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UNDERSTANDING ACCULTURATION FACTORS TO ENSURE WELL-BEING AMONG ETHNIC MINORITIES IN GEORGIA

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Abstract. This comprehensive article provides a deep dive into Georgia's intricate and diverse cultural landscape. With a particular focus on the country's ethnic minorities, specifically Armenians and Azeris, the research examines the various acculturation strategies these groups employ. The purpose of the research is to identify and thoroughly understand the multitude of factors that influence the selection of these acculturation strategies amongst these ethnic minorities. Acculturation strategies can take several forms, including integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation. Each strategy has different implications for individuals and groups, influencing their cultural identity, social relationships, and overall psychological well-being. The research presented in this article pays special attention to the integration strategy. Integration as an acculturation strategy has been linked to numerous positive outcomes. Among these are the successful coexistence of diverse ethnic groups within a single society and improved psychological well-being among ethnic minorities. This research aims to contribute to understanding how integration as an acculturation strategy can foster harmonious multicultural societies. The exploration of these complex dynamics of cultural integration within Georgia aims to shed light on the country's multicultural fabric. This understanding can be used to inform policy decisions and foster a more inclusive society that respects and values its diverse ethnic groups.

KEYWORDS: GEORGIA, ETHNIC MINORITIES, ACCULTURATION, INTEGRATION, ARMENIANS, AZERIS, PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING

INTRODUCTION

Georgia has a rich history of multiculturalism, with various ethnic groups having inhabited the country for centuries, as documented by Maisuradze (1999) [1], Vadachkoria (2003)[2], Tetvadze (1998)[3], and Jaoshvili (1996)[4]. Today, different ethnic groups continue to reside in Georgia, with one in every six citizens belonging to an ethnic minority and a significant proportion of these minorities living in compact settlements in the regions of Samtskhe-Javakheti and Kvemo Kartli. According to the 2014 general population census, 86.8% of the Georgian population are Georgians, 6.3% are Azeris, 4.5% are ethnically Armenian citizens, and the remaining 2% are comprised of vari-

ous other ethnicities, such as Russians, Ossetians, Yezidis, Ukrainians, Kists, Greeks, Assyrians, and others (GeoStat, 2014)[5].

The task of merging ethnic minorities into a country's majority culture is quite challenging, considering the diverse ethnic makeup of many nations. Ethnic groups use various methods to coexist with the main culture, which Sam and Berry (1997)[6] classified as integration, separation, marginalization, and assimilation under the concept of acculturation. Among these, integration is key for successful coexistence. It involves maintaining one's cultural individuality while adapting to the host culture, and it's linked to the mental health of ethnic minorities (Rogler et al., 1991[7]; Suinn et al., 1987[8]). Other studies by Berry et al., (2006)[9], Paluck et al., (2019)[10], and Rios & Wynn (2016)[11] highlight that integration fosters positive relationships between different groups and that multicultural beliefs help decrease bias against minority groups. Further research (Berry et al., 2021[12]; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013[13]; Stogianni et al., 2021[14]) also indicate positive outcomes for immigrants who adopt integration strategies, such as increased life satisfaction, improved self-esteem, and better sociocultural adjustment.

This research aims to identify factors that predict the choice of different acculturation strategies identified by Berry (1997)[15]. The study examines the acculturation strategies chosen by ethnic Armenians and Azeris, who constitute the two largest ethnic minority groups in Georgia and are predominantly settled in the regions of Kvemo Kartli, Kakheti, and Samtskhe-Javakheti (GeoStat, 2014)[16]. The research seeks to identify the factors that help or hinder the choice of integration as an acculturation strategy, which is one predictor of the well-being of ethnic minorities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Acculturation

The interaction between different cultures is not a new phenomenon and has been the subject of scholarly attention for decades, as evidenced by the works of Adler (1975)[17], Redfield et al. (1936)[18], Richardson (1957)[19], Thomas & Znanieck (1918)[20], van Osch & Breugelmans (2012)[21], Ward & Kennedy (1994)[22], and others. Acculturation, which refers to the changes that occur when two or more cultures come into contact with each other, has been the focus of numerous theories, including Milton Gordon's (1964)[23] assimilation theory, the multidimensional model of acculturation (Ward, 2001)[24], the model of acculturation strategies (Sam & Berry, 2006)[25], the interactional model (Bourhis et al., 1997)[26], and more.

The term acculturation originated in American anthropology and was first used by John Wesley Powell (1883)[27] to describe the psychological changes that occur when two cultures meet. Stanley Hall (1904)[28] is considered the first psychologist to write about acculturation, although it was Thomas and Znaniecki (1918)[29] who developed the first psychological theory of acculturation. They defined culture as shared conscious processes, such as habits, associations, attitudes, and beliefs, referred to as schemas. According to them, "The individual who is creative [+F+C] modifies existing cultural schema in order "to widen the control of his environment, to adapt to his purposes a continually increasing sphere of social reality" (Thomas & Znaniecki, 1918, p. 1856)[30].

In 1936, Redfield, Linton & Herskovits [31] proposed the first classic definition of acculturation, determining it as "the process of cultural change that occurs when individuals from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged, continuous, first-hand contact with each other" (pp. 149-152). They later revised their definition to include cultural change caused by the union of two or more autonomous culture systems, direct cultural transmission, ecological and demographic modifications, and changes related to the host culture (Social Science Research Council, 1954)[32]. According to Bogardus (1949)[33], Imposed acculturation "is found wherever the people of one culture try to suppress the culture patterns, for example, of immigrants and to impose their patterns of behaviour and of thought upon these immigrants" (p. 125).

The term "psychological acculturation" was introduced to distinguish between group and individual acculturation (Sam, 1994a)[34]; (Ward, 1996)[35]. Graves (1967)[36] defined individual acculturation as the changes that a person experiences as a result of interacting with another culture, while group-level acculturation involves changes in the

culture itself and manifests in population-level changes caused by contact between cultures (Berry et al., 1986)[37].

In 1964, Sociologist Milton Gordon [38] introduced a linear assimilation model, charting the cultural shifts seen within minority groups. This model presents acculturation as a stepping-stone within the broader process of assimilation, with biculturalism serving as a temporary phase between total segregation and total assimilation. The model assumes that individuals from one culture will shed their original identity as they integrate into another culture (LaFromboise et al.)., 1993)[39]. It suggests that any acculturation issues immigrants face are due to their failure to properly integrate into the new society (Bourhis et al., 1997)[40]. Other models in social psychology also depict acculturation as a one-way process, moving from the preservation of cultural heritage to total assimilation (Lambert et al., 1986)[41].

In 2001, Berry's [42] theory has undergone many modifications over the years. Berry refined his earlier theory (Berry et al., 1972)[43]; (1980)[44], which implied eight types of acculturation, and distinguished four types of acculturation strategies that a minority representative may apply in the process of interacting with the dominant culture (Berry, 1980, 1997 [45]; Berry, 2006 [46]; Sam, 2006a [47]; Sam & Berry, 2010 [48]; Ward & Kus, 2012 [49]; Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011 [50]):

1. Assimilation: when an individual does not want to have a connection with the native culture and tries to be more actively involved in the host culture. The process of interaction between two cultures, as a result of which one of them loses its identity and is absorbed by the other.
2. Integration: when an individual maintains a connection with the native culture and at the same time is actively involved in the host culture.
3. Separation: the individual maintains close ties with the native culture while contact with the host culture is minimized. It applies to individuals of different races, cultures, and backgrounds who do not assimilate with the dominant culture and try to remain separate.
4. Marginalization: The individual avoids both native and host culture. The members of the majority avoid the members of the minority group. The minority group and issues related to them become invisible to society. The process of making a class or group of people less or associated with a secondary position.

Berry's (1980 [51], 1997 [52], 2006 [53]) theory, modified in different years, deals with two main issues of acculturation of individuals – the first approach concerns how important it is for an individual to preserve his cultural heritage when in contact with the host culture. The second approach concerns how important it is for the individual to participate in the activities of the larger society. From these two approaches, four strategies of acculturation are derived. These strategies can be grouped in the following direction: strategies focused on the host culture and strategies focused on preserving the native cultural heritage. An individual's strong orientation to the host culture leads to assimilation, and vice versa (to the native cultural heritage) to separation, while those who avoid both cultures have an orientation to marginalization (Berry, 1997 [54], 2005 [55]).

Acculturation and well-being

The process of acculturation, or the learning and adaptation to a new culture, can be an exhilarating yet challenging journey for immigrants (Berry, 2005[56]; Bista & Gaulee, 2017[57]; Chun, Chesla, & Kwan, 2011[58]). When these individuals encounter significant cultural adaptation stress and perceive a lack of resources to handle this stress, it can often result in conditions such as stress, anxiety, and depression (Suinn, 2010[59]; Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006[60]). These conditions can prompt harmful health behaviours like drinking and smoking (Schnetzer, Schulenberg, & Buchanan, 2013[61]; Mee, 2014[62]).

Berry's (1997[63]) model of acculturation suggests that practices like alcohol abuse and smoking tend to increase in reaction to cultural adaptation stress. In this context, international students with no access to coping resources are more susceptible to this stress and may develop

harmful practices as a coping mechanism. However, a higher degree of acculturation correlates with lower smoking rates among these students (Sa et al., 2013[64]).

METHODOLOGY

The current study utilized quantitative research methods to collect data. A quantitative research method was used; in particular, 452 participants (46.5% Azeri, 53.5% Armenian) took part in the survey (n=452).

Based on the research objectives and research questions, a survey of ethnic Armenians and Azeris living in Georgia was conducted. For this purpose, a quantitative research questionnaire was created, for which the questions were developed considering the theoretical framework and also based on the analysis of in-depth interviews conducted with field experts (n=15) (the average duration of the survey process was 45 minutes).

The questionnaire consisted of different blocks; along with other questions, measures of psychological characteristics (various self-description tools) were built into the questionnaire. To determine acculturation strategies, the East Asian Immigrants' Acculturation Assessment Scale (EAAM) (Barry, 2001[65]) was used in the questionnaire, adapted into Georgian by Ia Shekriladze in 2017[66].

Because the ethnic Azeris and Armenians living in Georgia are not proficient in the official state language (BTCC, 2008[67]), the questionnaire was adapted to the Armenian and Azeri languages in accordance with all the rules – the questionnaire and all the questions and statements contained in it were translated from Georgian into Armenian and Azeri and then back into Georgian to compare them with the original version. Professional translators (ethnically Armenian and Azeri) were involved in translating the questionnaire.

Before fieldwork, 7-7 pilot questionnaires (cognitive interviews) were conducted with representatives of ethnic minorities to determine how well each question was understood (these 14 questionnaires were not used in the final data processing).

Data were processed using a statistical program designed for the social sciences (SPSS v25).

SAMPLING

Purposive sampling methods were used in the research conducted within the study framework. The non-probability sampling method, known as available sampling, was utilized during the interviews conducted with field experts. A total of 15 in-depth interviews were conducted.

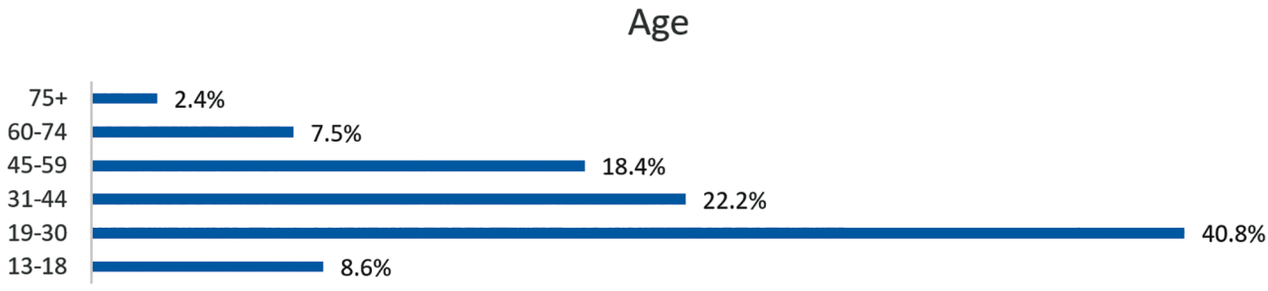
For the quantitative research, convenient and snowball sampling were identified as the purposive sampling methods conducted with ethnic minorities. 452 Armenian (n=210) and Azeri (n=242) respondents living in Georgia participated in the quantitative research, and 42 (n=20 Armenian, n=22 Azeri) took part in the qualitative research.

The survey was conducted using a self-administered questionnaire, with a door-to-door (D2D) approach adopted. However, interviewers were only involved in filling out the questionnaire if the respondent had a question regarding a specific topic.

RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

1. The expert survey included interviews with experts with experience working with ethnic minorities, including representatives of local non-governmental organizations, linguists, anthropologists, ethnographers, historians, education experts, and other stakeholders. A total of 15 field experts participated in the research. Notably, these field experts work directly on planning and implementing various initiatives and projects related to ethnic minorities and have direct contact with the representatives of ethnic minorities living in the regions and the capital city.
2. The quantitative research with ethnic minorities included a survey conducted in Tbilisi, Samtskhe-Javakheti, Kvemo Kartli, and other areas of Georgia. A total of 452 ethnic minority representatives participated in the study, including 210 ethnically Armenian and 242 ethnically Azeri participants. Participants from different age groups took part in the research, ranging

FIGURE 1. DISTRIBUTION OF AGE



in age from 13 to 82 years old. The highest number of participants (40.8%) fell within the age range of 19-30 years old, followed by the 31-44 age range. The smallest number of respondents were above 75 years old.

These findings provided valuable insights into the experiences of ethnic minorities in Georgia and helped inform the development of future policies and programs to promote interethnic understanding and social cohesion in the country *(See Figure 1)*.

The research participants were composed of 46.5% Armenians and 53.5% Azeris. Accordingly, 46.5% of participants reported speaking Armenian at home, while 53.5% spoke Azeri. The research took place in the Samtskhe-Javakheti, Tbilisi, Kakheti, and Kvemo Kartli regions, with 40% of participants living in Samtskhe-Javakheti, 12% in Tbilisi, 40% in Kvemo Kartli, and 8% in Kakheti.

Armenians and Azeris reported knowing the state language above the average level, with Armenians reporting a mean of 3.5 (SD=1.171) and Azeris reporting a mean of 3.33 (SD=1.022).

Most participants had secondary and higher education, followed by incomplete higher or technical education. Approximately 83% of participants stated that they received their education in Armenian or Azeri, while 9.5% stated they received education in mixed languages (Georgian and Armenian/Azeri), 3.1% in Georgian, and 4.2% in Russian.

These findings provided valuable insights into the demographic characteristics of the study participants, as well as their language abilities and educational backgrounds *(See Table 1)*.

TABLE 1. EDUCATION

EDUCATION	
	%
Primary	1,3
Incomplete Secondary	4,2
Secondary	39,2
Technical	12,4
Incomplete Higher	16,2
Higher	24,1
Masters	2,7

TABLE 2. CHOSE OF ACCULTURATION STRATEGIES BY ETHNICITY

ETHNICITY		ASSIMILATION	SEPARATION	INTEGRATION	MARGINALIZATION
Armenian	Mean	2,18	3,66	4,15	2,13
	St. Deviation	1,16	1,61	2,02	0,88
Azeri	Mean	2,43	3,50	3,40	2,85
	St. Deviation	1,14	0,95	1,24	0,83
Total	Mean	2,31	3,58	3,75	2,51
	St. Deviation	1,15	1,30	1,69	0,92

TABLE 3. ASSIMILATION AND MARGINALIZATION BY LONELINESS

LONELINESS		ASSIMILATION	MARGINALIZATION
LOW	Mean	1,8	2,0
	SD	1,1	0,7
HIGH	Mean	2,6	2,8
	SD	1,1	0,9

RESULTS

By analyzing the results of the quantitative research conducted with ethnic minorities, it is clear that the most commonly used acculturation strategy is integration (M=3.8; SD=1.1), followed by separation (M=3.6; SD=1.2), and finally marginalization (M=2.5; SD=0.9) or assimilation (M=2.3; SD=1.1) *(See Table 2)*.

The study found that the choice of acculturation strategies among ethnic minorities was related to various personal factors, including loneliness rate, life orientation, trust, locus of control, and self-esteem. The assimilation index had a positive correlation with the loneliness index (r=0.269; p=0.000) and a negative correlation with the locus of control (r=-0.249; p=0.000), particularly with the external locus (r=0.352; p=0.000). The correlation showed that as the loneliness index rose, so did the assimilation index, while it declined as the external locus index increased.

Analysis of the data by ethnic groups showed that in the case of ethnic Armenians, assimilation was positively correlated with self-esteem (r=0.406; p=0.000) and Azeris (r=0.157; p=0.015). The choice of assimilation is more likely in people with high self-esteem for representatives of both ethnic groups. The rate of separation was related to optimism (r=0.187; p=0.000), trust (r=0.246; p=0.000), and locus of control (r=0.223; p=0.000) internal locus (r=0.123; p=0.029); external locus (r=0.197; p=0.000)), and was negatively correlated with the self-esteem index (r=-0.104; p=0.028).

The choice of separation is higher among ethnic minorities with high levels of optimism, trust, and locus of control, while it is lower among people with a rate of self-esteem. The integration strategy was positively correlated with self-esteem (r=0.362; p=0.005) and negatively correlated with trust (r=-0.138; p=0.003), locus of control (r=-0.337; p=0.000) internal (r=-0.17; p= 0.002); external (r=0.269; p=0.000)) and loneliness index (r=-0.132; p=0.000).

For ethnic Armenians, loneliness and integration were unrelated, although there was an additional correlation between integration and optimism (r=0.161; p=0.02). The selection of integration strategy exhibited an upward trend in conjunction with elevated self-esteem, while it exhibited a decline with rising levels of trust, locus of control, and loneliness. The marginalization rate had a positive correlation with loneliness (r=0.621; p=0.000) and locus of control (r=0.376; p=0.000), particularly with the internal locus of control (r=0.329; p=0.000), and a negative correlation with optimism (r= – 0.433; p=0.000) and self-esteem (r=-0.408; p=0.000).

In our study, the between-group analysis showed that the rate of loneliness had a statistically significant effect on assimilation (F=0.447; p=0.504) (t(450)=-7.23; p=0.000) and marginalization (F=3.365; p=0.067) (t(450)=-10967; p=0.000) on the indicator. People with high loneliness rates were more likely to choose the strategy of assimilation and marginalization than ethnic minorities with low loneliness rates, which confirms the results of the research of Neto and his colleagues (2017) *(See Table 3)*.

According to the study, the life orientation had a statistically significant effect on separation (F=68.893; p=0.000) (t(231.3)=-2.035; p=0.043), integration (F=79.8; p=0.000) (t(232.5)=-2.679; p=0.008), and marginalization (F=2.533; p=0.112) (t(450)=11.227; p=0.000) indicators. Respondents with an optimistic life orientation tended to prefer separation and integration strategies, while those with a pessimistic life orientation preferred the marginalization strategy *(See Table 4)*.

TABLE 4. SEPARATION, INTEGRATION, MARGINALIZATION BY LIFE ORIENTATION

LIFE ORIENTATION		SEPARATION	INTEGRATION	MARGINALIZATION
PESIMISM	Mean	3,47	3,58	2,83
	SD	1,060	1,379	0,866
OPTIMISM	Mean	3,77	4,07	1,93
	SD	1,639	2,117	0,719

TABLE 5. ACCULTURATION STRATEGIES BY CONTROL OF LOCUS

CONTROL OF LOCUS		ASSIMILATION	SEPARATION	INTEGRATION	MARGINALIZATION
INTERNAL LOCUS	Mean	2,5	3,4	4,1	2,3
	SD	1,1	1,2	1,7	0,9
EXTERNAL LOCUS	Mean	1,9	3,9	3,0	2,9
	SD	1,1	1,4	1,5	0,9

Our study also confirmed the relationship between locus of control and acculturation strategies. Locus of control affected all four acculturation strategies – assimilation (F=0.241; p=0.642) (t(450)=4.493; p=0.000), separation (F=1.59; p=0.208) (t(450)=-3.677; p=0.000), integration (F=4.26; p=0.04) (t(289.6)=6.817; p=0.000), and marginalization (F=0.175; p=0.676) (t(450)=-6.562; p=0.000). Respondents with an internal locus of control preferred assimilation and integration strategies compared to those with an external locus, while respondents with an external locus prefer Separtion *(See Table 5)*.

Regarding self-esteem, the study found that the self-esteem was statistically significantly different between integration (F=9.442; p=0.002) (t(30.9)=-3.116; p=0.004) and marginalization (F=1.28; p=0.258) (t(450)=4.59; p=0.000) indicators. Respondents with high self-esteem were more likely to be integrated than those with low self-esteem, while respondents with low self-esteem were more likely to choose marginalization than those with high self-esteem *(See Table 6)*.

Following the correlational and intergroup analysis of the data, multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to examine the predictive factors of each acculturation strategy. The results of the regression analysis revealed various factors that significantly predicted integration (R2=.656, F(11)=76.235, p<0.01). These factors included age (β=-0.133, p<0.01), education (β=0.177, p<0.01), knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β=0.385, p<0.01), knowledge of the Russian language (β=0.09, p<0.01), perception of the equality of ethnic groups (β=0.147, p<0.01), equality of opportunity to start a job (β=-0.13, p<0.01), ability to use the Russian language (β=-0.258, p<0.01), perception of Orthodoxy as a characteristic factor

TABLE 6. INTEGRATION AND MARGINALIZATION BY SELF-ESTEEM

SELF-ESTEEM		INTEGRATION	MARGINALIZATION
LOW	Mean	3,0	3,3
	SD	1,1	1,0
HIGH	Mean	3,8	2,5
	SD	1,7	0,9

TABLE 7. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATION STRATEGY

	INTEGRATION	
	β	p<
Age	-0,133	0,01
Education	0,177	0,01
Knowledge of the state language (Georgian).	0,385	0,01
Knowledge of the Russian language	0,09	0,01
Perception of equality of ethnic groups	0,147	0,01
Perception of equality of opportunity to start service	-0,13	0,01
Ability to use the Russian language	-0,258	0,01
Perception of Orthodoxy as a characteristic factor for Georgians	-0,138	0,01
Trust in the shrine	0,117	0,01
Performing religious rituals	0,114	0,01
Frequency of going to pray	0,138	0,01

for Georgians (β=-0.138, p<0.01), trust in the shrine (β =0.117, p<0.01), performance of religious rituals (β=0.114, p<0.01), and frequency of going to prayer (β=0.138, p<0.01) *(See Table 7)*.

The study examined the relationship between personal characteristics and integration, finding a small relationship between the two (R2=.25, F(3)=49.799, p<0.01). The choice of integration strategy was only explained by 25% of personal characteristics such as locus of control (β= –0.317, p<0.01), self-esteem (β=0.416, p<0.01), and optimism (β=-0.226, p<0.01). Ethnic minorities with an internal locus of control, high self-esteem, and low optimism were more integrated in the Georgian environment. However, the data analysis for ethnic Azeris did not reveal any statistically significant predictors. For ethnic Armenians, personal factors such as locus of control (β=-0.262, p<0.01), optimism (β=-0.318, p<0.01), trust (β=-0.191, p<0.01), and self-esteem (β=0.51, p<0.01) predicted the integration rate (R2=.41, F(4)=35.583, p<0.01) *(See Table 8)*.

For ethnic Armenians, the integration index (R2=.926, F(10)=248.829, p<0.01) was predicted by various factors such as age (β=-0.208, p<0.01), knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β=0.361, p<0.01), perception of women's active involvement in public life (β=0.243, p<0.01), perception of equality of ethnic (β=0.545, p<0.01) and religious (β=-0.571, p<0.01) groups, perception of the possibility of using the Russian language (β=-0.297, p<0.01), trust in the shrine (β=0.138, p<0.01),

TABLE 8 – REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATION RATE (PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS) FOR ETHNIC ARMENIANS

	INTEGRATION	
	β	p<
Locus of control	-0,262	0,01
Optimism	-0.318	0,01
Trust	-0.191	0,01
Self-esteem	0,51	0,01

TABLE 10. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF INTEGRATION RATE FOR ETHNIC AZERIS

	INTEGRATION	
	β	p<
Knowledge of the Georgian language	0,323	0,01
Perception of equality of religious groups	0,256	0,01
Education	0,228	0,01

TABLE 11. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF ASSIMILATION RATE

	ASSIMILATION	
	β	p<
Age	-0,295	0,01
Knowledge of the state language (Georgian).	0,422	0,01
Knowledge of the Russian language	0,112	0,01
Equality of ethnic groups	0,148	0,01
Equal opportunities to start service	-0,227	0,01
Shrine trust	0,152	0,01
Government trust	-0,128	0,01
Performing religious rituals	0,101	0,01
The importance of knowledge of the Georgian language for the start of service	-0,273	0,01

the president (β=-0.185, p<0.01), the public defender (β=-0.187, p<0.01), and non-governmental organizations (β=0.277, p<0.01) *(See Table 9)*.

Linear multiple regression analysis confirmed that for ethnic Azeris, only a few factors significantly predicted integration (R2=.314, F(3)=36.392, p<0.01), including knowledge of the Georgian language (β=0.323, p<0.01), perception of equality of religious groups (β=0.256, p<0.01), and education (β=0.228, p<0.01) *(See Table 10)*.

Similarly, for assimilation, multiple regression analysis revealed that factors such as age (β=-0.295, p<0.01), knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β =0.422, p<0.01), knowledge of the Russian language (β=0.112, p<0.01), equality of ethnic groups (β=0.148, p<0.01), equal opportunities to start a job (β=-0.227, p<0.01), perception of the importance of the Georgian language for starting a job (β=-0.273, p <0.01), trust in the government (β=-0.128, p<0.01), the performance of religious rituals (β=0.101, p<0.01), and perception of the equality of opportunity to start a job (β=0.152, p<0.01)

TABLE 12. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE ASSIMILATION RATE ACCORDING TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

	ASSIMILATION	
	β	p<
Loneliness	0,427	0,01
Locus of control	-0,322	0,01
Self-esteem	0,164	0,01
Trust	0,128	0,01

TABLE 13. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE RATE OF ASSIMILATION ACCORDING TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR ETHNIC ARMENIANS

	ASSIMILATION	
	β	p<
Loneliness	0,477	0,01
Locus of control	-0,396	0,01
Self-esteem	0,386	0,01

TABLE 14. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF ASSIMILATION RATE FOR ETHNIC ARMENIANS

	ASSIMILATION	
	β	p<
Knowledge of the state language (Georgian).	0,278	0,01
Perception of the possibility of using the Russian language for communication	-0,407	0,01
The importance of religion	0,166	0,01
Shrine trust	0,248	0,01
Government trust	-0,488	0,01
Trust of the President	0,103	0,01

significantly predicted the assimilation strategy (R2=.528, F(9)=55.043, p<0.01) *(See Table 11)*.

Furthermore, the multiple regression analysis between assimilation and personal characteristics revealed a weak relationship (R2=.212, F(4)=29.986, p<0.01). Personal characteristics such as loneliness (β=0.427, p<0.01), locus of control (β=-0.322, p<0.01), self-esteem (β=0.164, p<0.01), and trust (β=0.128, p<0.01) were found to predict only 21.2% of the choice of the assimilation strategy *(See Table 12)*.

The analysis of data based on nationalities revealed that for assimilation, personal characteristics predicted 46.7% of the variance for ethnic Armenians (R2=.467, F(3)=60.088, p<0.01): locus of control (β=-0.396, p<0.01), self-esteem (β=0.386, p<0.01), and loneliness (β=0.477, p<0.01) *(See Table 13)*.

Data analysis based on ethnicity found that the following factors significantly predicted assimilation for ethnic Armenians (R2=.854, F(7)=169.365, p<0.01): knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β=0.278, p<0.01), perception of the possibility of using the Russian language for communication (β=-0.407, p<0.01), importance of religion (β=0.166, p<0.01) and the shrine (β=0.248, p<0.01), distrust of the government (β=-0.488, p<0.01), and distrust of the president (β=-0.103, p<0.01) *(See Table 14)*.

TABLE 15. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF ASSIMILATION RATE FOR ETHNIC AZERIS

	ASSIMILATION	
	β	p<
Knowledge of the state language (Georgian).	0,397	0,01
Perception of equality of religious groups	0,19	0,01
Assessment of the necessity of the Georgian language for starting the service	-0,362	0,01
Assessment of the ability to use the Russian language	0,191	0,01
Perception of Orthodoxy as a characteristic feature of Georgianness	-0,137	0,01

TABLE 16. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SEPARATION

	SEPARATION	
	β	p<
Age	0,254	0,01
Education	-0,13	0,01
Knowledge of the state language (Georgian).	-0,359	0,01
Perception of Orthodoxy as a factor characteristic of Georgianness	-0,303	0,01
Board/Mayor Trust	0,214	0,01
Parliamentary confidence	-0,18	0,01
Material condition	0,219	0,01

For ethnic Azeris, the following factors predicted assimilation (R2=.366, F(5)=27.229, p<0.01): knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β=0.397, p<0.01), perception of the equality of religious groups (β=0.19, p<0.01), assessment of the necessity of the Georgian language for starting a job (β=-0.362, p<0.01), assessment of the possibility of using the Russian language (β=0.191, p<0.01), and perception of Orthodoxy as a characteristic feature of Georgianness (β=-0.137, p<0.01) *(See Table 15)*.

Regarding separation, statistically significant linear multiple regression analysis (R2=.484, F(7)=59.461, p<0.01) revealed that the following factors were predictors: age (β=0.254, p<0.01), education (β=-0.13, p<0.01), knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β=-0.359, p<0.01), perception of Orthodoxy as a characteristic sign of Georgianness (β=0.303, p<0.01), confidence in the administration/city hall (β=0.214, p<0.01), confidence in the parliament (β=-0.18, p<0.01), and financial status (β=0.219, p<0.01) *(See Table 16)*.

Personal characteristics were also found to be predictive factors of separation, albeit to a lesser extent (R2=.173, F(4)=23.364, p<0.01). Personal characteristics such as locus of control (β=0.248, p<0.01), self-esteem (β=-0.203, p<0.01), optimism (β=0.288, p<0.01), and trust (β=0.173, p<0.01) predicted the choice of separation strategy by 17.3% *(See Table 17)*.

When analyzing the data according to ethnicity, similar trends were only present for ethnic Armenians, and the predictive percentage also increased to 44.3% (R2=.443, F(4)=40.838, p<0.01), with the following factors predicting the choice of separation strategy: locus of control (β=0.335, p<0.01), optimism (β=0.267, p<0.01), trust (β=0.287, p<0.01), and self-esteem (β=-0.417, p<0.01). No statistically significant regression relationships were found for ethnic Azeris *(See Table 18)*.

For ethnic Armenians, the choice of separation strategy can be predicted by the following factors (R2=.879, F(9)=161.375, p<0.01): age (β=0.263,

TABLE 17. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE SEPARATION RATE ACCORDING TO PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS

	SEPARATION	
	β	p<
Locus of control	0,248	0,01
Self-esteem	-0,203	0,01
Optimism	0,288	0,01
Trust	0,173	0,01

TABLE 18. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SEPARATION RATE BY PERSONAL CHARACTERISTICS FOR ETHNIC ARMENIANS

	SEPARATION	
	β	p<
Locus of control	0,335	0,01
Self-esteem	-0,417	0,01
Optimism	0,267	0,01
Trust	0,287	0,01

TABLE 19. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SEPARATION STRATEGY FOR ETHNIC ARMENIANS

	SEPARATION	
	β	p<
Age	0,263	0,01
Knowledge of the state language (Georgian).	-0,394	0,01
Perception of equality between men and women	-0,344	0,01
Perception of equality of ethnic groups	-0,704	0,01
Perception of equality of religious groups	0,569	0,01
Perception of equality of opportunity to start service	0,342	0,01
Assessment of the importance of knowledge of the Georgian language for starting the service	-0,131	0,01
Georgianness is equated with Orthodoxy	0,214	0,01
Performing religious rituals	0,108	0,01

p<0.01), knowledge of the state language (Georgian) (β=-0.394, p<0.01), perception of equality between women and men (β=-0.344, p<0.01), perception of equality of ethnic (β=-0.704, p<0.01) and religious (β=0.569, p<0.01) groups, the perception of equality of opportunities to start a job (β=0.342, p<0.01), assessment of the importance of knowledge of the Georgian language for starting a job (β=-0.131, p<0.01), identification with Georgian Orthodoxy (β=0.214, p<0.01), and performance of religious rituals (β=0.108, p<0.01) *(See Table 19)*.

For ethnic Azeris, the choice of separation strategy can be predicted by the following factors with 15% accuracy (R2=.15, F(4)=10.485, p<0.01): assessment of the importance of group membership with neighbors (β=-0.262, p<0.01) and relatives (β=0.356, p<0.01), trust in the administration/city hall (β=0.267, p<0.01), and financial status (β=0.237, p<0.01) *(See Table 20)*.

Regarding marginalization, the linear multiple

TABLE 20. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF SEPARATION RATE FOR ETHNIC AZERIS

	SEPARATION	
	β	p<
Assessing the importance of membership in a neighborhood group	-0,262	0,01
Assessing the importance of kin group membership	0,356	0,01
Confidence in the Board/City Hall	0,267	0,01
Material condition	0,237	0,01

TABLE 21. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF MARGINALIZATION RATE

	MARGINALIZATION	
	β	p<
Loneliness	0,501	0,01
Locus of control	0,236	0,01
Self-esteem	-0,148	0,01

regression analysis only showed statistically significant relationships with the personal characteristics of ethnic minorities (R2=.46, F(3)=127.357, p<0.01), which are loneliness (β=0.501, p<0.01), locus of control (β=0.236, p<0.01), and self-esteem (β=-0.148, p<0.01). For ethnic Armenians, the predictors of marginalization are loneliness index (β=0.546, p<0.01) and locus of control (β=0.521, p<0.01) (R2=.694, F(2)=235.246, p<0.01) *(See Table 21)*.

Predictors for ethnic Armenians were age (β=0.452, p<0.01), perception of equality between men and women (β=-0.317, p<0.01), attitudes of women towards work (β=0.443, p<0.01), neighbors (β=-0.237, p<0.01), friends (β=-0.302, p<0.01), colleagues (β=-0.243, p<0.01), importance of group membership of relatives (β=0.247, p<0.01), perception of the importance of knowledge of the Georgian language for starting work (β=0.174, p<0.01), and assessment of the possibility of using the Russian language for communication (β=-0.481, p<0.01) *(See Table 22)*.

DISCUSSION

The current study substantiates global patterns and supports previous research (Nguyen & Benet-Martínez, 2013 [68]; Rudmin, 2003 [69]; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999 [70]), demonstrating an inclination towards integration among ethnic minorities. However, unique trends surface upon examination of the ethnic groups Armenians and Azeris individually. Both groups express a willingness to conserve their cultural identities. Armenians, however, attribute significant importance to preserving cultural values for their identity and sense of belonging, a feature accentuated by the worldwide Armenian diaspora (Aghaie, 2019 [71]; Ghazarian, 2017 [72]). Similarly, Azeris consider their cultural values central to their heritage, emphasizing the preservation of their customs and traditions (Mammadova, 2015 [73]). It can, therefore, be deduced that Armenians and Azeris favour acculturation strategies that underscore cultural pres-

TABLE 22. REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF MARGINALIZATION FOR ETHNIC ARMENIANS

	MARGINALIZATION	
	β	p<
Age	0,452	0,01
The importance of membership in a group of friends	-0,302	0,01
The importance of membership in a neighborhood group	-0,237	0,01
Importance of kin group membership	0,247	0,01
The importance of employee group membership	-0,243	0,01
Perception of equality between men and women	-0,317	0,01
Attitudes of women to work	0,443	0,01
Perception of the importance of knowledge of the Georgian language for starting the service	0,174	0,01
Assessment of the ability to use the Russian language for communication	-0,481	0,01

ervation. According to Berry's theoretical model (Berry, 2001 [74]), these strategies would be separation or integration as both encompass the maintenance of cultural identity.

Observations from field experts indicate a divergence in the strategies adopted by Armenians and Azeris, with Armenians displaying a greater degree of integration into Georgian society than Azeris. This variation is ascribed to the superior educational achievement and openness of ethnic Armenians compared to Azeris. Our quantitative analysis reveals that ethnic Armenians predominantly adopt an integration strategy, while Azeris favour a separation strategy. These findings corroborate our hypothesis that both ethnic groups endeavour to preserve their ethnic values. However, ethnic Armenians also incorporate elements of the host culture, while Azeris focus solely on their native culture.

This study aimed to investigate the association between personal characteristics and the selection of acculturation strategies. By employing various scales, including the Rotter Locus of Control Scale (1966 [75]), Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (1965 [76]), Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau & Cutrona, 1980 [77]), the revised version of the Life Orientation Scale (Scheier & Carver, 1985 [78]), and the General Confidence Scale, we discovered that marginalization escalated with feelings of loneliness and external locus indices, and diminished with higher optimism and self-esteem indices. The integration strategy demonstrated a negative correlation with loneliness, suggesting that the more a migrant integrates with the culture, the less likely they are to experience high levels of loneliness. Conversely, loneliness positively correlated with assimilation and marginalization strategies (Neto et al., 2017 [79]).

Previous studies (Roncancio et al. (2013) [80], Knight & Stone (1977) [81], Yao (1983) [82], Prigooff (1984) [83], and Negg & Woods (1992) [84]) have established connections between locus of control and self-esteem, and integration and acculturation. For example, Latin Americans with a high internal locus of control displayed a higher degree of acculturation than those with an external locus (Roncancio et al., 2013 [85]), and a correlation between acculturation and locus of control and self-esteem was observed in Mexican Americans (Knight & Stone [86]).

The likelihood of choosing an integration strategy in Georgia was higher in individuals who were young, educated, and members of an ethnic minority, who were fluent in both Georgian and Russian, acknowledged the equality of all ethnic groups in Georgia, believed that proficiency in the Russian language did not eliminate the necessity to learn Georgian, maintained faith in the shrine, practised religious rituals, frequently attended prayers, and did not view Orthodoxy as a defining characteristic of Georgianness. These variables were identified as reliable predictors of integration, accounting for 65.6% of the variance in integration.

Integration, predicted by 41%, was associated with an internal locus, low optimism, high self-esteem, and low confidence. Intriguingly, a high trust score was a negative predictor of integration, suggesting that the higher the trust score, the lower the integration. This implies that while evaluating the statements on the trust scale, respondents took into account trust in their native culture. Hence, the lower the level of trust in the native culture, the greater the desire to integrate with the host culture.

CONCLUSION

The research carried out in this comprehensive study provides illuminating insights into the cultural landscape of Georgia, revealing the complex dynamics of acculturation strategies at play. Particularly, the study focused on the country's ethnic minorities, the Armenians and Azeris, and their strategies to navigate their cultural identities within the broader Georgian society.

The research found that among the various acculturation strategies, integration is crucial in promoting successful coexistence and psychological well-being among ethnic minorities. Integration allows these ethnic groups to maintain their unique cultural identities while participating actively in the wider society.

This crucial finding underscores the importance of policymakers recognizing and supporting the integration strategy in their decisions and actions. By encouraging integration, a more inclusive society can be fostered, one that respects

and values the diverse cultural identities of all its ethnic groups. Looking ahead, there is a need for further research in this area. Potential future research directions could include exploring the impact of these acculturation strategies on other critical aspects of societal life. These could encompass economic development, political participation, education, and social mobility. By continuing to investigate these areas, we can deepen our understanding of the multifaceted dynamics of multicultural societies and better learn how to support and nurture their growth.

Furthermore, the findings of this study contribute to the broader understanding of multicultural societies. They highlight how a successful integration strategy can weave a rich tapestry of diverse cultures, enhancing the societal fabric.

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