

School Enrollment of Internal Migrant Children and Adolescents on the Northwest Border of Mexico

Asistencia escolar de niños, niñas y adolescentes migrantes internos en la frontera noroeste de México

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ABSTRACT

The article examines the relationship between internal migration of children and adolescents and school enrollment in the border state of Baja California, Mexico. This research combines the analysis of the 2020 Population Census microdata and semi-structured interviews with teachers who served this sector between 2015 and 2022. Internal migrant children have disadvantages in school enrollment, and the gaps increase if the migration is recent, and if the parents work in agriculture. Being indigenous is a protective factor for school enrollment among non-recent migrants, but a risk factor among recent migrants; the latter is consistent with teachers' perceptions. Teachers point out that there are both socioeconomic and educational context barriers that limit the school integration of these migrants. The State still has to guarantee the full right to education for internal migrants.

Keywords: 1. internal migration, 2. education, 3. inequality, 4. México, 5. Baja California.

RESUMEN

En el artículo se examina la relación entre la migración interna de NNA (niños, niñas y adolescentes) y la asistencia escolar en la entidad fronteriza de Baja California, México. Se combina el análisis de los microdatos del Censo de Población 2020 con la realización de entrevistas semiestructuradas a docentes que atendieron a este sector entre 2015 y 2022. Los NNA migrantes internos presentan desventajas en la asistencia escolar, y las brechas aumentan si la migración es reciente y si los padres trabajan en la agricultura. Ser indígena es un factor protector de la asistencia escolar para los migrantes no recientes, pero de riesgo para los migrantes recientes; esto último coincide con las percepciones docentes. Estos señalan que existen barreras tanto socioeconómicas como del contexto educativo que limitan la inserción escolar de estos migrantes. El Estado tiene aún pendiente garantizar el derecho pleno a la educación de los migrantes internos.

Palabras clave: 1. migración interna, 2. educación, 3. desigualdad, 4. México, 5. Baja California.

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INTRODUCTION

Given the prominence of international migration to Mexico in recent years, there have been few studies focused on internal migration within the country (Cruz & Acosta, 2015). In particular, there is a need to understand the effects of internal migration on the social well-being of families and, especially, on the education of children and adolescents (CA). Internal migration refers to the movement of people crossing geographical boundaries within Mexico, either between entities or municipalities, involving a permanent change of residence (Sobrino, 2010), although circular, temporary, or seasonal migration may also occur (Zelinsky, 1971). Analyzing and understanding the link between families' internal migration and the schooling of their children can contribute to the design of public policies focused on vulnerable CA and the planning of educational services in receiving regions.

In Mexico, there is inequality in the distribution of wealth and employment opportunities, resulting in high levels of poverty, low wages, and precarious living conditions in certain areas. These factors are the primary causes compelling families to migrate from their places of origin (Peláez & Espinosa, 2021; Rojas, 2011). Baja California is one of the regions with a significant influx of migratory population in working age, as it offers various job opportunities due to its strategic location in the northwest border of Mexico with the United States (Peláez & Espinosa, 2021; Ybáñez & Alarcón, 2007). Noteworthy are the jobs or trades that provide opportunities for populations with low levels of education, whether in the maquiladora industry, agricultural fields, or the service sector (Ramírez Romero et al., 2006; Velasco Ortiz, 2013). Additionally, migration flows of indigenous populations to Baja California from expelling states such as Oaxaca, Guerrero, and Chiapas are prominent (Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Geografía [INEGI], 2020; Vera & Durazo, 2020).

Various research studies have indicated that internal migration poses several challenges for CA experiencing this phenomenon. One of these challenges is educational discontinuity resulting from changes in family structure, the loss of support networks in the community of origin, and difficulties in accessing education (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Peinador, 2005). Additionally, they face challenges related to economic survival and sociocultural adaptation in the destination, especially when migration occurs in a context of marginalization and multidimensional poverty (Juárez & Rodríguez, 2016; Peláez & Espinosa, 2021). While internal migration is predominantly urban (Romo et al., 2013), in some regions like Baja California, peripheral urban or rural areas are significant as destinations for internal migrants. This is evident in the findings of this research, and these areas often stand out for having lower school infrastructure and lower-quality schools compared to those located in highly urban areas (Giorguli et al., 2010). Moreover, due to the precarious living conditions of internal migrant CA, they may engage in domestic or nondomestic work to assist their families and improve their living conditions, a situation that competes with schooling (Aguilar, 2009; Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Juárez & Rodríguez, 2016).

The educational landscape in Baja California has improved over time, but dropouts in middle school persist, and there is educational inequality within the region (Secretaría de Educación de

Baja California, 2022). During the 2019-2020 school year, the terminal efficiency at this level stood at 90.9%, with an intracurricular dropout (within the academic year) of 1.6%. In the same school year, the dropout rate was 2.8% for Ensenada, while Tijuana presented a rate of 1%. Based on these educational statistics, it is worth questioning to what extent internal migration contributes to the enrollment levels of CA in the region, despite the existence of programs and educational projects in support of this vulnerable sector (Instituto Nacional para la Evaluación de la Educación [INEE], 2017; Juárez & Rodríguez, 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2019).

In this article, the objective is to analyze the relationship between internal migration and school enrollment of CA aged 5 to 17 years in Baja California. A mixed-methods approach is employed, incorporating the analysis of a survey and semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers. In the quantitative component, the extended questionnaire from the 2020 Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2020) is utilized. Descriptive statistics are generated from census microdata to understand the profiles of internal migrant CA. Multivariate logistic regression is employed to statistically analyze the relationship between internal migration and school enrollment. A distinction is made between recent and non-recent migration: the former refers to individuals who have resided in another state of México during the five years preceding the census—March 2015—(Romo et al., 2013); the latter type of migration encompasses all years prior to that date and is determined through birth in another state.³ Additionally, these data are complemented with interviews conducted with 11 teachers (seven in rural general schools, two in multigrade indigenous schools, and two in urban general schools) who provided educational support to internal migrants from 2015 onward in peripheral or rural areas of Ensenada, Baja California. In these interviews, teachers narrate the educational situation of these students during the period 2015-2020 and during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-2021).

In the first part of this article, empirical and theoretical studies related to the educational integration of internal migrant CA are briefly described. Subsequently, the employed methodological strategy is constructed, specifying the units of analysis in each strategy, the sources, and the data collection instruments. The following two sections present the results, outlining the sociodemographic characteristics of the CA and regression models on school enrollment. The interviews conducted with teachers are analyzed to complement the statistical information. In the conclusion, the results from both methodologies are triangulated, and the main findings are discussed.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE AND EMPIRICAL BACKGROUND OF EDUCATION FOR INTERNAL MIGRANT CHILDREN IN MEXICO

In this article, we begin with the perspective of internal migrant childhood education as a right, the assurance of which is the obligation of the Mexican State. The influence of the limited availability of educational offerings tailored to the reality of this population is acknowledged, as well as the opportunity cost faced by migrant children in pursuing education in host contexts. Additionally,

³ They are detailed in the methodological section.

the role of the social background of parents in shaping the educational trajectories of their children is recognized.

It is widely acknowledged that education is a universal right, with its primary objective being the comprehensive development of individuals and the promotion of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms (Resolution 217 [III-A] of 1948). According to Tomasevski (2004), the realization of the right to education is contingent upon the government's adherence to the 4-A principles: that education is affordable, ensuring that every CA can access the right to education with the existence of sufficient schools and quality programs; that it is accessible, allowing every CA in any location to participate in education without exclusion; that it is adaptable, aligning education with the needs and interests of CA while recognizing their life contexts; and that it is acceptable, valuing the characteristics, cultural diversity, and socio-economic disadvantages of students in the contents and forms of education.

Therefore, to ensure the right to education, achieving an equitable educational provision is imperative, facilitating both school retention and equity in educational attainment (Farrell, 2007). Regrettably, this objective largely exists at the paradigmatic level, as social inequality persists in Mexico, and discriminatory processes persistently impact the most vulnerable groups, particularly internal migrant CA (Bustos, 2018; Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Juárez & Rodríguez, 2016; Rojas, 2011, 2019).

For instance, internal migrants engaged in rural-urban migration may experience an enhancement in educational attainment due to improved access to better schools in destination areas, as noted by Peinador (2005). However, internal migrants residing in marginalized or remote areas, specifically peripheral and rural zones distant from urban centers, often face the challenge of low-quality schools due to the uneven distribution of educational resources (Giorguli et al., 2010; Rojas, 2011). Furthermore, Juárez and Rodríguez (2016) caution that educational program funds usually do not fully reach rural areas, leading to schools in these regions being understaffed with less qualified teachers. Despite the considerable influence of social factors, the school serves as the starting point for educational continuity. In cases where the school lacks essential infrastructure, teacher preparedness, and adequate textbooks, pursuing further education becomes a formidable challenge for CA.

The limitations in educational supply and quality are compounded by challenges in the demand for education across various social sectors. A crucial concept for understanding how inequality impacts the education of internal migrant children is that of human capital. Human capital encompasses the skills and competencies acquired over time that enhance a worker's effectiveness (Acemoglu & Autor, 2012). It is directly tied to schooling, as a higher level of education theoretically correlates with increased competencies and improved prospects for job opportunities and salaries (Becker, 1983). However, individuals with limited resources, including a significant portion of internal migrants, face challenges in accumulating education to enhance their human capital. The necessity to work often compels them to make short-term cost-benefit decisions, prioritizing employment over education (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016).

Moreover, beyond the choice to prioritize work over education, the economic capitals—comprising financial and material resources—and the social capitals of parents—resources mobilized through enduring networks of relationships—that stem from inherent class inequalities in societies and their perpetuation can significantly impact educational continuity (Bourdieu, 2011; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2009). For example, the absence of laws regulating the prohibition of child labor and monitoring its enforcement allows some migrant families to involve CA in non-domestic work to meet their economic goals and/or address immediate needs for food, housing, and health, relegating education to a secondary priority (Vera & Durazo, 2020). Consequently, when internal migrants lack stable employment or adequate wages, household economic resources dwindle, diminishing opportunities for their children to pursue education (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Peinador, 2005). The demand for parental work or the restructuring of roles and responsibilities within the household may intensify the need for internal migrant CA to engage in domestic work to support their parents, ultimately leading to disengagement from school (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Rojas, 2011).

Similarly, the cultural capital of families plays a pivotal role in influencing the education of internal migrants. Cultural capital encompasses the cultural resources acquired over time—sometimes unconsciously—that contribute to a certain social standing and can translate into social or economic capital. Cultural perspectives are often reproduced; for instance, individuals residing in intellectually enriched and privileged environments may harbor high educational aspirations, while those with fewer resources live in contexts where education is unfamiliar and may even be opposed to social institutions (Bourdieu, 2011). Besides the family, one of the primary spaces where the cultural and social capital of CA is generated is the school. The school itself may perpetuate the dominant culture and establish social hierarchies by not actively counteracting them. Juárez and Rodríguez (2016) highlight that one of the main challenges faced by CA in rural areas is that their life context's disadvantages are not adequately considered in policies aimed at mitigating educational inequity.

The school plays a pivotal role in facilitating the successful sociocultural integration of migrants at their destination. Internal migration, primarily an adult decision, results in various disruptions for CA, such as changing schools, which can influence school dropout rates (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016). In Mexico, evidence indicates the existence of violence and discrimination based on ethnic origin, skin color, and social class within schools (Velasco Ortiz & Rentería, 2019). The classroom becomes a space where students may perpetuate discourses of stigmatizing stereotypes historically and socially constructed by adults towards CA (Bustos, 2018). Therefore, both Giorguli and Angoa (2016), and Velasco Ortiz and Rentería (2019) argue for the necessity of implementing an intercultural approach within schools. This approach should focus on teaching respect and tolerance for cultural differences and developing plans for the integration of internal migrant and indigenous CA.

Various demographic studies, conducted with nationally representative samples, have consistently shown a statistical relationship between the internal migration of CA and school enrollment. This relationship is observed to be negative (Giorguli et al., 2010), and positive concerning school dropout at the basic level in urban areas (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016). For instance, the school enrollment rate of the population aged 14-18 exhibits a negative association with the net internal migration rate in semi-urban and urban municipalities. This suggests a higher level of educational discontinuity in contexts characterized by migratory attraction (Giorguli et al., 2010).

Additional research, based on case studies, has underscored the educational disadvantage experienced by internal migrants. In a representative survey conducted in the San Quintín valley,⁴ Velasco Ortiz (2013, p. 196) revealed that in 2003, “while in the neighborhoods, 13% of children aged 6 to 14 do not attend school, in the camps, non-attendance is much higher, reaching 33%.” Despite the elevated rates of school non-attendance among internal migrants, there was an improvement in school integration once settlement occurred. The same study demonstrated that being indigenous increased the likelihood of non-attendance in camps, although not significantly so in neighborhoods.

Conversely, in indigenous schools in Baja California, Solís et al. (2023) note a negative impact of internal migration on the educational development of CA. It is a common practice for families to seek the enrollment of their children in a different school than the one initially registered at any point during the school year. Despite education being a universal right for all CA, the authors found that this right is not always fulfilled in this particular context.

Another set of studies concentrates on the educational indicators of children of agricultural laborers, some of whom are migrants residing in housing adjacent to agricultural fields. Utilizing data from the INEE, Vera and Durazo (2020) found that in the year 2019, at least eight out of every 10 CA who are children of agricultural laborers either never attended basic education school or dropped out. Meanwhile, Rojas (2019), in an analysis of the educational trajectories of 26 secondary school students in schools for migrants, revealed that 15% of these students experienced grade lag due to factors such as failure, temporary abandonment, or repetition. These issues were attributed to the lack of educational quality, inflexibility of educational programs, difficulties in social and cultural adaptation to school, and engagement in child labor. Additionally, Rodríguez et al. (2019) documented that the majority of CA that study in schools for migrants, complete secondary school without mastering the minimum learning levels.

Therefore, this article posits the assumption that internal migration, particularly recent migration in Baja California, exposes CA aged 5 to 17 to lower school enrollment compared to non-internal migrants. These disadvantages become more pronounced when one of the parents is indigenous or engages in agricultural work. Similarly, recently arrived students find themselves in a family environment characterized by low cultural capital and an unfamiliar school setting, coupled with limited material and academic resources that adversely affect their school retention.

⁴ Locality that was part of Ensenada until 2020, specializing in export agriculture.

METHODOLOGY

The chosen methodological design for this research was mixed, involving the analysis of a publicly available database and the conduct of semi-structured interviews. The results obtained from both methods were triangulated to reinforce more robust deductions. A “transformative” theoretical perspective (Klingner & Boardman, 2011, p. 192) guided the study, with the expectation that qualitative data would enhance the comprehension of quantitative results.

Quantitative Strategy

The data source employed for the quantitative analysis was the extended questionnaire from the 2020 Population and Housing Census, conducted in March 2020, based on a nationally, statewide, and municipally representative sample. The selected subsample included 15 544 CA aged between 5 and 17 years residing in Baja California, with 89.7% not being household heads but having relevant information on the variables of interest (2 490 were non-recent internal migrants, and 1 065 were recent migrants). Information from parents was linked to these cases through the father’s or mother’s identifier, and household information was linked through the household identifier.

The dependent variable for this study was school enrollment, as determined by the census question: “Does [Name] currently attend school?” The responses to this question were categorized as either yes or no (INEGI, 2020). The population census employs this question to gauge school enrollment, assessing whether the student is currently studying (Giorguli et al., 2010), without specifying the frequency of attendance. Non-enrollment, in this context, may indicate either a temporary or permanent interruption in the school trajectory.

The main explanatory variable was the internal migration of CA, estimated indirectly at the interstate level (Partida, 2015; Romo et al., 2013). This variable comprised three categories: a) *recent migrants*, defined as those who had resided in a different state than their current residence for the past five years, based on the question: “Five years ago, in March 2015, in which state of the republic or country did [Name] live?”; b) *non-recent migrants*, characterized by residence in the same state five years ago but born in a different state than the current one, as per the question: “In which state of the Mexican republic or country was [Name] born?”; and c) *non-internal migrants*, reflecting residence in Baja California in March 2015 and being born in the same state, considering the possibility of continuing to reside in the entity.

It is important to note that the definition of internal migration based on the population census, although enabling the indirect estimation of this phenomenon, comes with limitations (Partida, 2015; Sobrino, 2010). Firstly, the source is a survey conducted on inhabited dwellings, lacking information on individuals in migratory transit or engaged in temporary migration. Secondly, a person living in a place different from their birthplace or with a residence of five years or less is considered a migrant, yet this does not provide a comprehensive picture of the individual’s entire migratory history. Similarly, it is not feasible to temporally locate migration, except for migration

within the last five years, making it challenging to comprehend changes in the socio-economic conditions and characteristics of migrants over time.

The occupation of the parents and indigenous status were introduced as additional explanatory variables interacting with internal migration. In terms of occupation, the analysis not only considered agricultural employment but also made a comparison with employment in the maquila industry, which is the primary occupation of internal migrants (INEGI, 2020). Concerning indigenous status, the study took into account whether the father or mother spoke an indigenous language and their affiliation with an indigenous group. Children and Adolescents (CA) with any of these ethnic characteristics were categorized as indigenous. Control variables included gender, age, parents' education,⁵ family structure (living with both parents, one parent, or none), overcrowding in the dwelling (more than two people in each room), the number of assets within the household,⁶ and rural status.

The statistical analysis was carried out considering the internal migrant condition, and school enrollment percentages were calculated across different age groups. Sociodemographic characteristics of CA were described, and bivariate relationships between independent variables and the dependent variable were explored. All variables under consideration exhibited statistical significance for school enrollment (refer to Table 2) and contributed to enhancing the goodness of fit in the multivariate model, as indicated by likelihood ratio tests (Powers & Xie, 2000). However, the rural condition was excluded from the multivariate models due to its correlation with the parents' educational level.

Logistic regression was utilized to estimate the statistical relationship between internal migration and school enrollment, the dependent variable. The $\exp \beta$, representing the odds ratio⁷ of being enrolled or not enrolled in school for the categories of independent variables compared to the reference category, was presented (Powers & Xie, 2000). The expression $(\exp \beta - 1) \times 100$ is interpreted as the percentage change in the odds of the categories of the dependent variable, independent of the effect of other covariates. $\exp \beta$ values less than one indicate a negative statistical relationship, whereas values greater than one demonstrate a positive association.

Qualitative Strategy

Teachers' perceptions were examined to gain insights into the experiences of CA concerning educational integration. Semi-structured interviews were carried out in February and March 2022, employing snowball sampling. The focus was on teachers working in rural or peri-urban areas of

⁵ The educational attainment of the mother was taken into account and supplemented with that of the father in the event of the mother's absence. In cases where both parents were absent, the educational level of the head of the household was considered.

⁶ This pertains to the goods or services available in the household, including but not limited to: refrigerator, television, computer, landline telephone, mobile phone, internet, washing machine, car, pay television, services for watching movies, video games, and/or microwave oven.

⁷ The odds of a specific outcome occurring, divided by the odds of failure.

Ensenada, Baja California, who had experience with recent internal migrant students in their classrooms. Through this sampling method, two teachers from different schools were interviewed, and they, in turn, recommended additional participants.

The interviews were conducted through both in-person and online methods, as halfway through the fieldwork, the state educational system transitioned back to in-person mode after a temporary closure caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the interviews, teachers shared their educational experiences covering the periods before the pandemic (2015-2020), during the closure, and after the resumption of in-person classes. To maintain confidentiality, the names of the teachers have been kept anonymous, and pseudonyms are used.

Interviews were conducted with a total of 11 teachers, comprising seven women and four men. These teachers were distributed across various educational levels, areas (eight in rural and two in peri-urban), and types of schools (two in indigenous multigrade and the remaining in general schools). Lupita and Mariana were teachers at a preschool in San Antonio de las Minas, while Noé worked at an elementary school in Valle de Guadalupe (Francisco Zarco). In the Real de Castillo delegation, Sara and Grecia were teachers in secondary and preschools, respectively. In Valle de la Trinidad, Pedro taught at an elementary school. In Maneadero, four teachers were identified: David and Jennifer in indigenous multigrade primary schools, Beatriz in a general elementary school, and Joel in a general secondary school. Additionally, teacher Raquel was involved in a program aimed at internal migrant CA. On average, these teachers had between 8 and 30 years of work experience, either in the classroom or as directors. Among the 11 teachers, three (Lupita, David, and Jennifer) also had experience in school management.

During the interviews with the teachers, they were queried about their basic information, the characteristics of the school environments (including features of the schools or classrooms and available resources), and the educational processes encountered by internal migrant students. Additionally, information was collected regarding the sociodemographic characteristics of these students, the language they speak, their living arrangements, and the alternative activities they participate in outside of school. The exploration further delved into the family capitals, encompassing cultural and socioeconomic aspects, with a specific focus on whether the occupations of family members influence the educational processes of migrant children.

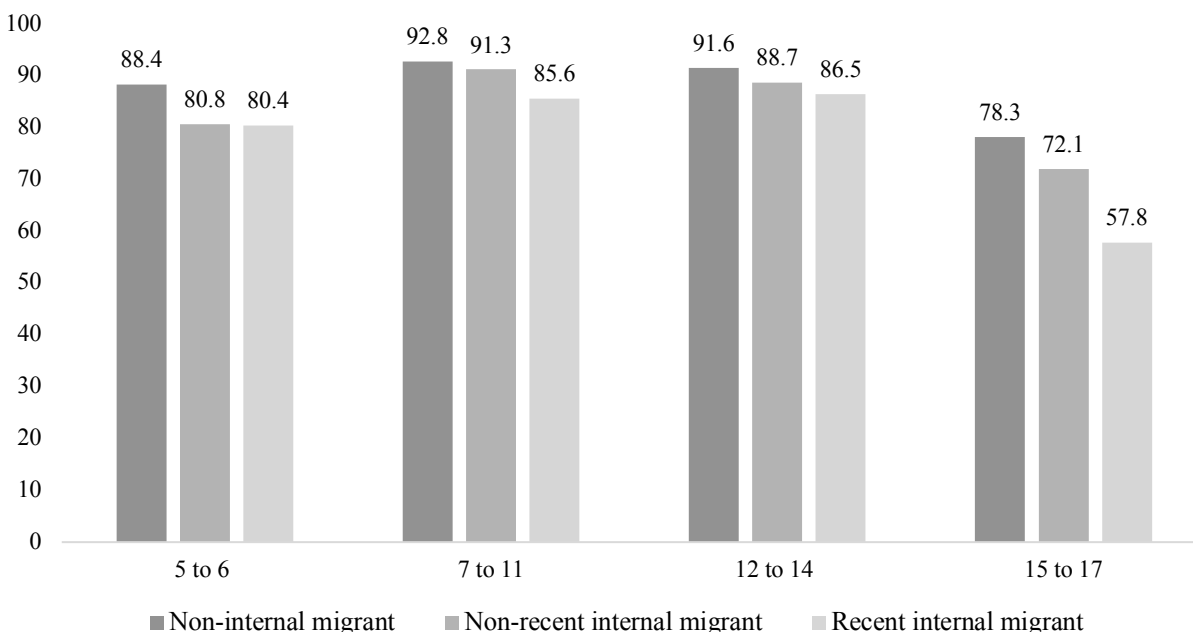
RESULTS

Educational and Sociodemographic Disadvantages of Internal Migrant Children and Adolescents

Graph 1 illustrates the school enrollment of CA in Baja California categorized by age and internal migration status. Commencing from the age of seven, school enrollment among recent internal migrants is lower than that of non-recent migrants and non-migrants, particularly in the age range of 15 to 17 years. At these ages, only 57.8% of recent internal migrants attend school, indicating a

gap of 14.3 percentage points compared to non-recent migrants and 20.5 percentage points compared to non-migrants.

Graph 1. School Enrollment by Age Groups and Internal Migration Status of Children and Adolescents in Baja California, Mexico



Source: Own elaboration based on the Population and Housing Census 2020 (INEGI, 2020).

The low school enrollment of internal migrants is also noticeable in the age group of five to six years, especially when compared to non-migrants. Overall, 80.4% of recent internal migrants attend school, a figure similar to that of non-recent migrants, but lower than the 88.3% of non-migrants. It is essential to highlight that, from the age of 12 onwards, non-recent internal migrants also exhibit disadvantages in school enrollment compared to non-migrants.

Table 1 analyzes the socioeconomic and demographic characteristics of CA based on their internal migration status. Recent internal migrants are more concentrated among those under 12 years old, while non-recent internal migrants are older, in contrast to non-migrants. Concerning household characteristics, the majority of recent internal migrants live with their mother or without both parents, compared to non-migrants. It is also observed that the human capital of the parents of internal migrants (both recent and non-recent) is lower than that among non-migrants. Likewise, among internal migrants, the percentage with indigenous parents is higher, especially among recent migrants. Regarding parents' occupation, it stands out that agricultural work is slightly more common among recent and non-recent internal migrants, and work in the maquila sector is more prevalent among recent internal migrants compared to non-migrants.

Table 1. Demographic and Socioeconomic Profile of Children and Adolescents by Internal Migration Status, Baja California, Mexico (Averages)

Variables	Non-internal migrant (%)	Non-recent internal migrant (%)	Recent internal migrant (%)	Total
Male	51	49.8	51	50.9
Age group				
5 to 6	15.2	7.3	17.7	14.6
7 to 11	39.1	34	41.8	38.8
12 to 14	24	26	20.4	24
15 to 17	21.6	32.6	20.1	22.6
Co-residence with parents				
Without both parents	4.9	5.5	5.9	5
Only with the father	3.6	4.3	3.1	3.6
Only with the mother	27.6	28	32.1	28
With both parents	63.9	62.2	58.9	63.4
Parents' years of schooling				
0 to 8	24.2	28.1	27.8	24.8
9 to 11	40.8	42.8	45.4	41.3
12	19.2	19.2	17.1	19.1
13 or more	15.8	9.9	9.8	14.8
Indigenous status of parents	9.6	13	19.1	10.6
Parents' occupation				
Agricultural labor	3.6	5.8	4.9	3.9
Maquila	14.6	15.4	22.3	15.2
Overcrowding	45.7	55	64.8	47.9
Average household assets	8.2	7.5	6.6	8
Owned dwelling	69.6	49.9	25.1	64.7
Rural (2,500 to 14,999 inhabitants)	11.6	15.7	15.1	12.2
n	11 989	2 490	1 065	15 544

Source: Own elaboration based on the 2020 Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2020).

In terms of housing characteristics, recent internal migrants often find themselves in more crowded living conditions compared to both non-recent migrants and non-migrants. The economic capital is also reflected in household assets, with the average number being lower for internal migrants at 6.6 out of the 12 assets measured through the variable, in contrast to the average of 8.2 assets among non-migrants. Only a quarter of recent internal migrants and half of non-recent migrants own their dwelling, a sharp contrast with nearly 70% of non-migrants. Lastly, it is

noteworthy that a higher percentage of internal migrants reside in localities with fewer than 15 000 inhabitants (rural or peri-urban), as compared to non-migrants.

Sociodemographic and Structural Factors of School Enrollment

Logistic regression models enable the evaluation of the statistical relationship between enrollment and internal migration. As depicted in Table 2, the multivariate model confirmed the negative association of internal migration with school enrollment, independent of the sociodemographic profiles' effects. It was observed that among recent internal migrants, there was a 39% lower likelihood of attending school ($[1-0.61]*100$), and among non-recent migrants, it was 17% less likely than among non-migrants ($[1-0.83]*100$). Regarding gender and age, the expected results were observed: males (versus females) and those in the age groups of 5 to 6 years or 15 to 17 years, versus those of 7 to 11 years, exhibited lower school enrollment. The interaction of gender with internal migration was examined, but no significant differences in school enrollment were noted. Regarding family characteristics, school enrollment increased with higher educational levels of household heads, when CA lived with parents—especially with the mother or both—and when parents were indigenous. Conversely, parental work in agriculture and maquila was negatively associated with school enrollment. Regarding housing characteristics, individuals experiencing overcrowded conditions had lower school enrollment than those who did not, while the likelihood of attending school was higher with an increased number of household assets and when residing in an owned dwelling.

Table 2. Odds Ratios of School Enrollment According to select Variables (Logistic Model). Population 5 to 17 Years Old, Baja California, Mexico

Variables	School enrollment	
	Bivariate	Multivariate
Male (Female)	0.85***	0.85**
Migration (Non-migrant)		
Non-recent internal migration	0.64***	0.83***
Recent internal migration	0.47***	0.61***
Age groups (7 to 11)		
5 to 6	0.58***	0.55***
12 to 14	0.84***	0.83***
15 to 17	0.27***	0.25***
Co-residence with parents (without parents)		
Only with the father	1.80***	1.30***
Only with the mother	2.14***	1.53***
With both parents	2.14***	1.64***

(continue)

(continuation)

Parents' years of schooling (0 to 8)		
9 to 11	1.83***	1.57***
12	3.09***	2.21***
13 or more	3.93***	2.29***
Indigenous status of parents (No)	1.34 ⁺	1.77***
Parents in agriculture (No)	0.75***	0.93***
Parents in maquila (No)	0.83***	0.88***
Overcrowding (No)	0.73**	0.92***
Household assets	1.18***	1.13***
Owned dwelling (No)	1.50***	1.25***
Rural (2 500 to 14 999 inhabitants)	0.95***	---
Constant	---	1.99***
Pseudo R2	---	0.21***
Log-Likelihood	---	-238.054

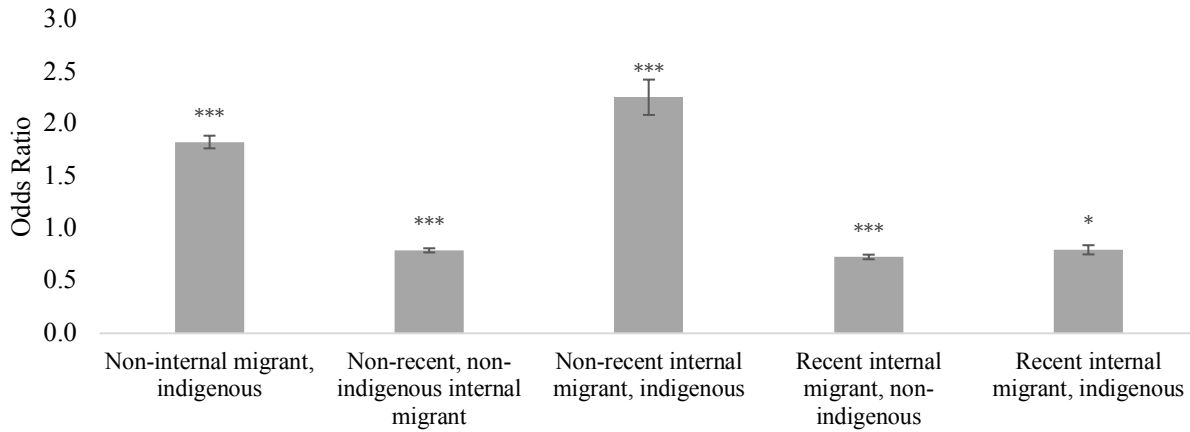
Note: ***p < 0.001, **p < 0.01, *p < 0.05; +p < 0.1; reference category in parentheses.

Source: Own elaboration based on the 2020 Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2020).

The analysis further explored the disparities in the school enrollment of internal migrants by examining interactions between the migration variable and indigenous status, as well as parental occupation, specifically comparing agricultural work with employment in the maquiladora industry. Recent internal migrants are notably concentrated in the category of indigenous people and engage in either agricultural work or maquiladora employment. Therefore, it becomes crucial to ascertain whether these characteristics maintain the same disadvantageous relationship with school enrollment, regardless of the time they have been residing in Baja California.

Despite the general observation that being indigenous tends to act as a protective factor for school enrollment, as indicated by both bivariate and multivariate models, the findings from the interaction between internal migration and having indigenous parents (significant in likelihood ratio tests $p < 0.001$) reveal a different pattern among recent internal migrants (Graph 2). The positive relationship between being indigenous and school enrollment is evident among non-migrants and non-recent internal migrants. However, among recent migrants, being indigenous did not exhibit a protective effect on school enrollment. Recent internal indigenous migrants face an educational disadvantage, with the odds ratio significantly lower than unity and comparable to that of non-indigenous individuals.

Graph 2. Odds ratios of school enrollment by internal migration and indigenous status of parents. Population 5 to 17 years old, Baja California, Mexico

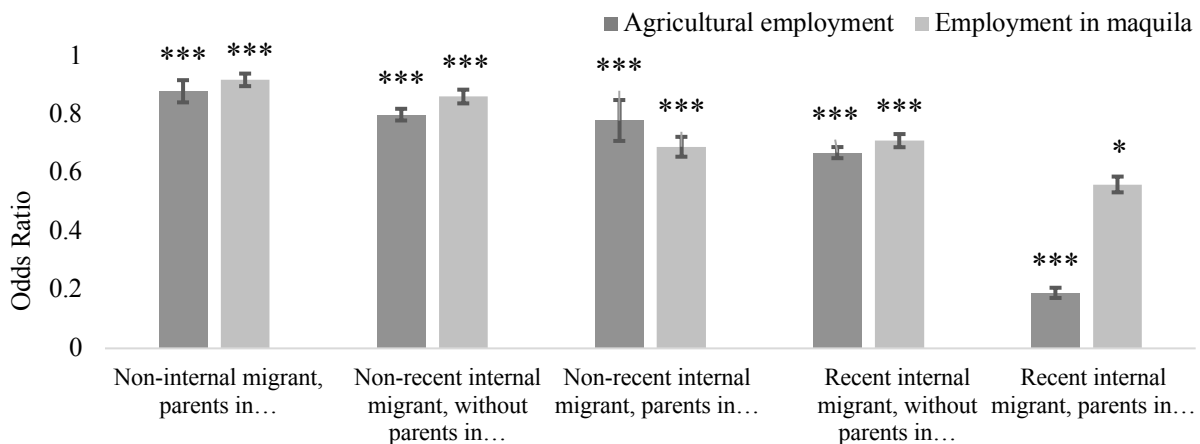


Note: ***p < 0.001, *p < 0.05; reference category=Non-internal migrants, non-indigenous; reasons derived from the multivariate model, same covariates from Table 2; line indicates confidence intervals.

Source: Own elaboration based on the 2020 Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2020).

Graph 3 illustrates the interaction of internal migration with the agricultural and maquila employment of parents. In general, CA whose parents work in agriculture or the maquila industry have a lower probability of attending school compared to those with parents in other occupations (odds ratios lower than unity in all cases), and school enrollment is further diminished when they are recent internal migrants. Among recent internal migrants, the impact of parental agricultural employment on CA school enrollment is more pronounced than that of employment in the maquila industry.

Graph 3. Odds Ratios of School Enrollment by Internal Migration and Parental Employment. Population 5 to 17 Years Old, Baja California, Mexico



Note: ***p < 0.001, *p < 0.05; reference category=No internal migrants, without parents in...; reasons derived from multivariate model, same covariates from Table 2; line indicates confidence intervals.

Source: Own elaboration based on the 2020 Population and Housing Census (INEGI, 2020).

Perceptions of Teachers Regarding the Social and School Context of Internal Migrant Children and Adolescents in Baja California

In this section, the results of interviews conducted with teachers in Ensenada, Baja California are presented. This municipality was chosen because of its extensive rural and semi-urban areas, along with the prevalence of vineyards, ranches, livestock, and general agricultural activities.

a) Sociodemographic Characteristics of Internal Migrant Students

Internal migrant students identified by the teachers originated from various states, listed in descending order of significance: Oaxaca, Chiapas, Michoacán, Sinaloa, Sonora, Guerrero, Estado de México, Nayarit, Veracruz, and Puebla. Additionally, teachers observed some students from other municipalities in Baja California, particularly from *ejidos* in the Mexicali valley and San Quintín.

According to the teachers, the living conditions of internal migrant students were precarious. They noted that some students reside in single-room houses with couples and children. “They often have small plywood or wooden houses with plastic roofs” (Sara, personal communication, February 15, 2022). On the other hand, teacher Jennifer stated, “They are made of wood, some are made of material [...] they are the so-called ‘*pichoneras*’ [...] those are brought by the Americans” (Jennifer, personal communication, March 30, 2022).⁸ Additionally, due to their marginalization and economic scarcity, very few students have Internet access, despite its crucial role during the school closure due to COVID-19. Ms. Raquel affirmed, “These are places where many do not have access to technology [...] and regardless of whether they are in a camp or in extremely poor conditions [...] our students must have the same conditions as all children” (Raquel, personal communication, March 15, 2022).

The main employment identified by the teachers was agriculture, followed by those engaged in food preparation. Due to precarious working conditions, the teachers observed instances of racism towards immigrants. For instance, Lupita and Mariana from San Antonio de las Minas highlighted that parents work in vineyards as farmers, overseeing ranches, cabins, or estates, and also in restaurant kitchens: “parents have told me how mistreated they are by their bosses, that there is racism towards them, they feel attacked, but they continue working” (Lupita, personal communication, February 18, 2022).

One prevalent perception among teachers is that the majority of parents have limited formal education, and some may lack basic literacy skills. The teachers also noticed that among internal migrant children, there were speakers of indigenous languages, primarily of Mixtec and Zapotec origin. Teacher Jennifer, who is of Mixtec origin and speaks the language, noted:

⁸ The teacher refers to the houses for marginalized populations built by civil and religious associations from the United States.

Almost all the parents [of my students] speak an indigenous language, like 90%, the children too, only that they are ashamed. Every now and then, a child will speak it to you, but the others don't want to speak it (Jennifer, personal communication, March 30, 2022).

She tried to encourage Mixteco with her students by practicing it in her classes, but she noticed that the children felt self-conscious when speaking and preferred not to use it.

The teachers also observed that some of the internal migrant children had work experiences even before completing elementary school. The most prevalent jobs were domestic work for girls and day laborer or farmhand for boys. The teachers concluded that this occurs because parents require assistance from their children in the fields or ranches, and particularly in their own homes. Jennifer comments:

it is common for boys and girls to work, especially if they are in fifth and sixth grade, as companies tend to avoid hiring them if they are younger. However, everyone assists their mom with activities that extend beyond regular hours [...] especially girls, boys tend to be very *macho* (sexist) (Jennifer, personal communication, March 30, 2022).

On his part, teacher David confirmed that gender differences persist, and the customs and traditions of the families of migrant CA remain a hindrance to their educational continuity. Boys tend to leave school more quickly to engage in agricultural work, but the situation for girls is more concerning due to their significant domestic responsibilities. Additionally, there are reported cases of girls being sold.

[Regarding] the girls, from the age of 10 [families] are planning to sell them or make an exchange with them. We had to intervene ourselves [...] the girls asked us for support because either they had to leave the house or they were going to be sold [...] in the end, we were able to rescue one; they were about to sell her for 50 thousand pesos (David, personal communication, March 28, 2022).

From the teachers' perspective, this phenomenon is encouraged by the same communities of origin of migrants with indigenous ancestry. Customs and traditions play a significant role in shaping life decisions made by internal migrant parents, negatively impacting the future of their own daughters.

b) Resources in Schools for Migrant Children

The interview highlighted the educational inequality prevalent in the schools attended by migrant children. Pedro, David, and Mariana emphasized the need for larger classrooms (with class sizes ranging between 35 and 38 students before the pandemic), improved infrastructure, and adequate materials to offer more personalized and effective support to migrant CA. One contributing factor is the influx of internal migrants into the communities, leading to a rise in the number of children without a corresponding increase in the construction of additional classrooms. Pedro noted that the current classroom size "is already insufficient" for the number of students it accommodates (Pedro, personal communication, February 22, 2022). David highlighted the shortage of classrooms, reaching a point where there was no longer enough space for the children:

We had to search, and well, the church in the community [...] provided the facilities to find the necessary spaces for the care of children in preschool, elementary, and middle school. Meanwhile, in the other school [in the urban area] where I am working as a Principle, the classroom capacity was indeed being met (David, personal communication, March 28, 2022).

The issue of classroom overcrowding is exacerbated by the mobility of students throughout the year. Mariana highlighted that the arrival of students in the middle of the school year can pose challenges, especially when they concentrate in specific grades due to limited space. However, Mariana emphasized that no CA can be denied entry as it is their right.

When inquiring about the pandemic, teachers were asked about the resources available for continuing education among migrant populations, and most responded affirmatively. However, there were doubts about the effectiveness of communication. WhatsApp served as the primary means of communication, but a significant number of teachers either did not have smartphones or had only one shared among the entire family, making it inaccessible to the children. To address this, most teachers opted to distribute workbooks and textbooks to parents with a designated schedule for pick-up at the school. Unfortunately, many parents did not show up, leading teachers to personally visit homes to collect the workbooks.

Teacher David highlighted the limited education level of the parents:

even with workbooks and WhatsApp groups, the response was minimal [...] there were instances where textbooks were collected, and they were left blank, but it was also because parents lacked the ability to interpret the instructions for their children (David, personal communication, March 28, 2022).

During the pandemic, the significance of schools and teachers in education is well-recognized, but parental support played a crucial role in this process, as they facilitated the integration of school activities into their homes.

Another observation was that teachers who serve internal migrant CA were not informed about any programs addressing the needs of these students, such as the Educational Attention Program for Migrant School Population (Programa de Atención Educativa a la Población Escolar Migrante [PAEPEM]) operational until 2021 or the Basic Education Program for Boys and Girls from Migrant Agricultural Worker Families (Programa de Educación Básica para Niños y Niñas de Familias Jornaleras Agrícolas Migrantes [PRONIM]) active until 2019. These initiatives involved providing material resources to schools and making curriculum adjustments to accommodate migrant children. In contrast, some teachers suggested that the Full-Time Schools Program (Programa de Escuelas de Tiempo Completo [PETC])⁹ could be beneficial for internal migrant children, allowing them to spend more time in school while their parents worked. Unfortunately, this program had not been implemented in all their schools in semi-urban or rural areas. For example, Lupita mentioned: “We had it, and it is beneficial because this way, children spend more

⁹ PETC aims to strengthen the quality of basic education by extending the school day.

time learning and eating well, on time, without the need for their elementary school sibling to take care of them for longer” (Lupita, personal communication, February 18, 2022). Similarly, Professor David emphasized the necessity: “for compensatory programs not only to reach schools in more accessible areas but also in rural areas; with us, there are children who are hungry and also eager to learn” (David, personal communication, March 28, 2022).

c) Educational Processes of Migrant Children

According to the teachers, being an internal migrant can influence educational trajectories, contingent on the parents’ interest in education, as indicated by the statistical model. Teacher Grecia mentioned that there have been instances of successful academic performance when mothers actively engage in their children’s education. However, the opposite scenario is also witnessed, with internal migrant parents focusing on work and neglecting their children. Grecia expressed: “The girl hasn’t been able to learn, doesn’t do her homework [...] she and her siblings show poor hygiene and pediculosis, all due to the parents’ negligence, although it’s known that they are working late” (Grecia, personal communication, February 25, 2022).

The interviews suggest that school dropout primarily occurs in preschool and middle school levels, consistent with the quantitative analysis. Instances of dropout in preschool have been observed due to the migratory movement itself or upon arrival at the destination out of sync with the school year, as mentioned by Lupita, Mariana, and Grecia. However, towards the end of elementary school and particularly in middle school, dropout becomes more prevalent and occurs due to the migratory movement itself or the necessity to assist the family, either economically or in domestic tasks.

Pedro, Joel, and Sara noted that while some CA express a desire to pursue further education, precarious living conditions and economic necessities often impede this continuity, as the allure of short-term financial gains becomes prominent. Moreover, in the absence of viable job prospects for young individuals in remote communities and the prevalent issue of drug addiction, both Pedro and Sara observed that certain students contemplate engaging in illegal activities or entering illicit businesses after completing elementary or middle school.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings of this research affirm that internal migration has a detrimental impact on the school enrollment of children residing in Baja California, aligning with previous national-level studies (Giorguli et al., 2010; Giorguli & Angoa, 2016) and regional case studies (Velasco Ortiz, 2013). It is noteworthy that recent internal migrants continue to encounter challenges in school non-enrollment, as observed decades ago. For instance, approximately 14% of recent internal migrants aged 7 to 14 did not attend school in Baja California in 2020, mirroring the 13% non-enrollment rate among children of agricultural laborers settled in communities in the San Quintín valley in 2003 (Velasco Ortiz, 2013). In contrast to earlier research, this article delves into this phenomenon at the state level and provides insights from teachers in peripheral areas of the city of Ensenada, which serve as destinations for internal migrants.

The hypotheses were largely confirmed. By the quantitative analysis, it was determined that although being an internal migrant acts as a hindrance to school enrollment, with a significantly higher level of non-enrollment when CA have parents engaged in agricultural jobs. This finding aligns with studies attributing the educational disadvantages of indigenous migrants to the precarious nature of their parents' agricultural employment rather than their indigenous status (Velasco Ortiz & Rentería, 2019). In interviews, teachers highlighted that when internal migrant parents worked in agriculture, their children faced challenges related to low economic and cultural capital, leading to increased involvement in the labor market or domestic work, which, in turn, competed with their academic pursuits. Interactions derived from logistic models affirm that, even when controlling for socio-economic factors, parents' education and household overcrowding, parents' engagement in agricultural occupations contributes to the school dropout of internal migrants.

Contrary to the hypothesis and the insights provided by teachers in interviews, the statistical analysis revealed that having indigenous parents acts as a protective factor for school enrollment. This trend was observed among both non-migrants and non-recent migrants, aligning with findings in other studies related to educational and social programs for indigenous communities (Mier et al., 2003). Only CA with indigenous parents who were recent internal migrants exhibited lower school enrollment than non-migrant populations. In fact, settling in Baja California appears to support educational continuity, but in cases of recent immigration of indigenous populations, instances of educational disadvantage, as reported by teachers, can arise. Interviews underscore the linguistic challenges faced by indigenous migrant CA, who often conceal their native language, either due to a negative perception of their roots or a fear of ethnic discrimination in receiving communities—a phenomenon documented in studies conducted in indigenous schools (Velasco Ortiz & Rentería, 2019).

An aspect related to the education of internal migrants is the gender gap in activities and expected roles among CA (Aguilar, 2009; Mier y Terán & Rabell, 2003). The quantitative analysis overall indicated that males had higher school dropout rates, and interviews confirmed that boys are often engaged in agricultural employment at a young age. Some even aspire to work in illegal jobs due to the scarce opportunities for decent employment in their places of residence. On the other hand, girls are less frequently involved in extra-domestic work and more commonly engage in domestic work, which is combined with school attendance. Additionally, teachers assert that some girls are forced into early partnerships to comply with the “*usos y costumbres*” (customs and traditions) of their indigenous communities, constituting a violation of human rights and an impediment to educational continuity.

The findings indicate that, compared to natives, internal migrants settled in housing have a lower probability of attending basic and upper secondary education, even though it is a right. For a significant proportion of these individuals, the state fails to guarantee this right (Tomasevski, 2004), aligning with previous studies (Giorguli & Angoa, 2016; Juárez & Rodríguez, 2016; Rodríguez et al., 2019; Velasco Ortiz, 2013; Velasco Ortiz & Rentería, 2019). Education is not

affordable, as there is no varied offer of basic and upper secondary education for every internal migrant CA; it is not accessible, given the scarcity of educational resources and infrastructure in existing schools, as well as the socio-economic marginalization of internal migrants, limiting access to education; it is not acceptable, as education lacks relevant, contextualized, and diversified content tailored to the needs of migrants; and it is not adaptable, as there is a lack of programs for strengthening and developing education appropriate to the needs of internal migrants in Baja California. The state has initiated programs, but they have not been sufficient, face implementation problems, and/or are not recognized by teachers, as evidenced in the interviews.

Teachers affirm that many families of internal migrant CA have low cultural capital and do not prioritize the education of their children, which aligns with the disadvantages in the education of parents and their connection to low school enrollment found in logistic models. There are also barriers to schooling related to school infrastructure deficiencies and the marginalization of residential areas, i.e., contexts where educational inequities are reproduced (Bourdieu, 2011; Bourdieu & Passeron, 2009) and where interventions could be made through social policies. For example, more spaces and/or schools of various levels could be constructed, school facilities could be improved, and there could be a focus on teacher training for migrant students. Additionally, prioritizing the improvement of access to information and communication technologies in areas densely populated by internal migrants could be considered.

The COVID-19 pandemic particularly underscored the technological challenges confronted by internal migrant CA, substantially limiting communication between teachers and parents. Teachers also emphasized the need to implement programs aimed at enhancing the quality of education, rendering it relevant to the life contexts of internal migrants, and extending school hours. According to the teachers, the expansion of the Full-Time Schools Program (PETC) in peri-urban and rural areas of Baja California would greatly benefit the education of numerous internal migrant CA who find themselves home alone due to their parents' work commitments and the absence of support networks.

The research poses inquiries into additional areas. For instance, it explores how the operations of agricultural enterprises and work practices in host communities impact the educational continuity of migrant children and their entitlement to social rights. Furthermore, it delves into the experiences of child labor among internal migrants in Baja California and examines who oversees adherence to regulations in this context. Lastly, it raises the question of how gender inequalities faced by girls and adolescents in migrant families, particularly related to domestic responsibilities and caring for siblings, might hinder their educational prospects and suggests exploring policies that could facilitate the educational continuity of these migrant women in future studies.

Translation: Erika Morales.

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