

Access to Education for Early Childhood Migrants to Chile: Migratory Trajectories and Social Exclusion

Susan Sanhueza¹, Karla Morales^{2*}, Miguel Friz³, Daniel Johnson¹

¹Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile

²Centro de Investigación de Estudios Avanzados del Maule, Universidad Católica del Maule, Campus San Miguel, Talca, Chile

³Académico del Departamento de Ciencias de la Educación, Universidad del Bío Bío, Concepción, Chile

Email: susan.sanhueza@uchile.cl, *kmorales@ucm.cl, mfriz@ubiobio.cl, djohnson@uchile.cl

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Abstract

In Chile, many children who have migrated with their families are outside the educational system. Although intercultural education policies exist and progress has been made in terms of instruments for access to education, folkloric practices, the predominance of a monocultural curriculum and disdain for different languages persist. The migratory trajectories of children are constructed from an adult-centric and ethnocentric approach, forgetting that in most cases children do not participate in the decision to migrate and are the ones put in a situation of greater vulnerability. Through a case study design, migrant families and pedagogical teams from educational institutions in the cities of Santiago and Talca were interviewed. The results demonstrate institutionalized violence in the educational system, school admission processes have been automated through platforms that are difficult to access for families and a lack of curricular flexibility to respond to the particularities of displacement. We recommend advancing an intercultural approach based on the reciprocity of cultures that promotes processes of inclusion and greater social cohesion.

Keywords

Migration, Early Child Education, Access to Education, Interculturality, Educational Management

1. Introduction

According to the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2020), the number of migrant children remained stable at around 24 million between 1990 and 2000, increasing steadily to 27 million in 2010 to 33

million in 2019. In 2019, migrant children represented 12% of the total migrant population. The number of unaccompanied minors among the refugees in Europe increased from 10,610 in 2010 to 95,205 in 2015, and then decreased to 17,890 in 2019. In 2015, 8% of all people who arrived in Italy through the Mediterranean were unaccompanied minors, and this percentage rose to 14% in 2016. That year, nine out of ten children who crossed the Mediterranean irregularly were unaccompanied minors. Between 2014 and 2020, at least 2300 children died or disappeared during their migration journey.

At the U.S.- Mexico border, the United States Border Patrol (USBP) apprehended nearly 69,000 unaccompanied minors in 2014, 40,000 in 2015 and 60,000 in 2016. Sixty-one percent of the unaccompanied minors arrested in 2016 were from El Salvador and Guatemala.

In a national school context, the proportion of students that have migrated has experienced a notable increase, from 0.6% of the total of enrollment in 2014 to almost 5% in 2020, which represents more than 170 thousand children and adolescents (Sanhueza, 2024). Furthermore, according to the same source, in 2020, 58% of children, adolescents and young adults (NNA, in Spanish) were enrolled in municipal education, while 37% did it in private subsidized schools.

Despite the distribution being quite heterogeneous, it is important to indicate that the first and second region of the country has over 10% of foreign enrollment, while Arica y Parinacota concentrates 7% of foreign enrollment. The Region Metropolitana has the greatest number of foreign students, although the percentage corresponds to 5 % of the total school enrollment. Focusing on children who are outside the educational system, data are disaggregated by levels and sublevels (Table 1).

Table 1. Access status kindergarten education.

	Level/sublevel	Projected Population	Enrolled Children	Non-enrolled Children	% Enrolled Children	% Non-enrolled Children
Nursery	Sala Cuna Menor (Between 85 days to 1 year old)	237,819	21,426	216,393	9.0%	91.0%
	Sala Cuna Mayor (1 to 2 years old)	237,549	60,313	177,236	25.4%	74.6%
	Medio Menor (2 to 3 years old)	235,636	74,163	161,473	31.5%	68.5%
Early Child-Education	Medio Mayor (3 to 4 years old)	233,000	142,803	90,197	61.3%	38.7%
	Pre-K (NT1) (4 years old)	233,282	210,324	22,958	90.2%	9.8%
	Kindergarten (NT2) (5 years old)	240,651	230,083	10,568	95.6%	4.4%
	Total	1,417,937	739,112	678,825	52.1%	47.9%

Source: Subsecretariat of Early Childhood Education 2023 (Subsecretaría Education Parvularia 2023).

As it can be observed, the breach of access to education is higher in the first three years of age (nursery), an aspect that represents an important challenge for the definition of public policies for children.

The scenario described above contemplates a series of challenges for the school, since it is expected to be a space where values are transmitted and education for citizenship is provided, guaranteeing the participation of the different cultural identities. Nevertheless, it continues to be conceived from homogeneity in terms of educative purposes and pedagogical strategies.

According to [Quintriqueo Millán and McGinity Travers \(2009\)](#) the school transmits determinate manners of social ordering that are the foundations of how society in general functions, for example, the selection of content and purposes of the curriculum that values determinate knowledge over others, assigning a different status to the knowledge it legitimizes. In practical terms, the school defines which subject is more important to teach, organizes the teaching based on the relationships of power and/or hierarchies, and defines the levels of communitarian participation, which in majority of the cases exclude the families and relevant actors for the community.

Preliminary works ([Luna & López, 2011](#)), present the predominance of a curricular conception focused principally on disciplines, which aims at transmitting universal culture. Under this concept, minority cultures are excluded from the effects that this annulment has on the identity of children and young adults. According to [Álvarez \(2012\)](#), this depreciation of the codes of socialization places migrant schoolchildren at a clear disadvantage when facing their school tasks.

There are diverse management models for multicultural schools ([Jiménez, 2014](#)) including exclusionary models which correspond to those educational contexts in which education was designed for a determinate type of citizen, leaving outside those who do not meet the characteristics contemplated in that category. Segregationist models validate the idea of each culture or social group corresponds to a specific school (an assumption that would explain determinate cultural ghettos). The assimilation models present an inclusive spirit (especially from the declarative discourse) but under the belief of the superiority of the hegemonic culture and the inferiority of the minoritarian cultures.

For their part, multicultural models adopt the concept of ethnic additivity [7], incorporating the socio-cultural diversity of the student body and promoting strategies of cross-cultural interaction. While this model represents progress in acknowledging minority students, it falls short of ensuring equal opportunities. Another model, distinct from the one proposed here, is the intercultural education model, which directs its socio-educational efforts towards recognizing differences.

For [Morales, Sanhueza, Friz and Riquelme \(2017\)](#) intercultural education emerges as a project based on the need to produce a dialogue between cultures, considering a relativization of categories, traditions, and symbolic universes in order to be able to incorporate the contributions of other cultures to social changes.

[Henríquez, Moltó and Carrillo \(2015\)](#) mention the Developmental Model of

Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) (Bennett, 1998), to explain the educational response to cultural diversity. An ethnocentric phase is where a person or social group interprets reality from its own cultural parameter, under a condition of superiority against the minority group. The actions of migrant and native children in this phase are characterized by the denial, defense and minimalization of cultural differences.

In an ethnorelative phase, the relationship between children from different cultures would be through processes of acceptance and adaptation to differences until a harmonious integration of the different cultures is developed. The implication of this model for the schooling of immigrant students is significant since, depending on the position adopted by teachers, the educational response will be more or less inclusive.

In this work, we propose as objectives to analyze the educative answer that the migrant children that have arrived in the country, as well as to indagate the motives for which the migrant families do not have access to the educative offer for children from 0 to 6 years old.

2. Material and Methods

2.1. Approach and Deseing

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a multiple case study design. This approach enables the exploration and interpretation of reality from the perspectives of the involved subjects, acknowledging diverse and sometimes contradictory viewpoints (Stake, 2007). Importantly, the case study does not interfere with the subjects' daily lives; instead, it seeks to understand, observe, and interpret their experiences while preserving their diversity.

2.2. Context and Participants

Fieldwork was conducted in two regions of Chile: The Región del Maule (Talca district) and the Región Metropolitana (Ñuñoa and Santiago Centro districts), between September and December 2023. Non-probabilistic sampling based on availability was utilized to select cases willing to participate, grounded in the interest of the subject and proximity to the researcher (Otzen & Manterola, 2017).

Additionally, snowball sampling was used, especially, in the case of those families who were homeless and/or with pending regularization processes. This technique consists of one subject providing us with the name of another person of interest for this study and so forth, which is appropriate for exploratory studies, where the groups are small in number or present specific profiles for their exclusion (Baltar & Gorjup, 2012).

In order to authenticate the sample, the following selection criteria were defined: a) pedagogical teams that work in migratory contexts, b) graphic representation in two regions of the country, c) mother/father/legal guardian of a child with a migratory background attending (and not attending) to kindergarten. Thus, the sample was organized as it follows (Table 2).

Table 2. Context and participants.

Region	Within the educational system	Outside the educational system	Pedagogical teams
Maule (Talca)	Two mothers (Venezuela) Municipal School Las Américas	Three mothers (Haiti and Venezuela)	Four members: two nursery education assistants and 2 kindergarten educators (Pre-K and kKindergarten)
Metropolitana (Santiago)	Two mothers (Venezuela and Haiti) Mundo Maravilloso JUNJI Kindergarten	Two mothers (Colombia)	Director, one kindergarten educator, two kindergarten education technicians
Total	4	5	8

Source: Own elaboration.

Two institutions were selected for the study: the Las Américas school in Talca, which depends on the Municipality of Talca. An establishment with a large enrollment of foreign students (over 30 %).

The educational establishment is located in the southeast sector of the city. It is an institution that receives students from pre-kindergarten and kindergarten (two grades per level) and from 1st and 8th grade (three grades per level), with an enrollment of around 650 students, mostly priority and preferential (over 70%), which reflects the large grade of vulnerability of the population it attends (PEI 2023-2026).

This school has designed a protocol for foreign students, which establishes procedures for the reception, delivery of information about the center, orientation on enrollment, and follow-up of foreign children.

In the case of the Región Metropolitana, the interviews were conducted at the Mundo Maravilloso Kindergarten in Ñuñoa, which depends on JUNJI. This institution belongs to the classic kindergarten program and it was built in 1972, with a history of 51 years of existence.

Through its “visual arts and nature” hallmark, educational opportunities are created that promote the free expression, creativity, and children diversity, expressing their emotions and interests through visual technique related to drawing, painting, sculpture, and engraving through an effective, challenging and active participation educational process, in connection with the natural environment that surrounds them.

2.3. Data production Techniques

The techniques for data collection were the following:

a) Semi-structured interviews conducted in a flexible environment, focused on exploring the symbolic and cultural universe of the participants, particularly concerning their participation in educational programs and the challenges of accessing them (**Table 3**).

A total of five interviews were conducted in educational centers and other places such as street markets and informal settlements, with an average duration of 40 minutes per interview.

Table 3. Context and participants.

Categories	Question for families In the sistem	Question for families Out the sistem	Question for pedagogical teems
	What led you to migrate from your country and with whom did you begin that journey?	What led you to migrate from your country and with whom did you begin that journey?	What processes have you seen in the boys and girls who have migrated, how do you observe them emotionally?
-Migration trajectories	How was the trip, what difficulties arose during the trip?	How was the trip, what difficulties arose during the trip?	What is the relationship of fathers, mothers, caregivers with children, how is the attachment/bond manifested?
-Family typologies and dynamics	What activities or routines do you maintain at home that you had in your country of origin?	How do they get to their neighborhood, what things do they like about the place and how do they relate to neighbors, friends, families?	What would you highlight about the families that have migrated?
-Territory, neighborhood and community life	Where do children play, what they play, and how do they maintain relationships with other children?	Where do children play, what they play, and how do they maintain relationships with other children?	How do you relate among peers, what elements do you see that you have in common, what things are difficult for you?
	Have you felt discriminated against, do you feel that you have the same opportunities as others? Why?	Have you felt discriminated against, do you feel that you have the same opportunities as others? Why?	What activities or projects have you developed to promote inclusion, which have been effective, which have not been so effective?
		Why don't you take your son to the kindergarden?	
	What have been the cultural differences or difficulties you have had in communicating?	Do you think it is important for him to attend the garden or is he better off at home?	What strategies does the team have to welcome families who have migrated?
-Barriers to integration	What difficulties did you have in enrolling your child, how did you overcome them?	Have you had information to decide whether or not to take it to the garden, where to enroll it, how to do it?	What elements should a reception plan for children and families who have migrated consider?
-Levels of information	What information did you have about kindergarden, how did you get it, what information do you think you needed and didn't have?	Have you received help or guidance from anyone about taking your child to kindergarden, a friend, family member?	Do you think they have the tools to respond to the needs of families and children who have migrated, what are they, what are needed?
-Types of participation	What does kindergarden give you, how does it help you, what do you expect from your child's education?	What does the child do at home, who is he with, does he play, what does he play?	What learning objectives have you worked on to promote inclusion, with what activities?
-Knowledge, intercultural knowledge		How do you feed the child, can you tell me about his daily meals, does he like certain foods, which ones he does and which ones he doesn't?	
-Expectations	How do you participate in the garden, do you usually talk with the educator or technician, about what topics, at what times?		

Continued

			Do you think that families who migrate value the work they do, where do they notice it?
	When you arrived at the kindergarten, what was the welcome like, how did you feel, what happened to your son?		What difficulties have you had to include the boys and girls who have migrated to the kindergarten?
-Assessment of preschool education	What things have been difficult for your child in kindergarten? What do you like to do most in kindergarten?	Have you had any experience of taking your child to the kindergarten, what was it like, how long, why did you stop taking him/her?	
-Hosting devices		What problems could your child have if he or she does not attend kindergarten? (learning, emotional)	How has the response of the other families been, have they welcomed them, do they include/exclude them?
-Inclusion/exclusion practices	How have the educators, technicians, and families received you, how have they also received your son?	What was education like in your country, what would you like to be the same here?	How does the garden contribute to the care and education of boys and girls who have migrated?
	Do you think it is important for your child to attend kindergarten, why?		What is the participation of families that have migrated, do they attend meetings and activities, enjoy them, are they marginalized, why?

Source: Own elaboration.

In the case of the interviews with families outside the system (from the same cities), they were conducted in a previously agreed upon location.

For the work performed in Santiago city, the interviews were conducted where two women/mothers from Colombia carried out non-established commercial activities (street vendors in the bus of Santiago).

In Talca city, we visit an informal settlement, in a slum of the city, which as a whole creates a cultural ghetto for families from Haiti. Here we interviewed a father, who was the one who could best communicate in Spanish.

In the case of the two Venezuelan women/mothers whose children do not attend kindergarten, the interview was conducted at the residence of the interviewer.

b) Focus group for the pedagogical teams, aiming to induce discussions on specific subjects. For the study, a preestablished script was followed to guide the conversation of the pedagogical teams. In this social situation, it is fundamental that structural censorship is not excessive and that participants are encouraged to become involved in the situation.

2.4. Procedures and Data Analysis

The data analysis was based on the method of Grounded Theory, which allows the generation of inductive theories about social, psychological or cultural phenomena from a reflective understanding of the empirical data. This approach focused

on the study of social life and social processes (Clarke, 2003; Raymond, 2005). The analysis plan followed the stages of open coding, categorization and the identification of emergent constructs (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

In coherence with the grounded theory framework, the data analysis procedure was carried out by raising theoretical categories on educational response in migration contexts, namely: migration trajectories, barriers to integration and inclusion practices. With these major themes in view, the transcriptions were made and, following an inductive process, subcategories were created, for example, life in the neighborhood, intercultural relations, discrimination practices.

These new categories followed a constant comparison with the theoretical frameworks and a relationship/comparison between cases with access to school as its axis, that is, we were able to verify that in some cases the same categories could explain typologies of children outside and within the educational system. The comparison and relationship between categories were constantly related to the theoretical frameworks and generated new theory. As research quality criteria, we assume theoretical sensitivity since the team of researchers has developed extensive work “with” communities that have migrated, theoretical saturation establishing discussions around the coincidences and differences with our previous works and the support of memo that captured the team’s impressions.

3. Results

This section may be divided by subheadings. It should provide a concise and precise description of the experimental results, their interpretation, as well as the experimental conclusions that can be drawn.

The results presented in this study are part of a broader research project developed for the Subsecretaría de Educación Parvularia, available at https://bibliotecadigital.mineduc.cl/bitstream/handle/20.500.12365/20338/Informe-final_Migraci%C3%B3n-y-EP_VF.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

3.1. Children in the Educational System

Inquiring into the construction of migratory trajectories can warn about the violence to which many migrants, including children and their families, are subjected. As Contreras (2019) indicates, migratory trajectories are objectively constructed through the recognition given by institutions (State) and society, in general, to those who migrate, which is subjectively crossed from the manner in which these experience this recognition and ponder it from their own experiences, this would explain the different experiences that families have had in educational institutions. In effect, some of them have obtained a job and access education more easily, others have had to work in precarious jobs or to start a small business (most of the times informal markets) to subsist, and there are families that to this day have not accomplished to obtain “a place” to enter the formal educational system, which directly affects their job opportunities.

The first mother interviewed has been in Chile for a year. She is married to a

Venezuelan man with whom she arrived in Chile; they have three children. She is currently experiencing a challenging adaptation period, which has even led her to have severe health issues. She frequently breaks down in tears, expressing profound pain and describes her time in the country as very difficult. Her husband has a food cart and she helps him in the kitchen whenever possible. She narrates:

“It was eleven days to get here, I passed through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and here Chile. I crossed five countries and it was a hard experience. I got off a bus, I got on another bus and so on, without rest, until we got here and it was a little more complicated. It is always difficult, excuse me if I cry, I’m sentimental... the arrival here generated a lot of stress, so much that it gave me a facial paralysis and going through unauthorized crossing points is really hard. If Chileans knew everything we have gone through to get here and give our children well-being, they would not treat us like this.” (Mother 1, Venezuela, Talca).

The second mother interviewed has been in Chile for seven years, she has a six-years-old daughter, who was born in Chile, she is a system engineer and recently graduated she saw that the situation in Venezuela was critical so she decided to emigrate. They traveled by bus with her husband; they passed through Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, and Chile, the trip took seven days and the destination was always Talca, since it is a peaceful place and where money could be enough to live. Today, she has their own house which she accessed through a government program. She narrates:

“We arrive with almost nothing, when I first arrived in Santiago, I sold my golden items I brought with me to buy the bus tickets and leave. Initially, we were well received, we have built good relationships with Chileans. However, nowadays, there is a lot of xenophobia. It is terrible. Venezuelans are stereotyped negatively and it worries me greatly, that when I return, we are going to have a calamity here, sometimes I feel anxious and sad. I really want to leave, feeling despised because only a small group and generalized against unfairly is hard to bear.” (Mother 2, Venezuela, Talca).

Mother born in Haiti has been five years in Chile, married to a Haitian man and they have a four years old son who was born in Chile. Her husband came before and after a month he sent her the tickets to come with him to Chile. She works as a housekeeper. It is striking how organized her routine is, which has been accompanied by her employer.

“She brought me here to register my son and spoke with the teachers, and my boss told me that it was better here since it is close to work, so I pick up my child at 4.30 p.m., then I take him with me to work, he accompanies me for a short time, then, we both go home.” (Mother, Haiti, Santiago)

A married couple of Venezuelan nationality was interviewed, they are 37 and 40 years old, respectively. They have a three-and-half-year-old daughter and who is in nursery. They have been in Chile for six years; both are professionals in the IT field. As the political situation was complicated, they went to, and from there they took a direct flight to Chile.

“We left Venezuela for economic reasons, we were looking to improve our quality of life. We arrived with the idea of working in any available job, our expectations were exceeded in Chile, we hadn't anticipating practicing our professions, but we manage to do so, which is more than we expected, and with that our quality of life was improved. Eventually, we were able to bring our parents here, we live all together in the same house and manage to cover all our expenses.” (Father, Venezuela, Santiago)

From these first notes it is necessary to point out a relevant item for the study and for both the design of public policies, and that today the children who are in kindergartens are second generations of migrants, meaning, their parents emigrated and they were born in Chile.

Portes, Aparicio and Haller (2016) conceptualize it as children born in Chile to foreign parents or who arrive in the country before the age of 12 are also known as 'generation 1.5' denoting those who immigrated at a young age and primary socialized in their new settlement.

It is important to point out that studies related to children of migrants have consolidated the term “second generation” to refer to them. Nevertheless, these people never migrated, even in many cases they maintain the foreign nationality inherited by their parents.

In Santiago city, three of these children were born in Chile, and one of them even said that they consciously chose to have their daughter born in this country, mainly to avoid her the problems that experienced in Venezuela. Facing this political situation in that country, they have never thought of returning.

“To enter a country under a dictatorship is a risk, suddenly you face soldiers, police officers, or whatever, who might see you as having money or a better life because you come from abroad. You don't know what can happen. We have heard all kinds of stories, they could even confiscate your saying is invalid. Getting a new one can take three to four months, leaving you stuck there. So, we decided not to take that risk with our daughter.” (Father, Venezuela, Santiago).

Experiences vary and depend on multiple variables, including conditions in the country of origin, experiences in the destination country, job opportunities, support networks and cultural practices.

A mother from Venezuela expresses her intention to return “as soon as possible”. She finds noticeable the cultural differences and does not want her daughter to grow in Chile, stating:

“I do not want to my daughter grow up here because it is a very liberal society. One sees women with women, men with men kissing openly in broad daylight, and this is not right for me... in Venezuela, that is frowned upon. Marijuana is in the plazas, one goes there and the smell is terrible. You have to leave because here it is considered normal, but for me it is not... as soon as possible I will return to my country. Thankfully, I've been lucky, but I'm not feel part of this country, because I am here temporarily, and obviously, I miss my family so much.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

This response is also closely associated with the experiences of discriminations

faced by immigrants in the country.

3.2. Discrimination Practices

One of the categories discussed in the interviews is the social discrimination, that, as is well known, is based on inequality of power. This discrimination manifests through stigmatization of cultural groups perceived as inferior. All the interviewees reported having experienced some type of discrimination, albeit varying in degree and manner. Families perceive and experience these incidents differently.

One mother mentioned her being discriminated against by her neighbors for being Venezuelan, receiving comments alluding to criminal stereotypes, and experiencing strained relations with her neighborhood, where she is the only Venezuelan.

Another family has experienced a similar situation, noting that, although they have not directly suffered discrimination, they do feel associated with stereotypes of delinquency. This generates constant concern when they sense that some people are intimidated by their presence.

Other mother narrated an episode of discrimination on public transport, where a passenger told her to return to her country. What struck us in this case was the justification given by the Haitian woman, who described it as an isolated event rather than a constant occurrence, thereby normalizing such responses within Chilean society. She expressed:

“One day the tree of us were on a bus (her husband and son) and I don't know why an old lady told me ‘Go back to your country’, she said that. But I've gotten used to that because in every country there are good and bad people, so it doesn't bother me so much.” (Mother, Haiti, Santiago).

It seems important to contextualize these results, which aligns with the study conducted by Gálvez, Rojas, Lawrence and Durán (2020). They explain the discrimination to which the Haitian population, influenced by the media portrayal. The authors indicate, the has been shaped by depictions of Haitians disembarking from planes and statements from the Minister of Health, Mañalich, regarding overcrowding.

The discourses portrayed in the media suggest that Haitian immigrants disregard the socioeconomic diversity of their origins and may deplete their savings when faced with limited opportunities in Chile.

According to the interviews conducted, the population affected by these discriminatory practices was mainly Venezuelan. Families claim to feel stigmatized as delinquents, which correlates with the results of the last CEP survey, concluding that 69% of Chileans agree that immigrants raise crime rates.

Concerning discrimination practices in kindergartens, only one mother reported that her daughter had been subjected to mockery.

“She participates, of course sometimes some children make fun of things, because it is a habit you have and we don't, you don't speak the same way we do, there are words that are hard for us to understand.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

Nevertheless, kindergartens are safe spaces where children receive care and education, aspects that are widely valued by this study participants. Families comment that their children enjoy and like going to kindergarten, besides they think that the education they receive is superior to that in their countries.

“My little son, Maty, he cries when doesn’t go to the school, he adores his teacher, Claudia the kindergarten teacher, he adores her. She is excellent in all aspects. When the children are here as in their home, when parents have some problem, she handles it excellently. If it were up to me, I would give her the other grades, because the truth is, she is very good.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

Children transfer their routines and the families, indicating the following, perceive learning to the home and this situation positively:

“I like that they have a routine, because my girl also tries to make me do the same things on the weekends. She tells me we do this, after lunch I sleep, I have to brush my teeth, then these things are important and I know she has learned them at kindergarten.” (Parents, Venezuela, Santiago).

3.3. Access to Education

Admission to education is regulated by chronological age, and in most cases, children enter after the school year has already begun, regardless of their prior knowledge.

“My oldest daughter, in Venezuela, she went until second grade and didn’t know how to read. When we arrived in Talca, due to her age, she was placed in third grade. We arrived here in October and within a week, she was accepted, and I enrolled her and she entered as we say in Venezuela as an auditing student, to adapt to the classroom and her classmates. Although the teacher Catherine was her teacher, and she did everything in her power to my daughter to make progress, the time was quite short since they went on vacation in December and she ended up repeating the grade. I believe it was the best decision that both the teacher and I could have made, because advancing to fourth grade without knowing how to read, and basic arithmetic, is more complicated.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

In general, access for families has been simple, and most of the time facilitated by a compatriot who has been in the country longer. Only one interviewee mentioned difficulties in securing a place in kindergarten, prompting them to explore other options, sometimes farther from home, and even changing districts to find a higher-quality option that better balances work and family life.

The selection of an educational center is of great interest to families, typically following a pattern: seeking an institution close to their residence, considering availability of school meals, relying on “good” references from compatriots or coworkers, and ideally, it should be free.

“Our first option was a private school, but it was too expensive for us. Then, we turned to a public school nearby, where we found a sign saying ‘no vacancies, waiting list’... One day, I walk around this neighborhood with my daughter. I didn’t even know the area, so I looked up JUNJI on the map and found another nearby, but there were no vacancies as well. Eventually, we arrived at this

kindergarten, knocked the door, and the director come out. The director said ‘Yes, there is place, you need to apply’. She gave me the website, we applied, and a week later she told me my daughter was accepted, it was super-fast, I was lucky. A Venezuelan friend told me that the JUNJI kindergartens are government-run and are very good. hey provide meals and operate all day, which is crucial for us since we both work. This kindergarten was convenient; we liked the facilities and felt confident that our child would be well cared for. The teachers are really caring.” (Parents, Venezuela, Santiago).

In educational establishments (for example, the Talca municipal school), where kindergarten level is integrated into the overall school structure, the situation differs. Families struggle with having different schedules for their children, which creates significant emotional and economic strain. The limited hours complicate access to jobs with regular schedules, forcing them to use various strategies to balance both responsibilities.

One of the mothers commented that she has three children in school and all with different schedules. Two of them go in the morning and yet they arrive and departure times vary. After dropping them off at home, she then takes her third child to school in the afternoon. When asked about her expectations from kindergarten, she said:

“It doesn’t matter that some leave at half-past twelve and others at one o’clock, but in my case, it is tough. I’ve seen other moms struggle too because, apart from first grade being the only afternoon class, the commute is hard. But overall, I’m very happy with the school. I leave my house at 7 in the morning with all three kids. I drop off two of them in the morning and I take the one in first grade with me. I go to work with my husband (food cart), help out, and then come back here to drop her off at school in the afternoon. From there, I go back to my husband, and we head home. The older one leaves school at 15:30, but she goes with her cousins who also attend the same school and are older than her. They accompany each other, and then I head home. When they arrive, my sister takes care of them.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

An element that also appears in the interviews regarding municipal schools is the frequent strikes, which often result in children missing school and disrupt family dynamics.

“I almost withdrew my daughter from this school because I applied to other schools out of frustration with the frequent strikes here. I need to work, and when I leave my daughter at school, it’s because I rely on her learning while I’m at work. That’s why I quit my job as an employee to take care of her myself, which has prevented me from working. Now I work part-time while she’s at school, and the rest of the time I care for her at home. So, it was upsetting during that week when we couldn’t attend due to the strike.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

3.4. Educational Response

Families consider educators and technicians to be caring and committed to their

children well-being.

“The educators are very good. When I arrived here, they even provided me the uniforms. They are very supportive here, speaking for myself, I don't know about the others, but I have received lot of help from here during this time. The current director who is here now seems to me to be super and they have provided many comforts for me and my children, they have always been very attentive”. (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

Families recognize that the kindergarten is a place where children acquire diverse skills, knowledge, aptitudes, cultural elements, and more. We found it interesting to present the case of the mother from Haiti, whose son was born in Chile, and they carry out various strategies together with the kindergarten team to achieve a communication that allows them to relate adequately and support the learning of children.

“I like kindergarten because what happens is that I speak Creole and my son is struggling to speak both languages, Creole and Spanish. Before coming here, he didn't speak Spanish well, but now he speaks it fluently. When I'm saying something, he corrects me and teaches me, he tells me ‘No, mom, you should or shouldn't say it like this’. He learns with the help of his teachers. He has learned to organize his things. He is four years old; he dresses himself; he knows how to bathe himself, he knows how to serve, he knows how to brush his teeth, he knows how to eat by himself... since I don't have to teach him things, he learns here. He knows how to count up to ten, share things, and many other things, I can't teach him all these things myself.” (Mother, Haiti, Santiago).

In the case of Venezuelan families, they recognize that, although they speak Spanish like Chileans, their way of speaking is very different. They find it very positive that their children speak both as at home and with their kindergarten classmates, and they highly value the fact that the teachers, instead of correcting them, incorporate elements of Venezuelan Spanish into the language used in class.

“She also uses Chilean words, which amuses us because since she was little, she said “la guata” (the belly in Mapudungun), whereas at home we say “barriga” (another way to say belly), so it's noticeable, but we still like it. We like that multiculturalism that she experiences because it opens her mind, besides she will be immersed in it.” (Father, Venezuela, Santiago).

Learning at the kindergarten is diverse, with a focus on developing social skills and fostering autonomy.

“She has learned autonomy, social skills, every day. The incentive for art, my daughter likes painting very much, very much and I know it is because the kindergarten has a focus on plastic art The structured routine is also significant, she tries to replicate it on weekends, mentioning, ‘In kindergarten, I do this after lunch, I sleep and brush my teeth.’ These habits are crucial, learned directly from kindergarten.” (Mother, Venezuela, Santiago).

Although it was not a recurring category, a mother in Venezuela questions the homework assigned to children. What is curious is that the strategy of play is not

recognized as a way of learning but rather associated with leisure time. In this sense, this mother considers that children play a lot in the kindergarten and do not do homework.

“I don’t want them to play too much, I don’t like they play too much, I prefer them to do homework, because if they don’t do it after they send home 20 pages of homework to do at home, which I don’t like. I grew up in a strict Catholic school run by nuns and my education is very strict so I believe my educational background influences my perception that education here is more flexible. Sometimes, it feels like children play excessively, perhaps because they’re in kindergarten. I ask if they’ve done any homework, and often they haven’t—they just play and paint. I’m unsure if it’s because of the grade level, but sometimes I feel they aren’t progressing. I ask my child if they’ve done their homework, and sometimes they haven’t—they just play and paint. I’m unsure if it’s because of their grade level, but sometimes I feel they haven’t made progress. I understand they’re not learning subtraction or addition in kindergarten, but they are learning letters like ‘ma,’ ‘me,’ ‘mi,’ ‘mo,’ and ‘mu.’ I remember when I was young, I think we were already able to read books and identify words.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

Moreover, the methods through which the pedagogical teams engage and communicate with families are positively valued. The most awaited moment for families is the time of arrival or departure, a brief but valuable time to find out how their children progress. Additionally, technology, particularly WhatsApp, serves as a widely used tool for communication with families.

“We have parent-teacher conference twice a month Do you find this sufficient? (interviewer) yes, because these meetings are for all parents, these are like formal meetings to talk about the objectives, those things, but we can come to the kindergarten to talk with the director, with the educator, we also have a WhatsApp group with the teachers, and there we can talk about any topic, so we are always in communication.” (Mother, Venezuela, Santiago).

3.5. Activities Focused on Inclusion

Several studies conducted in Chile has proven that there is a biased vision of the comprehensive sense of cultural identity, where the cultural materiality of those who migrate prevails and is the basis for the realization of social events in educational communities. According to Pincheira (2021), the cultural materiality of the immigrant prevails, which is installed in the organized social events. In this way, their dances, clothing, festivities, food and idiom of the original language of the countries from which they are come are recognized.

This situation has also been reflected in the interviews, where families commented on the cultural activities, they have been part of.

“Yes, they always consider us, at least teacher Claudia does, when there are activities that are related to Chile, she usually tries to ensure my son learns things about local traditions. However, for exhibitions, dissertations or similar activities, she asks him to talk about Venezuela, so he learns from Chileans while his

classmates from Venezuelan culture.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

“In fact, some time ago, we had an activity because in this kindergarten includes children from various nationalities from Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, and Haiti. We set up stands with typical foods from Venezuela, Colombia, and other countries. They also perform traditional dances from each country, and we actively participate.” (Parents, Venezuela, Santiago).

Although these practices are well appreciated by families, they are isolated events that reduce cultural identity to purely folkloric manifestations, ultimately shaping an educational approach focused on the assimilation of local culture.

3.6. Feeding Practices

Environments undoubtedly play an important role in the development of food culture and practices. In this context, immigration implies a clash of cultures that may or may not modify the behavior and eating habits of immigrants. In this sense, educational institutions such as schools, can positively or negatively influence migrant eating habits (Hun & Urzúa, 2019).

In the cases studied, families report that in the kindergarten their sons and daughters learned to eat healthier and to acquire a taste for home-cooked meals, which are common in Chile. Despite this, the families maintained their eating practices at home, justifying it as “what they know how to cook.”

“Well, here at school they eat what it is typical in Chile, but I think it is excellent. My daughter has a very good taste in food, she eats everything since she was born here. From nursery schools, she always has been eating Chilean food and she loves it. I also have to get used to it. At home I cook her lentils or beans for lunch. My mom asks me why we are eating that, because eating lentils or beans in Venezuela is the last option, During the crisis in Venezuela, when there was no meat, we had to eat lentils or beans because that was all that was available.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

“In kindergarten she eats whatever is provided. It has to be something she really dislikes for her to say ‘Mommy, I won’t eat this’, but she almost always eats everything in the kindergarten, and it is Chilean food.” (Mother, Haiti, Santiago).

These results are consistent with previous studies that indicate that the context in which migrants live influences their eating behaviors, as well as the place where they were born and the length of time, they have been in the host country.

In JUNJI kindergartens there were cases of food allergy that were reported early by the families, and the kindergarten took the necessary measures to change the menu. There were also instances of children refusing food, which became a complex situation for the educational teams.

“It was an issue with feeding because they said the child does not eat. They asked how I could bring her to kindergarten if she does not eat. They called us to come and pick her up, and we had to bring her for fewer hours because she did not eat. Obviously, I cannot bring food from outside, I understand that for security reasons. The food is provided by the kindergarten, and if something happened to the

child inside the kindergarten, it would be their responsibility, not mine, for bringing food that could be spoiled.” (Father, Venezuela, Santiago).

In general, families value positively the feeding practices implemented by educational centers, even highlighting the incorporation of fruits and vegetables in the diets of children, an aspect that was not the same in their countries of origin. They also question the fact that the kindergartens have a single menu, not providing options for those children who make a food transition or require specific feeding conditions.

“Obviously you don’t eat the food that we normally eat. At least you are healthier, you eat a lot of vegetables, a lot of fruit and obviously children should be given fruit, I think it’s good that they always have fruit for them, but it’s hard for my daughter, it’s very hard for her.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

It has been reported that there are differences in eating behaviors among foreign-born immigrants with respect to second-generation immigrants (Hun & Urzúa, 2019). The latter group has a higher probability of developing overweight due to structural differences such as lower family income, living in areas with higher immigrant density, or lower maternal education—factors that should be considered in policy development.

3.7. Children Outside the Educational System

Nowadays, many migrant families are outside the educational system, which is why the issue of reentry or reintegration has become a national priority. The government seeks to recover the educational trajectory of children excluded from the system. However, in order to act appropriately, it is necessary to understand the causes of this exclusion.

Ministry of Education (2022) has documented the main barriers to the realization of the right to education of migrant students. These findings include the absence of or difficulties in adopting inclusive and intercultural approaches by professional teams and educational policy, the acquisition of pedagogical tools that allow curricular flexibility, and difficulties in the regularization of children and their families, which excludes them from some support resources.

The work shows the migratory trajectories of those who are outside the system and provide insights into the processes of exclusion and the definition of measures to facilitate inclusion. Five interviews were conducted, three of them in the city of Talca and two in the city of Santiago.

In Talca, two Venezuelan mothers shared their experiences and the reasons why they have not enrolled their children in kindergarten. At the trade fair, we met a couple from Haiti with a three-year-old girl. The mother did not speak Spanish, so the father, in their home, answered the interview.

In Santiago, we interviewed two women who work informally as street vendors outside the bus terminal. Their children accompany both mothers throughout the day. The interviews were conducted on the street and in the bus terminal itself.

3.8. Migratory Trajectories (Talca)

The first mother Venezuelan, a 20-year-old Venezuelan, has been in Chile for 11 months. She became a mother at a very young age and has two children, a two-year-old girl (born in Ecuador) and a four-month-old boy (born in Chile). She left Venezuela when she was 15 years old, lived in Colombia for a year and seven months, then moved to Ecuador for two years before finally coming to Chile. She left her country due to drug-related issues, and her mother arranged for an aunt to take her to Colombia. She has only studied up to the second year of high school.

The second case is a 21 years old Venezuelan woman with a three-year-old son. The child was born in Colombia, where she lived for two years. Then, she moved to Ecuador and later to Chile, where she has been living for one year. She entered the country through an unauthorized crossing in the north of the country while she was pregnant. Her reasons for traveling were economic, the crisis affected her, leaving no food available. With the help of family networks, she made the journey through the north of the country.

A Haitian father has a three years old daughter born in Brazil, where they lived for about three years. They have been in Chile for two years. The wife has not found work and he spends time picking fruit and doing odd jobs in construction. Their motivation to emigrate was to have a better life, as the economic situation in Haiti prevented them from obtaining basic resources. They faced similar challenges in Brazil, prompting their move to Chile.

It is important to note that in these three cases, the migration status of the families is irregular, even though they are trying to change it. They do not have formal employment and have been in Chile for less than two years. All of them have crossed through countries before reaching Chile.

3.9. Migratory Trajectories (Santiago)

The first case involves an 18-year-old Colombian woman with a 10-month-old son. She arrived in the country seven months ago and immediately noticed that her situation was irregular, prompting her decision to return to her country.

She has no support networks and lives alone with her son, paying \$150,000 per month for a room in front of the bus terminal for. With no one to leave her child with, she carries him in her arms all day while she sells candy. Her motivation for migrating was economic, seeking to improve her quality of life.

The second case is of a 19-year-old Colombian woman with a one-year-and three-month-old daughter. She has been in Chile for six years, although she has left twice and re-entered. She is accompanied in her business by her two sisters, aged 16 and 18, respectively. She explains that she leaves her daughter in the care of a friend, who charges her by the day. When there is money, she can leave her daughter with the friend; when there is not, she brings her daughter and leaves her in the car while she sells near Estación Central. Her reasons for emigrating were economic.

In both cases, these very young Colombian women decided to emigrate for economic reasons. They work in informal commerce.

3.10. Poverty and Marginalization

The cases that have been presented highlight contexts of extreme poverty and social vulnerability, in which children are exposed to situations of violation of their rights to education, play, food, health, among others.

The living conditions of the families are indicative of these challenges. In the case of the Haitian family (who live in Talca), this is a population that concentrates more than 80% of Haitians in the district and is located in an area outside the city, next to the train line. The area is surrounded by micro-garbage dumps, and the presence of micro-trafficking can be observed in the street. Outside the houses (in very precarious conditions and unfinished construction), Haitians can be seen sitting for long hours and small children playing with stray dogs.

The father tells us “You can’t go out there, she is always inside (his daughter), you can’t let her go out because of the dogs, it’s always dirty outside, you can’t anymore” (Father, Haiti, Talca).

Within this poverty (see at the bottom of the photo), there is solidarity and hospitality. The family invites us to their home, greeted us at the corner of a passageway, offer us water and gladly accept that we interview them. They hope that this may help them to secure a place in kindergarten. In fact, the first thing they show us when we enter their house are their application documents and their identity papers.

The truth is that those who migrate tend to settle with their compatriots, forming large housing polygons, which have been called cultural ghettos, which limit the social use of languages. In these settlement territories, the immigrant population has little contact with nationals.

In the case of Santiago, both women live in places considered unsafe. The business of one of them is delimited with cardboard (see photograph) and is very close to the sidewalk. When we entered this space to conduct the interview, four men approached her to offer protection. She assures us that nothing would happen to us and they were only looking out for her. The same happens with the mother carrying her baby in her arms at the bus terminal, where we saw her feeding the child sitting on the ground (see photograph).

The mother comments that she has felt discriminated against and judged for working at the bus terminal with her child, mentioning that on more than one occasion she has been told to return to her country.

“There are people who discriminate against you for working with your child. They think I am taking advantage of my son, but that’s not the reason. It’s because you have to, because you don’t really have anyone to leave him with.” (Mother, Colombia, Santiago).

3.11. Support Network

In migrant networks, elements such as reciprocity, mutual aid and trust are present. These networks provide support in tasks such as finding lodging, a job or food, this type of solidarity sustains the network itself. It is important to consider

that the network has two purposes: first, it seeks to favor the arrival and immediate survival of newcomers from other countries, and second, it has a symbolic principle that strengthens the sense of parental and community belonging.

The interviews indicate that these networks are used to find an educational institution for children, to find a rental and also for childcare.

“When I have to work, sometimes I have to pay a babysitter to take care of her. She charges me forty thousand Chilean pesos per week, she takes care of her at her house. They feed her there, and I bring in everything needed, her milk, her food because I don’t like her to eat other things. I take her three meals and her feeding bottles. And where they take care of my baby there are two other children, who are grandchildren of the babysitter who are younger than my baby.” (Mother, Colombia, Santiago).

“I came straight to live in Huilquilemu because here my father, mother, uncles, cousin are here. My children play in the house with her children, who are the same age. Sometimes they fight, and later they are friends again.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

In other cases, employers play a fundamental role in the support networks. For example, in the case of the Haitian woman, the housewife accompanied her to enroll her son. Similarly, the Haitian father receives assistance from his employer and wife when needed.

“Interviewer: When you have any problem, who help you?... I have a boss, from my work. When I need more things, he helps me a lot...also his wife, when I need help, he says anything she helps.” (Father, Haiti, Talca).

In the literature, authors have called this type of relationships migratory networks. These networks consist of interpersonal ties that connect migrants with other migrants who have already settled and with non-migrants in both the areas of origin and destination. These ties, formed through kinship or friendship, increase the possibility of international migration by reducing costs and risks associated with displacement (Alvarado, 2008).

3.12. Reasons for Lack of Access to Education

The main reasons why migrant children do not have access to education are the lack of school place, the bureaucratization of the system (such as access and use of platforms, calendar that do not respond to accommodate prolonged or transitory displacements, and lack of information) and a preference for home care systems.

“I went to the nursery, prepared the papers, and they sent me to get a temporary R.U.N (National Identification Number). They told me that they would call me. This was about seven months ago. Recently, I received a call, asking for more documents. Due to the lack of documents, and also the schedules with the job they offered, I have not been able to enroll him in kindergarten, so I work with my child.” (Mother, Colombia, Santiago).

“I was told that there was a kindergarten near here in Mercedes, I went to ask

for information and they told me that I needed to pre-register online. However, by the time I tried, the registration period had closed and there were no more available spots left. Then they mentioned placing him on a waiting list, but there were already more than 15 children on the waiting list. However, I registered him anyway. Unfortunately, I never received a call. I waited until this year to ask again and but they said there was no place either.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

“I choose not to enroll them in kindergarten because I am currently not working. I am able to care for them at home, and my father also prefers they stay at home rather than attend kindergarten.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

In general, the process is difficult for those who migrate, due to lack of information and difficulties to access the internet to fill out a form. Waiting lists often discourage families, who repeatedly attempt to enroll during different periods but only manage to join waiting lists.

This situation has forced families to rely on third-party care providers who look after children at their homes, sometimes charging for their services, with conditions that cannot always guarantee the well-being of the children.

3.13. Valuation of Education

Most families without access to education positively value the efforts made by kindergartens. They think that access to education will provide greater opportunities, enable them to work while the children are cared for, and some mothers even express a desire for the opportunity to further their own studies.

“He really wanted to go to kindergarten, because as he saw his cousins going to school, he also wanted to go to school, he wanted a notebook, he wanted to do homework too, so I wanted that too.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

“I don’t like to leave the child at home, I think that if she can’t go to kindergarten this year, I will go back to Brazil.” (Father, Haiti, Talca)

“I want him to go so that he can have a better education, learn many things and to have a future. If he studies, he will have a better future. When you study, you have a better future for your life. It is important to study.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

Some interviewees expressed negative opinions about sending their children to kindergarten. One interviewee mentioned having heard rumors about poor care in kindergartens and she disliked the idea of sending her child there. Another interviewee stated that she is worried about not being present in her child childhood if the child attends kindergarten.

“If you send them to the kindergarten, you don’t spend so much time with them. They spend the whole day there, and you only see them in the afternoon...they eat and then they’re tired and just go to sleep. So you enjoy their childhood more when they grow up at home...I wanted a part-time job so I could work at least half time and spend the other half enjoying and sharing time with my children.” (Mother, Colombia, Santiago).

3.14. Ways of Learning and Daily Routines

Most families who do not take their children to kindergarten emphasize the role

of the telephone and television as a learning resource for children at home.

“On YouTube, there I look for videos, I teach her the numbers myself, the animals, and other things.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

“He plays with anything and when he gets bored, he grabs my phone and starts watching YouTube videos of number songs.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

“He has a TV inside, and through the TV, he learns a lot, many things in Spanish. He knows everything, the colors and all... on TV he learns everything.” (Father, Haiti, Talca).

Regarding the routines followed by the children at home, the families commented that it depends on whether they must accompany them to work, the schedules of adults at home and available resources such as space and games, etc.

“The child has no space to play with other children. He spends the whole day with me, when I play with him it is at night when I get home, I leave from noon to five in the afternoon to go to work.” (Mother, Colombia, Santiago).

“He gets up late. I would like him to get up early and sleep at noon, as he used to. He had a routine where he got up at 09:00 or 10:00 in the morning and went back to sleep at 2 - 3 in the afternoon. At night, he falls asleep not later than 9 - 10, but since we arrived here with the cold, everything got out of control. Since it is very cold, he wants to continue sleeping late.” (Mother, Venezuela, Talca).

3.15. The Role of Pedagogical Teams

For the work with the pedagogical teams, two focus groups were carried out, one in the city of Talca and the other in the city of Santiago. Each session involved four participants, including assistants, educators and school principals.

The groups consisted of young teams of educators and assistants, with diverse experiences in the field of cultural diversity, (all of them had worked with foreign children). Nevertheless, they noted a of formal training in intercultural education. On average, they had been with their institutions for five years.

The educational response of the pedagogical teams has relied on experience, determination, and collaboration among peers, prompting them to self-educate and devise strategies to effectively addressing diversity in their classrooms.

“Empathy and solidarity within the educational team have proven valuable in addressing the different problems. Due to our lack of formal training, we’ve had to self-educate.” (Educators, Talca).

“I think we are working from a foundational understanding of different cultures, recognizing that we are very similar, but there are always differences. This understanding has guided our communication strategies and discussion on how to support educational aspects.” (Educators, Talca).

The training needs are diverse, but always related to the educational response to cultural diversity.

“We need strategies to effectively implement interculturality in the classroom or with families. While we understand the concept, applying it daily in school, especially in areas like language, and other small yet relevant aspects for children

and families, would help us.” (Educators, Santiago).

3.16. Family Typology and Access to Education

The pedagogical teams express little concern regarding the migratory status of families and children, since they are mandated to enroll students when vacancies are available. However, in Talca, the situation seems to be different.

“When families seek school places, often four out of five are foreigners, the Chilean applicant is the last one.” (Educators, Talca).

In Santiago, educators clarify that there is no explicit prioritization of migrant children over nationals during enrollment, as the system manages this process. In fact, a significant portion of children in both cities is in a regular migratory situation (permanent or transitory residence or waiting for a resolution from the immigration authorities). This seems to us to be an important point, as it is radically opposed to the families outside the educational system, most of whom are not regularized.

Educators and assistants have observed a notable shift in the migratory profile, particularly with children arriving with higher educational level, as is the case of Venezuelans, who now constitute the main group of foreign students in the educational centers that are part of the study.

“In fact, we have a significant percentage of immigrant families, over forty percent are migrant families.” (Educator, Santiago).

When asked about specific reception plans for migrant families and children, participants responded that they did not have a specific plan but that they carried out activities to facilitate inclusion, especially during the first months.

“That is an area we are looking to improve. Recently, we’ve been reflecting on this issue. There is also an issue, Inclusion means they are not different to us, they are part of our kindergarten. We are learning to recognize these characteristics, interests and we incorporate into our activities. For example, Welcoming song are tailored to each child, obviously, respecting their language, and different upbringing styles.” (Educators, Santiago).

In Talca, activities are design to introduce elements of the children home cultures to help them feel more integrated into school. Additionally, new arrivals receive material support such as clothing, school supplies or food, if needed.

“In our class, it is noticeable the children who are more economically deprived. In fact, when a new child arrives from abroad, we get him/her what he/she needs. If he/she lacks a T-shirt, he/she lacks a sweatshirt, we mobilize as a team to assemble their uniform within two days, we are committed to supporting them.” (Educators, Talca).

The teams noted genuine interest among local children to learn about newcomers, often asking many questions and eagerly participating in activities aimed at promoting a welcoming atmosphere.

It should be noted that the curriculum of the Santiago kindergarten includes an inclusive approach in its Educational Project, integrating cultural elements of

migrant children into its planning.

The teams provide recommendations on how or what a foster care plan should be included, for example, suggesting that it should begin with a conversation with the families to understand their specific challenges and needs. In addition, in Talca, they emphasized that any plan should be designed based on the preferences and interests of children.

“Well, for example, it could involve organizing a meeting or a focus group, where families can express their fears, concerns, and doubts about this new educational phase, from their point of view as a migrant family.” (Educators, Santiago)

“Creating the opportunities to bring together all immigrant families and make them feel an afternoon especially for them.” (Educators, Talca)

3.17. Relationship between Pedagogical Teams and Families

In both groups it was mentioned that the relationship between parents and the pedagogical team is built on trust, with communication mainly occurring during drop-off and pick-up times at kindergarten.

“With migrant parents, I find that we have an excellent relationship. Yes, I also believe that it depends on the trust and the reception they have with the pedagogical team in general, with the pedagogical teams, because at the beginning, when they arrive at a kindergarten, they also arrive in a defensive posture. But when you give them confidence, there is a lot of communication with the family, that breaks down.” (Educators, Santiago).

Assistants were asked about the authority with which educators are recognized, a situation they do not experience similarly. They commented that the parents do not respect the assistant team very much, I think they see that we only have a welfare and caring role.

“I’ve noticed that parents perceive different levels of authority, if any of us assistants want to talk to parents, they often prefer to speaking with the teacher, those in green, that difference I’ve seen.” (Assistant, Santiago).

“There is a clear hierarchy in communication, where families see us as responsible for basic care rather than education. For example, to only take the child to the bathroom, but I am also the one who is there to educate them, and also this perception is evident institutionally.” (Assistant, Santiago).

They also note that families, especially those coming from Venezuela, expect to receive help and have become accustomed to receiving this assistance.

“They like receiving things as gifts, for example, they sometimes say ‘Teacher, no, I don’t have money’ and they wait until the last minute to see if the teacher will help them. We end up saying ‘Mom, don’t worry, we’ll help her’. Then, later we realize that maybe they do have money, but they waited until the last minute to see if someone else would help them so they don’t spend their own money.” (Educators, Talca).

In Santiago, the pedagogical teams observe that migrant families actively participate in kindergarten activities, showing their commitment to the education of

their children and being integrated into the dynamics of the institution, especially those who come from Venezuela.

“In meetings they talked a lot, despite being strangers to each other initially, they all ended up talking, then they greeted each other at the arrival.” (Educators, Santiago).

3.18. Diverse Learning and Educational Trajectories

The children from migrating families are affectionate, eager to learn and interact easily with their peers. The pedagogical teams try to build bonds of trust with the children and their families, welcoming them and integrating them into the various activities.

“The attachment they achieve with us depends on the country, but Venezuelans, for example, are very affectionate, they express themselves very well, have strong personality. They recount their experiences vividly, sharing their travel stories.” (Educators, Santiago)

One of the difficulties that the teams have detected is language development, which they attribute not only to foreign children, but as a general issue exacerbated by the effects of the pandemic.”

“Initially, some children, especially younger ones, didn't speak at all. Although older children have fewer issues, about six still struggle with pronunciation, speaking somewhat like a little baby.” (Educators, Santiago).

In addition, the autonomy of children has also been affected. Educators and assistants refer that child do not behave in the same way at home, emphasizing that families do not provide them with the necessary tools to be more autonomous.

“Children lack autonomy. Yes, because at home everything is done for them... and here we try to encourage them to be a little more independent. To do everything on their own, but it is very difficult. Only this year I have seen some progress, as parents realize the importance of children being independent at school, I think technology affected them.” (Educators, Talca).

The lack of previous schooling or educational delays is also recognized as a difficulty, a product of the migratory processes experienced by children, which makes the educational process more complex.

“My children couldn't follow a routine because they weren't used to it. So now every day we consult the calendar, the date, the attendance, emphasizing numerical skills. So, the children are now a little more level with their peers.” (Educators, Talca).

A naturalized image of children who have migrated, which places them in a position of “cultural disadvantage” with respect to their peers, has already been widely documented in the literature (Sanhueza, Rodríguez, Puentes, & Herrera, 2023).

3.19. Linguistic Diversity

Kindergartens have transformed into spaces of cultural exchanges, where

language is also an object of learning and inclusion. In fact, the pedagogical teams point out that the children have begun to include new words from the countries of origin of their classmates. Moreover, they themselves have embraced functional bilingualism, referring to objects and situations using terms from their own countries.

Linguistic differences would be naturalized and reinforced by two ways, maintaining communication networks with family and friends in their countries of origin and the use of social networks.

“For example, there are things called by different names, which also teach us new words. Instead of saying ‘vamos’ (let’s go) they say ‘full’, or cabritas (popcorn) instead of palomitas (different variation of popcorn), among others.” (Educators, Talca).

“Another practice involves presenting fruits or vegetables and having children share their country-specific names for them. For example, banana, plantain or sweet potatoes are included.” (Educators, Santiago).

“It is quite natural nowadays. For example, on YouTube, they use words like Mexican words and we don’t have any Mexicans here They blend Spanish words and phrases due to social networks and technology.” (Educators, Santiago).

One topic that comes up in the interviews is children who do not speak Spanish. We find it interesting since the pedagogical teams have used different resources of communication, such as translators and use of cell phones. One educator mentioned took a Creole course to better communicate with children in the classroom, driven by the challenge some face in playing and integrating.

“He was a Haitian child who cried and cried, we were very concerned at school. We got dictionaries for all the teachers who had Haitian students, through which I began learning new words. The truth is that I had proposed to learn French Creole and the first step we did was to modify our greeting song.” (Educator, Talca).

3.20. Feeding Practices

Food has been an issue in the focus groups. Educators mentioned that some children refuse to eat vegetables, apparently because these are not frequent in the diets of their countries of origin. Despite this, children have gradually incorporated new foods.

“I started by offering him just a spoonful, then two, and even grind the beans for him, until now he eats them by himself, whereas initially, we had to help them but not anymore.” (Educators, Talca).

In Santiago, children who have been in kindergarten for a longer period have started to receive food from an early age, and the eating routines have become normalized.

“From a young age, children have been accustomed to our meals upon their arrival. While some children have specific preferences, such as enjoying arepas while avoiding vegetables and other local foods, this reflects family upbringing, a topic we discuss with parents.” (Educators, Santiago).

“Sometimes they bring something to share, like a dessert or something different, such as arepas, bananas, or snacks, allowing them to get to know their classmates.” (Educators, Talca).

“In one instance, I remember that the mothers stayed to give lunch to the children and expressed gratitude to the technician. They mentioned that the children were now eating different foods, including vegetables, which they didn't eat before. They describe how one Venezuelan child is now a complete Chilean, they told me because they aren't receiving the arepa. They ask what they eat, how it is prepared, because children request them at home to give me the fish dish like in kindergarten.” (Educator, Santiago).

In Santiago, kindergarten educators noted that certain food practices brought by families can impact the educational process, particularly regarding the promotion of healthy habits. Some of these practices involve high-calorie foods, contributing to instances of overweight.

“Here, for example, the milk is mixed with Nestum, and she gives him milk with rice and with blended noodles. It is milk with rice or noodles, and she gives him one at night. The mother wanted to continue this practice and ask if she could bring her own bottle for her child. So, we explained to her that it wasn't possible, because there is a diet, since the child was not obese and was well build enough to be receiving a reinforcement of so many calories.” (Educators, Santiago)

In fact, they indicate that it does not matter if you are a foreigner or Chilean, there is only one menu defined by a professional/nutritionist. There is limited flexibility, and any adjustments are always made in consultation with and approved by the nutritionist.

“Yes, it can be some flexibility, but always through consultation with the nutritionist. The goal is to avoid deviations from the educational aspect. For example, if a child doesn't like milk with Nestum, they are allowed to have plain milk. This applies to all children, not just foreigners.” (Educator, Santiago)

3.21. Activities Focused on Inclusion

The teams suggest that the activities that promote inclusion always involve the participation of families, who value these spaces. These events typically display elements from the countries represented in the institution, adding a multicultural dimension to national holiday celebrations (Fiestas Patrias).

“During Fiestas Patrias, celebrated on September 18th, we invite parents from abroad to bring elements of their culture, whether it is food, clothing or that they talk about their home country, so that the other children can also learn about it.” (Educator, Talca).

When asked about other types of activities, the pedagogical teams point out that they are all the same, regardless of cultural background, the learning objectives are the same for all children. Any specific needs are addressed on a case-by-case basis.

“No, the activities are the same for everyone and operate under the same

principles, unless a specific objective is identified for an individual child, such as a Haitian child arriving without Spanish language skills. In such cases, the educational focus shifts accordingly, but it remains specific to that child, not all children.” (Educator, Santiago).

It is important to point out that families are highly committed to participating in the educational process, particularly in the organization of cultural events where they can participate by contributing elements from their own cultures. This is not just another activity since the migrant families feel recognized and believe that they contribute intercultural knowledge.

“Migrant parents are very interested in Chileans learning a little about them, about their food, their barbecues, their traditions. They actively seek to share more about their heritage so others also know a little about them.” (Educator, Santiago)

Valuing education and the contribution of cultural diversity

In both institutions there is a positive evaluation by the families regarding the work of the pedagogical team. Families value the care, the respectful treatment and the educational progress achieved by the children.

“Yes, they are the most grateful, especially in how the children interact with us, because that comes from home, that is learned at home... it is always what the teacher says, not just how the mother says... the families express their gratitude for everything.” (Educators, Talca).

The teams indicate that the families acknowledge the learning of basic skills and knowledge in their children, as well as their ability to socialize and interact with other children. Thus, contributing to the development of social skills. They explain that learning at this age is necessary for later levels.

“We focus on developing fundamental skills that enable children to build knowledge, literacy, as they progress. That is what we try to explain to parents.” (Educators, Santiago).

The teams view cultural diversity as a valuable asset to the center. They believe that migrants contribute to enriching experiences and relationships among children. Early exposure to diversity naturally encourages children to view others inclusively and adopt more inclusive attitudes and practices.

“Personally, I believe that the diversity of cultures enriches and deconstructs and builds a new Chilean society. Whether through language, food, or various actions, children mix and interact without noticing differences. They listen and respond similarly, learning respect from a young age—whether for different languages, appearances, or customs. Children learn to value and respect others who are different from themselves.” (Educator, Santiago).

4. Discussion

Migratory trajectories have been constructed from an adult-centric and ethnocentric perspective, forgetting that in most cases children do not participate in migratory decisions and are the most vulnerable. In the exposed cases, migrants have crossed through at least three countries before arriving in Chile, some have

entered through unauthorized crossings, carrying their children with them at a very early age, with an average travel time of at least ten days by bus.

These extensive journeys bring with them a series of emotional consequences not only for the children, but also for the families, especially for the women, the women who provide physical, material, and emotional support throughout the journey. Gender violence manifest in these trajectories in multiple ways, the responsibility of making decisions, providing food (some of them breastfeeding during the trip), implementing survival guidelines and maintaining the hope of reaching the destination, not to mention that most of the cases exposed are women who have been mothers at a very young age (17 years old).

In Chile, the migration of second generations, children born in Chile to migrant parents, has been evolving. According to [Cabrera \(2020\)](#), migrant children continue to be identified as such, despite being born in Chile, creating a symbolic border between the immigrant group and their children on one side, and native Chileans on the other. Experience shows that second-generation children face similar vulnerabilities due to their family environments, leading to what the literature refers to as intergenerational bereavement.

Thus, it perpetuates a classification that equates immigrant children with their parents and sets them apart from locals, while acknowledging that in practice, the term “immigrant” carries a stigmatizing connotation for those included in this group.

At the educational level, the findings reveal institutionalized barriers within the educational system, particularly evident when families seek enrollment for their children. Many families face extensive waiting lists despite persistent applications. While the shortage of available spots affects Chilean children as well, it remains a chronic issue for those interviewed in this study.

Furthermore, it has been noted that families have problems accessing educational platform, sometimes due to lack of internet access or limited knowledge of technology. This undoubtedly represents a barrier to access to education.

The calendar does not adjust to the particularities of mobilities, which in many cases are transitory, during or towards the end of the year, or are determined by the work of the families (as in the case of seasonal families in Maule who are employed in fruit harvesting). Information on these matters remains limited.

Experiences report the formation of cultural ghettos, spaces characterized by poverty and lack of opportunities. These are also spaces of resilience for communities such as the Haitian community living in a given neighborhood. They establish supportive and associative networks with compatriots, fostering a sense of security and cohesion.

Regarding discrimination practices, the research reveals that such behaviors primarily originate from adults and are often influenced by media portrayals. Children, on the other hand, exhibit inclusivity, respect for cultural differences, and a curiosity to learn about other cultures, presenting an opportunity for intercultural education.

In the classrooms, there are nuances and differences that lead to cautious

statements. As the literature mention, teachers identify learning deficits in foreign students and seek compensatory educational responses. However, it is also true that the presence of migrant children has enriched the multiculturalism of these educational communities and has favored the learning of families, as in the case of Haitian families who have learned Spanish from their children, who act as linguistic mediators. The same happens with feeding practices, where families are interested in learning about the food in the garden to prepare it later at home, at the request of their sons and daughters.

From our perspective, an intercultural approach based on the reciprocity of cultures favors processes of inclusion and social cohesion. In short, one learns from others to the extent that one also recognizes their own cultural practices.

The figure of the “peer mediator” appears in the interviews, where children accompany their siblings, cousins, friends of the same nationality and show them how the kindergarten operates. This induction strategy (which arises spontaneously) should be included in the welcome programs.

Families highly value the made by the educational centers; they recognize that their sons and daughters have gained knowledge, values and attitudes. The activities focused on inclusion are extended to other activities of the curriculum, i.e., the intercultural fair is carried out in one day, however, from this experience new learning objectives are proposed that are complemented during the following days.

The pedagogical team relationship with families is carried out in two instances, formally through parent meetings, and informally through ongoing interactions that are highly valued by families. These informal conversations occur when families drop off or pick up their children from kindergarten, in addition to using resources like family chats via telephone.

Multilingualism is a reality in the classroom. Communication is oriented through different strategies, literate environments, translators, applications, the expansion of words according to the ways in which they are known in the different countries represented. Although the “pathologization” of the language is widely documented, which has led to the massive referral of children to multi-professional teams, in the cases studied this reality does not occur; on the contrary, the language is recognized and valued in its uniqueness, both by the families and by the pedagogical teams.

In terms of professional development, it is necessary to state that the pedagogical teams have training gaps in terms of intercultural diversity. Nevertheless, experience has led them to develop intercultural communication skills, such as empathy, reciprocity, attentive listening, use of non-verbal forms of communication, among others. In short, they have incorporated a special intercultural sensitivity that leads them to commit themselves to the learning of children regardless of their cultural origin.

The pedagogical teams have discovered the value of problematizing reality together and, based on this, seeking solutions or strategies to face the challenges

posed by cultural diversity.

We think that it is possible to advance a more inclusive education based on the following recommendations for action:

- a) Design and implement reception programs for children and families who migrate.
- b) Make the curriculum and school calendar more flexible.
- c) Facilitate access to education, improving information channels, facilitating access technology (internet, information and help desks, translators, etc.), designing a safe reception environment that does not get bogged down in bureaucratic procedures or request for unnecessary documentation.
- d) Develop teacher training plans to promote greater knowledge and intercultural sensitivity.
- e) Work on new research questions, promote participatory research methods adjusted to the needs and interests of children as producers of knowledge.

Finally, we recognize some limitations of the study that we suggest readers consider, one of them is the sample, which is small and with particular characteristics of the group studied, for which comparisons or generalizations of the results should not be made, we also identify a limitation, the lack of previous studies on the topic in the country, however, we have taken it as an opportunity to identify new knowledge gaps in migration studies.

For future studies, it is recommended to include the voices and perspectives of migrant children through age-appropriate methods, such as drawings, observations or focus groups to capture their unique experiences, the present study was exploratory in nature and is limited to its participants.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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