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# RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CONSCIOUS SELF-REGULATION AND SOCIO-CULTURAL ADAPTATION OF FOREIGN STUDENTS

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### *Abstract*

The research has empirically proved that the direct correlation between the conscious self-regulation and socio-cultural adaptation of foreign students is mediated by the influence of the following factors: motivation of educational activity, acculturation attitudes, peculiarities of experience of acculturation stress and behavior overcoming it. The experimental sample included 316 students: 88 students, representatives of European culture, 22 students from Arab countries (Iraq, Syria, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine), 67 students from African countries (Angola, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria), 111 students from Central Asian countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), 28 students from North Caucasus Republic. Theoretical analysis of the problem made it possible to consider conscious self-regulation as a psychological means of mobilization and integration of cognitive and personal resources to solve the problems of social and cultural adaptation of foreign students. In the study it was established that only the motives focused on the learning process itself (procedural) play a mediator role in the presented interrelation, not on its result. Prosocial copying – "entering into social contacts" – was the main mediator of behavior overcoming social and cultural difficulties. It has been established that the formation of the general level of self-regulation reduces the intensity of the experience of acculturation stress and the focus on separation. At the same time, the mediator role of the integration into the new environment increases the efficiency of the linked self-regulation and adaptation of foreign students to both the study group and the learning activities.

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**Keywords:** Conscious self-regulation, overcoming behavior, acculturation attitudes, foreign students.



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## 1. Introduction

Intensification and deepening of international cooperation in the field of education is the most important and urgent task for many countries. In the context of globalization of education, opportunities for academic mobility of students are expanding significantly. In this situation, the problem of social and cultural adaptation of foreign students becomes urgent. As practice shows, even under the most favorable conditions, entering the new social and cultural environment is accompanied by various difficulties and problems. Often, foreign students, experiencing acculturation stress, are guided by stereotypes and attitudes, possessing unreliable and sometimes negative information about another culture, experience prejudice against representatives of another culture, which cannot but affect the duration and complexity of adaptation to another socio-cultural environment. It becomes relevant to study the role of regulatory mechanisms in overcoming the difficulties of socio-cultural adaptation of foreign students.

Self-regulation and co-authored behavior are increasingly being studied in the system of cognitive predictors, including the optimal adaptation predictors (Bodrov, 2007; Li et al., 2010; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990). Sharing the point of view of domestic scientists (Leontief, 2011; Konopkin, 2004; Morosanova, 2017), we consider conscious self-regulation as an integrative cognitive-personal structure that includes a cognitive system of information processing (planning of goals, modeling of conditions, programming of actions, evaluation of results) and performs a regulatory-personal function (flexibility, independence). We consider this structure as a psychological tool for mobilization and integration of cognitive and personal resources to solve the problems of socio-cultural adaptation of students.

Studies of psychological predictors of adaptation to new sociocultural conditions are now reaching a new integrative level. At this level, attention is paid to the identification of factors that perform an intermediary function in the relationship between regulatory and personal resources and indicators of adaptation to learning activities and study groups. Researchers emphasize the importance of joint study of such constructs as educational motivation, personal motivation potential (Kulikova, 2008), coping strategies (Alifanovienė et al., 2016; Folkman & Lazarus, 1998; Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Frydenberg, 2004), acculturation guidelines (Berry et al., 2007; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

In previous studies, it was found that self-regulation, coping behaviour, acts as significant predictors of students' socio-cultural adaptation to new living conditions. In this connection, we consider it expedient to study the mediator role of acculturation attitudes, acculturation stress and motivation to educational activities in the successful sociocultural adaptation of students.

Motivation of scientists is considered as a source of activity, as a set of factors that support, guide, i.e. determine human behavior, as a process of psychic regulation of specific activities (Heckhausen, 2003; Vorobyeva & Pitiukov, 2013); as a system of psychic education that guides the activity (Grabovsky, 2004). There is a number of studies of motivation (Hippenreiter & Falikman, 2009), which show the dependence between the nature of motivation and the choice of behavioral strategies, the solution of different complexity of effective behavior in situations with an uncertain outcome. Our research interest is focused on the role of motivation in the adaptation of foreign students to new socio-cultural conditions.

Acculturation as part of the everyday life of young people is the result of direct and continuous contact between representatives of different cultural groups (Ward & Kus, 2012). These changes affect

the psychological well-being of those involved in the process of acculturation (Berry & Sabatier, 2010, 2011; Leong & Ward, 2006). There are studies of how these changes take place at the individual and group levels (Berry, 2006), and how they affect the process of socio-cultural adaptation. In this study, the important question is: what is the role of acculturation attitudes, peculiarities of experience of acculturation stress in the efficiency of the process of adaptation of foreign students to the new socio-cultural environment?

It is planned to establish the mediator role of motivation to educational activity, acculturation, acculturation and acculturation in the influence of cognitive and personal processes in solving the problems of socio-cultural adaptation.

## **2. Problem Statement**

In scientific research, the problem of adaptation to the new sociocultural environment was studied in the context of intercultural adaptation, transformation of ethnic identity in new socio-cultural conditions. Despite numerous theoretical and empirical studies of this problem, there is a need to understand: what role in the socio-cultural adaptation of foreign students are played by their acculturation attitudes, the level of educational motivation, the nature of the experience of acculturation stress? The study of the mediator (mediator) role of co-owner behavior, acculturation attitudes, motivation in the relationship of conscious self-regulation and socio-cultural adaptation, is a fundamental scientific problem and is significant for the development of cross.

## **3. Research Questions**

The object of the research is the process of adaptation of foreign students to new socio-cultural conditions. The subject of the research is the peculiarities of interrelation of sociocultural adaptation and conscious self-regulation among students. The total number of respondents participating in the experiment was 316 students. The sample was distributed according to ethnocultural characteristics: 88 students, representatives of European culture, 22 students from Arab countries (Iraq, Morocco, Tunisia, Palestine), 67 students from African countries (Angola, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Nigeria), 111 students from Central Asian countries (Tajikistan, Uzbekistan), 28 students from the North Caucasus Federal District.

## **4. Purpose of the Study**

The aim of the study is to establish the mediator role of motivation to educational activity, acculturation attitudes in the influence of cognitive and personal processes on the solution of the problems of socio-cultural adaptation. The main hypothesis of this study is the assumption that conscious self-regulation influences both the successful adaptation of students to new socio-cultural conditions and indirectly due to the mediator role of motivation of teaching, acculturation attitudes, experience of acculturation stress by students.

## 5. Research Methods

The study included four blocks of methods. The first block of methods for estimating self-regulation parameters included: 1) the "Selfregulation Style of Behaviour" (SSM) questionnaire. Morosanova's (2004) multiscale survey method allows to diagnose the degree of development of conscious self-regulation and its individual profiles, the components of which are private regulatory processes: planning, modeling, programming, evaluation of results, as well as flexibility, independence and "general level of self-regulation". The method allows to determine the level of development of self-regulation processes and regulatory and personal properties: low, medium, high; 2) SACS (Hobfoll, 1994). The technique is a multiaxial model of overcoming, which has an axis: prosocial/associal, active/passive, direct/indirect. These axes are measurements of overall coping strategies.

The second set of methods is devoted to the assessment of human adaptation to the new sociocultural environment. It includes: 1) the methodology of studying the adaptation of students in the university (Dubovitskaya & Krylova, 2010). The method is used to identify students who have difficulties in adapting to the group and learning activities; 2) the questionnaire "Scale-acultural stressful foreign students" (ASSIS) (Sandhu & Asrabadi, 1994). The methodology includes 16 judgments, the answers to which allow to evaluate such parameters of the experience of acculturation stress as: perceived discrimination, homesickness, perceived hostility, fear, cultural shock, guilt, nonspecific problems; 3) questionnaire to measure the acculturation attitude of Berry et al. (1989). According to Berry et al. (1989), the process of entering a new culture is connected with two main problems: maintaining culture and participation in intercultural contacts.

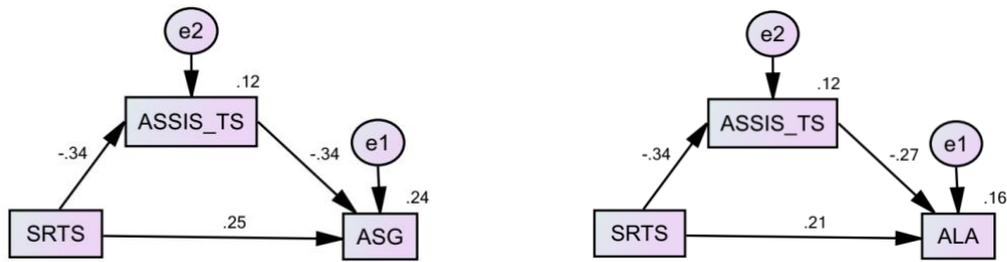
The third block of methods for assessment of motivation includes the method of diagnostics of motivation of educational activity in adolescence (Romusik, 2007), which allows to measure the strength of educational motives and assess the hierarchical structure of motivation of teaching.

Processing and analysis of empirical research data was carried out using mathematical and statistical methods: correlation analysis, modeling by structural equations, mediator analysis, using IBM SPSS Statistics 25, IBM SPSSAmos 25, IBM and MSExcel 2016 software package.

## 6. Findings

The research was carried out in several stages. At the first stage, the mediator role of acculturation stress in the adaptation of foreign students was established. At the second stage, the mediatory role of educational motivation in the relationship between self-regulation and adaptation was checked, and at the last stage the mediator was the indicators of the acculturation attitudes of foreign students.

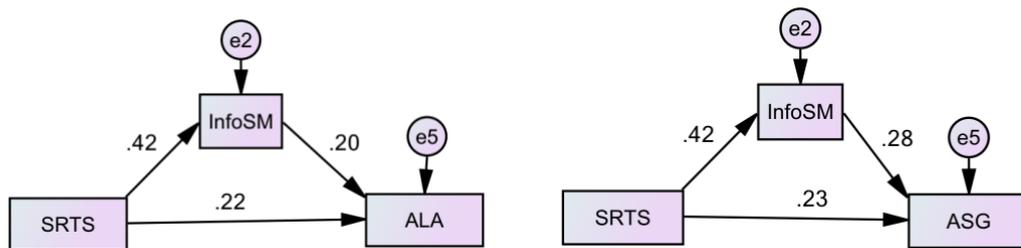
At the first stage, the indicator "General level of self-regulation" (SRTS) was used as a predictor in the mediator analysis, the indicator "General level of self-regulation" (ALA) and "Adaptation to learning activities" (ASG) were used as dependent variables, and the general level of experience of acculturation stress (ASSIS\_TS) was included as a mediator. It was found that conscious self-regulation is a significant predictor of students' adaptation to the study group and learning activities. Accumulated stress experience mediates the relationship between the overall level of self-regulation and the adaptation of students to learning activities and study groups (Figure 01).



**Figure 01.** Mediator role of the general level of acculturation stress

A high level of conscious self-regulation reduces the rate of acculturation stress ( $\beta = -0.34$ ), and the lower the overall level of acculturation stress, the more productive the process of students' adaptation to both the study group and to the learning activities. ( $\beta = -0.34$ )

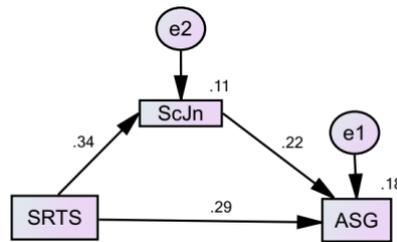
The following mediator model was built on the basis of motivation components – Achievement motives (AchievM), procedural (information and social) motives (Informative and Social motives – InfoSM), avoidance motives (Runaway motive – RunM) (Figure 02).



**Figure 02.** The mediator role of learning motivation

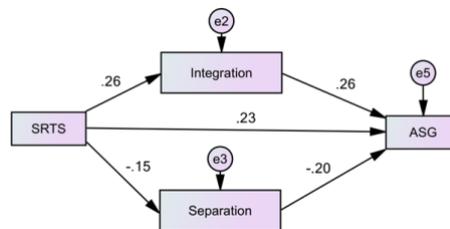
The results of the study have shown that the general level of self-regulation influences the procedural motives ( $\beta = 0.42$ ) – interest in certain subjects, teachers, and the ability to interact with others (classmates) – which, in turn, increase the efficiency of the process of adaptation both to learning activities ( $\beta = 0.20$ ) and to adaptation to the study group ( $\beta = 0.28$ ). The motives focused on the learning process itself, rather than on its results, mediate the relationship between the general level of self-regulation and the adaptation of students to learning activities and study groups.

A similar situation can be observed when assessing the mediator role of copying strategies. Of the nine strategies, only the pro-social model of "social networking" (Figure 03) plays an intermediary role. the overall level of self-regulation increases the likelihood of students entering into social networking with others, while at the same time, this strategy increases the efficiency of students' adaptation to the study group only ( $\beta = 0.22$ ), which is quite obvious. Resorting to the establishment of a wide circle of communication, new acquaintances, gaining social experience in unusual, non-standard situations, allows the student to master adaptive situations more effectively.



**Figure 03.** Mediator role of copying strategies

At the last stage, a mediator model was built, where the types of acculturation attitudes play an intermediary role: integration, separation, assimilation, marginalization (Figure 04). It was established that only the attitudes towards separation and integration mediate the interaction of the general level of self-regulation and adaptation to the study group and students' learning activities. The regulatory and personal function of conscious self-regulation is an active stimulator of integration of foreign students into new socio-cultural conditions ( $\beta = 0.34$ ), which increases the probability of effective adaptation of students ( $\beta = 0.26$ ). The general level of self-regulation reduces the probability of separation ( $\beta = -0.15$ ) – the desire to preserve one's own culture, ethnic identity, rejecting any contacts and relations with representatives of another culture. Studies have shown that the lower the severity of separation, the higher the probability of positive adaptation to the new conditions of life.



**Figure 04.** Mediator role of acculturation facilities

## 7. Conclusion

Thus, the study found that conscious self-regulation is a significant predictor in the socio-cultural adaptation of foreign students. This interrelation is reinforced by the students' academic motivation. In particular, the mediator's role is played by motives focused on the learning process (procedural), as well as pro-social copying – "entering into social contacts". In the study it was found that the formed ability to consciously self-regulate reduces the level of students' experience of acculturative stress and levels the attitude towards separation – the desire to preserve their culture, rejecting any contacts and relations with representatives of other cultures. Therefore, conscious self-regulation significantly influences the success of social and cultural adaptation of foreign students. At the same time, there is a need for further research on the presented interrelationships. We assume that acculturation attitudes have a specific relationship with cognitive components of conscious self-regulation and its regulatory and personal components.

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