



Acculturation In the Digital Sphere: Virtual Social Identity as A Buffer Against Marginalization

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Abstract

This research investigates how virtual social identity shapes the acculturation experiences of young Georgian migrants residing in Canada. The research is built around fifteen interviews with Georgian youths residing in Quebec which were conducted in March 2025. The conversations revolved around their physical and digital identities and their interactions with the Canadian culture. The study brought to light the duality of the virtual social identity and the intricacies of how it is situated in the acculturation process. Thematic analysis of the collected data revealed that virtual social identity plays a important role identity in the adaptation phase. The digital media helped the majority of the participants deal with the emotional impact of displacement, stress, and isolation from previous social networks. However, one must acknowledge that this coping strategy is not free of dangers of detachment from the physical environment, overdependence on digital social networks, and fragmentation of identity. Close virtual bonds and the need for contact from friends and relatives in Georgia can prove to be a deterrent to positive integration into Canadian society. Integration obstacles were also furthered by various contextual factors like low familiarity with local norms, poor French language skills, low involvement in social activities, unstable employment, and interrupted participation in formal schooling. These results underscore the importance of closely examining the web aspect of acculturation and implementing particular measures to counteract its potential drawbacks during the phase of initial settlement.

Keywords: Migration, acculturation; virtual social identity; young Georgian migrants in Canada