it required validating specific periods with multiple sources. I also needed to use a VPN to access certain academic sources from Peruvian/Colombia academia sources, adding complexity.

Another significant task was collecting news articles for analysis. I was committed to ensuring that Peruvian/Colombian reporters wrote the articles while checking to see that this news coverage was widely circulated through other news channels nationally to avoid bias. Manually searching for and integrating these articles into my database was time-consuming. I went through several steps to confirm the authenticity and relevance of each article to my study. These efforts, although demanding, were crucial in maintaining the balance and integrity of my research.

Yet, as I gathered data, I successfully identified critical themes related to discrimination against migrants. However, deciding how to focus my analysis and determine the best coding strategies—whether to use content analysis, thematic analysis, or both—was initially confusing. My research advisor reassured me that all research has some bias and that my work was just the

beginning. She encouraged me that this paper was only laying the groundwork, and as I continued to refine my codes and revisit my data, I would start to see clear connections between the articles. This advice was comforting and helped shift my approach. As I dove back into my data, I realized I needed to expand my literature review to include additional factors influencing Peruvian perceptions of Venezuelan migrants. This required more research and led to numerous revisions of my initial perspectives. Each round of edits helped sharpen my focus, but it also meant reevaluating and sometimes changing my approach to analyzing the data. This process, while demanding, was crucial in deepening my understanding of the topic and ensuring that my analysis was as thorough and accurate as possible.

Emotionally, I realized I was being too hard on myself. I was determined to produce a rigorous and unbiased paper, which led me to spend many days categorizing news articles into different themes to ensure each one was balanced. Initially, I included both Colombia and Peru in my study because I wanted to highlight the issue on a global scale. However, keeping both countries in the study made it difficult to manage the page count and maintain a focused narrative.

The pressure to cover everything comprehensively made me overlook how much I had written. It wasn't until I compiled all my findings that I realized I had exceeded the expected length. After further consideration and more research, I decided to focus solely on Peru. This decision was driven by the fact that there was already plenty of research on the media portrayal of Venezuelan migrants in Colombia, whereas information on Peru was less abundant. Narrowing my focus to Peru not only helped manage the overall tone of my paper but also allowed me to get deeper into the nuances of the Peruvian context, which made the paper more

specific. This adjustment made the project more manageable and strengthened my analysis by honing in on Peru's historical and social developments.

On the bright side, as a fourth-year student, it was a good challenge to try to combine all of my previous classes' knowledge to make this assignment engaging. I was able to see how language is a collective resource. For example, we often think of language as oxygen, used primarily for important forms of communication. However, there's another dimension to language, which is that it serves as a collective memory or an archive. Instead, language is a complex form of cultural memory that can make real changes in the real world. The collective language can transform social reality, so it's important to analyze and disrupt the flow of disinformation. Last year, I took a migration and war literature class, and the words of Arendt have helped give the foundations of this work. Arendt helped me see that the state is the one that provides us with the ability to be 'human' or to be treated as one. However, from a collectivist perspective, we don't have to depend solely on the state; as global citizens, we can do something to lend another arm.

Takeaways

One of the key lessons from conducting research this summer was learning to be kinder to myself and recognizing that this is just the beginning, not the final product. I had only six weeks to complete this project, which taught me to manage my expectations and time efficiently. I'm truly thankful for the opportunity to undertake such research, as my findings deepened my understanding of humanity. It highlighted how our personal challenges can sometimes close our eyes to the struggles of marginalized groups and undermine the actual impact xenophobia has on society. It reminds me that it's never too late to address these issues. The Laidlaw community was also important in this journey. Meeting and interacting with motivated students from around

the globe, my group, and those who have completed the Laidlaw program inspired me. It showed me the potential for what more we can achieve together. This sense of community was incredibly inspiring.

Overall, this summer's research was crucial for me as it provided a firsthand experience of what conducting research entails. The challenges I faced helped me better understand my identity both within and outside academia. I'm proud of the final report I produced, which captured the subtle dynamics of discrimination, historical contexts, and media influences. This project didn't just contribute to my academic growth; it also shaped my personal development, leaving me with a greater appreciation for research and its impact.