

# CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DISCURSIVE REPRESENTATION OF VENEZUELAN MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE PERUVIAN DIGITAL MEDIA

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## Summary

The objective of this research was to critically analyze the discursive representation of Venezuelan migrant women in the Peruvian digital media. The theoretical and methodological foundations adopted were the attitude system of Martin and White's Valuation Theory (2005) and van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (2016). A methodology of an analytical nature was employed, with a qualitative and documentary design. A corpus composed of fifteen (15) press articles from three digital media in Peru (La República, Trome and Perú 21) with references to Venezuelan migrant women and published between 2019 and 2023 was analyzed, since, during this time, the country experienced the largest migratory flow of Venezuelans (Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela, 2023). Taking into account the different evaluations and ideologies of each newspaper, three large semantic nodes were constructed. As for the newspaper La República, it was found that the most common discursive representation it constructed was the one that reduces women to vulnerable victims. In the case of the newspaper Trome, it portrays them as sensual and forbidden beings. On the other hand, the representation constructed by the newspaper Perú 21 is limited to that of an aggressive and dangerous victim. Based on these findings, it was concluded that the Peruvian digital media discursively represent Venezuelan migrant women in a negative way and focus on judging, discrediting and dehumanizing them.

**Keywords:** Venezuelan female migration, digital media, discursive representation, Valuation Theory, Critical Discourse Analysis.

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1. Problem statement**

The economic, political and social crisis that Venezuela has been going through in recent years has caused one of the most significant migratory flows of the 21st century. After Syria, the migratory displacement by Venezuelans has positioned itself as the second largest in the world and the largest in Latin America from 2014 to the present, which represents historical figures (Inter-American Development Bank, 2021). This phenomenon has been mainly due to a series of factors, such as inflation, insecurity and lack of basic services, which have forced more than seven million people to leave the country in the hope of improving their economic situation (Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela, 2023).

In their search for new opportunities, many Venezuelan migrants have resorted to seeking refuge in the countries closest to Venezuela, where one of the main destinations is Peru. By June 2023, more than 1.5 million Venezuelans would have been welcomed in Peru (United Nations Refugee Agency [UNHCR], 2023), which has represented a significant change both for the daily lives of Peruvians and for the international perception of Venezuelans. Also, according to UNHCR (2023), women make up 58% of this migrant population and have not only faced xenophobia and discrimination like other Venezuelan migrants, but have also been victims of sexual harassment, gender-based violence and obstacles to finding decent work.

The arrival of Venezuelan migrants in Peru has become a controversial issue that the media has taken advantage of to promote stereotypes and negative social representations with the purpose of attracting attention and causing controversy, often through yellow journalism. According to van Dijk (1994), when it comes to migration, the press tends to focus on highlighting how it represents a problem, invasion or threat, and acts as a political agent by having the power to influence the actions and thoughts of society. These narratives affect the living conditions and social identity of migrants, but especially of women; when their experiences are not invisibilized, they are constantly portrayed in digital media as sex workers, criminals, victims or husband stealers. Prado et al. (2021) explain that the problem of these news stories lies not only in the implantation of discriminatory imaginaries in the minds of the people who read them, but also in the ease with which they can reproduce them in other mass media: “[in social networks], cybernauts manifest and propagate obscenities and insults against them in a

visible way in the sense that they objectify them as sexual objects in front of those who idolize their value and intelligence” (p. 315).

This research seeks to study the way in which the Peruvian digital media refer to Venezuelan migrant women and how the way in which they are discursively represented can negatively affect their integration into society, especially when the imaginaries with which they are associated do not reflect reality. For example, between 60% and 85% of Venezuelan women who migrate to Peru demonstrate some level of higher education or previous work experience, which indicates that, in principle, they have the skills for successful labor market insertion (Álvarez et al., 2022) and which would translate, according to estimates, into an increase of 4.4% of the country's GDP (Sánchez et al., 2020). However, seeing migration as an invasion, Peruvian society sustains the idea that the entire migrant population arrived in the country to commit crimes and steal Peruvian jobs: “The overrepresentation of the refugee or migrant person as a criminal is not based on statistics or objective criteria, but on the sensationalist impact that crimes committed by foreign populations have caused in people's imagination” (Willer et al., 2021, as cited in UNHCR, 2023, p. 30). Further evidence of this is that, according to UNHCR (2023), the National Institute of Statistics and Information (INEI) found that, between 2016 and 2020, the percentage of crimes in Peru did not increase; only 0.5% of the total number of crime reports corresponds to Venezuelan individuals and only 98 women of Venezuelan nationality are in a penitentiary establishment.

As mentioned above, since this is such a controversial issue for Peruvians, the media have been in charge of reproducing the idea that Venezuelan migrants have a negative impact on the country in order to cause controversy, which only justifies and perpetuates discrimination against them. As van Dijk (1994) explains, people tend to believe everything published by the media, since they see them as an authority figure, and by disseminating their own opinions and ideological positions through specific evaluative language, such as referring to all Venezuelan migrants as coquettes or sex workers, they reinforce the beliefs that Peruvians already have towards them. Consequently, a discursive practice that could be considered to make the situation of Venezuelan migrant women visible only supports their vulnerabilization, social scrutiny and violent treatment.

## **1.2. Literature review and empirical background**

In order to understand the focus of this research, it is necessary to address concepts and theories that support the critical analysis of the discursive representation of Venezuelan migrant women in the Peruvian digital media proposed here.

First, Calsamiglia and Tusón (1999) define discourse as a social practice that is articulated on the basis of contextualized linguistic use, both oral and written. This implies that discourse depends on a reciprocal relationship between situations, objects of knowledge, social identities and people in order to exist: “situations, institutions and social structures shape the discursive event, but also the event shapes them” (Calsamiglia and Tusón, 1999, p. 15). Likewise, van Dijk (2000) considers discourse as a practical, social and cultural phenomenon that occurs during social interactions that are, in turn, embedded in diverse social and cultural contexts.

For their part, discursive representations can be defined as textual expressions of the references or meanings elaborated by the speaker’s consciousness about himself, his reality and his world of meaning (Matus, 2018). Likewise, according to Montecino (2008), as cited in Ramírez (2018), discursive representations constitute the lexical, semantic and syntactic resources used by speakers to manifest their particular way of constructing reality, so they vary depending on their social context or ideological position.

Ideology is another crucial concept for this research. For van Dijk (2012), ideology refers to a cognitive system of beliefs and attitudes, especially political, social or religious, shared by a social group or movement. Similarly, he explains that ideologies are neither personal nor private, but encompass the shared beliefs of a group about its fundamental conditions and its modes of existence and reproduction (van Dijk, 2005).

For its part, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a type of research focused on discursive analysis and studies “the way in which the abuse of power and social inequality are represented, reproduced, legitimized and resisted in text and speech in social and political contexts” (van Dijk, 2016, p. 21). This is a multidisciplinary study, so it encompasses areas such as discourse grammar, rhetoric, stylistics, narrative analysis, sociolinguistics, among others.

However, the specific theory on which this paper focuses is Valuation Theory, developed by James Martin and Peter White (2005). Valuation Theory can be understood as a linguistic current based on the study of valuation as a term that includes all the evaluative uses of language, through which speakers and writers adopt ideological positions, construct discursive identities, assume roles, etc. (Kaplan, 2004). Broadly speaking, this approach is divided into three main semantic domains: commitment, gradation and attitude. The commitment system refers to the linguistic resources used by the speaker to position him/herself in relation to the propositions communicated by a text, while gradation refers to the way in which speakers intensify or diminish the force of their utterances and graduate the focus of their semantic categorizations (Kaplan, 2004). Finally, the attitude system is the one adopted in this research and encompasses “all utterances that convey a positive or negative evaluation, or that can be interpreted as an invitation to the reader to supply his or her own negative or positive evaluations” (Kaplan, 2004, p. 60). Attitude can be explicit or implicit and its analysis must take

into account the context throughout the text. This system is also divided into the subsystems of affect, judgment and appreciation.

The affect subsystem is responsible for characterizing phenomena related to emotions and is determined by whether these are positive or negative (Kaplan, 2004). In this domain, emotions are concentrated in three groups: happiness or unhappiness; security or insecurity; and satisfaction or dissatisfaction.

On the other hand, the judgment subsystem refers to morality and the evaluation of human behavior and conduct with respect to institutionalized social norms (Kaplan, 2004). Evaluative judgment analyzes how people judge a behavior as due or improper based on their own ideals, which are constrained by culture, their experiences and their individual beliefs. Accordingly, this subsystem is divided into two other categories: social esteem judgments and social sanction judgments. Social esteem is subdivided into judgments related to normality, ability and tenacity. Social sanction, on the other hand, is subdivided into judgments related to truthfulness and moral integrity.

Finally, the appreciation subsystem refers to how human feelings towards products, processes and entities are formalized as a set of evaluations, positive or negative (Kaplan, 2004). Appreciation includes both aesthetic and non-aesthetic evaluations and, although people can also be evaluated through this subsystem, they are perceived as non-behavioral entities. Thus, this subsystem is categorized into three dimensions: reaction, composition, and evaluation. In turn, reaction is subdivided into values of impact and quality, and composition into values of balance and complexity.

On the other hand, in order to understand the specific situation of Venezuelan women, who are being discursively represented in the Peruvian press, it is important to understand what migration entails. Migration is understood as a social phenomenon that alters the structure, growth and distribution of the population of a country because “a number of people cross some administrative limit or border in search of settling in new lands to improve their living and working conditions, among other aspects” (Gutiérrez et al., 2020, p. 301).

Moreover, since Venezuelan migration has been such a controversial phenomenon in Peru in recent times, it can lead to cases of discrimination. Liars (2021) defines discrimination as a differentiation between individuals or groups that induces unequal treatment of people, reinforced by the customs or even the laws of a given society. This prejudicial treatment is based on negative prejudices or stigmas that establish social, political, economic or educational inequalities that are unjustifiable, undeserved and deprive those affected of fundamental rights.

In the digital era, the media play a crucial role in shaping imaginaries about migration and can perpetuate discrimination. According to González-Arias, et al. (2022), the media are



cultural institutions that, through the management of information, construct and produce ways of seeing the world and valuing it, which leads to the reproduction of ideologies through the imaginaries they convey and massively offer. By existing in a digital space, these acquire an interactive factor that enables users to act as issuers, producers, curators and distributors of content (Marta-Lazo and Gabelas, 2016).

Beyond the concepts and theories, among the antecedents consulted for this research work are Prado et al. (2021) who, in their research, focused on examining the constructions about Venezuelan migrant women, evidencing their situation of vulnerability and discrimination with the purpose of deconstructing images that end up affecting their integration into society. The authors concluded that, through the term *veneca*, Venezuelan migrant women are stigmatized and associated with sexuality, prostitution and criminalization, which provides this research with a sociological and linguistic perspective on the unequal treatment of migrant women.

Likewise, the situational diagnosis Representation of refugee and migrant women in the media and social networks in Peru by UNHCR (2023), aimed to identify the representations and discourses that these media construct towards Venezuelan refugee and migrant women, to understand the impact they have on their possibilities of inclusion in Peru between 2021 and 2022, and to propose recommendations to different actors to eliminate negative representations. The authors found that constantly consuming content associated with migrants, or living close to them, increases the probability that the Peruvian population adheres to negative representations, reproducing narratives from news coverage that link migrants to theft, drug trafficking or human trafficking, and portray Venezuelan women as easy, self-interested, vivid or flirtatious.

Finally, Centeno and Gómez (2019) proposed in their research, to analyze, from van Dijk's socio-cognitive approach, the media representations of the Venezuelan immigrant in the newspaper *El Tiempo* and the magazine *Semana* in the last quarter of 2018. This proved that Venezuelan migrants face similar situations regardless of the host country, given that, even in Colombia, these continue to have journalistic coverage loaded with ideological meanings that emphasize their poverty, vulnerability and need.

### **1.3. Objective of the research**

#### **1.3.1. General Objective**

To critically analyze the discursive representation of Venezuelan migrant women in the Peruvian digital media.

### **1.3.2. Specific objectives**

- To determine the attitude of the Peruvian digital media towards Venezuelan migrant women.
- To determine the ideological features of the attitude of the Peruvian digital media to discursively represent Venezuelan migrant women.
- To critically analyze the discursive representation of Venezuelan migrant women as reflected in the Peruvian digital media.

## **2. METHOD**

### **2.1. Research design**

The research work proposes to analyze statements from digital media in Peru that refer to Venezuelan migrant women. Therefore, its design is documentary, since it focuses on the collection of data from documentary sources with the purpose of describing, comparing, analyzing or explaining an event (Hurtado, 2010).

Likewise, the approach of this research is qualitative in nature. As Carhuanchu et al. (2019) explains, this approach encompasses the study, use and collection of empirical materials to understand and critically learn about reality, from the meanings and intentional purposes given by individuals. This corresponds with the intention of this study to discursively analyze the ideological features and the attitude of the Peruvian digital media towards the figure of the Venezuelan migrant woman.

### **2.2. Scope of the study**

This research presents an analytical scope, which, according to Hurtado (2010), consists of “generating a critique or an interpretation of a study event, from the reorganization of its synergies, based on an analytical criterion, in such a way that it is possible to discover novel aspects” (p. 444). This implies the decomposition of a study event to intensively analyze each of its elements and the relationships they have with each other, with the purpose of understanding its nature, which coincides with the objective of this research.

### 2.3. Linguistic corpus

The research corpus is composed of fifteen (15) press articles that come from Peruvian digital media and contain references to Venezuelan migrant women. These were particularly selected, since they met the following criteria. First, they had to belong to different newspapers with different editorial lines: traditional, balanced and sensationalist, which were recognized in the country in order to determine whether the representation of migrant women in the Peruvian press is biased and whether this represents a problem exclusive to a single type of media. Therefore, the analysis took into account three specific digital media: La República, Trome and Perú 21, from which five (5) articles from each were chosen equally. La República is a generalist newspaper with a long history, which, in its digital version, has approximately four million visitors per month and is considered one of the most relevant media in the country (Portocarrero and Fernández, 2019). Meanwhile, Trome is a popular and sensationalist newspaper characterized by being the most widely read in Peru and, until a few years ago, the best-selling in the Spanish-speaking world (Bejarano and Higuera, 2022).

Finally, Perú 21 is a newspaper aimed at the upper class, which is characterized by having an audience of approximately six million visitors per month and is among the ten digital media with the largest audience in the country (Media Ownership Monitor, 2016). Secondly, the publication dates of the articles had to cover a period of five (5) years, due to the fact that, in 2019, Peru experienced the largest migratory flow of Venezuelans until 2023, which is when this research was formulated (Plataforma de Coordinación Interagencial para Refugiados y Migrantes de Venezuela, 2023). Thirdly, the selected articles had to contain a high number of statements referring to Venezuelan migrant women; in total, throughout the fifteen (15) articles, a total of one hundred and thirteen (113) statements were collected.

### 2.4. Units and categories of analysis

Considering the nature of this study, the enunciation is taken as the unit of analysis, which according to Calsamiglia and Tusón (1999) is “the concrete and tangible product of an enunciation process carried out by an Enunciator and destined to an Enunciatee” (p. 17). In the case of this research, we analyzed those statements in different textual and discursive pieces, belonging to digital media in Peru, which contained evaluations of Venezuelan migrant women.

On the other hand, in the documentary analysis, categories were created from the classification and codification of the various elements of a message in order to better understand its meaning (Carhuacho et al., 2019). In order to fulfill what was stipulated in the specific objectives, this research work took as categories of analysis the three subsystems of attitude belonging to the Valuation Theory developed by James Martin and Peter White (2005). The affect

subsystem is divided into the subcategories of Happiness/Unhappiness, Safety/Unsafety and Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction; the judgment subsystem is divided into Social Esteem and Social Sanction valuations; and finally, the appraisal subsystem is divided into Reaction, Composition and Valuation valuations (Kaplan, 2004). Likewise, each of these attitudinal dimensions can be positive or negative, implicit or explicit.

## **2.5. Units and categories of analysis**

The data collection technique used for this research work was observation, because it is based on the collection, selection and recording of information from the use of the senses to perceive the events under study within a global vision (Hurtado, 2010). For the development of this research, an analysis matrix was prepared containing, first, the coding of all the selected statements based on the initials of the newspaper to which they belong, together with the date of their publication and a unique consecutive number to identify them. Subsequently, the direct transcription of each of these was placed in order to identify the particular linguistic item that refers to the Venezuelan migrant woman or her valuation. The type of valuation presented by each statement was determined according to the attitude subsystem of the Valuation Theory (affect, judgment and appreciation) and it was established whether they exhibit a positive or negative, explicit or implicit valuation. Finally, the analysis is complemented with the pertinent observations.

## **2.6. Data processing and procedure**

First, the utterances with expressions referring to Venezuelan migrant women were identified. Then, these were segmented and coded in the corpus, to later register them in the analysis matrix. Next, the type of valuation they presented (affection, judgment or appreciation; positive or negative; explicit or implicit) was determined according to the theory and the frequency of these was obtained to stipulate which category predominated in the selected statements. Consequently, the lexical selections favored in the corpus were determined and interpreted according to the context of enunciation, consumption, and social context to describe the representations made of Venezuelan migrant women. Likewise, the ideological and attitudinal traits of the enunciator were identified and the type of representation of Venezuelan migrant women that predominated in the selected sample of texts was characterized. Finally, the pertinent interpretations were made.

### 3. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

Now, returning to the results of the newspaper La República, the statements that denoted a judgmental assessment were the most common throughout the five (5) selected articles. Most of them were positive and explicit, so a great number of the statements included linguistic items such as: (LR2301) daring steps, (LR2307) showed his best steps, (LR2319) great talent, etc. It can be noted that all these positive and explicit statements allude to the great talent and boldness of Venezuelan women, which highlights their capabilities, a valuation of Social Esteem. This aspect can also be observed, for example, in the statement (LR2305) below:

*For that reason, she stole sighs in thousands of Internet users, who did not tire of giving her compliments for her talent.*

This statement was classified as a positive and explicit Social Esteem-Capability rating, since it highlights how the woman is so competent and talented that Internet users could not refrain from praising her. However, among the explicit statements, there were also those that were classified as negative, such as, for example, statement (LR2214):

*In social networks, a young Venezuelan woman told in extreme frustration that she could not get a job because of her nationality. This was classified as a negative and explicit Social Esteem-Capability rating, since it singles out the woman as incapable and not competent enough to get a job, apparently due to her nationality.*

Likewise, this system also had implicit ratings, mostly negative, which depended on a more complex interpretation and analysis that should take into account the complete statement and the context of the whole article, instead of individual items. An example that illustrates this case is the statement (LR1910):

*PNP agents captured Paolo Obregón Ruesta, a 32-year-old man who used to contact Venezuelan women through Facebook, deceiving them by offering them jobs and then raping them.*

This was classified as a negative Social Esteem-Capacity assessment. Here the role of the Venezuelan migrant woman as a helpless victim was assessed and it was emphasized that her desperation to get ahead was so overwhelming that she was unable to realize that the job offer was a deception to assault her. Similarly, the statement (LR2213) could be observed:

*A few days ago, the young foreigner in Peru told on TikTok about the acts of xenophobia she had gone through while trying to get a job in Peru.*

This was classified as a negative Social Sanction-Moral Integrity assessment. In this case, not only was the role of the Venezuelan woman as a victim of discrimination evaluated, but also the negative situation she had to go through as a migrant was morally condemned. Likewise, the evaluations of appreciation also stood out throughout the selected articles and were even present more than five (5) times in the same text. In the case of the newspaper La República, all the statements of appreciation were positive and mostly explicit and included linguistic items such as (LR2301) roba suspiros, (LR2302) singular movimientos, and (LR2304) sorprendió. An example is the case of the utterance (LR2317):

*He asks a young Venezuelan girl to dance, but she unleashes her best moves and steals the show.*

This was classified as an explicit positive Reaction-Impact appraisal, as it clearly demonstrates how the author's intention is to highlight the impact the Venezuelan woman caused on other people with her dance steps. As for the implicit appraisals, these follow the same line of portraying the Venezuelan woman as a sexy woman who cannot help but attract others. This is evident in the case of statement (LR2308):

*The unique moment soon went viral on social networks and cybernauts did not miss the opportunity to write hundreds of messages praising the foreign woman.*

This was also classified as a positive Reaction-Impact rating. In this instance, the author evaluated the Venezuelan migrant woman as so attractive that she had a great impact on Internet users, who could not resist making her viral and praising her through messages. Similarly, affectionate evaluations were present to a lesser extent in this newspaper and almost all the statements classified in this category belonged to the same text. Positive and explicit linguistic items such as (LR2321) se emociona, (LR2322) no cabía de la felicidad, (LR2324) su entusiasmo fue tan contagiante and (LR2325) agradeció constitute the same article that expresses the gratitude and happiness of a Venezuelan migrant woman towards the opportunities she has achieved in Peru. This also explains why they were all identified as ratings of Happiness/Unhappiness and Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction. However, there were two (2) specific cases that distinguished themselves from this line of ideas. First, the case of the statement (LR2214) was found:

*In social networks, a young Venezuelan woman said she was extremely frustrated that she could not get a job because of her nationality.*

This was previously evaluated as a judgment of incapacity; however, it also contains an explicit negative Happiness/Unhappiness assessment, as it directly exposes how the woman

felt frustrated and disappointed for not being able to find employment in her new country. Likewise, the statement (LR2303) was also observed:

*She feels like another Peruvian!*

This was classified as a positive and implicit Satisfaction/Implicit Dissatisfaction rating and presents an interesting case. This is placed in the context of an article mostly loaded with appreciation ratings where the Venezuelan woman is portrayed as sexy and irresistible. But, although the press gave it a positive connotation, this expression also implies that the only way for the author to find the Venezuelan woman attractive and feel satisfied with her behavior, is to consider that she resembles a Peruvian woman. Thus, it can be concluded that, among all the evaluations of Venezuelan migrant women identified in the newspaper La República, the most prevalent were those that referred to them as vulnerable and incapable victims or as attractive and captivating beings.

On the other hand, taking up the results of the Trome newspaper, the statements that denoted a judgmental appraisal were also the most predominant throughout the five (5) articles. Most of these were negative and included explicit linguistic items such as (TR2315) uninhibited, (TR2330) dangerous and (TR2331) abused her power. For example, the statement (TR2326) Venezuelan 'La flaca' tortured women: She pulled out their nails and shot them in the foot. was classified as a negative and explicit Social Sanction-Moral Integrity rating, as it clearly portrays the act of torturing as illegal and morally reprehensible. However, to a lesser extent, positive and explicit statements such as (TR2317) honest and (TR2317) legal were also found. As for statements with an implicit valuation, cases such as (TR2301) were found:

*Young Venezuelan woman in Peru is a nurse from Monday to Friday and an exotic dancer on weekends.*

This was classified both as a positive Social Esteem-Capacity assessment, for implying that Venezuelan women are hard-working and strive to get ahead, by performing two different jobs, at two different times and in two different contexts, and also as a negative Social Sanction-Moral Integrity, for implying that being an exotic dancer is something stigmatized and is usually not well regarded by society. This imaginary of the Venezuelan woman as a seductive being with a forbidden sensuality is repeated on several occasions throughout the texts of this diary. Another example of this is the statement (TR2303):

*Queen of the night*

This was classified as a negative Social Sanction-Moral Integrity rating, since it uses a metaphor that, at first, may seem positive (being a queen) but, in reality, hints at a semantic

content associated with the illegal and secret, which can only be shown during the night. An additional case is that of the statement (TR2328):

*Her name is Minervis Yulianny Hernández Peña (22) and she said she wanted to be a TikTok star, a network in which she recorded videos almost every day and in which she has more than 6900 followers, but those who really knew her believed she was the Devil in person.*

This was classified as a Social Sanction rating-Negative Truthfulness. By highlighting that she is a TikTok star, it implies that although the woman was committing illegal acts, one cannot get away from how attractive and irresistible she is. However, the author also made a contrast and evaluated her as a liar and manipulator, as her attractiveness only hid that she is an evil and cruel woman compared to the devil.

In the same way, evaluations of appreciation were also present in the framework of the five (5) articles. All the statements identified as part of this subsystem were positive, the vast majority were explicit and were associated with the impact caused by the Venezuelan migrant woman on other people. Some explicit statements included items such as (TR2302) cuerpo de infarto, (TR2304) bella, (TR2311) femme fatale, (TR2316) La miss sexy and (TR2321) quedaron atónitos. For example, statement (TR2327) was identified:

*La Flaca' recorded TikTok's showing off sensual dances to conquer her audience.*

This was classified as a Reaction-Impact appraisal both because the author highlighted the fact that this woman was sensual and attractive, and because he enhanced that this same attractiveness conquered and stole the hearts of her social network audience. In this sense, the statements with implicit evaluations also followed this same line of ideas. An example is the case of the statement (TR2319):

*The foreign girl changed her physique dramatically since she arrived in Peru and did not hesitate to show it off on social networks.*

This was classified as a Reaction-Impact appraisal, since the author implies that the woman had greatly impacted the internet users by her physical transformation and was proud of it, so she was not ashamed to show it off. Thus, affect appraisals represented the minority, as they were only found in four (4) positive and explicit statements that were related to feelings of Satisfaction/Dissatisfaction. First, the case of statement (TR2310) was found:

*It is a job she is neither ashamed nor sorry for, as it helps cover basic household expenses.*



This refers to a text where a woman practices sex work to survive in Peru; however, the author explicitly expressed her emotional disposition, demonstrating that she does not feel bad about her actions. The other statements belonged to the same text in which a woman stated that she loves Peru and does not want to leave; therefore, expressions such as those evidenced in statement (TR2323) and (TR2324) were included:

*She explained that it is not in her plans to leave Peru for the simple fact that she would miss a large group of traditional dishes.*

According to the foreigner, she loves Peruvian cuisine and could not live without it. In sum, it can be concluded that, similar to the newspaper La República, the dominant evaluations that made reference to the Venezuelan migrant woman in the newspaper Trome were those that portrayed her as a sensual, dangerous and forbidden being, whose actions are morally reprehensible, illegal or simply frowned upon by society.

Finally, taking up the results of the newspaper Perú 21, judgmental evaluations also represented the predominant type throughout all the texts. All the statements belonging to this subsystem were negative and, among those that presented an explicit evaluation, we found linguistic items such as (PR2304) victim, (PR2307) extortionist, (PR2312) dangerous, (PR2312) unfaithful, (PR2222) coward and (PR2221) aggressive foreigner. For example, the case of statement (PR2313) was found:

*Renato Baigorria assures that the foreigner always seeks to take advantage of her partners.*

This was classified as a Social Sanction-Truthfulness rating, as the author clearly portrayed the woman, throughout the statement and the entire text, as a self-serving, lying and manipulative person.

With respect to the statements with implicit evaluations, these were mostly focused on the indication that the Venezuelan migrant woman is aggressive, cruel and manipulative. A case that demonstrates this is the statement (PR2308):

*The Venezuelan was shown at private parties and nightclubs enjoying the extortion money she made.*

This was classified as a negative Social Sanction-Moral Integrity rating, since it implies that the woman involved is evil and immoral, does not repent of her actions and, rather, enjoys extorting others. Also, this same intention can be observed in the statement (PR2316):

*Finally, in her social networks, the woman shows a life full of luxuries; however, it would be a screen to cover her true personality.*

This one belongs to a story about how a man accused his Venezuelan partner of cheating on him on Valentine's Day and stealing 22 thousand soles. This was classified as a Social Sanction-Negative Truthfulness rating, as it implies that the woman is a fake and a liar and does not regret boasting a life of luxury, which she obtains through Peruvian men, to hide her superficial personality. On the other hand, we also found, to a lesser extent, Social Esteem-Capability ratings that portray the Venezuelan woman as a victim. An example is the statement (PR2303):

*The minor had fled Venezuela with Greyver Pacheco Veroes, after her parents did not accept the relationship because she suffered physical violence from her partner.*

Here, not only was the role of the Venezuelan woman as a vulnerable victim of gender violence evaluated, but also the naivety and innocence of the adolescent was highlighted for not paying attention to her parents and running away with her abuser, who was of legal age. In contrast, appreciative appraisals were only identified in two instances and both were positive. First, the statement (PR2312) was found:

*Beautiful and dangerous. A young businessman reported that his Venezuelan ex-partner was unfaithful to him on February 14.*

This was classified as an explicit positive Reaction-Quality rating, since, although the author then described the reprehensible acts for which this woman is judged, he did not hesitate to highlight her beauty. On the other hand, the statement (PR2318) was found:

*A Venezuelan TikTok sensation was recently discovered to be one of the biggest traffickers of the substance.*

This was classified as an implicit positive Reaction-Impact appraisal, given that the author implies that the woman was so attractive that she caused a great impact on people and they could not resist following her on social networks, even when she later emphasized that she is a dangerous woman who carried out illegal acts. Finally, affect appraisals were only identified in the negative and explicit case of the utterance (PR2302):

*Despite living far away from her family, the young woman always kept in touch with her mother, but one day she wrote to her mother that she was unhappy*

*and wanted to return to her country, as she could not stand the life she had with Greyver.*

This was classified as a Happiness/Unhappiness assessment, since the author exposed the emotional disposition of the Venezuelan girl, which was based on a total unhappiness with the life she was leading and the desire to return to the security represented by her parents. In conclusion, unlike the previously discussed newspapers, the evaluations found in the newspaper Perú 21 that referred to the Venezuelan migrant woman were not focused on portraying her as sensual or attractive, but as an aggressive and dangerous victimizer, who does not regret hurting others and who came to the country to commit illicit acts.

#### **IV.1 Discursive representations**

Based on the above, three major semantic nodes can be constructed, taking into account the different evaluations of each newspaper and their respective ideologies. First, based on its results, it can be affirmed that the most common discursive representation constructed by the newspaper La República is the one that reduces women to a vulnerable victim. However, it can also be observed that this is a generalist newspaper with a more balanced ideology that does not revolve around discrediting Venezuelan migrant women, since it does not focus only on representing them through negative judgment, but also highlights their favorable qualities and gives them a space to express their feelings. Even so, these positive evaluations do not refer to the intellectual attributes, professional achievements or work capabilities that could be represented in the texts, but focus mainly on praising her beauty.

However, in the texts of the newspaper Trome, a more yellowish tone is appreciated, which coincides with the fact that it is conceived as a popular and sensationalist media. The results of this newspaper reduce Venezuelan women to two main qualities: sensual and forbidden. A more frequent use of the Social Sanction judgment is evidenced, especially statements of Moral Integrity that have to do with women's sexuality, which gives way to polemic headlines that seem to only seek to attract attention and portray the Venezuelan woman as a sexy nurse or an OnlyFans model. This continues the line of imaginary drawn by the previous newspaper, La República, but with the nuances of the newspaper Trome.

Finally, the newspaper Perú 21 demonstrates a radical ideology that is completely closed to Venezuelan female migration. The representation it constructs limits the Venezuelan woman to being an aggressive and dangerous victimizer for Peruvian society, and there is an almost total use of negative judgment, even when it does not use sensationalist language, since its texts are aimed at readers of higher social classes. Thus, we can see a mostly negative valuation extreme, but common to the editorial line of the newspapers described above.

As a general result of these media representations, negative narratives portraying them as an invasion or threat are distributed among readers, contributing to the perpetuation of social stigmas towards this particular community, to give way to discriminatory practices in objective real life, such as violent acts of xenophobia, sexual harassment and gender-based violence.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS

The general objective of this research was to critically analyze the discursive representation of Venezuelan migrant women in the Peruvian digital media. For this purpose, fifteen (15) articles were selected from three influential Peruvian newspapers: La República, Trome and Perú 21. Then, we proceeded to collect, classify, segment and code all statements that made reference to Venezuelan migrant women and transmitted a positive or negative evaluation, according to what was proposed in the Valuation Theory of Martin and White (2005) in order to form the corpus of study.

The results obtained and their interpretation made it possible to explain the relationship between the ideological positions of the Peruvian press, the discursive representations it constructs in its texts and the influence they have on society and on the collective imaginary about Venezuelan migration in order to answer the question of this research: How does the Peruvian digital media discursively represent Venezuelan migrant women?

First, we proposed to determine the attitude of the Peruvian digital media towards Venezuelan migrant women. To do so, we took into account the attitude system of the Valuation Theory, made up of the subsystems of affect, judgment and appreciation. From the resulting data, a greater incidence in the use of judgment was evidenced in each journal, since this was the most frequent type of appraisal throughout the fifteen (15) articles. This implies that, in general, the Peruvian press focuses more on judging the behavior of Venezuelan migrant women and tends to highlight their actions as immoral and illegal. Along the same lines, it was concluded that the news treatment of this group of women by the newspapers La República, Trome and Perú 21 presents a mostly negative attitude. In total, of the one hundred and thirteen (113) statements collected, sixty (60) of them were negative, which represents more than 50% of the corpus. However, it is also important to mention that the second most frequent type of appraisal was appreciation, especially Reaction-Impact ratings, which draws a line between two extremes: being judged by their actions or being appreciated for their physical appearance. Moreover, it should be remembered that the appraisal subsystem does not evaluate people, only objects or constructs, so that evaluating a woman through this system presumably entails her dehumanization, by flattering her aesthetics as an object.

Secondly, it was proposed to determine the ideological features of the Peruvian digital media to discursively represent Venezuelan migrant women. Taking into account the above, it is concluded that *La República* presents more balanced ideological features, since it is a generalist newspaper that represented Venezuelan women through all types of valuations and did not focus only on demerit or dehumanize them. However, the newspaper *Trome*, being a popular and sensationalist newspaper, demonstrated an ideology biased by yellow journalism and the interest of its editorial line; it relied on objectifying and judging women to cause controversy and attract the attention of readers. Finally, in the same line of ideas, the newspaper *Perú 21* held an ideology entirely radical and opposed to Venezuelan migration. This is mainly because most of its articles referred to crimes caused by migrants, which validates the idea that Peruvian society already has that Venezuelan women represent a problem for the country and are a threat to its daily life. This is linked to what Matus (2018) explains about how discursive representations are elaborated by the consciousness of the speaker based on his or her social context and ideology, which gives way to them being used to manifest a reality that is not completely true.

Third, it was proposed to critically analyze the discursive representation of Venezuelan migrant women reflected in the Peruvian digital media. After analyzing all the statements and their respective evaluations, three major global representations of the Venezuelan migrant woman were constructed: 1) vulnerable victim, 2) attractive and sensual being, and 3) aggressive victimizer. With respect to the first representation, the identity of the Venezuelan woman is reduced only to her suffering as a migrant and woman, being portrayed as a needy person who must continuously go through difficulties, whether it is the impossibility of getting a job or sexual aggression. With respect to the second representation, the identity of the Venezuelan woman is reduced only to her physical appearance and her ability to attract the attention of men, which may give way to other implications such as the idea that migrant women take advantage of their beauty to manipulate Peruvian men, also with the figure of stealing husbands.

Finally, with respect to the third representation (which is the most popular), the Venezuelan migrant is perceived as a threat to Peruvian society; her identity is reduced to being a delinquent or invader who only came to Peru to disturb the peace and commit crimes. These imaginaries directly validate the findings of UNHCR (2023) and Prado et al. (2021), who had previously found that narratives from Peruvian news coverage link Venezuelan migrants to hypersexuality and crime, even when it has been proven that these have not been the cause of an increase in the crime rate. Additionally, Centeno and Gómez (2019) found that the negative and biased representation is not a problem exclusive to a specific country, since in Colombia there is also press coverage loaded with narratives that highlight the vulnerability and need of migrants.

These ways of representing Venezuelan women have consequences in real life, since the media play a fundamental role in the configuration of collective imaginaries in society. That is to say, the media rely on their particular beliefs and ideologies to construct an image of society that is not completely realistic, but being perceived as authority figures, people validate them

and end up making those imaginaries or stereotypes a reality. This is especially serious in the case of these three newspapers, given that, being digital, they have a greater reach, since it is global and anyone in the world, even without being Peruvian, can access them wherever and whenever they want in a click, which generates a massive dissemination of these negative imaginaries, like a snowball, locally, regionally, and globally.

In conclusion, the way in which the Peruvian digital media discursively represent Venezuelan migrant women is negative, focused on judgment and tied to an ideology that seeks to discredit them, dehumanize them and represent them as a threat to society. The implications of this stigmatized representation are not only semantic or linguistic, but also cause real social problems that affect women's lives. Since these media have such a wide reach, society feeds on their ideological practices and they begin to replicate through their actions what, at the beginning, were only yellow headlines. This translates into migrant women being perceived as second-class citizens or humans of lesser value, widening the social gap that women already suffer globally, and which is made visible through discrimination, gender violence, little or no access to education, poverty, unemployment, among many other difficulties that hinder their integration into society. The ACD as a way of denouncing these problems that are born in words makes it possible to evidence the escalation of social practices that derive from them. Thus, this type of study contributes to unveil not only the situation, but also to point to less violent, more inclusive and positive discursive practices that result in more productive social constructs for all.

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