Exploring Migration Profiles of Professional Hispano-Americans in Japan, China, and South Korea: Socio-Structural Tensions in Hispano-America and Aspirations in East Asia

Marcelo Alejandro PIFFAUT GÁLVEZ

Abstract. The global surge in migration has led to diversification in immigrant populations and their migration patterns, even towards countries like Japan, China, and South Korea with traditionally low immigration rates. This study examines the forces driving migration among professional Hispano-Americans. It introduces an analytical framework, inspired by Archer and Bourdieu, that unravels the interplay between agency and structure, utilizing the concept of migratory trajectories to investigates dynamic shifts and subjective dimensions inherent in migration. Using grounded theory, in-depth interviews and a questionnaire survey involving 236 professionals reveal four distinct migration profiles. The data highlights the intricate nature of participants' migration expectations, shaped by tensions like the education-occupation gap, corruption, nepotism, and security concerns in their home countries. These aspirations are influenced by a convergence of economic, socio-cultural, and political factors, emphasizing professional growth, enhanced quality of life, and enriching socio-cultural experiences. Importantly, these expectations lead to a tendency to deviate from conventional migration routes, driven by a highly positive perception of destination countries. The findings shed light on the complex interplay of socio-structural tensions, migration expectations, and resulting trajectories.

Keywords: *immigration, professional immigration, immigrant profiles, Hispano-Americans, Japan, China, South Korea*

1. Introduction

Global migration has surged, marked by substantial growth in the number of international migrants.[1] These migrants constitute approximately 3.6% of the world's population, totaling around 281 million in 2020 (IOM, 2022). Over the span

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[1] The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA, 1998) defines international migrants as individuals who relocate to a country other than their original place of residence and stay there for a minimum of 12 months, irrespective of the motive behind migration or their legal status.

of two decades, international remittances have escalated from about $128 billion to $702 billion. The count of international migrants has risen by approximately 87%, refugees by about 89%, and internally displaced persons by roughly 160% (IOM, 2022). Even regions historically experiencing low levels of international immigration, such as East Asia, have observed an increase in foreign residents.

This study adheres to the conventional definition of East Asia, encompassing dynamic nations like Japan, People's Republic of China, Republic of Korea (henceforth China and South Korea), Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, and the Republic of China (in Taiwan), along with semi-autonomous territories Hong Kong and Macau (Kort, 2005). Renowned for economic vitality, these nations play pivotal roles in the global economy, enhancing their influence (Yoshimatsu, 2014). They contribute significantly to global communication, trade networks, and interactions with the West, shaping 21st-century Asia (MacDonald & Lemco, 2011). Due to increased international migration and interactions, regions with significant influence, such as East Asia, have become focal points for the escalation of migration. Japan, China, and South Korea were selected for this research due to their rankings among the world's top three economies in the region, based on gross domestic product (GDP) and gross domestic product based on purchasing power parity (GDP PPP) (IMF, 2023). Additionally, their larger scale makes it methodologically plausible to have contact with diverse immigrant groups.

Japan's foreign population has surged to about 2.85 million, driven by changes in the resident management system, immigration law amendments, employment-based residence statuses, ethnic Japanese permanent residency policies, and the Technical Intern Training Program (Akashi, 2010). Between 1990 and 2017, the number of medium- to long-term foreign residents surged from 407,603 to 2,232,026 (Ministry of Justice, 2018). The ethnic Korean population, once 90% of foreign residents, has declined to 12.9% due to naturalization and an aging demographic, while "newcomer" immigrants have risen since the 1990s, becoming the majority. Additionally, about 14,000 naturalized citizens and 34,000 children from international marriages have contributed to Japan's diverse ethnicity. Korekawa's research (2018) underscores immigration trends, estimating immigrants and individuals with foreign backgrounds at 3,325,405 (2.6% of the population) in 2015, projected to grow to 7,260,732 (6.5%) by 2040 and 10,756,724 (12.0%) by 2065 (Korekawa, 2018).

Japanese immigration research primarily employs descriptive, qualitative,

and ethnographic approaches, yet lacks theoretical development linking individual experiences to broader social structures (Higuchi, 2010a, 2010b). That research often narrows its focus to specific ethnic groups, limiting comprehensive evaluations of integration experiences in contemporary Japan and complicating discussions on holistic social integration policies (Komai, 2015). Precedents like Japanese-Brazilians and Japanese-Peruvians migrating to Japan since the 1980s are well-researched (Tsuda, 2003; Takenaka, 2005; Maeda, 2006; Tsuda, 2022, among many others), but few studies delve into non-descendant immigration to East Asia.

Kajita (1994) explored the roles of foreign workers in Japan's labor landscape. Subsequent studies, such as Kamibayashi (2015), investigated foreign workers' placement in the labor market and company employment practices. Hashimoto (2017) analyzed foreign workers' job choices using census data, introducing the "invisible settling" hypothesis. Takenoshita (2006; 2013) validated economic assimilation propositions, primarily for Japanese Brazilians and Chinese immigrants. Takenaka et al., (2016) proposed a "negative assimilation model" for Japan, linking extended residence to lower wages. Notably, there is limited attention given to professional immigrants from other regions.

China's international student policies have attracted nearly 500,000 students in two decades, serving as a potential bridge for domestic employment (Qi, 2021). In 2019, 1,030,871 foreign residents (0.07% of the population) lived in China, primarily from Hong Kong and South Korea. China's transition from emigration source to immigration receptor is influenced by its emerging global power status. The 2012 exit-entry law merged laws for foreigners and Chinese citizens, signifying China's growing recognition of immigrants as integral members of society (Zhu & Price, 2013). Labor and specialized skill demand in sectors like agriculture, construction, export processing, and caregiving drives foreign residence (Park et al., 2010).

Despite recent changes, China's international immigration studies remain in their infancy. Research mainly addresses internal labor migration (Qian & Florence, 2021; Sun, 2014; Liu et al., 2015; Pun, 2016) and forced internal migrations due to state development projects (Feng, Zhu & Wang, 2021). However, studies on foreign urban residents are growing alongside their increasing presence in major cities. Topics encompass highly skilled migration (Li et al., 2021) and experiences of African traders in the southern region (Carling & Haugen, 2021; Jordan et al., 2021). Additionally, research examines how Chinese policies aim to attract immigrants to

globalize and transform major cities (Ong. 2011). The field's immaturity leads to generalizations like "western expats" (Cai & Su, 2021), encompassing vague definitions of immigrants from the global North or Africa.

South Korea's foreign resident population grew over threefold to 2,524,656 in 2019 (KIS, 2019), primarily due to labor migration. This growth addresses demographic challenges linked to low fertility rates and an aging population. With fertility rates below replacement level (0.84 in 2020), aging population is projected to comprise 40% by 2050 (Yun et al., 2022). South Korea introduced multifaceted policies, including financial incentives, childcare subsidies, and the Employment Permit System (EPS) in 2004 to address labor shortages (Chung, 2020).

As immigration rates rise in South Korea, research on immigrants has increased. Korean immigration researchers (Kim, 2009; Choi, 2017) focus on socio-cultural conflicts and immigrants' adaptation experiences in Korean society. Regarding Hispano-American immigration, Choi (2017) explored cultural adjustment experiences of Latin American workers in Korea. Joo (2012) compared adaptation experiences of Latin American immigrants in Korea with those in Japan.

Notably, previous research exhibits significant gaps in two key aspects. Firstly, studies focusing on Latin-American immigrants often employ oversimplified definitions that can lead to inaccuracies. Adopting the term "Hispano-American"[2] (Urbanski, 1978) enhances scientific precision, challenges the Western European political construct of 'Latino(a)/Latin' influenced by imperialism (Torres Martínez, 2016), and recognizes immigrants' self-identification. This recognition is essential, as it is evident that Hispano-Americans often strive to differentiate themselves from other foreign groups (Piffaut Gálvez, 2023a). Secondly, there is a significant gap in research concerning professional Hispano-American immigrants. Examining this particular group contributes to a deeper understanding of the various migration processes within the context of the 21st century's global networks and transnationalism (Colic-Peisker, 2010; Cranston, 2016).

Hence, this research focuses on professional Hispano-Americans in Japan,

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[2] Hispanic America or Hispano-America, as the term is used here, refers to the largest cultural area in the American Continent, including 18 countries, namely, Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela. Where Spanish is the most commonly spoken language, despite there are also indigenous minority languages in this area. Hispano-Americans as defined here are the native Spanish speakers born and raised in these countries.

China, and South Korea with the aim of contributing to migration studies in these countries, enhancing the understanding of Hispano-American immigrant origins, and investigating an understudied subgroup within East Asia. The study takes an exploratory-descriptive approach due to the absence of prior research addressing the distinct characteristics of Hispano-Americans without Asian ancestry in these countries, as well as the social dynamics that underlie their migration.

This study is centered on developing migratory profiles for professional Hispano-Americans and investigating the underlying social processes that shape their migration trajectories to Japan, China, and South Korea. The methodology involves understanding socio-structural tensions in their countries of origin, outlining their migration expectations, and exploring how these factors interact to form these profiles.

2. Theoretical approach and research methods
2.1 Theoretical approach

The proposed analytical-conceptual framework offers a nuanced approach to comprehending migration origins by examining the interplay between agency and structure while avoiding conflational approaches. Archer (2009) highlights the challenge of capturing temporal moments in agency/structure interactions, while Bourdieu (1998) asserts that changes in dispositions require concurrent changes in objective structures. Drawing from Archer's argument, this study analytically differentiates agency from structure and utilizes the concept of migratory trajectories to explore their interaction, thereby enhancing theoretical and investigative outcomes.

Migratory trajectories, as a concept, encompass the dynamic shifts and subjective elements inherent in migration (Lacomba, 2001). These trajectories reconstruct migration narratives by considering departure causes, conditions, and expectations, enabling a diachronic understanding of migration characteristics (Bourdieu, 2011). Bourdieu's social surface concept, portraying agents' multidimensionality, aids in comprehending migration complexities. These trajectories, often marked by rupture, gain significance through familial, occupational, and educational dimensions (Orejuela et al., 2008).

Understanding migration's complexity requires an exploration of destination conditions and migrant characteristics. The concept of hysteresis, revealing shifts

resulting from the asynchrony between agency and structure (Hardy, 2014), is integral. Bourdieu's theory views migration as a conflictual process stemming from the rupture between habitus and social conditions. The hysteresis of habitus captures the inertia or divergence between dispositions and realization possibilities within a social field (Bourdieu, 2000). The impact of hysteresis varies based on individual position and trajectory within social fields, signifying rupture with social structures and participation in distinct new fields (Diossa Jiménez, 2012).

Navigating the array of migratory trajectories requires distinguishing between trajectory and itinerary. Trajectory concerns individual-specific routes, while itinerary involves pre-established paths shaped by shared tendencies among individuals facing similar circumstances (Lacomba, 2001). Addressing the challenge of discerning specific and general aspects in trajectory construction, De Coninck & Godard (1990) propose "biographical navigation." This involves creating intermediate biographical concepts to bridge the gap between singular statements and collective assertions, forming a structurally grounded distinctiveness from observed data.

The trajectory concept aligns with migration profiles (Orejuela et al., 2008), capturing distinctions and shared characteristics within migration flows, offering a more nuanced understanding than the concept of uniform immigration (Lacomba, 2012). A multidimensional typology is developed to formulate profiles of professional Hispano-Americans in host countries, revealing associations between socio-structural tensions, migration expectations, and the interplay between structural and subjective aspects in migration decisions. These profiles serve as analytical tools representing ideal types, allowing for flexibility in aligning trajectories with itineraries.

2. Research Method

The research methodology employs grounded theory, a qualitative approach that entails iteratively deriving categories and concepts from constant data comparison and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 2017), offering flexibility in theoretical interpretation and novel analytical perspectives. Additionally, content analysis played a pivotal role in processing interview data (Krippendorff, 2018). Data collection involved in-depth interviews (Taylor et al., 2015) and a questionnaire survey (Mellenbergh, 2008). Initial exploratory interviews illuminated subjects' immigration experiences, guiding subsequent in-depth interviews focused on

specific topics. The interviews provided coded data that informed the creation of a questionnaire survey covering emerging themes.

For conciseness, this article thoroughly analyzes survey results, selecting one representative quote from research participants for each topic to be illustrated. A total of 236 individuals participated in this research. All 236 participants are first-generation professional Hispano-Americans immigrants with no known Asian ancestry. Table I summarizes the specifics.

Table I
Overview of Research Subjects by Country

	Japan	China	Korea
Fieldwork	Exploratory interviews (May to November 2019) In-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, and final analyses (July to December 2021)	Exploratory interviews (October to December 2021) In-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, and final analyses (August to December 2022)	Exploratory interviews (June to October 2021) In-depth interviews, questionnaire surveys, and final analyses (March to October 2022)
Total subjects	181	25	30
Subdivisions	171 subjects around 30 years old (average: 32 years old) (28-35) 10 middle-aged subjects (average: 46 years old) (45-48) 31 special informants (18 in Kansai, 12 in Kanto)	20 subjects around 30 years old (average: 30.4 years old) (28-35) 5 middle-aged subjects (average: 46.2 years old) (45-48) 25 special informants (all subjects)	23 subjects around 30 years old (average: 29.4 years old) (27-34) 7 middle-aged subjects (average: 47.7 years old) (45-54) 30 special informants (all subjects)
Residence areas	Keihanshin metropolitan: (Osaka City, Kyoto City, Kobe City) Greater Tokyo Area: (Tokyo, Kanagawa Pref., Chiba Pref., Saitama Pref.)	Beijing, Shanghai, Guangdong province	Gyeonggi-do, Seoul, Busan, Gyeongsangnam-do, Incheon
Length of residence	Over 4 years with a valid work permit and legal status.	Over 3 years with a valid work permit and legal status.	Over 3 years with a valid work permit and legal status.
Educational level	University degrees: 89.5% Vocational school: 10.5%	University degrees: 92.0% Vocational school: 8.0%	University degrees: 93.3% Vocational school: 6.7%
Sex	103 males (57%) 78 females (43%)	19 males (76%) 6 females (24%)	18 males (60%) 12 females (40%)
Final comprehensive analysis (May to July 2023)			

Finally, as this research is being conducted from Kyoto University in Japan, it follows the Code of Ethics of the Japanese Sociological Society (JSS)[3]. The objective and scope of the research were explained to all subjects, as well as how their privacy would be protected before their consent was obtained.

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[3] The purpose and content of this code can be found (in Japanese) at: https://jss-sociology.org/about/ethicalcodes/.

3. Results

3.1 Perception of Pre-existing Socio-Structural Tensions Before Migration

Table II offers an extensive analysis of participants' responses regarding their pre-migration perceptions of socio-structural tensions in their home countries and regions. These tensions are divided into distinct sections, each showcasing distinct perceptions and attitudes. We will now proceed to analyze each section individually.

3.1.1 Overqualification and Job-Qualification Unmatched

The "Overqualification" category focuses on respondents' perceptions of job-qualification alignment and the underutilization of their qualifications. Within the "Underutilization of qualifications" sub-category, 90.7% of participants agreed, while 2.1% disagreed and 7.2% expressed neutrality. This underscores a common sentiment that their qualifications were not fully utilized in their previous positions in their home countries. Concerning the alignment of qualifications with job roles, the majority (88.1%) strongly disagreed that their qualifications matched their former job roles, with 8.9% neutral and 3.0% in agreement. This indicates a significant disconnect between qualifications and job responsibilities as perceived by the participants. The "disillusionment" sub-category delves into the gap between career expectations and the actual professional experiences before migration. In this case, 92.4% expressed agreement, while 1.7% disagreed, and 5.9% remained neutral. This demonstrates a prevailing sense of disappointment or disconnection between their expected career paths and the reality they encountered. The following selected quote serves to exemplify this sentiment.

> "Man, I had this degree and all these skills, but my job didn't match up at all. Back home, it was like my potential was just going down the drain. You know, you see folks with degrees drivin' cabs and stuff, and it's like, what's the point?" (A17) (Male, 27, Chile) (In Japan)

In summary, the data consistently highlights dissatisfaction or incongruence between qualifications, job roles, and career expectations. Participants widely perceived the underutilization of their qualifications, a mismatch between qualifications and job roles, and misalignment between career expectations and reality. These findings underscore the challenges faced by professionals in their career trajectories within their home countries.

3.1.2 Labor Market Instability

This category delves into participants' views on labor market conditions and job security pre-migration. In the sub-category "Perceived unstable labor market," all participants unanimously agreed that the labor market lacked stability, with 8.9% expressing neutrality. The majority (91.1%) perceived the labor market in Hispanic America as uncertain and unstable. This consensus underscores the prevalent sentiment regarding the labor market's instability. Further exploration of labor market dynamics in the "Saturation of the labor market" sub-category revealed unanimous agreement on the concept of labor market saturation. A small fraction (2.5%) remained neutral, while a substantial 97.5% acknowledged the highly competitive job market in their home region, even for professionals. Regarding concerns about unemployment risk, 95% of participants disagreed, reflecting their apprehensions about job security in their home country. Another 2.5% expressed neutrality, and the same percentage agreed, indicating a diverse range of sentiments. In brief, participants consistently perceived the labor market as unstable and oversaturated, reflecting uncertainty and competitiveness. The chosen quote below showcases this aspect.

> "Dude, you had no clue if you'd still have a job the next day. Job market? It was a roller coaster you couldn't get off. It was a nightmare trying to plan your future with all that up-and-down. Even engineers, man, even engineers were struggling'. My old man was an engineer too, but back then, you got a job for life." (B10) (Male, 30, Mexico) (In China)

These findings shed light on the perspectives of the participants regarding labor market conditions and job security. They reveal the intricate interplay of perceptions and attitudes that influence their career and employment choices.

3.1.3 Nepotism and Corruption

This category encompasses participants' perceptions and attitudes regarding nepotism, corruption, and their trust in democratic systems in their home countries. In the "Corruption in political system" sub-category, none of the participants disagreed with the presence of corruption within their political systems. A small percentage (5.9%) remained neutral, while the majority (94.1%) agreed that corruption is prevalent. This high level of agreement highlights the widespread concern regarding corruption in the political landscape. Transitioning to "Nepotism

in the labor market," no respondents disagreed with the existence of nepotism. A minority (3.8%) expressed neutrality, while most (96.2%) agreed with the prevalence of nepotism in employment. This consensus reflects their perception of personal connections playing a role in hiring practices. In the "Confidence in democracy's efficacy" category, a significant 77.97% of participants disagreed with having confidence in the effectiveness of democracy. Additionally, 17.37% expressed neutrality, while a smaller portion (4.66%) agreed with the statement. This skepticism and lack of confidence indicate a complex perspective on the efficacy of democratic governance. This sentiment is evident in the chosen quote below.

> "Getting a good gig was all about who you knew, not what you could do. It's crazy frustrating. Like, all these talented people getting' pushed to the side 'cause someone's cousin knows the boss. Our countries are messed up, honestly." (C10) (Male, 31, Colombia) (In South Korea)

To summarize, participants largely acknowledge the presence of corruption and nepotism in their political and labor systems, revealing their awareness of these challenges. Notably, the majority exhibit skepticism about the effectiveness of democratic systems, offering nuanced insight into their attitudes toward governance, societal, and political aspects.

3.1.4 West-West Migration Issues

This final category sheds light on participants' perceptions regarding specific issues related to traditional migration patterns to developed countries in the northwestern hemisphere. In the "Belief in an 'American or European Dream'" sub-category, 81% of the participants disagreed with the concept of the "American or European Dream," while 16.5% remained neutral, and only 2.5% agreed with the concept. Moving to "Excessive prejudices in western nations," none of the respondents disagreed with the notion that Western nations harbor excessive prejudices against Hispano-American immigrants. A substantial portion (8.9%) expressed neutrality, while 91.1% agreed with the perception of Western nations holding significant prejudices. Finally, in the "Excessive immigration in western nations" sub-category, no respondents disagreed with the idea of excessive immigration in Western nations. A notable percentage (8.1%) expressed neutrality, and 91.9% agreed with the notion of Western nations facing an excessive influx of immigrants. This notion becomes apparent from the quote provided below.

"That whole 'American Dream' thing? Nah, never bought into it. People think it's all rosy over there, but trust me, you find issues once you're in or start diggin' around. It's not as amazing as it looks, and there's just so many immigrants makin' bad moves that our rep's taken a hit. And Europe, it's changing so much with all those Muslim and African folks." (B2) (Female, 28, Argentina) (In China)

To sum up, this last category provides insights into participants' perspectives on migration-related issues in the Western world. Many express skepticisms regarding the "American or European Dream," indicating nuanced views on migration benefits. Additionally, participants largely agree with the perceptions of excessive prejudices and immigration in Western nations. These agreements highlight the perceived immigration challenges in Western nations, influencing participants' attitudes towards migration to East Asia.

Table II
Pre-existing Socio-Structural Tensions Perception Before Migration

		n=236					
		Disagree		Neutral		Agree	
		f	%	f	%	f	%
Overqualification	Underutilization of qualifications	5	2.1%	17	7.2%	214	90.7%
	Job-Qualification match	208	88.1%	21	8.9%	7	3.0%
	Disillusionment (Career expectations vs. reality)	4	1.7%	14	5.9%	218	92.4%
Unstability Labor	Perceived unstable labor market	0	0.0%	21	8.9%	215	91.1%
	Saturation of the labor market	0	0.0%	6	2.5%	230	97.5%
	No concerns about unemployment	224	95%	6	2.5%	6	2.5%
Nepotism and Corruption	Corruption in political system	0	0.0%	14	5.9%	222	94.1%
	Nepotism in the labor market	0	0.0%	9	3.8%	227	96.2%
	Confidence in democracy's efficacy	184	77.97%	41	17.37%	11	4.66%
West-West Migration Issues	Belief in an "American or European Dream"	191	81%	39	16.5%	6	2.5%
	Excessive prejudices in western nations	0	0.0%	21	8.9%	215	91.1%
	Excessive immigration in western nations	0	0.0%	19	8.1%	217	91.9%

*"n" = total participants

**"f" = frequency of respondents within each compressed response category.

***The original survey scale included options from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. However, for simplicity and readability, responses have been condensed into Disagree, Neutral, and Agree

3.2 Expected Migration Outcomes

Table III provides a comprehensive summary of participants' expectations and priorities for their anticipated outcomes upon migrating to the selected country. Double answers were allowed to establish a hierarchy of primary and secondary expectations, offering nuanced insights into participants' responses.
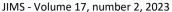
3.2.1 Economic Expectations

In the "Professional growth" sub-category, 6.8% of participants view migration primarily as a pathway to professional advancement. As for secondary expectations, a noteworthy percentage (22.5%) regards professional growth as important, underscoring its lasting significance. Furthermore, 3.0% of respondents mention "Financial security" as their primary migration expectation, suggesting that a minority perceives migration as primarily a means of achieving economic stability. Looking at secondary expectations, a higher proportion (24.6%) regards financial security as an essential outcome, emphasizing its continued relevance in participants' considerations. Lastly, within the "Improved quality of life" sub-category, 3.0% of participants prioritize an enhanced quality of life as their primary migration expectation, emphasizing that some individuals see migration as a means to improve their overall well-being. Concerning secondary expectations, 7.6% consider an improved quality of life significant, indicating its lasting appeal. The chosen quote below showcases this aspect.

> "I wanted a better job, a better life. It wasn't just about money, you know? I wanted chances I couldn't find here. I wanted to push myself and see how far I could take it. I was lookin' for some redemption from all the mess I'd seen back home." (C11) (Female, 31, Guatemala) (In South Korea)

In summary, participants exhibit diverse motivations for migration, with a subset valuing professional growth, financial security, and improved quality of life. These findings reveal the multifaceted nature of migration expectations, hinting at a primary expectation beyond mere economic factors. This complexity underscores the intricacies of individuals' aspirations when contemplating relocation.

3.2.2 Socio-Cultural Expectations

In the "Experience life in the chosen destination" sub-category, a significant majority (75.4%) of participants identified this as their primary migration expectation, indicating a desire for personal growth and cultural enrichment. As a secondary expectation, 23.7% still considered the experience of life in their chosen destination important, emphasizing the lasting appeal of embracing a new cultural context. In the "Enhanced safety and security" sub-category, 5.9% of respondents selected this as their primary migration expectation, suggesting migration as a response to perceived insecurity. As a secondary expectation, 14.0% prioritized

safety and security, underscoring its ongoing significance in participants' decisions. Lastly, 3.8% of participants identified "Relationship fulfillment" as their primary migration expectation, referring to marriage and long-distance internet romantic relationships. This minority anticipates positive impacts on their romantic relationships due to migration, with only one participant (0.4%) considering it a secondary expectation. This sentiment is evident in the chosen quote below.

> "I was lookin' to live life in a fresh spot, learn new things, and open up my world. It's not just punchin' the clock; it's 'bout growin' as a person and understandin' different walks of life. And let's get real, man, it's Japan we're talkin' 'bout. I mean, I'm down to explore other countries, but to actually live? Japan's the deal." (A2) (Male, 33, Chile) (In Japan)

In brief, participants' primary focus is on immersing themselves in their chosen destination, experiencing a new way of life, and seeking enhanced safety and security. This analysis highlights the diverse nature of migration expectations, which encompass not only economic benefits but also personal and cultural enrichment through the migration journey.

3.2.3 Politics related expectations

In this domain, the sole sub-category identified was "Enhanced political stability." Only 2.1% of participants selected this as their primary migration expectation, indicating that a minority seeks politically stable environments to minimize the impact of political volatility on their personal and professional lives. As a secondary expectation, 7.2% of participants still considered enhanced political stability significant in their migration decision, highlighting its relevance even though it's not the primary concern for the majority. While it may not be a prevailing consideration, political stability holds importance for a subset of participants when choosing their migration destination. The selected quote below illustrates this point.

> "I was huntin' for a stable place, you know? Somewhere I could grind on my career without all the political chaos and its consecuences messin' with my head. Just needed a solid base to work from." (B20) (Male, 35, Peru) (In China)

Table III
Expected Relocation Outcomes

	Expectations	Primary n=236		Secondary n=236	
		f	%	f	%
Economic	Professional growth	16	6.8%	53	22.5%
	Financial security	7	3.0%	58	24.6%
	Improved quality of life	7	3.0%	18	7.6%
Socio-Cultural	Experience life in chosen destination	178	75.4%	56	23.7%
	Enhanced safety and security	14	5.9%	33	14.0%
	Relationship fulfillment	9	3.8%	1	0.4%
Political	Enhanced political stability	5	2.1%	17	7.2%

*"n" = total participants

**"f" = frequency of respondents within each compressed response category.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the distinct roles played by economic, socio-cultural, and political factors in shaping participants' anticipated outcomes. They highlight that, while economic aspirations are important, participants also prioritize experiences in their chosen destination and consider safety and security. Furthermore, while not a primary concern for most, some participants are influenced by the desire for enhanced political stability. These sub-categories are closely tied to the highly positive image constructed about the destination countries, as noted in previous research (Piffaut Gálvez, 2023b; 2023c), which strengthens the bond with the destination prior to migration. In essence, this examination underscores the multifaceted nature of participants' expectations and priorities in the context of migration.
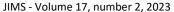
3.3 Migration Profiles

Diversity characterizes migration trajectories and each migrant's path is unique. Despite this individuality, shared trends can be organized into profiles or itineraries to enhance comprehensibility (De Coninck & Godard, 1990). Table IV outlines four profiles: former international postgraduate students, professionals with job offers, other types of former international student, and love-driven migrants. All these profiles represent the first migratory movement they made, their first step into living and working as professionals.

3.3.1. Former international postgraduate students:

This profile represents 14.8% of the participants, showing a substantial number who initiated their migration journey through postgraduate education in the

destination country, reflecting both academic and professional mobility. More specifically, 13.1% of the total sample completed a master's degree, while 1.7% obtained a PhD. Analyzing the distribution within each country subset reveals nuanced differences. Among former international postgraduate students in Japan, 12.7% pursued master's degrees and 1.7% pursued PhDs. In China, these percentages are 11.0% for master's degrees and 1.7% for PhDs. South Korea, on the other hand, has a higher percentage of participants (24.0%) pursuing master's degrees, with no PhDs.

These variations highlight diverse educational pathways among professional Hispano-Americans across the subset of countries. While master's degrees are the predominant choice, South Korea stands out as a nation where this route is particularly common. This analysis emphasizes the crucial role of academic mobility in the initial phase of immigration. The selected quote below illustrates this point.

"PhD was the way in for me. Education was my golden ticket to a fresh start, and it played out smooth. It wasn't just textbooks; it was my shot at a brighter future with more doors open. Plus, in these countries, they're pickier, so international education became the means to an end." (A3) (Male, 35, Mexico) (In Japan)

3.3.2. Professionals with job offers:

This profile represents 21.6% of the total participants, emphasizing professional Hispano-Americans who obtained job offers before migrating. This signifies a significant portion of respondents who had pre-arranged employment, highlighting their career mobility and global outlook. Among this group, the majority (17.4%) actively sought job opportunities independently, demonstrating their proactive approach to exploring new career prospects. Additionally, a subset (4.2%) relocated for their jobs, often as former employees of transnational or international companies in their home countries, with ties to their desired destination.

Analyzing subset distributions for each country reveals distinctive migratory patterns. In Japan, 21.5% of respondents received job offers, with 3.3% relocating for their jobs and 18.2% engaging in autonomous job searching. In South Korea, 33.4% received job offers, with 26.7% opting for autonomous job searching and 6.7% being relocated by a company. This indicates a preference for independent job searching over relocating for specific job positions. In contrast, China presents a unique dynamic, with 8.0% receiving job offers, all of which involved relocation, despite a similar sample size to South Korea. The situation is reflected in the following selected quote.

"I had a job lined up, so it was a no-brainer. Wanted a fresh hustle and here was my shot. Jumping in meant more than just career moves; it meant growing on a personal level too. And, I'm seriously thankful for the internet era, 'cause LinkedIn got me talkin' to recruiters in Japan!" (A25) (Male, 31, Chile) (In Japan)

3.3.3. Other types of former international student:

This profile is the most common, representing 59.3% of the participants. Notably, 40.3% of them enrolled in language schools, highlighting the popularity of these institutions for improving language skills and cultural integration. This choice reflects their strong desire for a transformative life experience in the destination country. Additionally, intern-training programs were significant (19.0%), indicating a willingness to participate in training and internships abroad to acquire practical skills and facilitate professional integration in the host country.
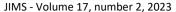
In Japan's sub-set, 63.0% of participants fall into this category, with 42.5% attending language schools and 20.5% participating in intern-training programs. China exhibits a similar pattern, with 52.0% of participants in this category—44.0% attending language schools and 8.0% engaging in intern-training programs. South Korea's subset includes 43.3% in this category, with 23.3% attending language schools and 20.0% participating in intern-training programs. The selected quote below illustrates this trend.

"I kicked off with a language school to wrap my head 'round the language and the culture. It wasn't just about work; I was lookin' for a whole new experience, a chance to dive into somethin' different. But hey, the skills I picked up? They're helpin' me do my job." (A10) (Female, 30, Mexico) (In Japan)

The data highlights the preference for language schools and intern-training programs as common pathways for international migration and professional integration. Differences observed across the country subsets reveal nuanced migration preferences and opportunities, providing insights into the choices made by respondents from Japan, China, and South Korea.

3.3.4. Love-Driven migrant:

Overall distribution reveals a minority profile, constituting only 4.2% of participants (10 out of 236 individuals). This profile represents individuals who migrated due to long-distance virtual romantic relationships and formal marriages. Notably, all these cases involve Hispano-American males and females of Japanese,

Chinese, or Korean nationality. This underscores the significant influence of love and personal connections on decisions regarding international migration. A more in-depth analysis reveals that marriage is a prominent factor (2.5%) within this subset. These respondents migrated to maintain marital relationships as their partners sought to return to their home countries. Additionally, long-distance internet romance motivated 1.7% of participants, with these individuals initially engaging in romantic relationships through online platforms, often as language partners, which eventually led to migration and in-person encounters. Importantly, all such cases have maintained their relationships even after years of migration.

Table IV
Immigration profiles of professional hispanic-americans

Migratory Profiles	Total distribution		Subsets distribution					
	n=236		Japan n=181		China n=25		South Korea n=30	
	f	%	f	%	f	%	f	%
Former international postgraduate students	35	14.8%	23	12.7%	7	28.0%	5	16.7%
Masters degree	31	13.1%	20	11.0%	6	24.0%	5	16.7%
PhD.	4	1.7%	3	1.7%	1	4.0%	0	0.0%
Professionals with job offers	51	21.6%	39	21.5%	2	8.0%	10	33.4%
Job relocation	10	4.2%	6	3.3%	2	8.0%	2	6.7%
Autonomous job searching	41	17.4%	33	18.2%	0	0.0%	8	26.7%
Other former international students	140	59.3%	114	63.0%	13	52.0%	13	43.3%
Language schools	95	40.3%	77	42.5%	11	44.0%	7	23.3%
Intern-training programs	45	19.0%	37	20.5%	2	8.0%	6	20.0%
Love-Driven	10	4.2%	5	2.8%	3	12.0%	2	6.6%
Marriage	6	2.5%	2	1.1%	3	12.0%	1	3.3%
Internet romance	4	1.7%	3	1.7%	0	0.0%	1	3.3%

*"n" = total participants

**"f" = frequency of respondents within each compressed response category.

Analyzing the sub-sets, 2.8% of respondents in Japan fall into the love-driven category, comprising 1.1% married couples and 1.7% engaged in internet romance. In South Korea, this category is more prominent, accounting for 6.6% of respondents, with 3.3% migrating due to marriage and an additional 3.3% due to internet romance. In contrast, in China, all love-driven immigrants were married, constituting 12.0% of the participants. This profile aligns with the overarching "love migrants' model" (Roca et al., 2012; Roca, 2007), characterized by romantic love taking precedence over material interests. However, a gender shift is evident in these instances compared to previous studies, as women from developed regions are now receiving men from underdeveloped regions. As the following quote illustrate.

"Moved across the map for love. It wasn't a walk in the park, but it was worth it, no doubt. Our bond got tighter through all the changes, and it's wild how love can make you take such a massive leap. We kicked off with a long-distance thing, sharin' interest in each other's culture and language. I mean, what's better than a relationship where you both talk each other language?" (C2) (Male, 29, Mexico) (In South Korea)

The next section will synthesize these findings by explaining them within the theoretical framework of this research.
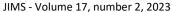
3.4. Synthesis

The neoclassical migration perspective's one-dimensional rationality fails to fully grasp the complexities of skilled individuals' mobility (Pellegrino, 2001). This oversimplification ignores the interplay of factors, especially in Latin America, where socio-political conditions significantly influence emigration trends. Socio-structural tensions influence international emigration within the socio-cultural and economic framework of Hispano-American societies, aligning with Bourdieu's concept of "hysteresis" (Hardy, 2014). These tensions represent factors leading to expulsion, disrupting the alignment of ingrained individual trajectories with possibilities within a given social space. Three key tensions emerge.

First, the discrepancy between the educational system and occupational structure triggers the willingness of qualified individuals to emigrate due to the gap between educational system development and the labor market's capacity to absorb it (Filgueira, 1976). Migration to economically developed countries isn't solely driven by economic necessity, as suggested by Pellegrino (2001). Participants' narratives mirror this tension, leading to unemployment, underemployment, and flexible work arrangements. These are fueled by the oversupply of educated professionals in the job market and even a lack of industries (Burgos & López, 2010).

Secondly, nepotism and insecurity act as impediments. The widespread perception of corruption and insecurity in Hispanic-American societies, supported by empirical data from Transparency International (2023), cultivates skepticism toward the political system. Corruption fosters disillusionment and motivates emigration as individuals aspire to a better life. These tensions disrupt familial upward mobility and intensify disillusionment. Insecurity and violence, although indirectly, lead to fear and mistrust, creating apprehension in society at large.

Third, a deviation from traditional migration routes. Tensions exist, compelling a segment of skilled Hispano-Americans to intentionally deviate from

conventional migration routes to the United States or Europe. In Bourdieu's terms, this represents a shift from an existing disposition (Bourdieu, 1998) to a new one. Educational attainment plays a significant role in shaping this deviation, challenging the historical trend of economic migration. Discrimination and prejudice in traditional Western destinations further accentuate this distinction, motivating migration beyond the Western world.

Expectations around migration are deeply entwined with insights from socio-structural tensions, revealing a complex interplay of economic, socio-cultural, and political forces that shape migration aspirations. Initially, economic factors such as "Professional growth," "Financial security," and "Improved quality of life" mirror the gap between educational system development and occupational opportunities in the Hispano-American region. This disparity between educational attainment and job prospects motivates professionals to seek better opportunities. Subsequently, the desire for "Enhanced safety and security" and "Enhanced political stability" resonates with the challenges of nepotism and insecurity hindering professional and national development. Corruption, insecurity, and violence impact the region, prompting professionals to seek improved living conditions elsewhere. Finally, these issues potentially find a solution in the expectation to "Experience life in the chosen destination," which is connected to a highly positive image of the destination countries (Piffaut Gálvez, 2023b; 2023c), rooted in pre-existing (pre-migration) bonds with their desired destination. These expectations align with the desire to deviate from traditional migration to avoid perceived prejudice and achieve better integration.

Furthermore, these aligned expectations converge with multifaceted opportunities, giving rise to a new sense of purpose that surpasses previous alternatives. Constructive narratives reinforce the drive to fulfill these expectations. Ultimately, these expectations, which offer alternatives to pre-migratory tensions, guide distinct migration movements, aligning with the profiles outlined in this study. Amid diverse migration trajectories, common trends emerge, enhancing comprehensibility (De Coninck & Godard, 1990).

In summary, migration expectations, influenced by socio-structural tensions, guide specific migration trajectories that align with the identified profiles. All of this culminates in a pursuit that empowers them to ultimately work as professionals in fields that they find compelling and well-matched to their qualifications.
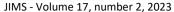
4. Limitations and Future Research

First, this comprehensive descriptive study aims to highlight commonalities across diverse cases and summarize data from a substantial number of participants across three countries. However, a more qualitative approach, focused on in-depth narrative data, could provide deeper insights into each profile and its individuals. Second, this research focused on migration expectations. Future research should explore post-migration satisfaction, examining how individuals' satisfaction aligns with their expectations after migration. Finally, this research doesn't cover socio-cultural and psychological integration. Ongoing research is addressing these aspects with the same participant cohort, but it will be presented on a per-country basis due to length constraints.

5. Conclusion

This study provides a comprehensive investigation into the social processes that shape the migratory trajectories of professional Hispano-Americans in East Asia, specifically Japan, China, and South Korea. The conclusions are in line with the study's objectives, which include exploring social tensions, migration motivations, and migration profiles, while also reflecting on the research process.

Analyzing socio-structural tensions in the Hispano-American region highlights the importance of the hysteresis concept, which explains the gap between individuals' expectations and opportunities. These tensions serve various roles, motivating migration or leading to independent trajectories like romantic relationships or secured job transfers. Integration challenges in the Hispano-American labor market drive participants to seek better opportunities abroad due to competition, labor deregulation, and unemployment risk. Disillusionment with socio-political conditions, including corruption, nepotism, and insecurity, is a prominent driver of migration as well. These disconnections between dispositions and realities fuels the decision to migrate.

Professional Hispano-Americans are diversifying their migration destinations due to challenges in traditional alternatives. Their expectations for migration go beyond purely economic considerations, signaling a deviation from established migration patterns influenced by perceptions of the current state of affairs in both their home and destination countries. Migration expectations encompass emotional,

professional, and non-economic factors, and the representations of destination countries align with stability and security, reflecting new opportunities.

Migration profiles integrate tensions and expectations, revealing the interplay of motivations and circumstances. No conventional economic immigrant profiles emerged in this study. Nevertheless, the research also identifies profiles independent of socio-structural tensions, primarily driven by personal affection. These findings contribute to our understanding of migration complexities, with an emphasis on the concept of habitus hysteresis. Migration decisions are multifaceted. Further research is needed to delve deeper into the identified profiles for a more in-depth qualitative understanding.

Lastly, in conclusion, the study discusses methodological approaches. The employment of grounded theory enabled the exploration of both larger societal trends and individual-level experiences, facilitating a deeper understanding of the research subjects over time. Nonetheless, the study recognizes the need for further research to thoroughly investigate each of the identified profiles within each country, thereby achieving a more comprehensive understanding of migration patterns. In the end, this study enhances the sociological understanding of migration as an intricate process shaped by an array of interconnected factors in the lives of the immigrants themselves.

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