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Ph.D. Thesis

Minority Gender and Ethnicity in Georgia's European Integration Way: Socio-Political Participation of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women in Georgia

The thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the PhD Programme in European Studies

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APPROVAL OF THESIS

This is to certify that Mrs Aytan Hajiyeva has completed her PhD thesis entitled "Minority Gender and Ethnicity in Georgia's European Integration Way: Socio-Political Participation of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women in Georgia." This thesis is found acceptable for the partial fulfilment of the PhD Programme in European Studies

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ABSTRACT

This study adds to the academic debate by providing insights and deeper knowledge of the intersections of minority ethnicity and gender in the context of Georgia's European integration. In the case of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, the dissertation studies "*How is minority gender and ethnicity dealt with in Georgia and how is it related to its EU integration?*" The study aims: a) to analyse minority gender and ethnicity in the context of EU-Georgia relations; b) to determine reasons for the low level of political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia; c) to identify factors affecting the social integration of the group under study; d) to identify factors affecting the attitudes towards the EU integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. *Intersectionality* is applied as a theoretical framework for understanding how gender, ethnicity, and religion are combined to form barriers for the group being studied. The study uses a combination of secondary literature analysis and quantitative research methods. In order to achieve the main objectives of the dissertation, first, the social integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women was deductively analysed using relevant literature. Then, a quantitative research method was used to measure political participation, specifically voter turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, using a logistic regression model. Finally, structural equation modelling was used to investigate the EU awareness of Azerbaijani women in Georgia. The findings of the study show that state language fluency and education have significant impacts on socio-political participation and the integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgian society. Social integration is a two-way process that requires the effort of both the majority group and the group under study. The thesis concludes that Georgia's EU integration would be facilitated if it enforced EU values, particularly ensuring a pluralistic and inclusive society.

Keywords: *Intersectionality, Gender, Ethnicity, European Integration, Georgia*

რეზიუმე

საქართველოს ევროპული ინტეგრაციის კონტექსტში უმცირესობების ეთნიკური კუთვნილებისა და გენდერის შესახებ ინფორმაციისა და სიღრმისეული ცოდნის გადმოცემით, კვლევაში შეჯამებულია აკადემიური განხილვები. საქართველოში ეთნიკურ აზერბაიჯანელ ქალებთან მიმართებაში დისერტაცია ეძღვნება თემას: „როგორ ხდება საქართველოში გენდერულ უმცირესობასთან და ეთნიკურ კუთვნილებასთან დაკავშირებული საკითხების გადაწყვეტა და როგორ არის ეს დაკავშირებული მის ევროკავშირში ინტეგრაციისთან?" კვლევის მიზანია: ა) ევროკავშირსა და საქართველოს შორის ურთიერთობების კონტექსტში გენდერისა და ეთნიკური კუთვნილების ანალიზი; ბ) საქართველოში ეთნიკურად აზერბაიჯანელი ქალების დაბალი პოლიტიკური ჩართულობის მიზეზების დადგენა; გ) საკვლევი ჯგუფის სოციალურ ინტეგრაციაზე მოქმედი ფაქტორების იდენტიფიცირება; დ) საქართველოში ეთნიკური აზერბაიჯანელი ქალების ევროკავშირში ინტეგრაციისადმი დამოკიდებულებაზე მოქმედი ფაქტორების იდენტიფიცირება. ინტერსექციურობა გამოიყენება როგორც თეორიული საფუძველი იმის გასაგებად, თუ როგორ უქმნის საკვლევ ჯგუფს ბარიერებს სქესთან, ეთნიკურ კუთვნილებასთან და რელიგიასთან დაკავშირებული მოსაზრებები. კვლევაში გამოყენებულია ლიტერატურის მეორადი ანალიზისა და რაოდენობრივი კვლევის მეთოდების კომბინაცია. დისერტაციის ძირითადი მიზნების მიღწევის მიზნით, პირველ რიგში, შესაბამისი ლიტერატურის გამოყენებით დედუქციურად გაანალიზდა ეთნიკურად აზერბაიჯანელი ქალების სოციალური ინტეგრაცია. შემდეგ, საქართველოში ეთნიკურ აზერბაიჯანელ ქალებში პოლიტიკური ჩართულობის, კონკრეტულად ამომრჩეველთა აქტივობის გაზომვის მიზნით, ლოგისტიკური რეგრესიის მოდელის შესაბამისად, გამოყენებული იქნა რაოდენობრივი კვლევის მეთოდი. კვლევის შედეგები აჩვენებს, რომ სახელმწიფო ენის თავისუფლად ცოდნა და განათლება მნიშვნელოვან გავლენას ახდენს ეთნიკურად აზერბაიჯანელი ქალების სოციალურ-პოლიტიკურ ჩართულობაზე და ქართულ საზოგადოებაში ინტეგრაციაზე. სოციალური ინტეგრაცია ორმხრივი პროცესია, რომელიც როგორც უმრავლესობის, ასევე საკვლევი ჯგუფის ძალისხმევას მოითხოვს. დისერტაცია ასკვნის, რომ საქართველოს ევროკავშირში ინტეგრაცია გაადვილდება, თუ იგი, განსაკუთრებით პლურალისტური და ინკლუზიური საზოგადოების ჩამოყალიბების გზით, განამტკიცებს ევროკავშირის ღირებულებების დაცვას.

საკვანძო სიტყვები: ინტერსექციურობა, გენდერი, ეთნიკური კუთვნილება, ევროინტეგრაცია, საქართველო

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Table of Contents

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

LIST OF ACRONYMS

AA	Association Agreement
AVE	Average Variance Extracted
CB	Caucasus Barometer
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CRRC	Caucasus Research Resource Centers
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DV	Domestic Violence
DCFTA	Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area
EU	European Union
FCNM	Framework Convention on National Minorities
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GE	Gender Equality
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEM	Structural Equation Model
SOGI	Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity
UN	United Nations
UNAG	United Nations Association of Georgia
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
VET	Vocal Education and Training
VLAP	Visa Liberalisation Action Plan
WEE	Women's Economic Empowerment

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This research contributes to the academic discussion by providing insights and a deeper understanding of the intersections of minority ethnicity and gender in the context of European integration in Georgia.

European integration has been one of the main political priorities and a primary focus of both the foreign and internal policies of Georgia since its early years of independence. The Georgian political elite's road to European integration is supported by the general populace as well (Javakhishvili et al., 2018). The country has signed a sufficient number of agreements for further close cooperation and rapprochement with the European Union (EU). In fact, Georgia was one of the six leading Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries in terms of legislative and institutional approximation with the EU (EaP Index 2020–2021).

Gender equality and minority rights are important values protected by the EU's legislative and political framework, and they are one of the Union's main accession criteria. In addition, social cohesion and an inclusive society are seen as important strategic goals by the EU. To avoid the disintegration and fragmentation of societies based on ethnicity, region, religion, gender, age, or other social identities, recognition and representation of distinct groups, as well as just redistributive measures between them, are required.

Social integration is a positive process that promotes harmonious interactions among different groups in society, including women and religious and ethnic minorities. Building a socially integrated community has long-term benefits for both the country and the integrating population. By encouraging more innovation and economic growth, integrating communities and groups can bring cultural diversity and support to the country (Putnam, 2009). More socially integrated people also tend to show more altruistic attitudes. Also encountering difficulties, a socially integrated group will be more effective (Brañas-Garza, 2010). Social integration removes prejudices and inequality; increases the value of oppressed and marginalised individuals or groups; creates opportunities for their socio-political participation;

and helps create stable and good employment opportunities for traditionally underrepresented groups and individuals. It also promotes capacity building among vulnerable communities to eradicate poverty and social isolation (Cruz-Saco, 2008, pp. 2-3).

Georgia is one of the most ethnically diverse former Soviet countries. Ethnic minorities account for more than 13% of the Georgian population (Geostat, 2014). These minority groups have historically faced challenges in terms of access to education, employment, and political representation. Since its independence, the country has been struggling with the challenges of the transition period to build a democratic state, improve the situation of women and ethnic minorities, and integrate them into society. In recent years, the government of Georgia has made efforts to address the above-mentioned issues and promote the integration of minority groups into society. For example, the government has implemented policies aimed at increasing access to education for minority students.

The EU has also played a role in promoting the integration of minority groups in Georgia. The EU has provided funding and technical assistance to support the implementation of policies and programmes aimed at promoting the integration of minority groups into Georgian society. Additionally, the EU-Georgia Association Agreement encourages the government to strengthen the protection of human rights, the rule of law, and the fight against discrimination and provides a platform for dialogue and cooperation in the areas of equality, non-discrimination, and minority rights (EU-Georgia Association Agreement, 2014).

However, the road to full integration of minority groups is long, and there is still much work to be done in order to ensure that all Georgian citizens, regardless of their gender or ethnicity, have equal access to opportunities and can fully participate in the country's socio-political life.

Azerbaijanis of Georgia, despite being the country's largest ethnic and religious minority group, are not integrated/participating enough in the socio-political life of the country (Amirejibi and Gabunia, 2021), and compared to other ethnic minorities, they are least aware of Georgia's EU integration (CRRC, 2021). The situation is even worse when it comes to female representatives of this group, as they face even greater barriers due to their gender. Despite

belonging to the country's largest ethnic and religious minority group, ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia remain understudied.

Active engagement by all citizens, irrespective of gender, religion, and ethnicity, in the social and political life of a country is vital for a healthy democracy and sustainable governance. People's participation in the selection of leaders and the determination of public policy through voting in competitive elections is an essential component of democracy.

> "Participation in conventional ways, such as voting, enhances people's sense of having a stake in the system, encourages them to become more knowledgeable about politics, and enables individuals to channel their demands to the political system in legal and peaceful ways. Hopefully this will lead to political legitimacy, stable political institutions, effective public policy, and ultimately the betterment of society. These issues may be particularly important with respect to ethnic minorities, who are more likely to feel discriminated against, become alienated from electoral politics, and become more motivated to engage in political violence" (Just 2017).

The above-mentioned factors are of great importance for Georgia, a country with a rich ethnic palette. The country is stepping forward and seeking to build a democratic state and has successfully implemented major policies aimed at forming appropriate administrative and political institutions. From the perspective of understanding how broad voter turnout can be achieved, it is important to examine the extent of electoral participation by Azeri citizens, especially Azerbaijani women, who are the largest ethnic minority in Georgia. Data on elections in Georgia show that the voter turnout of women living in the regions mostly populated by ethnic Azerbaijanis is weak.

Georgia and the European Union (EU), as a result of their achievements in a number of domains, signed the Association Agreement, containing the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) component, that allows Georgia (together with Ukraine and Moldova) to access some sectors of the European Single Market in 2014. However, in order to accomplish the duties outlined in the treaty mentioned above, significant reforms are required in almost every area, as well as public support for the EU's expansion, which, in turn, is linked with an increased understanding of European values. Public support is crucial in Georgia's European

integration process as it helps to create a favourable political and social environment for implementing reforms and advancing towards European integration. Without public support, it can be difficult to secure political commitment, mobilise resources, and gain broad-based agreement on the goals and objectives of European integration. Additionally, public support helps to ensure the sustainability of reforms as well as the legitimacy and accountability of the government in the eyes of its citizens. Ultimately, strong public support can help increase the likelihood of success in Georgia's European integration journey. Briefly, societal support for European integration is crucial to maximising benefits from the process and ensuring effective communication between Georgia and the EU. Therefore, it is important that all groups in Georgian society have equal access to the advantages that come with Europeanization. Each person ought to be aware of the significance of European integration and cooperation and the opportunities they present. Unfortunately, the Russian media's disinformation has erected intellectual barriers on Georgia's path to Europe, and these barriers are most vivid when it comes to the ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, who, in addition to the majority population's difficulties, lack sufficient proficiency in the state language. Due to the fact that ethnic Azerbaijani women do not speak Georgian, (sometimes) they get information from Russian media, which spreads false or misleading information that misrepresents the benefits of European integration and undermines public support for the process. In order to have a complete sense of what lies ahead for the Georgian population, including ethnic Azerbaijani women, they need to be well-informed about the EU, the prospects of its further expansion, and the fulfilment of the Association Agreement. According to studies conducted by numerous organisations, the general public is pro-European (NDI Poll, 2022; Panchulidze, 2017), yet, despite a certain interest in the association process, the general public is not entirely informed about the EU-Georgia relationship and its characteristics (Samwel & Muradashvili, 2021).

Using *intersectionality* as a theoretical framework for understanding how gender, ethnicity, and religion are combined to form barriers for the studied group, the study aims to analyse gender and ethnicity in the context of EU-Georgia relations, find out reasons for the low level of political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, identify factors affecting the

social integration of the studied group in Georgia, and finally, identify factors affecting the attitudes towards the EU integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

The present study addresses multiple gaps and, in doing so, makes significant contributions. First, the study extends the understanding of socio-political participation as well as attitudes towards EU integration among minority intersectional groups outside the EU. Second, the study contributes to the literature on the impact of social factors on attitudes towards EU integration, and third, it contributes to the study of Georgia's Azerbaijani minority-populated regions.

This chapter will provide an introduction to the study first by identifying the gap and the research problem, followed by the research aims, objectives, and questions, and the structure of the thesis.

1.1. Background of the Study

Georgia is a country in Eastern Europe with a diverse population. Since gaining independence from the Soviet Union in 1991, the country has pursued a policy of European integration and made it the primary focus of both its foreign and internal policies. As a part of this process, Georgia has sought to align its laws and policies with those of the European Union (EU) and has taken steps to strengthen its democracy, human rights, and rule of law. This includes efforts to promote the rights and inclusion of minority groups, including women and ethnic minorities. As a result of their achievements in a number of domains, Georgia and the European Union (EU) signed the Association Agreement, which contains the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area (DCFTA) component, which allows Georgia (together with Ukraine and Moldova) to access some sectors of the European Single Market in 2014.

The background of minority gender and ethnicity in Georgia's European integration path is rooted in the country's history and diversity. Georgia has been a multi-ethnic society for centuries, with various ethnic groups living in the country, including Abkhazians, Armenians,

Azerbaijanis, Greeks, Kurds, Ossetians, and Russians. Each of these groups has its own language, culture, and history, and they have contributed to the country's cultural richness. However, in different historical periods, ethnic minorities in Georgia have faced discrimination and marginalisation, which has affected their ability to fully participate in the country's political, economic, and social life.

Gender, just like ethnicity, indeed plays a significant role in the integration of minority groups in Georgia. While the challenges faced by ethnic minorities are well-documented, it is crucial to recognize that women, regardless of their ethnic background, also face distinct obstacles when it comes to accessing education, securing employment opportunities, and attaining political representation. In Georgia, as in many other parts of the world, women confront a multifaceted web of inequalities that often intersect with their ethnic identities, making their integration even more complex.

For years, the government of Georgia has made efforts to address these issues and promote the integration of minority groups into society. The government has implemented policies aimed at increasing access to education for minority students, promoting their active participation in political life, and addressing discrimination and hate crimes against minority groups.

In recent years, Georgia has actively sought to integrate with the European Union, which has also placed emphasis on the protection of human rights, the rule of law, and the fight against discrimination, as well as promoting the integration of minority groups.

Georgia's European integration path is also linked to the aspirations of the country's population to align itself with the values and norms of European democracies, which include the protection of minority rights and their integration into society.

Today, the Government of Georgia is focused on the consolidation of a single, stable, multicultural society under the rule of law through the implementation of a pluralistic and inclusive policy in order to strengthen the country's multiethnic and culturally diverse society. Notwithstanding several steps in this direction, serious gaps still exist. According to the Directorate-General for Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations (2022), while there is a State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration 2021–2030 and its Action Plan, the social,

economic, and cultural rights of persons belonging to minorities, as well as their political participation, are still not fully upheld in Georgia.

Gender Equality. Gender equality remains a multifaceted and persistent concern in Georgia. Although the Georgian government has undertaken initiatives to support gender parity, substantial hurdles still require attention.

One of the primary obstacles to realising gender equality in Georgia pertains to the prevailing cultural norms and perceptions surrounding gender roles. Conventional gender expectations are firmly rooted in Georgian culture, leading to a notable disparity in the involvement of individuals in political and economic spheres based on their gender. Women are frequently anticipated to prioritise their roles as spouses and mothers, which can constrain their access to education and career progress.

Additionally, violence against women is a serious problem in Georgia. Domestic violence, sexual harassment, and sexual assault are all too common, and the social stigma surrounding these issues can make it difficult for women to seek help.

In recent years, the Georgian government has taken steps to address gender inequality. For example, in 2010, the Law on Gender Equality was adopted, which aims to promote equal rights and opportunities for men and women in all areas of life. The government has also implemented a national action plan for gender equality, which includes measures to combat violence against women, increase women's participation in politics and public life, and promote women's economic empowerment.

The Government of Georgia has also signed several international commitments, created action plans, improved the legislative framework in areas such as Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) and Gender-Based Violence (GBV), and even sought to protect women who face discrimination because of their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI). However, the implementation of these regulations and systems has been restricted. This can be linked to a lack of political will to address gender issues, a lack of financial resources, and a lack of understanding of how policy commitments can be translated into action. There is still much work to be done. Advocates for gender equality in Georgia continue to call for greater

awareness-raising and education on the issue, as well as better enforcement of existing laws and policies. Ultimately, achieving gender equality in Georgia will require a shift in cultural attitudes towards gender roles and a sustained commitment to promoting women's rights and empowerment.

Gender stereotypes and patriarchal norms continue to influence women's roles in the public and private realms, particularly in rural areas. Historically, marginalised communities, such as rural women and ethnic minorities, have been impacted by patriarchal ideals and gender norms. Furthermore, ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia bear the dual burden of belonging to a historically oppressed gender as well as an ethnic and religious minority.

Given the norm of patrilocal marriage, rural households invest less in females since the prospective economic rewards are believed to be lower than for boys—this has long-term consequences for young women, limiting access to school and jobs and harming rural development (FAO, 2018). Women, for example, are overrepresented in service sectors and informal occupations, which are less stable, pay less, and have had bigger income drops as a result of COVID-19 lockdowns.

Within society, there is a high level of tolerance for domestic violence (DV) against women (UNFPA/UNDP, 2020). One-third of Georgians blame rape survivors for encouraging the attacks based on their behaviour, preventing many women from getting aid or reporting cases of GBV.

The traditional perception in Georgia is that home and domestic activities are the domain of women. Surprisingly, 21% of women and 14% of men felt that males should be equally active in housework as women (UN Women, 2021). Childcare chores continue to be the primary responsibility of women, with more than two-thirds of women indicating that they are always or usually responsible for childcare (Naskidashvili, 2011). As a result, women devote three times as much time as men to unpaid care duties. This imbalance has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 epidemic (UN Women, 2020).

Women's labour force participation is low in comparison to men's, and they have difficulties earning equally due to a variety of factors, including the additional duties of unpaid domestic

and care work. In fact, in Georgia, women identify domestic obligations as a hindrance to greater participation in public life. Women dominate small-scale trade and consumer services, including street vending and subsistence agriculture. In terms of employment, women are concentrated in three sectors: health, education, and culture (UN Women, 2021). Conversely, 86% of men work in white-collar occupations and are more evenly dispersed across industries (Khitarishvili et al., 2018). Men dominate higher-paying industries such as finance and banking (Sapari, 2019). Women working in the non-agricultural informal economy are largely domestic workers. Approximately 99% of domestic workers are women (UN Women, 2021).

Women entrepreneurs, particularly those in rural regions, face obstacles to receiving loans and engaging in government economic programmes due to a lack of awareness about loan terms and requirements, a lack of collateral due to restricted property ownership, and a lack of fixed salaries (Mercy Corps ALCP, 2019). While women have the right to own and inherit land and property in Georgia, the presence of traditional gendered practices favours men in inheriting, owning, and administering property (Asian Development Bank, 2019).

Before the pandemic, men had a greater unemployment rate (13.9 %) than women (11.2 %), and the gender gap in economic inactivity was 17.5 percent (GeoStat, 2019). The gender age difference was 35.8 percent per month in 2018, owing primarily to unpaid domestic labour (UN Women Georgia, 2020). Women's labour force involvement is much reduced in households with children, whereas men work more.

 Women are underrepresented in the legislative and executive arms of government, as well as in central and municipal governments, the judiciary, and administrative posts (UN Women, 2021). Furthermore, structural and systemic barriers, such as the disproportionate burden of family and caregiving roles, long and inflexible hours in both public and political work, and violence against women in politics and elections, prevent women from fully participating in decision-making at all levels. Sexual harassment, which is common in Georgia's public services, is also a barrier to women's full participation and presence in higher ranks.

Women, particularly those in rural areas, confront economic restrictions that prevent them from starting their own businesses or pursuing well-paying employment (UN Women, 2021).

Individuals who do not own land are excluded from village development projects and, as a result, from decision-making procedures. However, becoming a landowner or business owner is tough due to the difficulties in obtaining loans and borrowing credit without capital (income or property). The same is true for ethnic minority women (UN Women, 2021). Rural women, in particular, are frequently barred from participating in decision-making, harming the growth of their community. Similarly, gender roles influence home decision-making and family farming, affecting women's economic potential both directly and negatively (UNFPA/UNDP, 2020).

Moreover, local development programmes and budgets frequently fail to account for the possibly differing demands of men and women, and in general, the level of awareness of various development programmes implemented in regions is low.

Background on social integration for minority women

Social integration for ethnic minority women refers to the process by which individuals from minority ethnic groups become integrated into the wider society in terms of their rights, responsibilities, and opportunities. Ethnic minority women often face multiple forms of discrimination, including gender, ethnicity, and race, making social integration more difficult to achieve.

Social integration can take many forms, including economic, political, and cultural integration. Economic integration refers to access to employment, education, and other economic opportunities. Political integration refers to the ability to participate in the political process and have representation in government. Cultural integration refers to the ability to maintain one's own culture while also participating in the dominant culture.

For ethnic minority women, access to education, job opportunities. and representation in politics will play an important role in achieving social integration. In addition, they often face

cultural barriers, such as language and customs, which can make it difficult to fully participate in society. Moreover, they are also subject to patriarchal norms, which can limit their autonomy and their access to opportunities.

To support ethnic minority women in social integration, a number of approaches can be implemented, such as affirmative action policies, anti-discrimination laws, community-based organisations, and targeted education and training programmes. However, it's important to note that these issues are complex and multifaceted, and addressing these barriers often requires a holistic approach that includes input from ethnic minority women themselves.

Ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia have traditionally had a lower level of social participation compared to men and other groups in Georgian society. Factors that contribute to this include cultural norms that limit women's roles and opportunities, a lack of education and job skills, and economic and social barriers. The research specifically seeks to explain factors affecting social integration among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

Background on Voter Participation for Minority Women

Since its independence, Georgia has been struggling with the challenges and difficulties of transitioning to and building a democratic state and improving the situation of women and ethnic minorities. The country has made a number of commitments under key international documents to move towards eliminating discrimination against women, particularly relating to access for women in political life. Among the steps taken by the Georgian government to address women's issues was the establishment of the first state institution for the advancement of women in 1998. Moreover, Georgia joined the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1994, which showed its readiness to fight discrimination against women and support the establishment of gender equality.

Parallel to this, the Georgian government has taken serious and consistent steps towards the formation of a state strategy and the creation of institutions dedicated to integrating national

minorities. The first such step was taken in 2006, when the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of National Minorities went into force. In 2008, the Office of the State Minister for Reintegration (currently called the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality) was created and charged with implementing policies to integrate national minorities.

 Furthermore, the adoption of the National Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration and Action Plan in May 2009 was another important step towards integrating national minorities. Simultaneously with all of this, the role of the Public Defender of Georgia must also be mentioned. In December 2005, its official mission and mandate were expanded when the Council of National Minorities was established. This council unifies most organisations of national minorities operating in the country and seeks to provide consultations and promote collaboration between the national minorities and the government. The adoption of the National Concept on Tolerance and Civil Integration further expanded the role of the Council of National Minorities (Sordia 2014, 3).

In spite of all these efforts, there has been little substantive change in the status and rights of women in Georgia (Chkheidze 2011). The situation looks even worse when it comes to the political participation of ethnic minorities, especially Azerbaijani women in Georgia. These Azerbaijani women are often regarded as the most vulnerable members of society due to the double burden of belonging to the historically discriminated gender and also because of traditional and religious factors. While religion factors into the different roles attributed to men and women throughout the Caucasus, the strict division of gender roles typical for Muslim societies may place Azeri women in a particularly difficult position (Peinhopf, 2014).

In the Kvemo Kartli region, mostly populated by Azerbaijani people, the rate of political participation is very low among women, and there are almost no Azerbaijani women representatives at the regional level. According to expert remarks and studies conducted in Kvemo Kartli, the region has always had a particularly wide gap in political participation between genders. It is also known that the general lack of interest in politics is even more widespread among women than men (Kachkachishvili et al. 2012, 20).

Table 1.1: Electoral Activity of Women in 2017 Municipal Elections in Ethnic Azerbaijani Populated Areas in Georgia

Municipal elections 2017		
	Female %	Male %
Voter turnout in Georgia	50.28	49.72
Voter turnout according to regions - Kvemo Kartli	47.02	52.98
Voter turnout according to election districts mainly populated with ethnic Azerbaijanis		
Gardabani	45.5	54.5
Marneuli	40.46	59.4
Bolnisi	44.57	55.43
Dmanisi	46.59	53.41

Source: CEC Municipal elections 2017, Voter Turnout. Retrieved on August 23, 2018 from http://cesko.ge/res/docs/Aqtivoba20.002017ENGGENDER.pdf

Table 1.1. contains data from the Central Election Commission of Georgia for the 2017 municipal elections, while Table 1.2. provides a population breakdown by gender as reported in the 2014 census. As Table 1.1. shows, female voters comprised 50.28% of those voting in municipal elections throughout Georgia in 2017, while male voters comprised the remaining 49.72%. However, in the Kvemo Kartli region, female voting activity in voting is lower than any other region in Georgia, with women making up only 47.02% of the voters in this region. When examining the four election districts that are mainly populated with ethnic Azerbaijanis - Gardabani, Marneuli, Bolnisi, and Dmanisi - we can see that women formed an even smaller percentage of voters in these districts compared with the Kvemo Kartli region as a whole.

Table 1.2: Population of Georgia and the Kvemo Kartli Region by Gender

Area	Women	Men	Total
Georgia	52.26%	47.74%	100.00%

	(1,940,940)	(1,772,864)	(3,713,804)
Kvemo Kartli	50.82%	49.18%	100.00%
	(215,454)	(208,532)	(423,986)

Source: Geostat data on the 2014 General Population Census

To get a sense of how large the turnout gap is in Kvemo Kartli, we can contrast the share of voters who are women in Table 1.1. with the share of the population who are women in Table 1.2. In the country of Georgia, women make up 52.26% of the population, but only 50.28% of voters in the 2017 municipal elections. This 1.98 percentage point drop-off indicates that women are less likely to vote than men across the nation. In the Kvemo Kartli region, the gap is even greater. The population is a bit more gender-balanced in Kvemo Kartli, with 50.82% of residents being women. However, women only comprised 47.02% of voters in the region. Hence, in Kvemo Kartli there is a 3.8 percentage point drop-off from the percentage of the population that is female to the percentage of voters that is female. Overall, then, the gender gap in turnout is much higher in Kvemo Kartli than it is nationwide. The analysis of the data provided in Tables 1.1. and 1.2. demonstrates the low level of political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women, even though voting is a simple form of political activity. The research specifically seeks to explain this lower level of turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women.

Background on Ethnic Azerbaijani Women's Attitudes to EU Integration

Ethnic Azerbaijani women who live in Georgia are frequently seen as the most disadvantaged in the community because they bear the dual burden of belonging to a historically marginalised gender and, at the same time, an ethnic and religious minority (intersectionality). Religion affects the gender roles ascribed to men and women throughout the Caucasus, but Azerbaijani women face particular challenges because of the rigid gender norms prevalent in Muslim societies (Mehrabov, 2016; Javakhishvili et al., 2020; Javakhishvili, 2021; Hajiyeva &

Javakhishvili, (in press)). There is little question that the majority of ethnic Azerbaijanis today view Georgia as their country and desire their children to participate more in the advancement of Georgian society, even though political involvement among this group is still minimal (Kandelaki, 2020; Hajiyeva, 2021). Increased knowledge about Georgia's social and economic potential has influenced people's willingness to integrate. This, together with recent initiatives to broaden language instruction for young people from ethnic minorities, provides cause for, at best, guarded optimism over the future of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

Nevertheless, poor command of the state language, which further restricts the ability of Azerbaijani women (and Azerbaijanis in general) to fully exercise their constitutional protections under Georgian legislation, including equal land ownership, is a problem that is strongly related to their lack of state language knowledge. The perception that Azerbaijani minority women frequently serve in local councils as nominal representatives but do not perform substantive duties can be related to Azerbaijani minority women's ignorance of the official language. Local analysts claim that, usually, men perform the majority of the political effort in Azerbaijani families. According to Peinhopf (2014), the finding that ethnic Azerbaijani women could not describe their responsibilities in the local council corroborated the notion that women's involvement in politics is still primarily formal.

According to estimates from several civic society organisations' (CSOs) research, between 30 and 78.3 percent of Azerbaijani minorities do not speak Georgian (The Institute of Social Studies and Analysis, 2012). Today, 10 years later, the situation has improved, but only among the young Azerbaijani population who went to study at the universities in the capital city. The majority of Armenians and Azerbaijanis in Georgia reside in rural, monoethnic communities in the south and east of the country. The language divides them from the rest of Georgian society the most; just 74% of native Azerbaijani speakers and 51% of native Armenian speakers are fluent in Georgian. Minorities prefer to work and study in Baku or Yerevan (or in Russia) as opposed to Tbilisi, and there is a significant emigration rate (Civil.ge, 2021). At the same time, most Azerbaijanis have a friendly perception of the Georgian language, demonstrating a keen understanding that proficiency in the official language is a requirement for social and

economic success. The government of Georgia introduced a special language educational programme for ethnic minority representatives who want to study at Georgian universities. The prospective ethnic minority students might choose to study the Georgian language for a year before starting bachelor-level courses. Thus, the 1+4 programme was established, resulting in an increase in the Azerbaijani young population with university education in Georgia (Gelovani et al., 2017).

In order to secure the establishment of a positive and widespread attitude towards Georgia's European integration among the population, including minorities, it is essential and opportune to counter the rising anti-Western propaganda by engaging in a particular and intense public discourse. First, however, by educating minorities, including the Azerbaijani minority women in Georgia, about European values. The difference between a concept (European integration in our case) and its realisation in practice is studied in the current paper, which looks at the factors that influence attitudes towards EU integration and the methods for its promotion, particularly among minority groups.

The present study addresses multiple gaps and, in doing so, makes significant contributions. First, the study extends the understanding of attitudes towards EU integration among minority intersectional groups outside the EU. Second, the study contributes to the literature on the impact of social factors on attitudes towards EU integration, and third, it contributes to the study of Georgia's Azerbaijani minority-populated regions.

1.2. Identification of the gap

For Georgia, which has made integration into the Euro-Atlantic space its primary political priority (Sikharulidze, 2020), it is essential to ensure human rights, respect, and protection of ethnic minorities, including minority women, and integrate them into mainstream society.

There is insufficient knowledge of the history and challenges faced by the ethnic Azerbaijani community living in Georgia, both in academic and political circles, as well as among the

general public (Zviadadze et al., 2018, p. 1). From this point of view, given the lack of research regarding minority gender and ethnicity in Georgia's European integration, a separate study on Georgian Azerbaijanis, especially ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, is particularly required. Scholarly literature lacks research into the Georgian Azerbaijanis' contemporary socio-political life as the largest ethnic and religious minority group in the country, which is mostly settled in the Kvemo-Kartli region of Georgia.

The motivation driving this dissertation emanates from the evident void in academic research concerning ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. Despite their status as the largest ethnic and religious minority in the country, they have remained a significantly understudied population. This research gap not only perpetuates an unjust neglect but also obstructs the development of vital inclusive policies necessary for societal cohesion and the successful realization of Georgia's European integration aspirations. By embarking on this journey to illuminate the lived experiences, challenges, and aspirations of these women, my dissertation endeavors to address this substantial academic oversight, offering fresh insights into the intricate dynamics within Georgian society. Ultimately, the study aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of this underrepresented group and promote a more equitable and harmonious trajectory toward European integration. Despite the claims that minority groups have been underrepresented in research in a variety of fields (Redwood and Gill, 2013; Etti et al., 2021), recent literature shows that minority issues have become a focal point for scholars.

In the case of Georgia, studies on minority groups mainly focus on integration problems (Amirejibi and Gabunia, 2021; Shavtvaladze, 2018; Guthrie, 2018), religious issues (Kahraman, 2021; Lorusso, 2013), and identity issues (Storm, 2019). Minorities in Georgia in these studies have been covered altogether, including Armenians and other ethnic minority groups. In both academic and political circles, as well as among the general public, there is a lack of knowledge regarding the history and difficulties that the ethnic Azerbaijani community in Georgia has encountered (Zviadadze et al., 2018). In a few studies specifically focusing on Georgian Azerbaijanis as a specific/separate minority group (Tabachnik, 2019; Storm, 2020), gender

issues were not considered, and the unique experiences and challenges of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia were ignored.

The Georgian Europeanization process has also been researched from different political, social, and economic perspectives (Karadag, 2019; Bolkvadze, 2016; Coene, 2016; Emerson and Kovziridze, 2016). However, gender and ethnicity issues have not been considered in these studies.

Different studies on women in Georgia either mainly focus on all women in the country (Javakhishvili and Jibladze, 2018; Chitashvili et al., 2010; Darbaidze, 2018; Darchashvili, 2020), or in the context of ethnic minorities, these studies cover all minority women, including Armenians, etc. (Peinhopf, 2014; Kakhishvili, 2017).

Research on women living in Azerbaijan has also been conducted from different perspectives (Aliyeva, 2021; Gozalova, 2014; Karimova, 2020; Heyat, 2008, 2020; Mandl, 2011; Nfa, 2014; Tohidi, 1996, 1997; Sabi, 1999). However, previous literature has not explored the socio-political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia as a separate group within the intersectionality framework. In general, the experiences, practices, and problems of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia have not been researched as a specific topic, either in Georgia, where they are the largest ethnic minority, or in Azerbaijan, where they have an ethnic spiritual affiliation, or in world-scale studies.

Analyzing the socio-political engagement and European Union (EU) awareness among ethnic Azerbaijani women, situated at the nexus of diverse identities including ethnicity, gender, and religion, in Georgia represents a vital stride towards fostering an all-encompassing, culturally attuned, and efficacious approach to Georgia's European integration journey. This distinct group embodies a rich tapestry of backgrounds and perspectives, and understanding their involvement in socio-political dynamics and EU-related matters is instrumental for creating a more holistic and responsive integration strategy. By delving into the experiences and perspectives of these women, Georgia can tailor its integration initiatives to resonate with the entirety of its populace, ensuring that the advantages of integration are effectively communicated and experienced by all members of society. This approach not only bolsters

inclusivity but also celebrates the diversity that makes Georgia a unique and vibrant part of the European landscape.

1.3. Problem statement

It is known that a successful and representative democracy requires the integration of all groups into the political, economic, and cultural life of a state and a strong leadership that can speak up for the interests of various groups. If Georgia wants to facilitate EU integration, it needs to enforce European values, particularly in ensuring a pluralistic and inclusive society.

Ethnic minority groups in Georgia have been alienated as a result of ethno-nationalist attitudes dating back to Soviet times (Berglund and Blauvelt, 2016; Gabunia, 2021). Lack of state language proficiency by ethnic minorities in Georgia contributed to this marginalisation even more (Berglund, 2016b).

The general problem is that Azerbaijanis in Georgia, despite being the country's largest ethnic and religious minority group, are not integrated/participating enough in the socio-political life of the country, and compared to the country's other ethnic minorities, they are least aware of Georgia's EU integration processes (CRRC, 2021). The situation is even worse when it comes to female representatives of this group, as they face even greater barriers due to their gender.

In the case of ethnic Azerbaijani women's sociopolitical participation in Georgia, this research focuses on some unexplored dimensions related to minority gender and ethnicity in Georgia's European integration process.

The dissertation addresses the question: *"how is minority gender and ethnicity dealt in Georgia and how is it related to its European integration?"* and this main, overall, umbrella question is divided into the following specific questions:

- *Are ethnic Azerbaijani women integrated into mainstream society in Georgia, and what are the contributing factors?*

- *What factors are associated with voter turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia?*

- *What is the attitude towards the EU integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, and what are the contributing factors?*

1.4. Goals and objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- To analyse gender and ethnicity in the context of EU-Georgia relations

- To find out the reasons for the low level of political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia

- To identify factors affecting the social integration of the studied group in Georgia.

- To identify factors affecting the attitudes towards the EU integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

1.5. Definition of Terms

The following section of this PhD dissertation is dedicated to defining key terms and concepts that are central to the research study. This subchapter is critical in ensuring that the reader has a clear and consistent understanding of the language and terminology used throughout the dissertation. It is also important to avoid misunderstandings and ambiguities that may arise from using technical language or specialised terms. The definitions provided in this section are based on existing literature, established theories, and the results of the research study. By providing precise and concise definitions, this subchapter serves as a foundation for the arguments and findings presented in the subsequent chapters. Additionally, defining terms in this subchapter will provide a clear framework for the reader to understand the significance

and context of the research study. It is crucial to remember that the precise definition of terms is a key factor in ensuring the credibility and rigour of the research. The definitions provided in this section will be referred to throughout the rest of the dissertation to maintain consistency and clarity. This subchapter is an essential component of the dissertation, as it lays the foundation for the reader to fully comprehend the results and implications of the research. The definitions provided here will serve as the cornerstone for the reader's understanding of the entire dissertation.

European Integration

European integration is the process of integrating nations that are entirely or largely in Europe or close by on a political, legal, social, and cultural level. It also refers to how EU institutions, political processes, and policies affect states on a national level. Along with the transfer of institutions and policies, this effect also entails the internalisation of EU standards and laws (Börzel and Risse 2012, 193). While the term "Europeanization" was initially used in relation to member states and accession countries, experts have later begun to look into "Europeanization beyond Europe," or the internal effects of the EU on neighbouring countries and in other regions of the world (Schimmelfennig, 2015). Kunz and Maisenbacher (2017), for instance, use the term "Europeanization" to denote the adoption of EU norms and values in neighbouring countries in the context of the New European Neighbourhood Policy (NENP).

The motto of the European Union, 'United in Diversity', means that men and women and people of all races should work together for a better world while at the same time being enriched by the continent's many different cultures, traditions, and languages. In this sense, the integration of minority women is important for promoting a more equitable, inclusive, and prosperous society, as well as for a country's EU integration process. It is important for Georgia to take actions to ensure that minority women, including ethnic Azerbaijani women, have equal opportunities and rights to participate in society and the EU integration process.

Social Integration

The concept of social integration, as discussed by scholars like Castles et al. (2002) and Rudiger and Spencer (2003), is indeed a multifaceted and adaptable one, often shaped by the perceptions and desires of different individuals and societies. It is a concept that transcends borders, and its interpretation varies significantly from one nation to another, as noted by Strobl (2007). Social integration, at its core, can be defined as a process that encompasses the provision of access to resources, participation in communal life, and a deep sense of belonging. It is a term that extends its embrace to any social community, whether it is a small, tight-knit group or an entire nation.

In the realm of sociology and other social sciences, social integration serves as a vital concept, referring to the intricate process of assimilating individuals or groups from diverse backgrounds into the mainstream society. This process aims to ensure that all members of society, including those from underprivileged strata, ethnic or religious minorities, and more, are afforded the same opportunities, rights, and services that the welfare state has to offer. It's a term closely intertwined with the principles of democratic governments and communities that champion human rights and core values.

Social integration, in its essence, becomes a multidimensional mechanism working to establish peaceful coexistence within the framework of a historically diverse social reality. It's about forging connections among individuals and groups who differ culturally and ethnically, emphasizing the importance of respecting ethnocultural diversity without infringing upon fundamental human rights or undermining the stability of democratic institutions, as discussed by Martelli (2019).

In a nutshell, social integration can be seen as the glue that holds diverse social groups together, fostering unity and cohesion. It is the process through which minority groups, like ethnic minorities, find their place in the heart of society. In open and tolerant societies, the concept of social integration becomes a pathway through which minority groups gain access to the full spectrum of opportunities, rights, and services that the broader society has to offer, ensuring a harmonious coexistence for all.

Ethnic and Religious Minorities

The term 'national minority' is ambiguous, meaning that there is no universally accepted definition of it. When defining the term, it should be considered that there is no binding or non-binding international law document that determines which group category minorities belong to and, thus, exactly defines minority groups. It should be noted that the term generally accepted in the United Nations system is "ethnic minority." In contrast, in the Council of Europe system, members of this group are called "national minorities."

While, in an international treaty, there is no widely agreed-upon, clearly formulated concept of the minority, many approaches are accepted among academics. Lanchester and Andreas (2010) describe minorities in Europe as a non-dominant group whose ethnocultural characteristics are clearly distinct from the rest of a country's numerically superior population. Article 1 of the United Nations Declaration of Minorities refers to minorities based on national/ethnic, linguistic, cultural, and religious identities. In the definition proposed by the Venice Commission, an ethnic minority is defined as:

> "... a group which is smaller in number than the rest of the population of a State, whose members, who are nationals of that State, have ethnic, religious or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population, and are guided by the will to safeguard their culture, traditions, religion, or language".

Therefore, ethnic identification can relate to identifying with a group that is perceived to be different from the majority, whether for cultural, "ethnic," or religious reasons (Persky & Birman, 2005; Merino & Tileaga, 2011).

According to Kahanec and Zimmermann (2010), the term "ethnic minorities" is complicated because it is commonly understood to refer to groups or individuals who have different cultural preferences or cultural and socioeconomic origins than the majority population.

In contrast to most standard social science definitions of ethnicity, a two-dimensional definition of ethnicity is developed. According to this definition, ethnicity comprises two dimensions: a) the *attributional dimension,* which describes the unique socio-cultural

characteristics (e.g., culture, diet) of groups. This dimension is useful for understanding personal identity and group socio-cultural characteristics; b) the *relational dimension,* which covers characteristics of the relationship between an ethnically defined group and the society in which it is situated (Ford and Harawa, 2010).

Religious minorities. N. S. Katko (2001) offers his definition of the concept of "minority" as "a group of citizens of the state, numerically smaller than the main part of the population and/or occupying a non-dominant position, having stable ethnic, linguistic, religious, and cultural characteristics, and having a desire to maintain their identity" (Катько, 2001). Supporting this definition, it could be considered that a religious minority is a group of citizens of the state, numerically smaller than the central part of the population and/or occupying a non-dominant position, having stable religious characteristics, and having a desire to maintain their identity (Мухаметзянова-Дуггал & Кляшев, 2010).

Ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia

Ethnic Azerbaijanis are the country's largest ethnic and religious minority group. According to the 2014 official census, 233,024 ethnic Azerbaijanis live in Georgia (Ethnic composition of Georgia: 2014 census). Azerbaijanis in Georgia are compactly settled in the south-eastern part of the country. The majority of the populations of Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Gardabani districts of the Kvemo-Kartli region are ethnic Azerbaijanis. There are also Azeri villages in the Tetritskaro and Tsalka districts of the Kvemo-Kartli region. A significant Azerbaijani population can be found in the eastern Georgian regions of Kakheti, Shida (Inner) Kartli, and Mtskheta-Mtianeti, as well as in Rustavi, the central city of the Kvemo-Kartli region, and the capital Tbilisi. (Kerimli, 2011, pp. 214–216; Memmedli, 2006, pp. 88–94; Valehoğlu, 2005, pp. 4–8).

Due to different factors such as the language barrier and socio-political and cultural exclusion, there is insufficient knowledge of the history and challenges faced by the Azerbaijani

community living in Georgia in both academic and political circles and among the general public (Zviadadze and Jishkariani, 2018).

The Azerbaijani family structure is dominated by traditional gender roles learned and passed down from previous generations (Mandl, 2011). Such social gender norms impose restrictions on women's lives and, if attempted to be overcome, encourage violence against women. Women's engagement in various aspects of society is limited by patriarchal traditional norms. Azerbaijani women face severe societal restraints, particularly in rural areas. Young people, particularly young women, are expected to live with their parents until they marry. Social concerns regarding what older men and women can do have a big influence on the restrictions placed on young women.

Ethnic Azerbaijani women are distinct from other women in Georgia, including both Georgian and other ethnic minority women in the country. This group differs from other Georgian women in terms of ethnicity (Azerbaijani) and religious identification (Muslim) and tends to have a distinct culture and customs from the majority of the Georgian population. They also often speak Azerbaijani as their first language.

In the comprehensive study of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, several pivotal considerations emerge, each adding depth to the complexities surrounding their social integration. These factors not only emphasize the importance of focusing on this specific group but also highlight the multifaceted nature of their identity and the unique challenges they face.

First and foremost, adopting a gender perspective is indispensable in understanding the experiences of ethnic Azerbaijani women. These women are not only members of a minority ethnic group but also belong to the more vulnerable gender within society. This intersectionality compounds the challenges they encounter, as they navigate the intricate dynamics of both ethnic and gender-based discrimination. Consequently, the gender lens provides a critical vantage point for comprehending the specific hurdles and opportunities that ethnic Azerbaijani women confront in their quest for social integration.

Furthermore, it is crucial to recognize that Azerbaijani women in Georgia constitute the largest ethnic minority group in the country. Their sheer numbers underscore their significance within the broader context of Georgia's multicultural fabric. This demographic reality has implications for their social and cultural impact, as well as the degree to which their experiences may inform policies and practices related to minority integration.

Additionally, when conducting research on ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, particular attention should be dedicated to the unique position they hold as members of a religious minority group within the country. Being primarily Muslim within a predominantly Christian nation introduces an additional layer of complexity. This religious dimension influences their experiences, social interactions, and perceptions, potentially adding to the challenges they encounter as they strive for meaningful integration. Scholars and researchers are thus faced with the intricate task of disentangling the combined effects of ethnic and religious minority status on the lives of Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

This intersectionality of ethnicity, gender, and religion amplifies the significance of their experiences and underscores the complexity that researchers must navigate in their studies. The unique challenges posed by this intersectionality should not deter scholars but rather serve as a motivating factor to delve deeper into the exploration of ethnic Azerbaijani women's lives and the broader implications for social integration in Georgia. Acknowledging these dimensions is pivotal for the development of more targeted and effective policies and interventions aimed at fostering a truly inclusive and harmonious society that embraces diversity and fully supports all its members, regardless of their ethnicity, gender, or religious affiliations.

Gender

Gender refers to the roles and behaviours attributed to men and women by society (Little et al., 2014, p. 370). Social gender roles consist of stereotypes that expect women to be mothers, daughters, carers, and the 'weaker sex'. The criteria for males are different and are related to

the perception of males as breadwinners, protectors, decision-makers, and the 'stronger sex' (Abrahamyan et al., 2019, p. 60).

Femininity and masculinity, rather than being separate, are intertwined in gender orientations towards men and women. Gender is no longer a causative element that can be deliberately included or excluded from an explanatory model but rather an integral component of social phenomena such as the European integration process. Gender analysis is comparable to social analysis in that it investigates the meanings of femininity and masculinity in social contexts and investigates how gender influences social connections. Thus, gender is not a stable construct; rather, it is shaped and sustained by the interactions of several individuals in a variety of circumstances. The core of a feminist research programme that views gender as a vital category for analysis is the examination of the underlying mechanisms as well as the underlying assumptions involved in the (re-)production of existing gender arrangements (Locher and Prügl, 2008).

The traditional division of household labour in the Caucasus specifies men's position as decision-makers and breadwinners, while women's duty is to care for all family members, particularly in the fields of childcare and household tasks. These obligations restrict women in their personal lives and, in most situations, limit their capacity to advance professionally and engage in public and political life (Aliyeva, 2020; Mandl, 2011).

Ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia can be considered one of the most vulnerable groups of society because of the double burden of both the historically discriminated gender and traditional and religious factors. Although there are religious factors in the different roles attributed to women and men in the Caucasus, the rigid division of gender roles typical of Muslim societies has put ethnic Azerbaijani women in a challenging situation. This fact is also reflected in the integration of the studied group into Georgian society.

Theory of Intersectionality

In 1989, Kimberlie Crenshaw introduced a theory of intersectionality, claiming that individuals are often disadvantaged by various sources of oppression, such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, and other identities (Crenshaw, 1989). While this theory was initially claimed to be a feminist theory, it later expanded, surpassing the explanation of women's oppression. Later, it was used to describe discrimination in all segments of society. Intersectional feminism is a branch of feminism that claims that various aspects of discrimination in social and political identity coincide ('intersect') with gender. Despite Crenshaw's writing about excluded women in the United States, this theoretical framework can also be applied universally. Patricia Hill Collins theorised that we all exist in a domination matrix where our experiences are determined by gender, race, class, age, and religious structures (Collins, 1990).

Intersectionality is a theoretical framework for understanding how a person's social and political identity (e.g., gender, class, race, ethnic origin, and religion) are combined to form discriminatory and privileged regimes. It identifies the advantages and disadvantages felt by humans due to a combination of factors (Bowleg, 2012).

According to intersectionality theory, instead of measuring people's social hierarchies by adding up the consequences of discrete components of their identity, each difference becomes important in relation to the other differences at play (Davis, 2008; Choo and Ferree, 2010). In other words, intersectional theory views difference as the result of many intersecting markers of identity that interact to generate a specific subject and shape experiences of subjectivity (Glenn 1999; Yuval-Davis 2006, 2007). Furthermore, intersectional theory shows how various markers of difference are at work in these constructs, regardless of whether these markers represent the dominant or subordinate pole of binary distinctions (Choo and Ferree 2010). Consequently, one can analyse intersectional definitional projects to see how they constitute both marginalised minority and dominant majority subjectivities, with the latter serving as the compass for directing integration measures (Korteweg & Triadafilopoulos, 2013).

A growing amount of research on the politics of minority women in European cultures has revealed that political actors actively mobilise certain intersecting distinctions while downplaying others in their support or rejection of certain policy measures. Rottman and Ferree (2008), for instance, indicate that German feminists regard Muslim women's gender oppression as crossing with religion but do not see Muslim women's encounters with racism as a gendered issue. Work on the veil, honour-related violence, and forced marriage also highlights the relevance of intersectional approaches to understanding the politics of Muslim and other minority women in North America and Europe (Kilic et al., 2008; Dustin and Phillips, 2008; Sauer, 2009; Korteweg and Yurdakul, 2010).

Building on these insights, it can be argued that ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia are at the intersection of several factors, such as *gender, religion*, and *ethnic origin*. This intersection complicates the situation of minorities and, as Hankinsky and Christoffersen (2008) note, causes more difficulties for academics who intend to study these and similar groups.

1.6. Organisation

The dissertation consists of five chapters and is structured in the following way: Chapter one of the dissertation discusses the introduction, background of the study, scope, and problem statement connected to minority gender and ethnicity in Georgia's European integration process in the case of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. The definition of terms and the thesis's goals and objectives are established in the next section. Chapters two to four are the literary review, methods, results, and discussion sections of the dissertation. Chapter two, "Literature Review," is a critical analysis of the existing research on the topic of the dissertation. The chapter provides a summary of the key findings and theories related to the research problem and identifies gaps in the literature that the current study aims to address. Chapter three is the methodology section. This chapter outlines the research design and methods used in the study, including the sample, population, data collection methods, and data analysis techniques. Chapter four is the results and discussion part of the dissertation, which

presents the findings of the study, including the statistical analysis that was conducted, interprets the results of the study, and considers their implications for the field. Finally, chapter five, the conclusion part of the research, summarises the main findings of the study, provides policy recommendations, offers avenues for future research, and discusses the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. European integration and gender

European integration theories are criticized by gender researchers working in this field for being gender-blind and biased towards men (Abels and MacRae, 2016; Kronsell, 2016). These theories are based on descriptions of general processes, structures, and actors whose underlying gender is ignored. The fact that the majority of key players (such as presidents, commissioners, or high-ranking government officials) in the EU are men has received little attention from researchers. In addition, as Haastrup and Kenny (2016) state, for women, men, and minorities residing in the EU or working in its institutions, the structures of economic and political integration may mean different things, and the integration processes themselves may be gendered, prioritising masculine structures and failing to advance gender equality and diversity. In the theories and approaches used to research European integration, there is a similar lack of awareness of how gender influences society (Lombardo and Kantola, 2019).

Feminist research, which has historically focused on the equality of women and men, has shifted its attention to gender, or how femininity and masculinity relate to one another, and how "masculine constructions depend upon maintaining feminine ones - and vice versa," rather than on women and men as equivalent categories (Peterson 1992: 9).

European integration in Georgia is studied from different perspectives by both local and foreign scholars (Abuselidze, 2019; Tsuladze, 2021; Morari, 2014; Chiarella, 2017). Previous studies consider how the country sees itself as a European nation and how it perceives Europe. Georgia's European identity has long been a source of debate (Tarkhan-Mouravi, 2014). According to Kakachia and Minesashvili (2015), identity and ideology are two important factors in explaining Georgia's pro-European orientation.

Describing how Georgian political elites are framing Georgia's connection to Europe, Ó Beacháin and Coene (2014) note: *"Fundamental to Georgia's foreign policy is the tenet that*

Georgia is an old, if not the oldest, European country, which in recent years has sought to retake its rightful place in Europe." According to Georgian elites, Georgia has "*always been European, and European values are at the core of Georgian society."* The scholars examine the political elites' rhetoric of Georgia's self-perceived European identity and then provide a constructivist approach to the formation and evolution of the concepts of "Europe" and "Europeanness" in the Georgian government's official discourse (Ó Beacháin and Coene, 2014).

While some scholars claim that Georgia's desire for freedom and democratic values is tied to its pro-European orientation, other researchers relate this "European identity" in Georgia to its Christian heritage (Preston, 2016). Georgia's European self-identification is related to their Christian heritage, and a true Georgian is framed as Christian, European, and 'warrior-martyr' (Jones, 2003). Besides the Christian aspect of Georgia's European identity, Georgians also claim to have "European values". All the above-mentioned factors are the reasons for Georgia's desire for EU integration.

2.2. Social integration of minority women

Social integration has often been defined as a response to structural barriers that prohibit individuals and groups from fully engaging in societal benefits, with a focus on access to resources such as goods, services, power, and control (Cass et al., 2005; Marsh and Mullins, 1998). Hale (2000) states that "economic and social participation in mainstream society" is essential to comprehending integration.

The social integration of minorities is important for a number of reasons. First, it promotes equality and helps to break down barriers between different groups of people. It also allows for greater cultural exchange and understanding, which can lead to a more harmonious and inclusive society. Additionally, social integration can have positive effects on the economic

and social well-being of minorities, as it can provide access to education, employment, and other opportunities.

Minority women often face unique barriers to social integration due to the intersection of their gender and racial/ethnic identities (Grossman and Porche, 2014). Studies have shown that minority women may experience discrimination and marginalisation in both the workplace and in their communities. This can lead to feelings of isolation and a lack of a sense of belonging (Avraamidou, 2020; Rodriguez and Blaney, 2021).

Researchers identify macrosocial determinants of social integration (Gracia et al., 1995), which include social status and social roles, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and socioeconomic position, and social ecological elements, such as habitat (i.e., rural versus urban) and community and housing patterns. According to House et al. (1988), various types of studies can shed light on the impact of macrosocial structures on social integration and support processes. First, consider how social interaction structures and processes differ across groups of people in different structural positions in society, such as class, age, and gender. Second, investigate differences in social interaction structures and processes across different organisational units of society, such as distinct communities (urban versus rural), formal organisations, and residential regions. Finally, investigating the impacts of planned or unforeseen changes in society's macrosocial structures, such as changes in public policy.

Integration is also mentioned in terms of people from various groups participating in a variety of activities, such as sports, college classes, political activity, and so on, all of which were welcomed as evidence that integration was taking place. The underlying idea supporting such views appears to be that if a community is integrated, its members will participate equally and without discrimination in the activities and interests available to them (Ager and Strang, 2008).

The impact of social integration on ethnic minority students' academic success, as well as the impact of education on ethnic minority students' social inclusion, has received a great deal of attention. Various elements affecting schooling and social integration have been discovered in studies. Studies on social class and social interactions have investigated the extent to which a

wide range of relationships, such as volunteer organisations, social groups, family, friendship, and neighbours, exhibit diverse characteristics as a feature of socioeconomic status (Argyle, 1994). Several studies have discovered variations in social interactions and social support based on social class. (Laumann, 1973; Young & Willmott, 1973). Generally, these studies show that individuals with lower levels of education and income have fewer networks, less access to and constancy of material and emotional support, and less social engagement and involvement in organisations.

There is an assumption that participation is inhibited by certain factors that act as barriers to effective integration. The role of the state is then to remove these barriers and allow integration to take place. In contrast, scholars mention factors facilitating social integration. Ager and Strang (2008), for example, consider language and *cultural knowledge* as one of the facilitators of social integration. Being able to speak the state language is consistently identified as central to the integration process. In the Georgian context, not being able to speak Georgian is seen as a barrier to social interaction, economic integration, and full participation. While dominant attention is paid to the issue of language competence, a literature review has consistently highlighted the importance of a broader cultural awareness in facilitating integration processes and outcomes. This included both the knowledge of national and local practices, customs, and facilities of ethnic minorities and, albeit to a lesser degree, the knowledge of the circumstances and culture of ethnic minorities (Ager and Strang, 2008). As a result, while studying the integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women into Georgian society in accordance with state policy, deeper cultural factors must also be investigated.

2.3. Political Participation of Women and Minorities

Over the years, researchers have studied the voting habits and behaviours of women and ethnic minorities. These studies have mainly focused on Western democracies, especially the United States. There are relatively weak statistics and data on female and minority participation in the politics of developing countries. In the case of Georgia, there are few

studies on the political participation of women and minorities and almost no studies on the voter turnout of Azerbaijani women in the country.

This lack of basic information is partly due to Georgia's status as a Soviet republic during much of the Twentieth Century. The Soviet Union's elections consisted of centralised rules applying to all elections in a one-party authoritarian system, including those in Georgia. Suffrage was universal and voting was considered secret, but in practice, voters could submit a blank ballot to vote for Communist Party candidates but had to enter a polling booth to vote for other candidates. This practice likely suppressed voter turnout and distorted election results. Hence, Georgia's historical voting data is not comparable with data compiled since Georgia declared independence from the Soviet Union in the early 1990s and began democratic elections (Shapiro, 1977; Nohlen and Stover, 2010).

The literature cites many factors that can affect voter behavior. These factors can appear in unique and complex combinations in various countries and can depend on certain circumstances. These factors can be grouped together as: a) socio-economic factors, which include population size, population stability, and economic development; b) political factors, which include closeness of elections, perception of the political issues at stake, campaign expenditures, and political fragmentation; c) institutional factors, which include electoral system, compulsory voting, concurrent elections, registration requirements, and voting arrangements; and d) individual factors such as age, education, political interest, and civic duty (Solijonov 2016). There are also some factors that affect only certain groups of the population, such as women, minority groups, or youth.

For an investigation of the voter turnout of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, several important factors should be taken into consideration: First, the issue should be viewed from a gender perspective, as women are the most vulnerable gender group in society. Second, Azerbaijani women in Georgia belong to the largest minority group in the country. Third, unlike the other ethnic minorities living in Georgia, Azerbaijanis are mainly Muslim. Thus, these women also belong to a religious minority group within the country.

Starting with gender, despite the removal of legal barriers to women's political participation in many countries, governments remain largely male-dominated (Shvedova 2005). She asserts that the political arena is organised according to male norms, values, and lifestyles. This is otherwise known as the masculine model of politics (Shvedova, 2005). In an investigation of barriers to women's political participation in Georgia, Blomgren (2010) divides hindrances to women's political participation in Georgia into two groups of obstacles: first, psychological, cultural, and socio-economic obstacles, which are related to public opinion, the Soviet past, and resources; and second, political obstacles, which are connected with political culture and the electoral system.

Turning to ethnicity, Hansen (2009) investigates what factors motivate members of minority groups to vote based on an ethnic attachment. She argues that

"…ethnic voting is more likely to emerge when individual socialization experiences and dissatisfaction increase the salience of ethnic identity, contextual factors serve to politicize this salient identity, and the mobilization potential of the ethnic group is high, making it more likely that an ethnic-based appeal will be successful" (Hansen, 2009, 1).

Given that Georgia is a country with a rich ethnic makeup and is geographically located in a region where geopolitical interests intersect, Hansen's findings suggest that ethnicity could be particularly important in the country.

In Georgia, some research has been done regarding gender and ethnicity issues. Particularly relevant to this study are the works of Sabedashvili (2007), who has done valuable studies about gender and the democratisation process in Georgia. Sabedashvili (2011) has also studied gender equality and women's rights in Georgia (2011), where she does comprehensive research and provides broad information regarding the topic during the post-Soviet period. She stresses that:

"…without engaging women or representatives of other excluded and marginalised groups of the population, democratization processes-as understood in a broader sense rather than as structural or system reform-are doomed to fail" (Sabedashvili 2007, 44).

Stefanczak (2015) examines the political representation of women in independent Georgia in the context of political and electoral systems and the broader socio-economic environment of the state. The author argues that the transition from a Soviet republic to an independent state had a negative impact on women's public involvement and influence. She concludes that this transition

> "…brought an end to the formal structures that had supported women's political engagement while at the same time the reassertion of 'traditional values' with the social perception of gender roles and the growing influence of the Orthodox Church mitigated ideas of gender equality that would have supported calls for women's political participation" (Stefanczak 2015, 5).

The work done by Sordia (2014) on minority governance and political participation in Georgia is of particular interest. In that work, the author discusses state policies towards national minorities in Georgia. The article explores the institutional framework of minority governance and identifies the main challenges the state is facing in the process of civil integration and the participation of minorities (Sordia, 2014).

Scholars have identified sociological factors, such as income, occupation, education, gender, age, religion, ethnic background, geography, and family, that affect voter behaviour in elections. Regarding income, researchers have found a strong relationship between income and voting rates. It was found that wealthier people vote at higher rates, and when the national economy declines, turnout from the most affected citizens is more likely to decrease (Harder and Krosnick, 2008). There are also theories predicting that occupational involvement generates wider political participation and that a high-status job substantially increases an individual's likelihood to vote (Sobel, 1993).

Age is another factor that may affect turnout of people. Most people seem to vote more frequently as they grow older, although participation in voting tends to decrease in their retirement years (Strate et al., 1989). Scholars mention a number of reasons that can cause differences between age groups in turnout rates, such as the 'generational effect'. This term suggests that historical events occurring when a particular generation of people is at a particular age can shape their political views for the rest of their lives (Harder and Krosnick,

2008). For instance, in regards to partisanship, for people who grew up before the fall of the Soviet Union, the socialisation hypothesis would suggest a greater attachment to the communist successor parties among older respondents (Hansen 2009).

Regarding gender, feminist political scientists and scholars have used a supply-and-demand model to explain women's political participation (Norris and Lovenduski, 1995). Supply factors are those that motivate individuals to participate in public life and politics, such as political knowledge, material and financial resources, skills, support networks, time, and so on. Demand factors, in contrast, are the factors that hinder women's access to venues of power and play a key role in their exclusion. Demand factors would include the

> "…male-dominated nature of social, economic, cultural and political institutions and political and legal-historical cultures which see women as inferior citizens and therefore not admissible to spheres of influence and power" (Joly and Wadia, 2017, 24).

The role of gender in voter turnout has greatly changed over time. In the United States, from the early years of women's suffrage until the 1980s, women's turnout rate was very low in comparison to men. This was explained by the fact that women then often felt less efficacious, were less informed and politically interested than men, and often had less power and responsibility in the workplace. However, starting in the mid-1980s, women's turnout rate started increasing and would eventually equal or even exceed the rate of men in some cases (Harder and Krosnick, 2008).

In another vein, scholars have developed a civic education theory to explain the link between education and political participation. According to this theory, "education provides both the skills necessary to become politically engaged and the knowledge to understand and accept democratic principles" (Hillygus, 2005, 27). There is general agreement in the literature that education is positively related to voter turnout (Putnam, 2000). Scholars believe that education is likely to broaden people's outlooks, help them understand the need for norms of tolerance, and increase their capacity to make rational electoral choices (Chevalier and Doyle, 2012). Studies have also found that college graduates who took more social science classes have an

increased sense of civic duty, and they also vote more often than other graduates (Hillygus, 2005).

Theoretical Framework

An investigation of lower voter turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia should include factors such as education, residency, and fluency in the official state language. The lower level of voter turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women can be partially explained by factors that are known to affect turnout, such as language, education, religion, and living in a rural area. Once these factors are accounted for, the turnout rate for ethnic Azerbaijani women may be similar to that of other Georgians. Yet the turnout rate of Azerbaijani women may be lower because, on average, they are less fluent in the Georgian language, have less formal education, are more likely to be Muslim, have higher levels of religiosity, and participate in customs that subordinate women's roles in society.

Why can language, education, and religion explain these differences in Georgia? Consider education: Huseyn Yusupov, who is the Head of the Congress of Ethnic Azerbaijani People in Georgia and former Kvemo Kartli region deputy governor, argues that an increased level of political education and an informed electorate will lead to a solution to the problem. He states that:

"A large part of the population did not have information about other political parties in Georgia. Only the ruling party had an office in Kvemo Kartli. People vote for the political party they know. Personal contacts are very important. Ethnic Azerbaijani people mostly vote for the parties where their relatives and acquaintances are members. It may be strange, but in the regions inhabited by ethnic Azerbaijani people, those political parties win who have no visions about ethnic minorities in their election agendas. It is caused by political illiteracy" (Mammad 2016).

It has been well-established in the literature that education is important for political participation. Here, Huseyn Yusupov confirms that political knowledge is lower in the Kvemo

Kartli region and that this can affect Azerbaijani turnout due to a lack of political learning among the uneducated. We can therefore expect that education continues to have an effect on turnout in Georgia and that this is one of the main reasons for lower turnout among Azerbaijani women.

Turning to language, interviews conducted by Azeri researchers (on September 1, 2015) regarding the political participation of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia can offer insight. Regarding these interviews, one scholar said:

"…today ethnic Azerbaijanis are a non-integrated community in Georgia. They speak Turkish. They preserve their traditions and customs. But they are not involved in politics in the administrative sense. They do not speak Georgian. They are culturally and socially isolated. They cannot nominate a candidate in elections because they cannot fulfil the criteria for the application - the knowledge of Georgian, to be in official correspondence, to speak Georgian" (Yılmaz and Öğütcü, 2016).

Lack of state language proficiency can serve as a barrier to the voter activity of ethnic Azerbaijani women. According to a survey done by the National Integration and Tolerance in Georgia Program (NITG) in 2006, in Kvemo Kartli, only 16.9% of inhabitants who belong to national minorities say they speak Georgian (Wheatley, 2009). Thus, this factor hinders their integration into the socio-political life of the country. This lack of language ability is likely to dampen political participation as well. In Georgia, most national news and political information is in the Georgian language, meaning those who are not fluent in Georgian are less able to learn about politics. With less learning, citizens are less likely to engage with the issues and the candidates seeking office. Therefore, any citizen who is not fluent in the Georgian language will be less likely to participate in politics. This means that lower language fluency may be a major cause of lower voter turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women.

Regarding religion, Georgian Azerbaijanis are predominantly Muslim. As a result of the lack of proper interpretation of the Islamic religion, like women of other Muslim nations, the socio-political activity of Azerbaijani women in Georgia has been limited in a certain sense. Although 70 years of Soviet atheist rule exacerbate this issue, the misinterpreted religious

factor persists in the form of traditions in the lifestyle of Georgian Azerbaijanis. The way Islam is practiced in Georgia is likely to discourage women from engaging in public life. Hence, Muslim Georgians are less likely to vote, and this is a major reason why predominantly-Muslim Azerbaijani women are less likely to vote themselves.

A final important factor is whether a respondent lives in an urban or rural area. The majority of the ethnic Azerbaijani population lives in the rural areas of Kvemo Kartli. The absence or weak functioning of political parties and related organisations in rural areas, unlike urban areas, leads to weak political competition among the rural population and, ultimately, a lack of interest in political processes. Hence, the rural settlement patterns of most ethnic Azerbaijanis likely contribute to lower voter turnout rates.

Based on the forgoing discussion, the following hypotheses are formulated:

   Hypothesis 1. Low fluency of the official state language negatively affects voter turnout in Georgia.

   Hypothesis 2. Lack of education has a negative influence on voter activity in Georgia.

   Hypothesis 3. Identifying Islam as a religion is negatively related to voter turnout.

   Hypothesis 4. Living in a rural area has a negative influence on voter turnout.

   Hypothesis 5. Once language ability, education, religion, and ruralism are accounted for, there will not be an additional effect of being an ethnic Azerbaijani woman on voter turnout compared with other Georgian women. That is to say, the low turnout among this group can be explained by its differences from other Georgians on these four factors.

2.4. Minority Women's Attitude to the EU Integration

Most studies do not consider gender to be a significant factor in predicting attitudes towards the EU, and rather than being used as an explanatory component, gender is frequently used as a control variable (Noe, 2016; Favero, 2020). Although few studies have explored the gender

gap in attitudes towards the EU (Nelsen and Guth, 2000; Mau, 2010), almost all of these works concentrate on Western EU member states, ignoring the altered political and economic environment that EU membership has brought to women in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) (Słomczyński and Shabad, 2003; Noe, 2016). In the vast majority of these academic works regarding how EU attitudes are formed, it is claimed that women are generally less supportive of EU integration. These conventional theoretical justifications frequently cite a number of causes for this disparity, including women's political interests, economic preferences, and vulnerability (Liebert, 1997; Nelsen and Guth, 2000). More recent research offers a more diverse and even conflicting perspective on gender-based support for the EU. Moreover, most studies on gendered support for European integration in CEE nations contend that there are no significant gender differences in popular support for and perceptions of the benefits of European integration (Słomczyński and Shabad 2003; Schlenker 2012). The current study aims to address this issue by investigating women's attitudes towards the EU. Furthermore, it touches upon intersectionality by studying the attitudes of Azerbaijani women, representing ethnic and religious minorities in Georgia.

Most research on ethnic minority women has focused on career opportunities (Kamenou & Fearfull, 2006), health issues (Bryant-Davis et al., 2009), political spheres (Mügge et al., 2019), and economic aspects (Ram & Jones, 2008). In the case of Georgian ethnic minority women, awareness of rights and social and political integration into Georgian society has attracted considerable attention in the frame of the Georgian EU integration process. Early works in this field were primarily concerned with the integration problems of Georgian ethnic minorities, such as dealing with minorities who do not speak the official language, which impedes their integration (Wheatley, 2009; Yilmaz and Öğütcü, 2016; Hajieva, 2021); or analysing ethnic minorities in the context of Georgia's European integration (Samkharadze, 2018; Kakhishvili, 2020). However, these studies covered ethnic minorities within the country in general, including ethnic Armenians, males, etc., and ethnic Azerbaijani women were not studied as a specific group within this context. According to Robert Dahl, to engage effectively in a democracy, individuals must be aware of and knowledgeable about the political system. According to recent Caucasus barometer polls, Georgia's EU integration problem begins here

because awareness of the EU, its institutions, and its system is generally extremely poor among the Georgian minority (CRRC, 2021). As a result, it can be concluded that the minority is uninformed and unaware of the EU's integration process.

Notwithstanding the interest in the ethnic minority problems in Georgia (Grigoryan, 2015; Shavtvaladze, 2018), none of them considered minority women's awareness of the EU and attitudes towards EU integration. The attitude towards EU integration is also a topic of discussion in EU countries. According to Cosse (2007), the mere existence of information sources is insufficient to raise awareness of a topic. Analysing the attitudes of citizens as beneficiaries would have made no sense at all if the citizens do not appear to be engaged in the EU integration discussions. According to Cunico et al. (2021), a different trend is followed by the more recent EU members, such as Poland, Estonia, Romania, Hungary, Latvia, Slovakia, and Bulgaria. They showed an increasing awareness after they entered the EU, but later, these trends started to diverge considerably. Upon reaching a peak, knowledge in some nations, such as Romania, Bulgaria, and Slovakia, eventually begins to decline, as it did in the former member states. Estonia displays a sharp, diminishing pattern immediately after beginning. Ultimately, the growth of Latvia, Poland, and Hungary reaches a point where it stabilises and fluctuates.

There are some attempts and projects to increase EU awareness, especially among young people. With the implementation of a new parliamentary form of youth and youngster participation, Könczöl (2019) examines the possibility of reviving EU decision-making and discovers that young Europeans have the chance to participate in a consultative form of political activity, though with a limited impact on decision-making (Gherghina & Geissel, 2017). Thus, it appears that the abilities the participants acquired during the process are more akin to advocacy-related skills. By considering the potential avenues for participation, young people have the choice of being presented with a list of unanswered questions, taking part in a national consultation, or helping to develop the questions themselves, primarily through the European Youth Forum and in accordance with guidelines set by the youth ministers of the EU Member States. There is no way to undervalue this type of participation. Through such communication avenues, authorities may increase young people's "knowledge" of the EU and

provide opportunities for individuals engaged in European politics to gain experience and form national and international networks. This successful example demonstrates that considering possible causes of lack of EU awareness and EU integration understanding leads to developing corresponding, relevant measures to address these causes. Thus, factors influencing attitudes towards EU integration should be thoroughly studied in the context of Georgia's ethnic and religious minority women.

2.4.1. Education in the EU-related issues and knowledge of state language

Inadequate knowledge and awareness, as a condition of not knowing things and being powerless to control them, does not simply apply to people who are under the control of others. Being ignorant also puts a person in the position of being forgotten, unconsidered, and out of sight. In this case, education is seen as a process that enlightens people, enabling them to go from ignorance to knowledge and from inferiority to superiority—in other words, the process of emancipation (Szkudlarek & Zamojski, 2020). In this sense, all segments of society, including minorities and women, should be well aware of the processes going on in the country where they live that affect them. Favero's (2020) study suggests that well-educated women are more inclined than men to support EU integration. According to Tchelidze et al. (2021), there exists a significant interest in the EU, and it is independent of the particulars and dynamics of the bilateral interactions. Most of the time, individuals just learn simple facts through television. The authors propose that a new approach to organising an information campaign aimed at promoting European values and, more broadly, relations between the EU and Georgia, on the one hand, and improving instruction of the Georgian language in ethnic minority-populated areas, on the other, would be an excellent solution. It is also clear that providing school students with more thorough information on Europe via their history and civic education classes might be another solution. Thus, education of the population in general and ethnic minorities in particular in EU-related issues, as well as knowledge of the state language, might be considered as factors influencing the willingness of EU integration.

In some remote and poor regions of Georgia, where schools have few or no funds, boys tend to leave school at an early age to work and earn money. This case frequently occurs among ethnic Azerbaijani communities living in Georgia, however, with girls instead of boys. Parents may attach little importance to the education of girls, and in cases of early marriage, girls could leave school as early as age 13 or 14 (Group & Karaia, 2019). The issue of transferring information on ongoing processes in Georgian society, especially relations with the EU for minority groups, especially to its vulnerable part, which is the ethnic Azerbaijani women of Georgia, is still under question.

2.4.2. Activism

Activism is a way to influence social, political, economic, or environmental processes in order to transform society for what is thought to be the greater good. Scholars differentiate many forms of political activity, including writing letters to the editor of local newspapers, organising community meetings, marching on city streets, participating in sit-ins or hunger strikes, running for office, or contributing to a political campaign. Activism, thus, can be considered a synonym for political participation and involves a number of important factors, one of which is possessing the necessary cognitive abilities and up-to-date knowledge to engage in informed discussion of challenging social issues (Dee, 2020).

Brown (2017) argues that individuals with multiple subordinate group identities, namely racial and ethnic minority women, will experience differences in political mobilisation and interest in politics and demonstrate different participatory styles than other women do. The author notes that because of an identity based both on gender and racialized/ethnic disadvantages, minority women do not participate in American politics in the same way as white women do. Emejulu and Bassel (2015), in this regard, claim that the politics of minority women who choose to voice intersectional social justice concerns should have real and meaningful places in pluralist democratic societies that aspire to foster social and political unity, and that minority women have the capacity to question prevalent perceptions when speaking and being

heard outside of the scripts of victimhood or neoliberal agency, enabling new political imaginations and solidarities for social justice.

Cultural norms may hinder women's opportunities to participate in politics (Norris and Inglehart, 2001). Research shows that ideology strongly predicts differences in women's political representation (Paxton and Kunovich, 2003). The effects of cultural differences across countries, including region and dominant religion, can be an important factor in women's political participation (Paxton et al., 2007).

Education is found to be strongly associated with political participation, both for women and for men (Sahu & Yadav, 2018). Burns, Schlozman, and Verba (2001) claim that activism helps people grow as individuals in a variety of ways: by learning about their community and society, developing lifelong civic skills, and developing a deeper understanding of others' concerns and interests as well as those of society as a whole. Therefore, it can be concluded that the engaged or activist woman is the one who is educated and well aware of the social and political processes taking place in society. In this case, it can be said that if ethnic Azerbaijani women actively participate in the socio-political life of Georgia, they must be aware of and have a positive attitude towards the country's EU integration. Mehrabov (2016) found four forms of activism among women in Azerbaijan – traditional oppositional political activists, religious Islamic activists, feminist activists, and liberal activists. However, political activism should not necessarily be oppositional, as in our case—supporting EU integration is in line with the official political discourse of Georgia (Georgian Centre for Security and Development, 2017, Gvalia et al., 2013; Javakhishvili et al., 2021).

2.4.3. Innovation/Usage of new technologies

Technological developments within society are considered to have a serious influence on civic and political participation. Widespread use of information technology and platforms such as

Twitter and Facebook made individuals' civic and political participation different from those of a couple of decades ago (Zani and Barret, 2012).

According to Van der Have and Rubalcaba (2016, p. 1924) technological innovation has societal implications. Thakur et al., (2016, p. 2765) state that there is a strong correlation between technological innovation and individual innovation. Innovative individuals, those who are able to use new technologies, are more susceptible to risks and innovations because of their personal characteristics of curiosity and innovation search. Considering that the concept of technological innovation is closely related to the concept of social innovation, it can be assumed that there is a positive relationship between individual innovation and social innovation. Tracey and Stott (2017, p. 56) outlined a framework for social innovation typology, indicating that research considers digital solutions to social issues as social movement organisations make significant investments in digital technology. Rahman et al., (2018, p. 242) examined social innovation through the lens of technological innovation and found that the innovation of individuals can be considered a predictor of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of technological innovations with a social aspect. Moreover, Osipov et al. (2022) claim that digital learning, a higher education innovation, is a practical, cost-effective, and highly effective way to make higher education more appealing to young people, and the growth of digital learning will result in an increase in the number of young people enrolling in higher education. Therefore, it can be concluded that innovation—that is, the ability to use modern technologies and the internet and be aware of modern developments—would increase the general awareness of ethnic Azerbaijani women about the EU and their willingness to integrate.

To answer the question of *what factors affect the attitudes towards the EU integration of the ethnic Azerbaijani women of Georgia,* the roles of four possible factors are studied. Also, as discussed above, according to the corresponding literature, state language knowledge is a potential way to engage in activism, which, in turn, leads to improved attitudes towards EU integration; therefore, this potential path is also examined.

Accordingly, the following hypotheses were tested:

H1: Education about the EU, knowledge of the official language, women's activism, and innovation/usage of new technologies are positive predictors of attitudes towards EU integration.

H2: Activism mediates the association between official language knowledge and attitudes towards EU integration. Official language knowledge is directly associated with attitudes towards EU integration (hypothesis 1); however, the link is stronger through activism.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter outlines the strategies and techniques used to conduct the research. The purpose of this chapter is to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research approach and methodology adopted to answer the research questions and achieve the objectives of the study. The research methodology chapter provides a clear explanation of the steps taken to collect, analyse, and interpret the data. The following parts of this chapter provide a detailed description of the research design, data collection methods, data analysis techniques, and any limitations or ethical considerations of the study. Ultimately, the methodology chapter provides a clear and transparent account of the research process that enables the reader to assess the validity and reliability of the findings.

3.1. Research Design

To achieve the study aims, the thesis uses a mixed-method approach, which is "the only method that provides the most accurate interpretation" (McKim, 2016: 214).

According to Bigler et al. (2019), when approaching a research subject holistically, the employment of mixed methods is almost inevitable. This is due to the fact that reality is too complicated to be treated with a one-dimensional approach. When investigating complex research issues, mixed-methods designs may be advantageous because qualitative data provide a comprehensive insight into survey responses, whereas statistical analysis can provide a detailed assessment of response trends (McCusker & Gunaydin, 2014).

In order to achieve the main objectives of the dissertation, first, the social integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women was deductively analysed using relevant literature. Then, applying the logistic regression model, a quantitative research method was utilised to measure political participation, particularly the voter turnout of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. Finally,

the study on EU awareness among Azerbaijani women in Georgia was conducted using Structural Equation Modelling.

3.2. Content analysis of the social integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia

The social integration of Georgian Azerbaijani women, representatives of the country's largest ethnic and religious minority group, who are at the intersection of different identity and group affiliation defining factors and are compactly settled mainly in Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Gardabani municipalities of the Kvemo-Kartli region, is studied based on relevant literature analysis. The study considers *participation, knowledge of the state language, social networks,* and *intermarriage* -the widely used dimensions of integration of minorities in a society - and finds that the integration level of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgian society is low. Further, the study discusses endogenous and exogenous factors responsible for the low integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

3.3. Logistic Regression Analysis of Voter Turnout of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women in Georgia

Sample

The research on the voter turnout of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia is based on data from the Caucasus Barometer, a regular survey about socio-economic issues and political attitudes conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centres (CRRC) that covers Georgia for the year 2017. The sample size is 2,379 respondents (with 2,356 complete cases for our analysis), and the population consists of adults (18 years old and over), excluding the populations living in territories affected by military conflict (South Ossetia and Abkhazia). The

response rate is 58%. The sample design is multi-stage cluster sampling with preliminary stratification, and the survey mode is face-to-face paper-and-pencil interview (PAPI).

Data processing

The hypotheses are tested with a logistic regression model in which voter turnout is the dependent variable. The model is specified as follows:

$$P \text{ (voter turnout)} = B0 + B1woman + B2azeri + B3woman*azeri + B4educ +$$
$$B5muslim + B6rural + B7language + error\ term$$

In this model, *P (voter turnout)* refers to the probability that a survey respondent turns out to vote. The *woman* variable is a dummy variable for a woman respondent, *azeri* is a dummy variable for an Azeri respondent, *educ* is an eight-category ordinal measure of education of respondents, *muslim* is a dummy variable for a respondent who adheres to the Muslim religion, *rural* is a dummy variable for a respondent who lives in a rural area, and *language* is a dummy variable for whether the respondent took the interview in a language other than Georgian (specifically, in Armenian or Azeri).

3.4. Structural Equation Modelling Analysis of the Attitude to the EU Integration of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women of Georgia

Study tool

The study utilises a correlational design, where data is collected using a questionnaire survey approach. The technique was chosen because it is widely utilised and makes it possible to reach a sizable portion of the research population for a relatively low investment (Taherdoost, 2019).

The variables listed in the conceptual model were used to generate the questionnaire items. The questionnaire contains two sections: the demographic characteristics of the respondents are covered in the first section, while the study's variables are covered in the second. The

questionnaire was developed in the Azerbaijani language to facilitate its administration. A pilot study was carried out prior to data collection to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. Study participants recommended several adjustments to the questionnaire. The questionnaire was updated in response to comments made by the participants in the pilot study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

The answers are rated on a 7-point Likert-type scale, with the answers ranging from 1 "strongly disagree" to 7 "Strongly Agree." Each of the five variables—four predictors and one outcome variable—was measured by three items. A sample item for innovation/usage of new technologies is the following: "I use advanced gadgets to access or transfer information"; for attitude towards EU integration: "I believe that Georgia EU integration is positive for Georgia"; for education: "Education enhanced my understanding of EU policy towards Georgia"; for state language knowledge: "I speak Georgian"; and for activism: "I participate in street actions for Georgia EU integration". After establishing the reliability of the scales, each variable's composite score was calculated by averaging answers to three corresponding questions.

Sample

The survey respondents were chosen using a multistage sampling technique from Azerbaijani women's minority groups, mainly on Facebook. Women from the Azerbaijani minority group who resided in Georgia's four districts mostly inhabited by ethnic Azerbaijanis — Gardabani, Marneuli, Dmanisi, and Bolnisi — received a total of 400 questionnaires, both online and in person. 380 respondents participated in the survey (out of 400 contacted). The poll was conducted in a hybrid fashion, with the questionnaire being delivered in regions where the ethnic Azerbaijani population lives in June 2022.
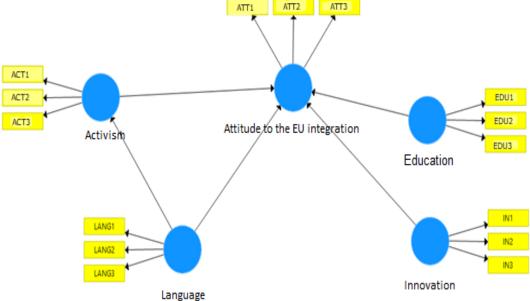
Data processing

The data was processed using a structural equation model (SEM) in the SMART-PLS program. The advantage of using SEM to make the construct apparent and streamline the investigation

is that it allows researchers to test the idea by assessing how variables relate to one another (Urban & Mayerl, 2013). The SEM technique is appropriate for simultaneously forecasting a set of equations and establishing the relationship between variables (Davari & Rezazadeh, 2013). SEM-PLS is a second-generation method (Haenlein & Kaplan, 2004). PLS is built on the component analysis principle, which describes model parameter changes.

The structural model is shown in Figure 3.4. By calculating model fit parameters, the reliability and discriminant validity of the scales were ensured, and by examining the path coefficients among the elements, the structural model was tested. The structural model describes the links (including mediational chains) among latent constructs and items united under the corresponding observed variables.

Figure 3.4. Structural Equation Model specification diagram

The present study aimed to examine the socio-political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia as the country moves towards European integration. The focus was on understanding the challenges and barriers faced by minority women in participating in the political and social spheres and how their ethnicity and gender intersect to shape their experiences. This research sheds light on the unique experiences of ethnic Azerbaijani women in the Georgian context and contributes to the broader discussions on gender and ethnicity in the European integration process. The results and discussion chapter will present the findings from the study and offer insights into the ways in which ethnic Azerbaijani women participate in the political and social spheres, their perception of EU integration, and how they navigate the intersections of their gender and ethnicity in the Georgian context.

4.1. Question 1. Indicators of Social Integration of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women in Georgia

The following indicators are generally used in the literature to measure the level of social integration of ethnic minorities:

Participation — means access to and involvement of people from different groups in various socio-political activities – political parties, clubs, voting, sports, etc.). All of this is seen as proof that integration has taken place. The basic point of such views is that if a community is integrated, the public will participate equally and without prejudice in current activities and entertainment (Ager et al., 2008, p. 180).

Membership and activity in social groups or organisations are used to qualify and rate general participation. When it comes to political or civic participation, there are two types of participation: traditional, such as voting, petition writing, and meeting attendance, and non-

traditional, such as protests and pickets. If the participation patterns of the majority and minority groups are similar, they can be used as an indicator of integration to some extent. Participation in social life encompasses abilities and opportunities to recognise social reality and, at the same time, to be recognised by members of other community groups.

In general, more or less active participation in social life can take various forms and characteristics, and it is one of the most important factors in social integration. On the contrary, insufficient participation by members of ethnic groups at different levels of the social sphere may be one of the factors contributing to ethnic cleavages or social exclusion.

Ethnic minorities' civic, political, and social integration has been a problematic aspect of Georgia's democratic growth.

Participation levels in public life in Georgia are low. This fact is particularly evident in the participation of minorities in political life and representation in public bodies and government institutions (Kakhishvili, 2018, p. 5). Notwithstanding several programmes and initiatives launched towards integrating ethnic minorities into political life in recent years, no significant progress has been made in this direction (Public Defender's Office, 2018, p. 244). Currently, among national minorities, only three MPs represent ethnic Azerbaijanis, even though this group constitutes the largest minority group in the country (Parliament of Georgia, 2021). Despite the presence of these officials in the Georgian Parliament, ethnic Azerbaijanis remain underrepresented at almost all levels of government in Georgia, both at the central and local levels. Women have historically been and continue to be underrepresented in Georgia's parliament, with only 17% of seats held by them in the current Parliament of Georgia (Parliament of Georgia, 2021). So far, no ethnic Azerbaijani woman has been represented in the Parliament of Georgia.

The "Study on the Needs and Priorities of Ethnic Minority Women in the Kvemo Kartli Region" examines the barriers that ethnic minority women face in participating in public life and decision-making processes. According to the findings, 77.6% of respondents were uninformed of local government and self-government entities' actions and responsibilities. The level of awareness in rural areas was lower than in urban areas (81.4 percent vs. 66.4

percent). According to the results of the survey, the "majority" of respondents "did not participate in the preparation of the local budget, setting district/town priorities, planning municipal programmes, or reviewing implemented municipal programmes" (UN Women, ISSA, 2014).

In the Kvemo-Kartli region, where Azerbaijanis mostly live, the rate of political participation among women is very low. There are almost no Azerbaijani female representatives at the regional level. According to expert remarks and research from Kvemo-Kartli, there has always been a vast gap in political participation between men and women in the region. It was also concluded that the general lack of interest in politics is more common among women than men (Kachkachishvili et al., 2012, p. 17).

All these factors create significant obstacles to the participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia's socio-political life, hindering their ability to not only exercise their democratic rights but also limiting their capacity to influence policies, advocate for their community's needs, and ultimately shape the inclusive and equitable future of the nation.

Language — knowledge of the state language is consistently defined as the centre of the integration process (Ager et al. 2008, p. 182). It increases the chances of understanding the state language at a higher level, communicating with local people, and understanding their culture.

Studies indicate that the language barrier has been one of the most acute problems negatively affecting minorities' integration into Georgian society (Gabunia, 2014, p. 10; Kahraman, 2021, p. 315). Ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia generally do not have a good command of the state language, which hinders their engagement in the country's social and cultural life, makes them feel marginalised (Berglund, 2016; Wheatley, 2009), blocks their representation in Parliament and regional municipalities (Aydingun, 2013), and negatively affects their economic situation by reducing job opportunities in the public sector (Yılmaz et al., 2016, pp. 256-258; Public Defender's Office of Georgia, 2017). Parallel to such poor command of the state language, the low level of education is also argued as the most significant problem that the ethnic Azerbaijani community experiences (Kahraman 2021, p. 315) and which hinders their integration.

The Azerbaijani language is spoken as the first language among the ethnic Azerbaijani community of Georgia. A decade ago, Georgian, the state language, was spoken little or not not at all. Till 2008, compared to other ethnic minority groups, the number of Azerbaijanis who did not speak the Georgian language was high (UNAG, Report 2008, p. 38). If the Azerbaijanis living in Georgia were bilingual, speaking their native Azerbaijani and Russian (even trilingual in some cases) during the Soviet period (Driscoll et al., 2016), many representatives of this ethnic group, especially the generation born during the last years of the Soviet period and early years of independence, became monolingual because the younger generation did not know enough Russian after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

At the same time, teaching in the Georgian language had structural problems following the transition period, such as a lack of qualified teachers, material provision of staff, etc. As a result, most ethnic Azerbaijanis spoke only the Azerbaijani language until recently, which created many difficulties in integration and interaction with the majority population (Gabunia, 2014). Little or no command of the state language hindered ethnic minority members' career development, blocked their access to the public sector as employees, and isolated them (Public Defender's Office of Georgia, 2017).

Currently, as a result of the state's targeted measures to teach Georgian in secondary schools, as well as the 1+4 programme, which encourages national minorities to attend Georgian universities, there is a growing interest among youth in learning Georgian as the state language, as well as a growing trend in the number of those who learn it. The younger generation understands the Georgian language better and is more determined to integrate into Georgian society than the older generations. However, notwithstanding the growing trend among youth who learn the Georgian language, in Kvemo Kartli, the number of Azerbaijani women who do not speak Georgian remains significant (Gelovani et al., 2017). According to a 2018 CRRC survey, half of Azerbaijani respondents still see incompetence in the Georgian language as the most important concern for ethnic minorities (CRRC, 2017). Furthermore, the degree of Georgian language proficiency among Azerbaijanis has remained low (CRRC 2017b, 2019).

In conclusion, the language barrier, characterized by the limited proficiency in the state language among the ethnic Azerbaijani community in Georgia, persists as a formidable challenge that hinders their integration into Georgian society. The inability to effectively communicate in Georgian not only limits their access to various opportunities but also perpetuates a sense of marginalization and disconnection from the broader cultural and social fabric of the country.

Social networks refer to the connections that minority members establish with people belonging to the community's majority group. It is measured by the frequency of interactions with friends in the majority group. Wuthnow et al. (2003, pp. 652-653) emphasise that integration problems result from the characteristics of minorities and the relationships between the majority and minorities.

Osepashvili's study (2013, p. 2) on Georgian attitudes towards Armenians (the second largest ethnic minority group in Georgia) and ethnic Azerbaijanis shows that social ties between Georgians and ethnic Azerbaijanis are weak and that Georgians know ethnic Armenians better than ethnic Azerbaijanis. Several factors can cause this. One of the main reasons for the weak social ties between ethnic Georgians and ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia is the compact settlement of ethnic Azerbaijanis. According to Vervoort et al. (2011, pp. 624-625), the ethnic density of minorities is an essential factor affecting their social integration. Ethnically segregated neighbourhoods are seen as a significant obstacle to ethnic minority integration. Social relations between majority and minority groups are less frequent in ethnically dense areas (Gijsberts et al., 2007, p. 807). The concentration of ethnic Azerbaijanis in densely settled villages near the Azerbaijani border, primarily in the southeast regions of Georgia, has profound implications for their social integration. This geographical clustering not only limits their geographical proximity to ethnic Georgians but also fosters a sense of insularity within their own communities. As a result, there is a notable lack of cross-cultural interactions and exchanges of ideas and perspectives, which are crucial components of successful social integration. This geographical separation inadvertently perpetuates ignorance about each other's cultures and traditions, leading to a lack of mutual understanding and empathy.

Moreover, the proximity to the border may further contribute to a sense of exclusion, as it can create a perception of being on the periphery of Georgian society, which, in turn, can amplify feelings of marginalization among the ethnic Azerbaijani community. These challenges underscore the importance of initiatives aimed at fostering greater intercultural engagement and dismantling geographical barriers to promote more effective social integration between ethnic Azerbaijani and Georgian communities.

Intermarriage — is another indicator of the degree of social integration. It measures the intermarriage level between members of minority and majority groups. In Georgia, people usually marry within their own ethnic group. Ethnic homogeneity in marriage is higher in rural communities (98.4 percent) than in urban settlements (95.7 percent) (Hakkert and Sumbadze, 2017).

Intermarriage between Azerbaijanians and Georgians almost does not exist. *Endogamy[1],* or *internal marriage*, is widely practiced in the regions settled by Georgian Azerbaijanis. The lack of mixed marriages also hampers the integration of the Azerbaijani population - and, accordingly, family ties - between Azerbaijanis and Georgians because of a religious ban within the Muslim community (Sikharulidze et al., 2016, p. 77). Marriages between ethnic Azerbaijanis and other nations are extremely rare (Sanikidze, 2018, p. 252). In the annual survey on socioeconomic issues and political attitudes conducted by the Caucasus Research Resource Centre (CRRC), approval by Azerbaijani minority representatives for ethnic Azerbaijani women to marry Georgians is very low (2%), in comparison with someone of the same ethnicity and religion (92% Azerbaijanis, 64% Turks). The results of the same survey show that, unlike the ethnic Azerbaijani respondents, 27% of Georgian women respondents approve of marrying Azerbaijanis living in Georgia (Caucasus Barometer, Georgia 2019).

Based on a comprehensive analysis of the multifaceted indicators examined within this study, a definitive conclusion can be drawn regarding the integration status of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgian society. The findings reveal a complex web of challenges and barriers that

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[1] marriage within a particular social group, caste, or ethnic group; rejection of others because it is not suitable for marriage or other close personal relationships (Emery, 2013)

collectively contribute to a suboptimal level of integration. Notably, the stark absence of intermarriage and the pronounced prevalence of endogamy, primarily within regions inhabited by Georgian Azerbaijanis, serve as stark indicators of the enduring separation and limited social interactions between these communities. These divides are further accentuated by the influence of religious and cultural factors, resulting in a distinct dearth of cross-cultural relationships.

4.1.1. The Barriers to Social Integration of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women in Georgia

The barriers to social integration experienced by ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia are multi-faceted, stemming from a combination of *exogenous* and *endogenous* factors. These factors intertwine and contribute to the unique challenges faced by this specific demographic within the broader context of Georgian society.

Exogenous or *external* factors are common to all groups in the country, such as an administrative system, a system of laws, etc. In contrast, *endogenous* or *internal* factors are the internal barriers the group faces within its community.

Exogenous or External Factors

Respect for human rights, including those of minorities, is one of the key values of the EU and international legal principles. In its way towards Western integration, Georgia became a party to several international agreements, including The International Covenant for Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; and The European Convention of Human Rights, wherein the country has made international and national commitments for minority rights. Following the accession of Georgia to the Council of Europe, the State was expressly obliged to create a legal structure in accordance with international standards of human rights and minority rights, particularly by acceding to the Framework Convention on National Minorities (FCNM). In 2008, the post of State Minister

for Reintegration (currently called the State Minister for Reconciliation and Civil Equality) was created and charged with the implementation of policies to integrate national minorities.

Regarding gender equality, since the first years of independence, the country has ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Kinds of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW, 1994). It has become a signatory to the Beijing Platform for Action (BFPA, 1995). In the design of national legislation, policy structures and processes to ensure gender equality and women's rights, initiatives to prevent and respond to violence against women, and gender-responsive changes to the labour code, the implementation of commitments under CEDAW and the BPFA are visible (Brody, 2018, p. 6).

Georgia joined the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG)[2] agenda in 2015, and active work has begun to make it possible to successfully enforce the agenda by prioritizing goals and setting up committees. The 5th goal, which aims to 'achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls', is prioritized by the Government of Georgia (Bakhturidze et al., 2017, p. 4). Besides, in 2017, the country ratified the Istanbul Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence.

Georgia has taken steps to enhance its national legislation by enacting two crucial laws: the Gender Equality Law (2010) and the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination (2014). These legal measures are designed to foster a society where discrimination in all spheres of public life is unequivocally unacceptable.

The Gender Equality Law of 2010 is geared towards establishing the necessary conditions for both men and women to equally enjoy their rights, freedoms, and opportunities. Its primary objective is to encourage the eradication and reduction of all forms of discrimination rooted in gender. This law serves as a cornerstone in promoting gender equality in Georgia and ensuring that individuals are not subjected to prejudice or disadvantage based on their gender.

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[2] The SDGs are founded on the achievements of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG). Their ultimate aim is to end poverty in all forms by 2030. To this purpose, they call on all countries to take action, irrespective of their economic position and level of income. A total of 17 priorities and 169 targets are included in the SDGs. They address three main subject areas: economic development, social inclusion, and protection of the environment. It is expected that each state will build national structures to achieve the 17 objectives and each country is responsible for the processes of implementation and monitoring at the national level.

In a similar vein, the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, passed in 2014, represents a comprehensive approach to the elimination of discrimination in all its manifestations. It is designed to provide equal protection under the law to all individuals, whether they are natural or legal persons, regardless of factors such as ethnicity, language, sex, religion, national or ethnic origin, and other characteristics. This law underscores Georgia's commitment to upholding the principles of non-discrimination and equality for all its residents, thus contributing to a more inclusive and just society.

However, according to Bujashvili, while there have been a range of reforms in the institutional minority management policy, the policy's effectiveness has been impacted by the inadequate financial support given by the government to enforce the relevant policy. The specified prioritization of policies for the security of ethnic minorities and civic integration is not reflected at the budgetary level in the financial provision. The fulfilment of many government obligations and responsibilities now depends, as in previous years, on foreign support (Bujiashvili, 2018, p. 161).

Parallel to this, some researchers claim that while moving closer to the West in the post-Soviet period as a result of increased political, economic, and socio-cultural interaction, conservative elements of Georgian society are attempting to counter the liberal principles that the West is believed to embody (Kuprashvili, 2010; Stöber, 2013; Waller, 2016; Sulkhanishvili, 2012). This, in turn, also hinders the European integration process.

Georgia officially continues to pursue a multiculturalist policy that recognises the role of different ethnic groups in the development of the country. This approach is outlined by a multiannual State Strategy for Civic Equality and Integration adopted in 2015, along with a 5-year Action Plan. Inclusion of minorities in public life, equal social and economic opportunities, access to quality education, the enhancement of Georgian language skills among minorities along with other native languages, and the protection of minority culture are the key objectives of the policy.

The EU advocates Georgian minority policies in EU-Georgia cooperation as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy. Indeed, the promotion of gender equality and minority rights is one of the goals of the political dialogue set out in the Association Agreement and the Visa Liberalisation Action Plan (VLAP), which seeks to ensure people's rights, including those of minorities. The Association Agenda and the VLAP are the primary tools that have set targets and benchmarks for Georgia's approximation to EU standards. In the domain of minority rights, they prioritize the signature, ratification, and implementation of relevant United Nations (UN) and Council of Europe (CoE) instruments aimed at fighting discrimination.

Moreover, the 2021-2027 EU-Georgia Association Agenda expressly calls for improving gender equality, ensuring fair treatment in social, political, and economic life, and encouraging greater integration and tolerance of people from all social groups. Equal treatment and anti-discrimination were also the main focus of the VLAP in the sphere of minority rights, as it aimed to ensure equal access to travel documents and transparency in the process of acquisition of Georgian citizenship.

Emphasising the need to properly address issues relating to the protection of minority rights in the context of the relationship of the European Union with Georgia, Le Grix (2020) argues that not enough attention is paid to the integration component in association instruments. Minority integration efforts-especially in bilingual education, access to information, and civic, political, and cultural participation-are essential elements of minority rights. Consequently, they should be seen by the EU as a pillar in Georgia's advancement of democracy and human rights (Le Grix, 2020, p. 3).

Scholars claim that both political will and the dearth of adequate funds play an essential role in deciding whether or how existing policies ensuring minority protection are implemented in Georgia (Storm, 2019, p. 20; Kadagishvili, 2019, p. 34). Also, it should be noted that today in Georgia, a lack of teachers for minority education, the pluralist-integrative education model, the alienation of ethnic minority groups, and civil integration issues cause fundamental problems in different ways. Besides, various educational and cultural institutions are unavailable to the population of Kvemo-Kartli (Gelovani et al., 2017, p. 1799). The different

patterns of majority-minority relations in the country are influenced by these challenges, public sentiment, and financial difficulties faced by the Georgian state.

Even though incompetence in the state language is widely noted as one of the main reasons for the low participation level of the studied group, even when minorities are fluent in Georgian, problems concerning civil and political participation remain.

The lack of information is indicated as one of the factors limiting the access of minority women to services. Ignorance of the law, women's rights, and opportunities prevents them from fully understanding their real values and strengths. The low level of legal literacy/lack of legislative knowledge keep this group uninformed of their rights.

Education is identified as a possible way of promoting social integration (Beresnevieute, 2003; Esser, 2000; Heckmann & Bosswick, 2006). Scholars have developed a civic education theory to explain the link between education and civic empowerment. According to this theory, through education, individuals both get the necessary skills to actively engage in socio-political processes and the knowledge to understand and accept democratic principles. Education provides knowledge and skills to support subsequent jobs that allow people to become more productive and active members of society. Educational institutions are viewed as the most important places of interaction with members of local host communities for ethnic minority students and play an essential role in forming relationships (Ager & Strang 2008).

Also, in the broadest sense, education is crucial both in terms of obtaining knowledge and in terms of providing minority people with awareness of available opportunities for community development. Lack of education creates obstacles to jobs, a healthy lifestyle, and civil society involvement.

One of the reasons for the low integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women into Georgian society is their education. Today, many problems exist in the field of minority education (Janashia & Giorgadze, 2017; Kadagishvili, 2019).

Deficiencies in the quality of students' education in minority-language schools continue to result in lower entrance exam scores. Therefore, fewer ethnic Azerbaijanis are enrolled in these universities than might otherwise have been the case. Studies show a low higher

education level (5%) in ethnic Azerbaijanis of Georgia (UN Women, 2014, p. 5; CRRC, 2019), while this number is much higher (41%) for Georgians (CRRC, 2019). Today, because of the state's targeted measures to teach Georgian in secondary schools, as well as the 1 + 4 programme that stimulates the education of national minorities in Georgian universities, there is a growing interest among youth in learning Georgian as the state language. There is an increasing trend in the number of people who learn this language. According to Gelovani et al. (2017, p. 1799), the younger generation understands the Georgian language better and is more determined to integrate with Georgian society than the older generations. However, despite the positive measures, the Georgian language level among ethnic Azerbaijanis was found to remain low (CRRC 2019). Still, the percentage of Azerbaijani women in Kvemo-Kartli who lack mastery over the Georgian language is high (Gelovani et al., 2017, p. 1799).

The main barriers to the education of minorities in Georgia are institutional (Kitiashvili et al., 2016). Institutional barriers are outside of a learner's direct control, and they can have relevant strategies to overcome them. The institutional barriers need to be addressed from an institutional standpoint as well as from the perspective of regulating governments. Policymakers should cooperate with stakeholders to overcome institutional barriers.

Geographical access to vocational education and training (VET) and higher education is very challenging for minorities living outside urban areas. The number of VET colleges and universities is limited. It is important to expand the network of educational institutions so that the needs of minorities are considered. Today, even if they come to Tbilisi or large towns to study, the cost of an education is prohibitive—not only for tuition fees but for additional transportation costs, for renting a room, etc. (Kitiashvili et al., 2015).

Given the current reality, it can be concluded that there are still some gaps in Georgia's policy towards the social integration process of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. The only positive thing that can be seen in the launch of the bilingual education policy and implementation of 1+4 was the increase in the motivation of young people from ethnic minorities to learn the Georgian language, which may bring positive results in the long run.

Endogenous or Internal Factors

The interrelated internal factors affecting the integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women into Georgian society can be classified as follows:

a. Early marriage

Georgia has the highest child/early marriage rate in Europe (UNICEF, 2016, p. 151). Approximately 14% of women in Georgia marry before 18 (CRRC 2019, p. 1). Experts in gender studies and women NGO leaders claim that early marriage is the biggest obstacle to women's economic and socio-political activity in Georgia. Although early marriage occurs throughout Georgia, it is more common in certain ethnic and religious communities, including Kvemo-Kartli (UNFPA, 2014: 4). A study by UN Women in an area dominated by ethnic minority groups in Georgia (Azeri, Armenian, etc.) found that 32% of married women were married before turning 18 (UN Women, 2014: 5). A later study also indicates that among the three main ethnic groups of Georgia, ethnic Azerbaijani girls (37.6%) tend to be at greater risk of child marriage compared to Georgian (12.4%) and Armenian girls (4.5% married by age 18) (Hoare, 2020, p. 15). Hakkert and Sumbadze (2017) state that the Islam religion appears to create a more permissive environment because early weddings are more common among Muslims in Georgia: 19.6 percent of Muslim girls under the age of 18 are married. While the number of girls getting married at a young age is very high among ethnic Azerbaijanis in the Kvemo-Kartli region, the situation of the men is not different from the country in general (Peinhopf, 2014, p. 9).

The majority of girls who get married before 18 do not seek higher education (Gupta et al., 2018, p. 39). Early marriage is considered one of the main reasons why girls stop their education (UNFPA, 2014, p. 8). In most cases, in rural ethnic minorities, teachers and the local community are generally unaware of the deleterious consequences of early marriage. They are often involved in the arranged marriage process (UNFPA, 2014, p. 5).

Target 5.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) aims to 'eliminate all harmful practices, such as child/early marriage'. Likewise, Article 37(1) of the Istanbul Convention

provides that the contracting parties shall take the necessary legislative or other steps to ensure that forced marriage of an adult or a child is criminalized (Council of Europe 2013).

Under Georgian law, the minimum age for marriage is 18. Previously, young men or women could only marry at younger ages with the consent of their parents. In 2017, the Public Defender proposal led to a complete ban on marriages involving girls under 18.

Statistics show that since 2017, there has been a small but not drastic change/decrease in the population (both men and women) who got married at 16–19 years old. The number of females who had early marriages is much higher than that of males in the same age category.

Table 4.1. *Number of Married People Age (16–19) and Gender*

Years	Male	Female
2017	386	2213
2018	326	2054
2019	294	1933

Source: National Statistics Office of Georgia

Despite historical, institutional, and legal developments in recent years in Georgia, the problems with child/early marriage still persist. Most early marriages are not officially registered, as they only occur in churches or mosques (Ellena, 2015).

Bride kidnapping, a practice wherein a man kidnaps the woman he wants to marry (in most cases against her will), has been practiced throughout the world and in history. This practice is seen in Central Asia, the Caucasus region, and other countries; it is still valid among ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia.

Bride kidnapping was a common practice among the ethnic Azerbaijani community in Georgia since its independence and was one of the main obstacles to girls' education. The ethnic Azerbaijani girls were either abducted before they reached high school age or dropped out of high school for fear of being kidnapped. Although reforms in the Georgian law enforcement

system have contributed significantly to the decline of this practice, bride kidnapping cases are still observed today. The most critical problem in this matter is that some locals/representatives of the older generation consider it a national custom and support this practice. Such attitudes seem to cause the Georgian authorities to brush the issue under the carpet. State and central governments both pay little attention to the hundreds of offences perpetrated against underage children. Yet, at the same time, they vigilantly observe compliance with the rest of the regulations (Sisvadze, 2017).

According to ethnic Azerbaijani activist Samira Bayramova, the main reason for the continuation of this practice is related to legal and social problems. Bayramova argues that despite Georgia's recognition of the international legal system and the adoption of international treaties and agreements, there are some shortcomings in the implementation of these laws. According to her, when a new law is adopted, whether society meets these standards should be taken into consideration (Radio Marneuli, 2021).

In conclusion, early marriage and bride kidnapping are prevalent and deeply ingrained practices among ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia, and they continue to pose significant challenges to the education and social integration of women in this community. It is a harmful tradition that robs women of their freedom and agency and often leads to forced marriages, physical and psychological abuse, and exclusion from social and economic opportunities. The education of these women is often disrupted as they are taken out of school to get married, and their opportunities for further education and employment are severely limited. To address this issue, there is a need for comprehensive programmes and policies that educate communities on the negative effects of bride kidnapping, promote gender equality and women's rights, and provide support and resources to women who are affected by this practice. Until these measures are implemented, bride kidnapping will continue to hinder the progress and development of women in the Azerbaijani community in Georgia.

b. *Religious factors*

Cultural and religious norms in Muslim societies generally, it is held, prevent women's education (Rahman, 2012, pp. 355-356). It is also assumed that the traditional attitude of the Muslim community is the most important reason for the low educational level of Muslim women. Studies show that the factors responsible for impeding Muslim girls' academic development may be early marriage, isolation, and the absence of a socially defined professional role for women in the Muslim community (Menon, 1979).

In Georgia, it is noteworthy that ethnic Azerbaijanis constitute the majority of the Muslim population, as reported by Geostat in 2014. For many within this community, their religious identity is closely intertwined with their national culture, and they consider it an inseparable part of their cultural heritage and traditions. This connection between religion and culture underscores the significant role that faith plays in shaping the identity and daily lives of ethnic Azerbaijanis in Georgia, as documented by Prasad in 2012 (p. 5) and Sanikidze et al. in 2004 (p. 25). Dvali & Badasyan (2014) state that religion plays an important role in the lives of the young population of Kvemo Kartli, and interest in religion is growing day by day. In the Kvemo Kartli region, there are local Islamic religious schools. While some people positively evaluate the youth interest in religion, pointing out its positive effects on the youth, such as keeping them away from crime and leading them to focus on good deeds, others claim that some youth are too religious and that it is not essential to be so interested in religion at such a young age (Dvali & Badasyan, 2014).

In general, the historical and political context in Georgia has had a significant impact on the religious and cultural identity of ethnic Azerbaijanis. Despite their self-identification as predominantly Muslim, the influence of lengthy Soviet rule and political dynamics has contributed to a marginalization of their religious values. This situation has, in turn, resulted in religious ignorance and misinterpretation within the community, with adverse consequences, particularly for the rights and freedoms of ethnic Azerbaijani women. Moreover, the misinterpretation of Islam, coupled with traditional rural lifestyles, has placed additional constraints on the social activities of women, highlighting the complex interplay of cultural, historical, and religious factors in the lives of this minority group (Caucasian House, 2016, p. 22).

c. *Family background*

Coleman's work shows that families can play a much more crucial role in students' academic success than schools and societies (Coleman et al., 1966). Since then, empirical studies on family background and children's success have revealed that a family's socioeconomic status can affect children's academic achievement more than schools (Cheadle, 2008; Shirin, 2005; White, 1980). Furthermore, parental support and a lack of cultural incentives for early marriage may explain superior performance among girls from specific ethnic groups (Crul and Doomernik).

The cultural capital theory stresses that family cultural resources and the environment affect children's educational aspirations and performances. Compared to families with insufficient cultural capital, parents with rich cultural capital are more aware of the importance of education at school, invest more cultural resources, pay more attention to cultivating the children's educational aspirations and interests, help children with school curriculum, and enable them to perform outstandingly in education (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990). The social capital theory emphasises the participation of parents in education and children's learning behaviours and achievement; parents with higher social economic status usually participate in their children's learning activities more intensively, pay more attention to communication with teachers, manage the children's school absences and other risky behaviors, and improve the children's academic performance (Coleman, 1988). Parents' educational expectations have significant effects on junior students' academic performances. Empirical studies showed that parental educational participation, such as discussing school topics with children, checking their homework, and participating in school activities, could improve children's academic performances (Pong et al., 2005).

The social status of Azerbaijani families in Georgia is affected by the low level of higher education among them. According to the CRRC, 91% of the Azerbaijani population in Georgia has secondary or lower education, while only 5% have completed higher education. This is the lowest indicator among other ethnic groups in Georgia (Caucasus Barometer 2019, Georgia). The main occupations of ethnic Azerbaijanis, who live mostly in rural areas of

Kvemo Kartli, are agriculture and cattle breeding. In the post-Soviet era, the intelligentsia in the villages decreased compared to the Soviet era. As a result, this factor has had a negative impact on society's inclination towards education.

On the other hand, when the economic situation of families allows them to finance their children's education, it is often preferable to provide education to boys. For centuries, this way of thinking has been associated not only with the ethnic Azerbaijanis but also with the centuries-old lifestyles in the Caucasus and the East (Dudwick, 2005, p. 5). While boys are considered successors and bearers of the surname, girls are perceived as being in a temporary state where they are born and remain there until they get married. According to UNFPA research, the ethnic minorities' populated regions of Georgia, including Kvemo Kartli, record a decreasing trend in male births over the last decade, but son preference is still prevalent in those regions (UNFPA, 2019).

To sum up, family background and son preference play a major role in shaping the social integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. The traditional cultural norms that emphasize the importance of sons and restrict women's opportunities and participation in society can limit their social integration and prevent them from reaching their full potential. These cultural biases can also perpetuate gender inequalities, perpetuating the cycle of discrimination against women. Addressing these cultural attitudes and promoting gender equality will be essential for increasing social integration and improving the lives of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

d. *Rural locations*

In integration processes, ethnic residential segregation has also been regarded as an obstacle (Vervoort & Dagevos, 2011). It is widely debated that minority group members who live in minority groups with co-ethnics are less likely to integrate into the majority society (e.g., Gijsberts et al., 2007, p. 807; Danzer et al., 2013, p. 323). High concentrations of spatial ethnic minorities can contribute to the development of parallel societies in which minorities get by without engaging with the majority population (Danzer & Yaman 2013). However,

communication with the majority population is vital for acquiring native language skills, mutual acceptance promotion, and general acculturation processes (Gijsberts et al., 2007, p. 809).

Owing to the heterogeneity of the allocation of educational resources to rural and urban areas, districts, and schools, school quality should be seen as an essential factor when talking about the relationship between the family background of ethnic Azerbaijani girls in Kvemo-Kartli and their educational achievements. Innovative teaching tools and peers prone to education, concentrating on key schools, significantly impact children's access to next-level education opportunities. It should be taken into account that the majority of ethnic Azerbaijanis live in rural areas of Kvemo-Kartli, where schools are in terrible conditions compared to urban schools. Some villages are without schools at all. Because of this factor, some students have to go to schools in nearby towns/villages or to schools in urban areas if the family economic situation allows.

Many children, especially girls, face difficulties in their long and dangerous journeys to and from school. These students are more likely to travel by public transportation. The underdeveloped transport infrastructure complicates communications with remote villages. The villagers are cut off from the cultural and educational environment (Sikharulidze et al., 2016, p. 75). The lack of regularly scheduled public transport to villages and some towns makes it difficult for ethnic Azerbaijani girls living in rural areas to access educational opportunities. The same problems also affect students at higher education institutions.

Briefly, compact settlement in rural locations have a significant impact on the education and social integration of Georgian ethnic Azerbaijani women. Due to the limited resources and opportunities available in rural areas, these women often face challenges in accessing education and participating in social activities. Furthermore, cultural and societal norms in rural communities place additional barriers to women's ability to pursue education and become integrated into the community. This, in turn, limits their potential for personal and professional growth, as well as the potential for development and progress in their communities. It is important for policymakers and community leaders to understand the

challenges faced by ethnic Azerbaijani women in rural Georgia and to work towards creating inclusive and equitable opportunities for education and social integration.

4.2. Question 2: Voter Turnout of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women in Georgia

Two logistic regression models of voters' turnout are estimated to see how much of the participation gap can be explained by measurable factors. In Table 4.2.1., a simple logistic regression model of voting was used. The model has three predictors: a dummy variable for woman, an Azerbaijani dummy variable, and the interaction of the two. This model produces a significant negative coefficient for being a woman, which shows that women in Georgia in general are less likely to vote than men, on average. This model also shows a significant negative relationship to the interaction effect between Azerbaijani and woman. This means that ethnic Azerbaijani women are even less likely to vote than non-Azerbaijani women.

Table 4.2.1. Partial Model of Voter Turnout with Gender and Ethnicity as Predictors

Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	z value	p value
Intercept	1.2823	0.0875	14.661	0.0000
Woman	-0.2331	0.1068	-2.183	0.0291
Azeri	0.0218	0.2731	0.080	0.9364
Woman*Azeri	-0.5694	0.3401	-1.674	0.0941

Notes: N=2,356; AIC=2640.7.

In the second model, which is shown in Table 4.2.2., a logistic regression model of voting again includes the three predictors of woman dummy variable, Azerbaijani dummy variable, and the interaction of the two. However, this model also includes four control variables: an ordinal

variable for education (ranging from 1-8), a dummy variable for Muslim, a dummy variable for rural, and a dummy variable for a non-Georgian language interview.

When controlling for these additional predictors, the significant interaction effect between Azerbaijani and woman from the first model goes away. According to this model, education is a significant variable. This is important because ethnic Azerbaijani women tend to have lower levels of education and limited education opportunities. Since education has an important positive relationship with voting, Azerbaijani women's lower levels of education is a simple explanation for the lower turnout.

Additionally, those who completed the survey in a language other than Georgian were also less likely to vote. This, too, is an important reason why Azerbaijani women might be less likely to vote- they are less likely to be fluent in the state language. It should be noted that there is still a gender gap between men and women in general in Georgia, even when controlling for these other predictors. However, the gap does not seem to be larger for Azerbaijani women compared to non-Azerbaijani women.

Table 4.2.2. Full Model of Voter Turnout with Gender and Ethnicity as Predictors, and Controls

Variable	Coefficients	Std. Error	z value	p value
Intercept	0.5129	0.2128	2.411	0.0159
Woman	-0.2027	0.1086	-1.867	0.0620
Azeri	0.3531	0.4392	0.804	0.4214
Woman*Azeri	-0.5424	0.3427	-1.583	0.1135
Education	0.1075	0.0352	3.055	0.0023
Muslim	0.5235	0.2892	1.810	0.0702

Rural	0.5136	0.1053	4.878	0.0000
Non-Georgian Language	-1.0261	0.2342	-4.381	0.0000

Notes: N=2,356; AIC=2596.6.

4.3. Question 3: The Attitude to the EU Integration of Ethnic Azerbaijani Women of Georgia

4.3.1. Measurement model results: The reliability of the elements in the SEM construct, which are scale scores, was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha and Composite ratios. Cronbach's Alpha value is greater than 0.7 based on the results for all factors, which is compelling proof that the data obtained using Nunnally's methodology are reliable (1978). The Composite Reliability ratio (Table 4.3.1.(a)) confirms the indicators' dependability, which shows that all of the variable scores are greater than 0.7, which is considered appropriate (Wasko & Faraj, 2005). The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is greater than 0.5 and the rho A is greater than 0.7 (Chin, 1998), supporting the accuracy and dependability of the data.

Table 4.3.1.(a). Loadings, Reliability, and Validity

	Loadings	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
ATT1	*0.862*	*0.891*	*0.891*	*0.933*	*0.822*
ATT2	*0.942*				
ATT3	*0.914*				
ACT1	*0.894*	*0.825*	*0.83*	*0.896*	*0.742*

ACT2	*0.807*				
ACT3	*0.880*				
IN1	*0.920*	*0.898*	*0.909*	*0.936*	*0.83*
IN2	*0.925*				
IN3	*0.887*				
EDU1	*0.937*	*0.925*	*0.926*	*0.953*	*0.87*
EDU2	*0.939*				
EDU3	*0.922*				
LANG1	*0.759*	*0.731*	*0.764*	*0.844*	*0.643*
LANG2	*0.806*				
LANG3	*0.839*				

The outcomes of the Discriminant Validity test, which was conducted following the Fornell-Larcker Criterion, are shown in table 4.3.1.(b). The sub-factors of each structure should be distinct from those of other composites. By representing the diagonal line of standards that encircles the square root of the AVE, the values in Table 4.3.1.(b). create associations. The diagonal line in the table yields discriminant validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

Table 4.3.1.(b). Heterotrait–monotrait ratio of correlations and Fornell-Larcker Criterion

	Attitudes to the EU integration	Activism	Innovation	Education	Language
Attitudes to the EU integration	**0.907**	0.784	0.419	0.746	0.461
Activism	0.674	**0.861**	0.437	0.722	0.431
Innovation	0.379	0.378	**0.911**	0.327	0.272

Education in the EU related issues	0.679		0.628	0.302	**0.933**	0.392
Knowledge of state language	0.387		0.351	0.234	0.338	**0.802**

Note: Values in bold represent the square root of AVE. Below the diagonal elements are the correlations between the variable values. Above the diagonal elements are the heterotrait–monotrait ratios of correlation values.

4.3.2. Structural model results

The paths proposed in the research concept are reflected in the structural model. A structural model is evaluated based on the R^2, and the importance of the routes. According to Briones Peñalver et al. (2018), the robustness of each structural path determines the model's suitability, and the value of R^2 for the predictor variables should be equal to or greater than 0.1 in order to be significant (Falk & Miller, 1992). Table 4.3.2.(a)'s SEM analysis illustrates how the suggested hypothesis 1 was confirmed. As a statistical conclusion criterion, a value of 0.05 ($p = 0.05$) is used as a significance level of the pathways defined within the structural model. Table 4.3.2.(a)'s findings demonstrate that all R^2 values are greater than 0.1. Consequently, the capacity to predict is formed.

The results confirmed the H1 hypothesis (β = .392, t = 7.768, p = .000). The findings show that knowing the *official language* is a significant positive predictor of attitudes towards the EU integration (β = .107, t = 2.829, p < .005), as well as *Women's activism* (β = .351, t = 6.051, p < .000), and *innovation* (β = .103, t = 2.596, p < .009) confirming hypothesis H1.

Table 4.3.2.(a) Direct relationship test results

	Path Coefficient	SD	t value	p-value
Education -> Attitudes to the EU integration	0.392	0.050	7.768	0.000
Language -> Attitudes to the EU integration	0.107	0.038	2.829	0.005

Activism -> Attitudes to the EU integration	0.351	0.058	6.051	0.000
Innovation -> Attitudes to the EU integration	0.103	0.040	2.596	0.009
R² Attitudes to the EU integration=0.583				

In order to check H2, a mediating analysis was performed. The findings (Table 4.3.2.(b)) revealed the significant mediating role of women's activism between the official language knowledge and attitudes towards the EU integration variables, confirming H2.

Table 4.3.2.(b). Mediation analysis results

Specific Indirect Effects	Path Coefficient	SD	t value(bootstrapping)	p-value
Language knowledge -> Activism -> Attitudes to the EU integration	0.123	0.025	4.832	0.000

4.4.3. Discussion

The present study ascertained the inter-relationship among attitudes towards EU integration, official language knowledge, education on EU-related issues, activism, and innovation. The study discovered that education on EU-related issues has a significant impact on attitudes towards EU integration. The results of the study are similar to the findings of Zhang (2020) in the case of China, where the author argues that the studies, projects, and spreading of general knowledge have made important scholarly contributions to academic debate and have been helpful in providing policy recommendations relating to a positive attitude towards the EU. This shows that the general spread of knowledge through different sources (mass media, education, social networks, etc.) positively enhances attitudes towards EU integration among citizens, including minorities.

The study found that official language knowledge is a significant positive predictor of attitudes towards EU integration, which is consistent with the findings of Giannakopoulos (2019), who found that as the level of knowledge of the official language among Turkey's Kurdish minority increases, so does their knowledge of rights, access to trending information, and knowledge of international organisations.

Furthermore, the study also ascertained the significant impact of minority women's activism on attitudes towards EU integration. The importance of minority women's activism was also demonstrated in the work of Kobakhidze (2021), who stresses the fact that minority women's engagement can improve society's view of legitimacy, which is suffering greatly as a result of the current political divisiveness and instability. Honesty, integrity, and modesty—qualities that are frequently exploited in a patriarchal environment—can also help build public confidence in politics and Georgian politicians. Many of the difficulties facing women in politics now must be overcome by giving them more influence. The same idea is proposed by Mehrabov when considering women's activism in Azerbaijan (Mehrabov, 2016).

The findings of this study demonstrate that the innovative efforts of minority women have had a positive influence on their attitudes towards EU integration. The widespread availability of smartphones in the Georgian population, the pervasive use of social media, and YouTube in particular, have played a substantial and continually growing role in shaping the opinions of minority women. These digital platforms have become powerful tools for providing access to information about the European Union. Notably, these results align with the conclusions reached by Park & Chung in their 2020 study, highlighting the consistent impact of technology and social media in shaping attitudes and access to information in the context of EU integration.

The study also demonstrated the mediated impact of activism on official language knowledge and attitudes towards EU integration. From the mediation analysis, it was deduced that activism is a significant factor between knowledge of the state language and attitudes towards EU integration, since only with the knowledge of the official language is it possible for minority women to actively engage in political, social, or economic activities. Thus, knowledge

of the official language enhances activism, which, in turn, leads to getting involved with the activities and issues that are in trend. Since the topic of EU integration is currently a contentious issue in Georgian society, minority women can only gain awareness of the EU and other ongoing issues through active participation, not only in person but also through social media.

CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECCOMENDATIONS

The integration of Georgia into the European community has been a complex and ongoing process, with various challenges and opportunities for different groups within society that raise questions about the inclusion of minority genders and ethnicities in the process. This dissertation focuses specifically on the socio-political participation and EU awareness of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia and their experiences as the country moves towards integration with Europe. Through the analysis of minority gender and ethnicity in the context of EU-Georgia relations, the study aims to identify factors affecting ethnic Azerbaijani women's social integration, determine the reasons for their low level of political participation, and understand the attitudes towards the EU integration of this group. This conclusion and policy recommendations chapter summarises the key findings of the research and provides insights into how minority gender and ethnicity are dealt with in Georgia and how they relate to its EU integration. The chapter concludes by offering policy recommendations aimed at promoting the inclusion and empowerment of ethnic Azerbaijani women in the European integration process.

5.1. Conclusion

The dissertation examined minority gender and ethnicity issues in Georgia's European integration process through the socio-political participation of the country's ethnic Azerbaijani women.

European integration has been one of the main political priorities in Georgia. Social cohesion and an inclusive society are seen as important strategic goals of the EU. Gender equality and minority rights are important values protected by the EU's legislative and political framework, and they are one of the Union's main accession criteria.

In accordance with the EU integration agenda, the Georgian government is focused on the consolidation of a single, stable, multicultural society under the rule of law through the

implementation of a pluralistic and inclusive policy in order to strengthen the country's multiethnic and culturally diverse society. Notwithstanding several steps in this direction, serious gaps still exist.

Azerbaijanis of Georgia, despite being the country's largest ethnic and religious minority group, are not integrated or participating enough (Shiriyev, 2016; Storm, 2016) in the socio-political life of the country, and compared to other ethnic minorities, they are least aware of Georgia's EU integration (CRRC, 2021). As the present study demonstrated, the situation is even worse when it comes to female representatives of this group, as they face even greater barriers due to their gender.

There are limited studies in the literature that focus on Georgia's ethnic Azerbaijani population. Generally, in the case of Georgia, studies on minority groups mainly looked into integration problems, religious issues, and identity issues, and these studies focused on all ethnic groups living in Georgia. Previous research has not looked at ethnic Azerbaijani women's sociopolitical participation in Georgia as a separate category under the intersectionality framework. In general, the experiences, practices, and challenges of Georgian ethnic Azerbaijani women have not been studied as a special topic, either in Georgia, where they are the largest ethnic minority, or in Azerbaijan, where they have an ethnic spiritual attachment, or in global studies. The problem statements of this research included *(i) factors associated with lower turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, (ii) factors contributing to the low social integration level of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, and (iii) variables affecting ethnic Azerbaijani women's attitudes towards EU integration in Georgia.*

The concept of intersectionality is applied as a theoretical framework for understanding how gender, ethnicity, and religion are combined to form barriers for the studied group.

The study uses a combination of relevant literature reviews and quantitative research methods. Three separate studies are conducted, particularly answering: a) *What is the level of social integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, and what are the contributing factors? b) What factors are associated with lower turnout among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia?*

c) What is the attitude of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia towards EU integration, and what are the contributing factors? are united under the umbrella question of *"How are minority gender and ethnicity dealt with in Georgia, and how is it related to its European integration?"* (in the case of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia).

Social integration of ethnic minorities is essential for every democratic state. For Georgia, an ethnically diverse country that sees integration into the Euro-Atlantic space as its primary political priority and follows the EU association agreement, it is crucial to protect the human rights and gender equality of minorities. From this point, a study of minority groups who are at the intersection of different identities and group affiliation defining factors (ethnicity, religion, and gender) is particularly important.

The thesis first focuses on the social integration of Georgian Azerbaijani women. The study considers participation, knowledge of the state language, social networks, and intermarriage—the widely used dimensions of integration of minorities in a society—and finds that the integration level of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgian society is low. The endogenous and exogenous factors responsible for the low integration are discussed. The research concludes that social integration is a two-way process that requires mutual efforts both by the majority society and the group under study.

Secondly, the dissertation proceeds to understand why the voter turnout of ethnic Azerbaijani women is particularly low in Georgia. The research looks into the impact of factors such as religion, language, education, and ruralism on voter turnout. The study draws on data from the Caucasus Barometer collected from the ethnic Azerbaijanian population in East Georgia (where the minority Azerbaijanians reside) in 2017. To estimate the association between the outcome and predictor variables, a logistic regression model was used. The results support part of the hypotheses by demonstrating that state language fluency and education have a significant impact on voter turnout in Georgia. The study found no evidence of a major impact of religion or ruralism on voter turnout. The most important finding, however, is that the strong negative effect of being an Azerbaijani woman decreased once education and language were adjusted for in the model, providing a possible explanation for why voter turnout is lower

for this group. There is still a general gap in participation between men and women, but the additionally lower turnout for Azeri women can be explained to a large degree.

Finally, the study presents one of the earliest attempts to develop and test an integrated model that links social variables such as education in EU-related issues, state language knowledge, activism, and innovation to attitudes towards EU integration among ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia. This research adds to the literature by demonstrating that education in EU-related topics, official language knowledge, activism, and innovation are positive predictors that can significantly improve attitudes towards EU integration. The important mediating role of women's activism between official language knowledge and attitudes towards EU integration variables emphasises the importance of official language knowledge in motivating minority representatives to actively participate in a country's political life on the one hand and active participation in forming attitudes on the other.

Promoting the socio-political participation of Georgian ethnic Azerbaijani women and raising their awareness of the EU can facilitate Georgia's European integration in several ways:

Gender Equality: The EU promotes gender equality as a fundamental value and encourages the participation of women in political and social life. By promoting the social-political participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia, Georgia would demonstrate that it is committed to this value and would be more likely to be seen as a suitable candidate for European Union membership.

Diversity and Inclusion: the participation of ethnic Azerbaijani women would also contribute to the cultural diversity and inclusiveness of society, which is a key value for EU integration. This can also help to address stereotypes and biases and promote a more equitable and inclusive society.

Democratic Governance: The socio-political participation of women can also help to improve the representativeness and inclusiveness of the government and promote democratic governance, which is one of the fundamental principles of the EU.

Awareness of the EU: Raising the awareness of the EU among ethnic Azerbaijani women would not only help them understand the EU values and priorities but also encourage them to engage and actively participate in the decision-making process towards EU integration.

Overall, promoting the social-political participation of Georgian ethnic Azerbaijani women and raising their awareness of the EU can help to promote gender equality, diversity and inclusion, and democratic governance, which are all key factors that facilitate George's European integration.

5.2. Limitations of the study

Despite the fact that the researcher belongs to the examined minority group and, unlike some other researchers, did not face challenges with approaching, contacting, and communicating with the target community while conducting the study, the thesis has clear limitations. This study, like most research, must be viewed within its conceptual and methodological boundaries.

According to some scholars, there is little basis for generalizing results in case study research to a larger population (Simon & Goes, 2013; Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). The study is mainly focused on ethnic minority women in the Kvemo Kartli region of Georgia. Although care was taken to research the specific group (ethnic Azerbaijani women) in the specific region (Kvemo Kartli), it limits the ability to generalise the findings to the general Azerbaijani population of the country.

Location – the research covers Georgian ethnic Azerbaijani women mainly residing in rural areas of the Kvemo Kartli region. The situation with ethnic Azerbaijani women in other regions of Georgia, as well as those in urban areas and the capital Tbilisi, may seem different, as the majority of them have state language proficiency.

Time – Chronological framework covers data of the period 2017-2022 (the research was conducted during this period), while the results would prove different at other times. The

findings may change in accordance with the level of advancement of Georgia's European integration, the effect of the reforms adopted, and the trends of the time.

Lack of statistical databases – inadequate statistical sources in general, and particularly in minority-populated regions. The latest census was held in 2014, which can be considered outdated. The existing data on minority gender and ethnicity in Georgia lacks a systematic and meticulous collection of information.

Lack of research studies on the topic - no empirical or theoretical foundation for conducting the investigation.

Despite these limitations, the presented study provides reliable and representative information to meet the objectives of this research.

5.3. Policy recommendations

Integration problems are caused by relations between the majority and minorities, not by the minorities' features alone (Wuthnow and Hackett, 2003; Bolt, G., et al., 2010). Thus, social integration is a two-way process that requires the effort of both the majority group and the group under study. After gaining independence, Georgia has implemented many reforms to bring democratic values to its society, trying to get the legislation in line with international and European standards and promote gender equality. The country has made many significant improvements in recent years to accelerate women's and girls' progress, prevent discrimination, and promote women's and girls' rights. However, studies show that the implementation of normative actions and policy documents is inadequate, preventing women's and girls' equality (USAID Georgia, 2018). The study provides the following recommendations:

- More attention should be paid to the issues of minority gender and ethnicity in the projects implemented within the framework of the Georgia-EU cooperation platform.

- Policy initiatives should occur in a participatory approach, in consultation with ethnic minorities, so that suggested improvements reflect their actual experience. Policies must consider the impact of settled minority ethnic communities' needs.

- As some cultural stereotypes hamper the achievement of ethnic minority women's rights, microlevel interventions or efforts at the community level will be more crucial to overcome. Ethnic Azerbaijani women need more education and professional training opportunities, as well as community support and knowledge of the necessity of economic empowerment for women. It is suggested that the country promote school attendance among girls from ethnic minorities through information campaigns, particularly in the Kvemo Kartli region. Furthermore, efforts should be made to raise awareness of the developmental and health dangers of early marriage practices for girls.

- *Affirmative actions*[3] of the state can positively affect the social integration of minorities. Since 2010, Georgia has started using affirmative action policies. The Georgian government has taken a practical step towards addressing the problems faced by national minorities in previous years. The Ministry of Education and Science has implemented the '1 + 4' quota system since 2010. This reform of the quota system launched a one-year Georgian Language Education Programme, which prepares students from ethnic minority groups to undertake smooth transitions to undergraduate programmes. Studies show the effectiveness of this affirmative action for ethnic minorities. The number of enrolled ethnic Azerbaijani students in the '1 + 4' system has increased significantly since 2010 (Tabatadze and Gorgadze, 2017).

- In order for the affirmative actions in this field of education to be fruitful and effective, it is necessary to ensure the continuity and non-interruption of this process.

- In addition to affirmative actions in the field of education, similar projects aimed at specific goals should be implemented in other areas. For instance, it is possible to prepare and implement various effective mechanisms for ethnic Azerbaijani women who are

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[3]'Affirmative action' means positive steps taken to increase the representation of women and minorities in employment, education, and culture, from which they were historically excluded (Fullinwider, 2018).

graduates of higher schools to continue their education at the next stages (MA, PhD) or to get a job, according to their choices of specialisations.

- It is important to ensure the coordinated activities of various state and private structures, especially local self-governing bodies and civil society institutions, in order to make the mentioned recommendations effective.

- The minority representatives, in turn, should demonstrate their willingness to engage in social integration by increasing their legal knowledge and education, actively participating in social programmes, and fighting the discrimination they face within their community, which hinders their access to education and resources.

- The findings suggest expanding the minority integration programmes in the regions, especially directing grants for programmes that increase minority women's activism.

- More involvement of regional civil society organisations (CSOs) working on minority issues and providing training in minority languages is advised.

- Despite the fact that the 1+4 program plays an enormous role in the integration of minority women, the payment for learning the official language should be covered by the state.

- To give information about attitudes towards EU integration and conduct contests among minority women relating to EU issues through regional TV and mass media.

5.4. Future research

There are limitations to this study that provide new dimensions to future research on minority gender and ethnicity issues in Georgia and its path to European integration. The study offers the following avenues for future research:

- One is to consider more deeply how education or language training might remedy unequal participation rates. The two factors often fit together in that higher education access can be limited for those who cannot speak Georgian. Once the language factor is removed as a barrier, though, it will open the way

for the Azerbaijani community to access the Georgian higher education system. Therefore, language ought to directly increase participation in the political process, especially in the election process, and it also ought to have an indirect effect through its impact on education levels. For thi reason, a particularly important programme to study, for this reason, is the 1+4 programme that is in place to help students from minority groups learn Georgian and earn a higher education degree.

- Another avenue for research is to consider that there might be deeper cultural factors affecting turnout that are hard to quantify. Qualitatively, it might be useful to do case studies of Azeri families. In this way, we could compare families based on their degree of conservatism or national traditions. Whether these differences have an effect on women's political involvement and behaviour could be discerned from these qualitative contrasts. Both of these kinds of studies give space for future research on this topic. Perhaps such studies can lead to new policies that help close the voter turnout gap for Azeri women.

In the body of research on issues affecting women in minority groups, the study of the attitude towards the EU integration of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia is one of the few to combine symmetrical techniques in SEM.

- Future research might benefit from using this strategy as well and applying the approach to other minority populations, while this study focused on ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia.

- The data for the model's tests was gathered from Georgia's four regions. Future research may test the model in other emerging and developed nations and compare the results further to determine the impact's importance.

- The current study only evaluated how EU integration was perceived; future studies may also evaluate the importance of political or economic aspects.

Future studies can comparatively analyse the socio-political participation of Georgian ethnic Azerbaijani women of different generations to find out how the Soviet system, transition period, and contemporary Georgian reality impact the lives of the studied group.

The context of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Kvemo Kartli region and Tbilisi, the capital city, is different; thus, a comparative study on ethnic Azerbaijani women in rural areas of Kvemo Kartli region with ethnic Azerbaijani women in capital Tbilisi would be interesting, as it might shed some light on how urban and rural areas, mono-ethnic and multi-ethnic environments, affect the integration process of ethnic Azerbaijani women. It will allow future researchers to draw certain parallels and look at the topic from a broader and more generalised perspective.

Future research may also comparatively study ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia with the women in Azerbaijan, who comprise the majority ethnic and religious group in the Republic of Azerbaijan. This kind of study would provide insight into any cultural, social, and economic differences or similarities between the two groups. Additionally, it could also help in understanding the impact of historical and political context on the lives of Azerbaijani women in Georgia and Azerbaijan, revealing stimulating and hindering factors for the integration of these groups in their societies.

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Appendix A

The questionnaire distributed (in Azerbaijani language) among 400 ethnic Azerbaijani women in Marneuli, Bolnisi, Dmanisi, and Gardabani municipalities of Kvemo Kartli region to study the EU awareness of ethnic Azerbaijani women of Georgia.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire will be used only for academic purposes!

Rate from 1 to 7 the following sentences. according to your level of agreement: 1 = Totally disagree (TD), 2 = Disagree (D) ,3=Somewhat disagree (SD) 4=Neutral (N), 5=Somewhat agree, 6=Agree (A), 7=Totally agree (TA).

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES	
Indicate your age	5. 18-22, 4. 23-28, 3. 29-39, 2. 40-59, 1. 60 and more
Education level	1. No Education (I did not graduate from school) 2. School 3. Bachelor 4. Master

Variables	ID	Items	Agreement Scale						
		5. PhD or higher							
			TD	D	SD	N	SA	A	TA
EU Awareness	EUA1	I trust EU.							
	EUA2	I believe that Georgia EU integration is positive for Georgia.							
	EUA3	EU integration will bring benefit to me.							
Knowledge (KNW)	KNW 1	I know what the EU is							
	KNW 2	I know why the EU integration is important for Georgia							
	KNW 3	I am informed about the EU policy toward Georgia							
Language (LANG)	LANG1	I speak Georgian language							
	LANG2	I can write in Georgian language							
	LANG3	I can read in Georgian language							
Empowerment (EMP)	EMP1	I participate in street actions for Georgia EU integration							
	EMP2	I write posts on the Georgia EU integration topic							
	EMP3	I actively support Georgia's EU integration in social and real life							
Innovation (INV)	INV 1	I write comments about the EU on Facebook or other social platforms							
	INV 2	I actively use social media to express my ideas							

	INV 3	I use advanced gadgets to access or transfer information							

Appendix B

R script of voter turnout of ethnic Azerbaijani women in Georgia adapted from 2017 wave Caucasus Barometer survey conducted by CRRC.

```
#clean up
rm(list=ls())


#load packages
library(foreign)


#read data
#setwd("C:/Users/hp/Desktop/Stat")
data.2017<-read.dta("CB2017old.dta",convert.factors=F)
codebook.2017<-read.dta("CB2017old.dta",convert.factors=T)


###Verify only studying Georgia###
table(codebook.2017$COUNTRY) #Yes, 2379 Georgians and no others.


###Figuring out the religion variable:###
#Compare to this in the online codebook:
http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/RELGION/
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$RELGNEW)) prop.table(table(data.2017$RELGNEW))


#Eliminate missing values
data.2017$RELGNEW[data.2017$RELGNEW<0]<-NA


#create a dummy variable for Muslim
data.2017$MUSLIM<-0
```

```
data.2017$MUSLIM[data.2017$RELGNEW==6 | data.2017$RELGNEW==7 |
data.2017$RELGNEW==8]<-1
prop.table(table(data.2017$MUSLIM))
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$RELGNEW, data.2017$MUSLIM))
```

###Figuring out the voter turnout variable:###

#Compare to this in the online codebook:

http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/VOTLELE/

```
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$VOTLELE))
prop.table(table(data.2017$VOTLELE))
```

#Eliminate missing values

```
data.2017$VOTLELE[data.2017$VOTLELE<0]<-NA    prop.table(table(data.2017$VOTLELE))
```

#ready to go

###Figuring out the woman variable:###

#Compare to this in the online codebook:

http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/RESPSEX/

```
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$RESPSEX))
prop.table(table(data.2017$RESPSEX))
```

#Recode from 1 & 2 to 0 & 1

```
data.2017$RESPSEX<-data.2017$RESPSEX-1
prop.table(table(data.2017$RESPSEX))
```

###Figuring out the language variable:###

#Compare to this in the online codebook:

http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/INTLANG/ prop.table(table(codebook.2017$L1))

```
prop.table(table(data.2017$L1))
```

```
data.2017$no.ge<-as.numeric(data.2017$L1!=3)

prop.table(table(data.2017$no.ge))

prop.table(table(codebook.2017$L1, data.2017$no.ge))
```

###Figuring out the education variable:###

#Compare to this in the online codebook:

 http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/RESPEDU/

```
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$RESPEDU))

prop.table(table(data.2017$RESPEDU))
```

###Figuring out the ethnicity variable:###

#Compare to this in the online codebook:

http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/ETHNIC/

```
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$ETHNIC))

prop.table(table(data.2017$ETHNIC))
```

###Figuring out the settlement type variable:###

#Compare to this in the online codebook:

http://caucasusbarometer.org/en/cb2017ge/SETTYPE/

```
prop.table(table(codebook.2017$STRATUM)) prop.table(table(data.2017$STRATUM))

data.2017$RURAL<-0

data.2017$RURAL[data.2017$STRATUM==3]<-1
```

#create a dummy variable for ethnic Azerbaijani

```
data.2017$AZER<-0

data.2017$AZER[data.2017$ETHNIC==2]<-1

prop.table(table(data.2017$AZER))

prop.table(table(codebook.2017$ETHNIC, data.2017$AZER))
```

```
###Simple model with RESPSEX and AZER as predictors###
simple.model<glm(VOTLELE~RESPSEX*AZER,family=binomial(link="logit"),data=data.2017
)
summary(simple.model)
length(simple.model$fitted.values)


###Full model with control variables###
control.model<-
glm(VOTLELE~RESPSEX*AZER+RESPEDU+MUSLIM+RURAL+no.ge,family=binomial(link
="logit"),data=data.2017)
summary(control.model)
length(control.model$fitted.values)
```

Appendix C

Population Figures by Region, Gender, and Nationality/Ethnicity

Response to a letter addressed to National Statistics Office of Georgia.

ს9ქsრთველოს სტsტისტიკის
ეროვნული სsმსsხური

სsქსტsტი

National Statistics Office of Georgia

GEOSTAT

1916-9-2-202308021318

N 9-1916   02/08/2023

ქsლბsტონ sითsნ ჰsჯიევsს

ქsლბsტონო sითsნ,

თქვენი მიმდინsრე წლის 29 ივლისის წერილის ჰsსუხsდ, გიგზsვნით მოსsხლეობის რიცხოვნობsს რეგიონების, თვითმმsრთველი ერთეულების, სქესის დs ეროვნებs/ეთნიკური წsრმომsვლობის მიხედვით, მოსsხლეობის 2014 წლის სsყოველთsო sღწერის შედეგების ბsზუჰველზე.

ჰsტივისცემით,

ჰssტs შsვიშვილი

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125