

Native Flight in Education: The Venezuelan Migration to Peru

*Li, Martínez, Martínez & Sánchez (2024) – **Discussion***

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Overview

RQ: How does Venezuelan migrant influx into Peruvian schools affect incumbent students' outcomes and school choice decisions?

Strategy

- Administrative data on all Peruvian students, 2014-2019
- Use cross-grade within-school variation in migrant share
- Combine reduced-form analysis with structural model of school choice

Main empirical results

- Small negative effects on incumbent academic outcomes
- Substantial native flight: 10pp increase in migrant share → 1.5pp increase in switching
- But: minimal academic gains for switchers, despite higher tuition costs
- **Discrete choice model** helps interpret results wrt welfare for incumbents

Overall, great work! Very interesting and well motivated questions, rigorous empirical work and clear writing. A joy to read

#1: Theoretical framework

What rationale for native flight and academic outcomes?

- There could be many theories for why families switch schools:
 - Academic quality concerns? (**rational** response to negative peer effects)
 - Resource competition? (avoiding crowded, underfunded schools)
 - Social preferences/discrimination? (avoiding immigrant peers regardless of quality)
- Interpretation of zero academic gains depends on motivation:
 - If academic quality → results suggest irrational decisions or market failure
 - If non-academic motives → zero gains may be consistent with theory
- Could you think of ways to formalize competing hypotheses and test implications:
 - e.g.: Does switching occur even when migrant academic quality is high?

Could help increase impact of paper

- External validity
- Policy implications

#2. Identification strategy

Key assumption: “grade placement of Venezuelan students within schools is uncorrelated with [...] incumbent students’ conditional outcomes [...] in the absence of the influx”

- Grade placement by age is similar between migrants and natives – good. But:
 - Might there be reallocation of resources (teachers) across grades as a reaction to immigrant shocks?
 - Evidence on “parallel trends” pre-migration shock?
- Scope for additional tests:
 - Test for differences in migrant and incumbent characteristics across grades
 - Use migrant shares from prior years as placebo tests

#3. Policy implications?

Welfare/policy implications would be interesting to explore

- Impacts for migrants themselves?
- Limited ability to evaluate overall system efficiency
 - Would be great to have data on per-pupil expenditures or resource allocation, and test resource competition mechanism; or indicators on teacher quality (perhaps turnover easier?)
- Policy implications unclear without better understanding of mechanisms
- Mechanism important to think of policy options:
 - How to mitigate any negative externalities or misperceptions?
 - ⇨ If native flight is discrimination-based, what policies could reduce the stigma?
 - ⇨ Could model be used to test policies?

Thank you

#4. Competing motives: residential mobility vs. school choice

Is native flight due to education or other local factors?

- Exclusion restriction: families change schools to avoid migrants
- Residential mobility patterns in response to migration? Evidence could also suggest it:
 - No academic gains from switching
 - Similar patterns of switching across neighborhood boundaries

Can the data say more?

- Significant effect of migrant share on distance (Table A2)
- Authors interpret as small. Would be good to have some more info on that
 - Anecdotal evidence?
 - Some way of inferring address of parents? Test only for those who do not move?