Acculturation Attitudes and Psychological Well-Being of Russians in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan: The Moderating Role of Perceived Security

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More than 400 thousand Russians remain in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan after the collapse of the USSR. They have to adapt to the changing conditions, and it is important to study the factors that determine their psychological well-being. This study focuses on the moderating role of perceived security in the relationship between acculturation attitudes and psychological well-being of the Russians in the two Central Asian countries. The sample included 578 respondents. In the study, we used scales from the MIRIPS questionnaire and carried out analysis using the moderation models 1 and 3. The results showed that for the Russians in both countries, when perceived security was low, separation attitudes promoted self-esteem, while assimilation attitudes decreased it. The study also revealed the role of the context: in Tajikistan (less favorable context for the Russians), assimilation attitudes contributed to life satisfaction in situations of high perceived security, while in Kyrgyzstan (more favorable context) it was integration attitudes that determined life satisfaction when perceived security was high or medium. We may conclude that the context determines the preference of acculturation strategy that provides the Russians with life satisfaction in the situation of perceived security: the assimilation strategy in Tajikistan, and the integration strategy in Kyrgyzstan.

Keywords: perceived security, acculturation attitudes, psychological well-being, Russians, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan.

Аккультурационные установки и психологическое благополучие русских в Кыргызстане и Таджикистане: модерационная роль воспринимаемой безопасности

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После распада СССР более 400 тыс. русских остались проживать в Кыргызстане и Таджикистане. Им приходится адаптироваться к изменившейся ситуации, и в этой связи важно исследовать факторы, обусловливающие их психологическое благополучие. Данное исследование посвящено изучению модерационной роли воспринимаемой безопасности во взаимосвязи аккультурационных установок и психологического благополучия русских в двух странах Центральной Азии. Выборка составила 578 респондентов. Были использованы шкалы из опросника MIRIPS. Анализ проводился с помощью двух моделей модерации — 1 и 3. Результаты показали, что для русских в двух странах в ситуации низкой воспринимаемой безопасности установки на сепарацию способствуют, а установки

на ассимиляцию препятствуют самоуважению. Исследование выявило роль контекста: в Таджикистане (менее благоприятный контекст для русских) в ситуации высокой воспринимаемой безопасности установки на ассимиляцию обусловливают удовлетворенность жизнью, а в Кыргызстане (более благоприятный контекст) в ситуации высокой и умеренной воспринимаемой безопасности интеграционные установки приводят к удовлетворенности жизнью. Можно заключить, что контекст задает паттерн предпочтения той стратегии, которая обеспечивает русским удовлетворенность жизнью в ситуации безопасности: в Таджикистане — это ассимиляция, а в Кыргызстане — интеграция.

Ключевые слова: воспринимаемая безопасность, аккультурационные установки, психологическое благополучие, русские, Кыргызстан, Таджикистан.

Introduction

After the collapse of the USSR, the Russians, living in the new independent states of Central Asia, faced many problems: status change, ethnic discrimination, negative attitudes of titular ethnic groups, etc. [6]. Many Russians left these states, those that remain are trying to adapt to the changed conditions. According to statistical data, today about 34 000 Russians live in Tajikistan, and 360 000 Russians live in Kyrgyzstan [4, 6]. In this regard, it is important to investigate the factors that contribute to the psychological well-being of the Russians in these countries.

Numerous studies [9] show that the choice of acculturation strategies by ethnic minority representatives is critical for successful psychological adaptation. However, the researchers note that this choice is determined by the sociocultural context, including the policy towards ethnic minorities and the attitudes of the titular ethnic groups towards minorities [14]. Perceived threat/security is one of the important contextual factors. High perceived threat contributes to prejudice, discrimination by the majority. In contrast, perceived security is associated with the maintenance of the multiculturalism ideology and attitudes towards the integration of minorities [22].

Additionally, studies show [15] that perceived threat/security affects the psychological well-being of people, since the need for security is basic for a person. However, most of the previous studies have included members of the ethnic majority. In this regard, the question remains unclear: What is the role of perceived threat/security in the relationship between acculturation attitudes and psychological well-being among representatives of the ethnic minority (in our case, Russians)? Our study aims to identify the role of the sociocultural context of the two states of Central Asia (Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan) in the psychological well-being of the Russians in these countries.

Relationship between acculturation strategies and psychological well-being

Studies of migrants and representatives of ethnic minorities demonstrate that the acculturation strategy of integration is the most effective [9]; it is positively related to psychological adaptation [16].

However, some studies show the importance of assimilation strategies for the adaptation of migrants and ethnic minorities [12]. Thus, in the study of migrants from Central Asia in Russia, researchers found that the assimilation strategy is positively associated with their sociocultural adaptation and life satisfaction [14].

In addition, the choice of the separation strategy predicts both positive and negative results of adaptation of migrants and ethnic minorities. In the study of intercultural relations in Dagestan, researchers found that separation strategy is positively associated with life satisfaction among the Avars [11]. In contrast, in the study of migrants and the host population in Germany, the results demonstrate that the preference for the separation strategy is negatively related to their adaptation [20].

As shown by research results [10], the strategy of marginalization is the least effective and does not contribute to psychological well-being. For that reason, researchers often do not consider this strategy in the context of psychological well-being of migrants and ethnic minorities.

Relationship between perceived threat/security, intercultural attitudes, and well-being

Perceived threat has been analyzed as the stress factor for intergroup relationships in many studies [17, 21]. Most researchers focus on the study of the relationship

between perceived threat and intercultural attitudes among the host population towards migrants [8,21]. Research in Northern Ireland and Israel has shown the positive relationship between symbolic threat and ethnocentrism [26]. In the Canadian study, researchers found that perceived cultural and economic security correlated negatively with ethnocentrism and positively with the ideology of multiculturalism [8].

In addition, the studies identified the relationship between perceived threat and acculturation attitudes [10, 18]. For example, the study of the dominant ethnic groups in France, Germany and the UK showed that if the ethnic majority representatives feel threatened by migrants, they are less likely to expect the assimilation of migrants in their country [10].

Some researchers have analyzed the relationship between perceived threat and acculturation attitudes among ethnic minorities [13]. For example, the study of the Russians living in Estonia showed that the Russians who prefer integration demonstrated a low level of perceived cultural threat, while those who prefer assimilation and separation were characterized by a higher perceived cultural threat [13].

Few research focuses on the effects of perceived threats on psychological well-being. The study in Northern Ireland showed that perceived intergroup threat determines the deterioration in the host population well-being [15].

Thus, the analysis shows that most often the perceived threat is studied among the ethnic majority representatives in the context of its relationship with intercultural attitudes [17]. There are practically no studies that focus on the relationship between perceived threat/security and psychological well-being among ethnic minorities.

Several studies have examined the mediating role of the perceived threat. For example, Aberson [7] found that symbolic and real threats mediate the relationship between intergroup contact and prejudice. However, the role of perceived threat in the relationship between acculturation attitudes and psychological well-being among minorities is not clear. Based on the abovementioned, it is important to analyze whether the perceived threat/security will be the moderator increasing/decreasing the relationship of acculturation strategies with psychological well-being among ethnic minorities.

Sociocultural context

This study was conducted in two states of Central Asia - Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The sociocultural context of these countries has both similarities and differences. The Russians are an ethnic and religious minority in both countries. However, there are almost 10 times more Russians in Kyrgyzstan than in Tajikistan (about 360 thousand and about 38 thousand, respectively). In Kyrgyzstan, according to the Constitution [1], the Russian language is the state language, unlike in Tajikistan. One third of the Kyrgyzstan population communicate in Russian. In Tajikistan, Russian is the language of science and culture, but not of everyday communication. There are more opportunities for education in Russian in Kyrgyzstan than in Tajikistan [3]. In addition, in Kyrgyzstan, interethnic relations between the dominant ethnic group and the Russians are more favorable than in Tajikistan [4, 6]. It can be concluded that the socio-cultural context of Kyrgyzstan is secure and more favorable for the Russian ethnic representatives.

Based on the analysis of previous research and taking into account the peculiarities of the socio-cultural context, we formulated our research questions:

1) What is the moderation role of perceived security in the relationship between acculturation attitudes (integration, assimilation, and separation) and psychological well-being (self-esteem and life satisfaction) among the Russian ethnic minority representatives in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan?

2) What are the cross-country differences in the identified moderation role of perceived security?

Sample

This study included representatives of the Russian ethnic minority (N = 300, of whom 35% are men, mean age is 35,56 years) in Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (N = 278, of which 33% are men, mean age is 31,58 years).

Measures

In this study, we used scales from the MIRIPS project questionnaire, translated and adapted for the Russian sample [2].

Perceived security. The scale included 3 items, for example, 'There is the place for the diversity of languages and cultures in Kyrgyzstan/Tajikistan'); all > 0.50.

Acculturation strategies: *the integration* scale included 3 items, 'It is important for me to be fluent in both Kyrgyz/Tajik and Russian'; *the assimilation* scale included 3 items, 'I prefer social activities in which only Kyrgyz/Tajiks participate'); *the separation* scale included 3 items, 'I prefer to participate in events in which only Russians participate'; all > 0.67.

Psychological well-being was measured using two scales - the self-esteem scale, which includes 4 items, for example, 'I feel that I am quite worthy of respect, at least on an equal basis with others'; all > 0.68; and the life satisfaction scale, which includes 4 items, for example, 'In many ways, my life is close to ideal"'; all > 0.74.

Socio-demographic data: gender, age, education, and ethnicity of the respondents.

Data processing: descriptive statistics, Cronbach's α, MANOVA and regression analysis with additional moderation analysis ('Process'" module, models 1 and 3) were used, (SPSS 22.0).

Research procedure

We used a convenient sample and applied the "snowball" method. The researchers from the Kyrgyz-Russian Slavic University helped us with the distribution of the questionnaire in Kyrgyzstan, the researchers from the Russian-Tajik (Slavic) University helped to collect the sample in Tajikistan. Participation in the study was voluntary with no reward.

Results

First, we compared all variables among the Russians living in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan using MANOVA (country was the independent variable, perceived security, acculturation strategies, and psychological well-being were dependent). The results showed significant differences: Wilks's $\Lambda = 0,775$, $F (6, 566) = 27,331$, $p = 0,000$, $\eta^2 = 0,225$. Differences in individual indicators were also significant; life satisfaction was an exception (Table 1).

To answer our research questions, we conducted a moderation analysis. We used Model 1 (Fig. 1) to answer our first research question and test whether the relationship of each acculturation strategy (X) with self-esteem and life satisfaction (Y) varies with the level of perceived security (W).

To answer the second research question, we used the moderated moderator model (Model 3). This model allowed us to analyze changes in the moderation effect of perceived security depending on the country: acculturation strategies (X) - predictor, psychological well-being (Y) - outcome, perceived security (W) - moderator, country (Z) - moderated moderator (Fig. 2.)

Only significant non-standardized coefficients are presented in the tables. The results of the analysis of models for the variable 'self-esteem' are presented in Table 2. As for the moderation effect of perceived security on the relationship between assimilation strategy and self-esteem of the Russians in all sample (Model 1), the model showed the significant effect of two-way interaction (Fig. 3).

The regression coefficients for XW – $b = 0,086$, $t = 2,436$, $p = 0,015$, with the 95% confidence interval from 0,017 to 0,158, show that in the case of low perceived security, the preference for assimilation inhibits the self-esteem of Russians (Fig. 3). In addition, the results of the table show that there is a di-

Table 1

Comparison of the Means of All Variables among Representatives of the Russian Ethnic Minority in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

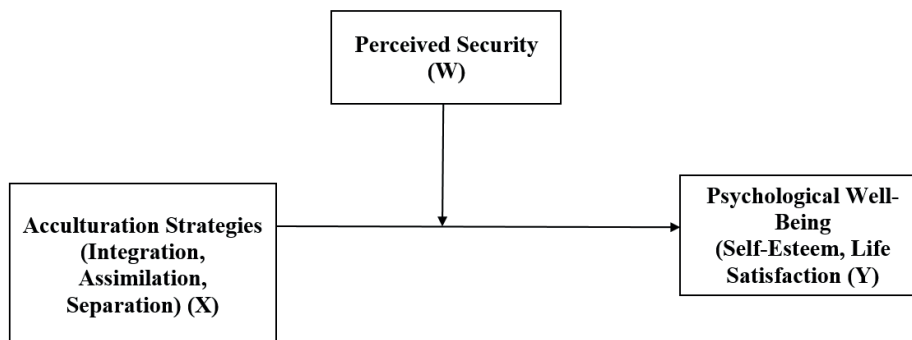| Variables	Groups		F (3, 573)	Partial η²
	The Russians from Kyrgyzstan	The Russians from Tajikistan		
	M (SD)	M (SD)		
Perceived Security	3,04(0,93)	3,61(0,95)	52,54***	0,084
Integration	4,41(0,75)	4,14(0,87)	15,95***	0,027
Assimilation	1,49 (0,56)	1,93 (0,80)	58,51***	0,093
Separation	3,01(0,90)	2,62(0,92)	27,12***	0,045
Self-Esteem	4,31(0,57)	4,15 (0,72)	9,38**	0,016
Life Satisfaction	3,35(0,80)	3,26(0,96)	1,21	0,002

Fig. 1. Model 1 of the moderation role of perceived security in the relationship between acculturation strategies and psychological well-being

rect negative relationship between the preference for the assimilation strategy and the self-esteem of the Russians. Regarding moderated moderation (XWZ), Model 3 showed no statistically significant interaction effects for both moderators (perceived security, country) and predictor (assimilation). This allows us to conclude that there are no cross-country differences in the moderation role of perceived security (the country's effect is not significant). The results also showed that there is the moderation effect of the country on the relationship between assimilation and self-esteem (XZ).

We also found the significant moderation effect of perceived security on the relationship between separation strategy and self-esteem of the Russians (Fig. 4). The model showed that the effect of the interaction of perceived security and separation (XW) is negative

$b = -0,058$, $t = -2,008$, $p = 0,045$, with a 95% confidence interval from $-0,115$ to $0,001$ (Fig.4). We can say that the separation strategy promotes the self-esteem of the Russians in the case of low and medium perceived security. Additionally, the results show that there is a direct positive relationship between the preference for a separation strategy and the self-esteem of the Russians in both countries. Model 3 showed the statistically insignificant effect of the three-way interaction of separation strategy, perceived security, and country (XWZ) on self-esteem of the Russians. We can conclude that there is no significant difference in the role of perceived security in the relationship between separation and self-esteem of the Russians living in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

The results in Table 3 show the effects for the life satisfaction variable.
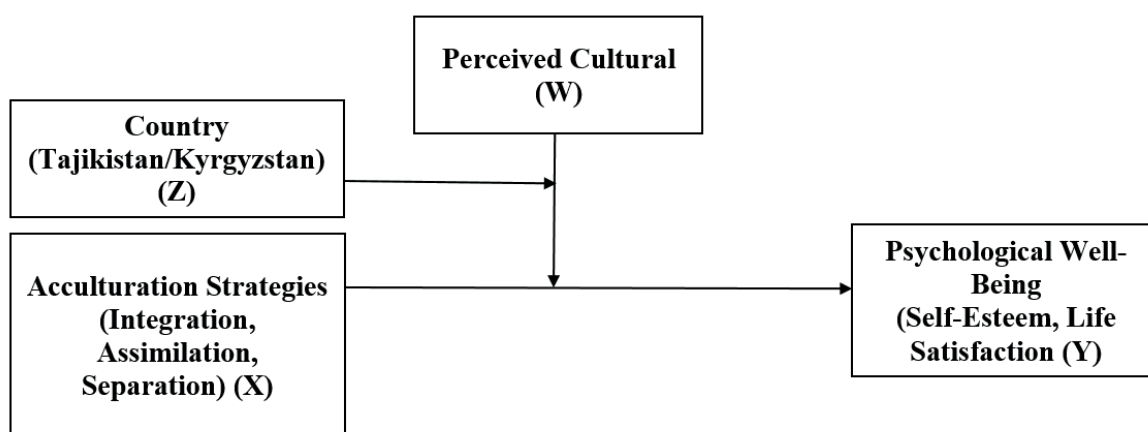

Fig. 2. Model 3 of the moderated role (country) of the moderator (perceived security) in the relationship between acculturation attitudes and psychological well-being

Table 2

Non-standardized b-coefficients and Model Indices of the Relationship of Acculturation Strategies, Perceived Security, and Country with Self Esteem

Predictors	Model 1: R = 0,321, R² = 0,097, p = 0,001	Model 3: R = 0,360, R² = 0,129, p = 0,001
Assimilation	**-0,518** (p < 0,001)	0,207 (p > 0,05)
Perceived Security	-0,006 (p > 0,05)	0,052 (p> 0,05)
Country		0,157 (p >0,05)
Assimilation × Perceived Security	**0,086** (p < 0,05)	-0,052 (p >0,05)
Assimilation × Country		**-0,464** (p < 0,05)
Perceived Security × Country		-0,027 (p >0,05)
Assimilation × Perceived Security × Country		0,094 (p >0,05)
	Model 1: R = 0,204, R² = 0,042, p = 0,001	Model 3: R= 0,291, R2= 0,045, p= 0,001
Separation	**0, 243** (p < 0,05)	0,440 (p > 0,05)
Perceived Security	0,304 (p < 0,001)	0,273(p> 0,05)
Country		0,001 (p >0,05)
Separation × Perceived Security	**-0,058** (p < 0,05)	-0,088 (p > 0,05)
Separation × Country		-0,205 (p> 0,05)
Separation x Perceived Security × Country		-0,003 (p >0,05)

Regarding the association of assimilation, perceived security with life satisfaction, Model 1 showed the statistically significant direct effect of assimilation on life satisfaction and the significant interaction effect (XW) (Fig. 5). Regression coefficients b = 0,144, t = 2,968, p = 0,003, with a 95% confidence interval from 0,048 to 0,240. We can say that in the case of low perceived security, assimilation attitudes reduce life satisfaction, in contrast, in the case of high perceived security, assimilation promotes life satisfaction of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan.

Additionally, Model 3 showed the significant three-way interaction effect (Fig. 6). The regression coeffi-
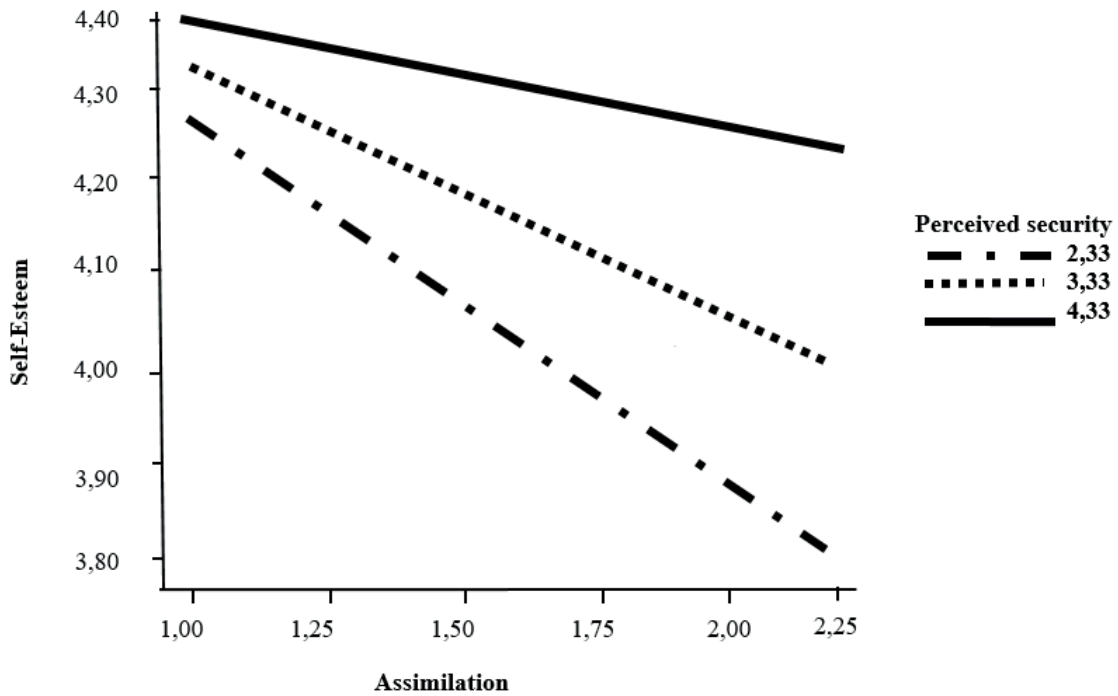

Fig. 3. Model 1 of the moderated role of perceived security in the relationship between assimilation and self-esteem of the Russians
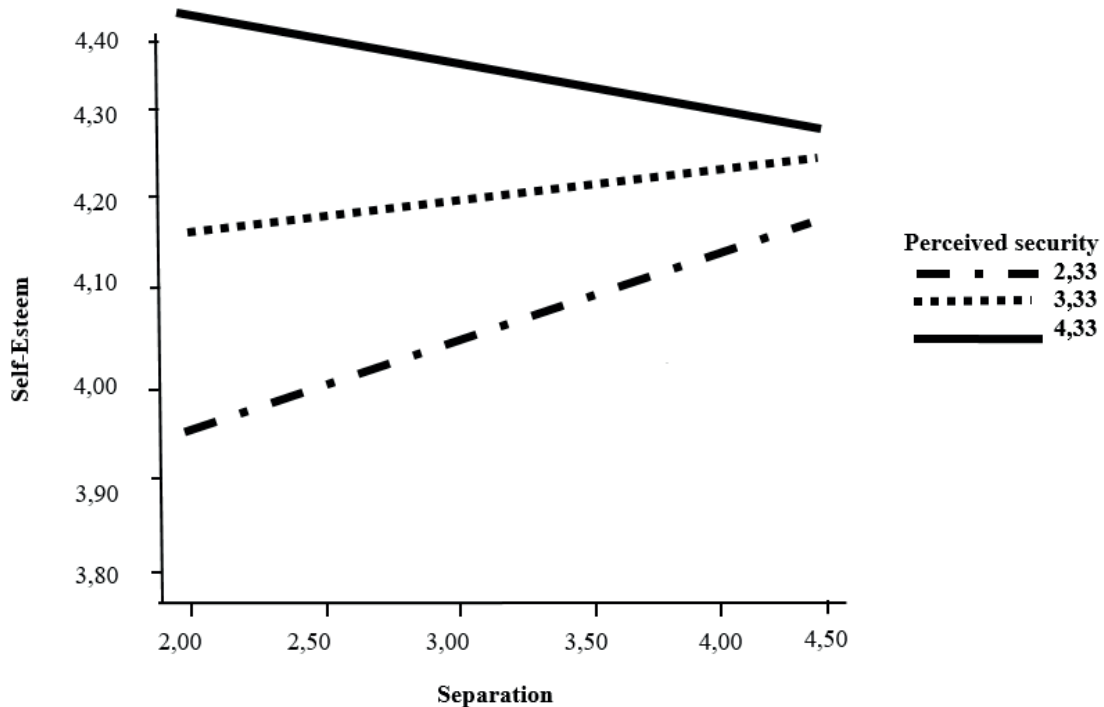

Fig. 4. Model 1 of the moderated role of perceived security in the relationship between separation and self-esteem of the Russians

cient for XWZ, b = 0,216, t = 2,075, p = 0,038 with a 95% confidence interval from 0,012 to 0,420, demonstrates that the strength of the perceived security influence on the relationship between assimilation strategy and Russians' satisfaction with their lives depends on the country. The effect of perceived security on the relationship between assimilation and life satisfaction is positive, but the difference between those with a high level of perceived security and a low one is greater in Tajikistan. We found significant direct positive effects of perceived security and country on life satisfaction as well. The effects of the relationship between assimilation and the country, as well as the relationship between perceived security and the country, are significant negative.

Finally, we found that the effect of the three-way interaction of integration, perceived security, and the country on Russians' life satisfaction (Model 3

Table 3

Non-Standardized b-Coefficients and Model Indices of the Relationship of Acculturation Strategies, Perceived Security and Countries with Life Satisfaction

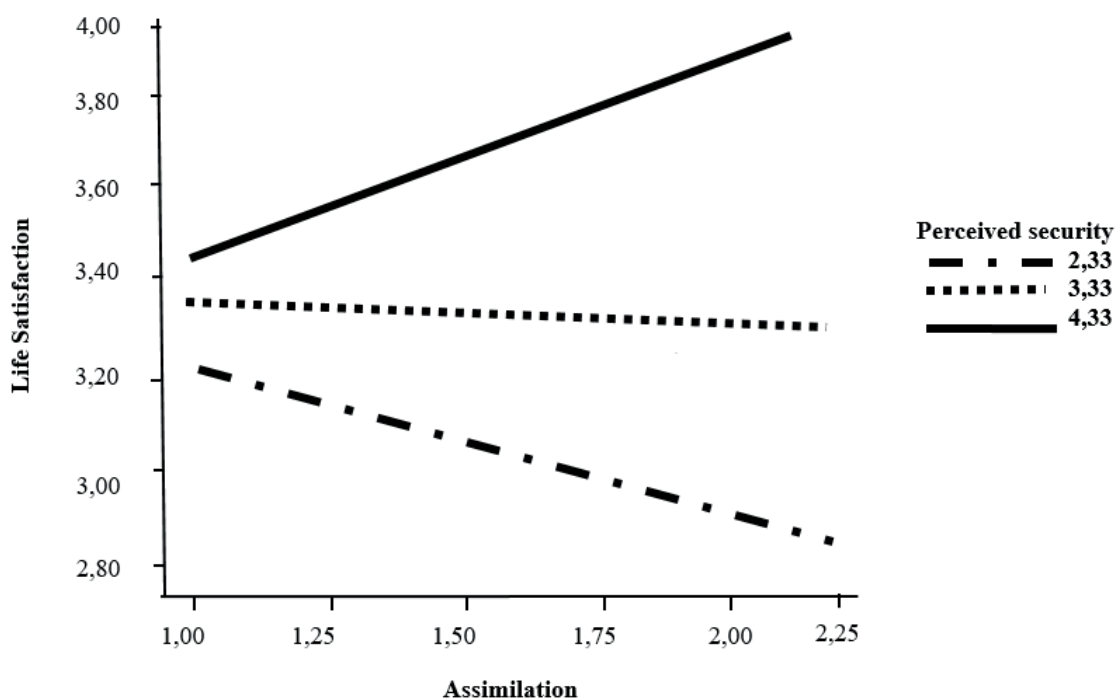| Predictors	Model 1: R = 0,327, R² = 0,107, p = 0,001	Model 3: R = 0,370, R² = 0,137, p = 0,001
Assimilation	**-0,476** (p < 0,01)	0,708 (p > 0,05)
Perceived Security	0,024 (p > 0,05)	**0,678** (p < 0,05)
Country		**1,251** (p < 0,05)
Assimilation × Perceived Security	**0,144** (p < 0,01)	-0,174 (p > 0,05)
Assimilation × Country		**-0.786** (p < 0,05)
Perceived Security × Country		**-0,427** (p < 0,05)
Assimilation × Perceived Security × Country		**0,216** (p < 0,05)
	Model 1: R = 0,321, R² = 0,102, p = 0.001	**Model 3: R = 0,353, R² = 0,124, p = 0,001**
Integration	0,023 (p > 0,05)	-0,605 (p > 0,05)
Perceived Security	0,141 (p > 0,05)	-1,166 (p > 0,05)
Country		-1, 819 (p > 0,05)
Integration × Perceived Security	0,027 (p > 0,05)	**0, 320** (p < 0,05)
Integration × Country		0, 351 (p > 0,05)
Perceived Security × Country		**0,769** (p < 0,05)
Integration × Perceived Security × Country		**-0,169** (p < 0,05)

Fig. 5. Model 1 of the moderated role of perceived security in the relationship between assimilation and life satisfaction of the Russians

b = - 0,169, t = -1,797, p = 0,043 with a 95% confidence interval from -0,354 to -0,015) is significant. We can conclude (Fig. 7) that in Tajikistan the effect of perceived security on the relationship between integration and life satisfaction is negative, but there is practically no difference between those with high, medium, and low security levels. In contrast, in Kyrgyzstan, we found the significant difference between those with high, medium, and low levels of perceived security: in case of high and medium perceived security, the integration strategy contributes to the satisfaction with life of the Russians; in case of low perceived security, this

relationship is practically insignificant. We identified positive effects of the two-way interaction of integration strategy and perceived security on life satisfaction, as well as perceived security and the country on Russians' satisfaction with their lives (see Table 3).

Discussion and conclusions

Our study tested the role of perceived security in the choice of acculturation strategies and psychological well-being for the Russians in two Central Asian
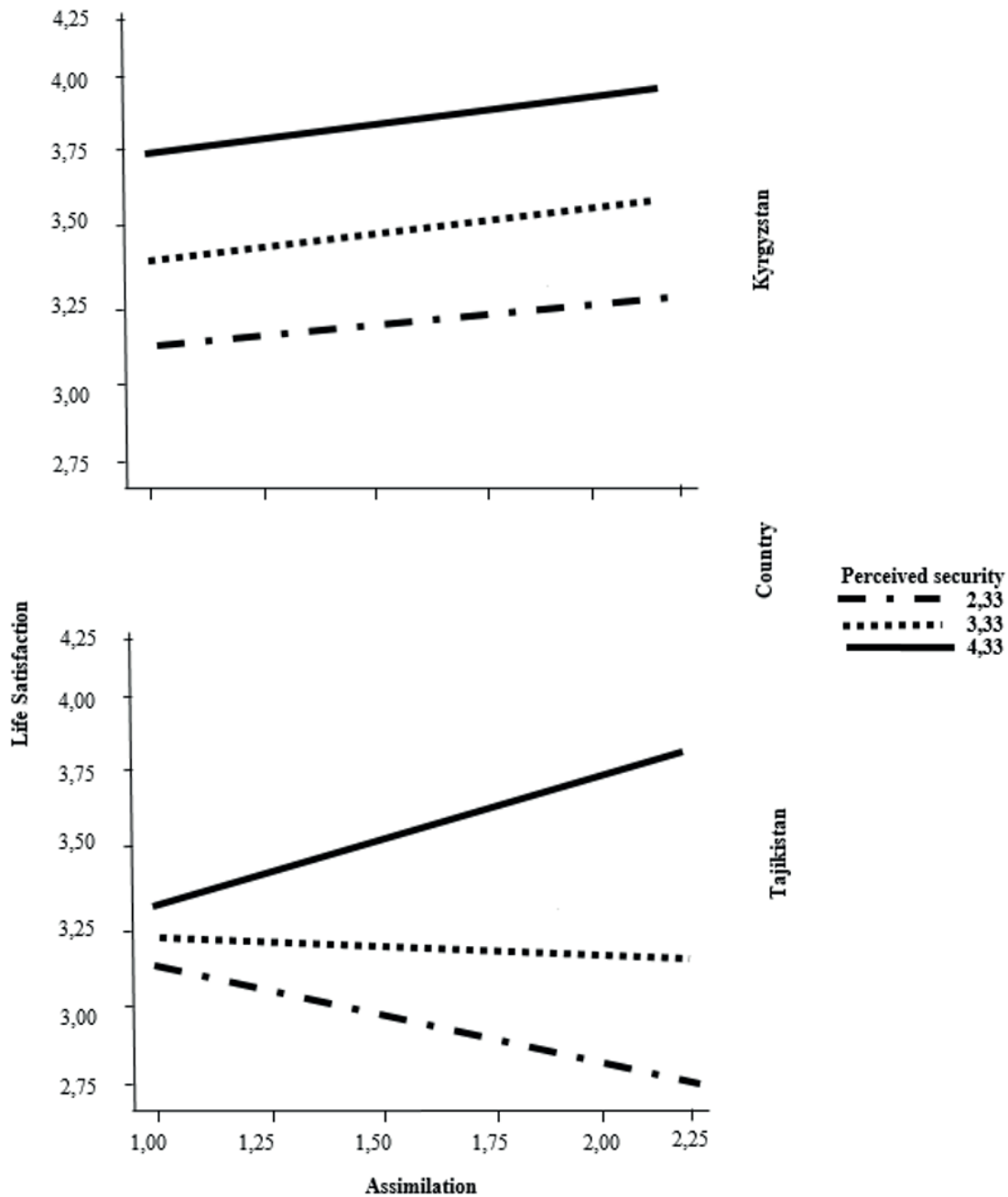

Fig. 6. Model 3 of the moderated moderation of perceived security in the relationship between assimilation and life satisfaction of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

countries: Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The results of our study showed that in case of low and medium perceived security, the preference for the assimilation strategy does not contribute to the self-esteem of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan, in contrast, the separation strategy leads to a high level of self-esteem. This relationship is universal for both countries. We can say that when the Russians feel threat, their cultural orientation fosters their self-esteem. Researchers from various fields of humanitarian knowledge [5] note that turning to cultural roots as the source of spiritual strength helps to overcome the negative consequences of the feeling of danger experienced during periods of instability and social cataclysms. In this sense, culture serves as a 'means' of protection from a threat.

In general, these data are consistent with the idea of J. Berry [9] that only when people are sure that nothing threatens their cultural identity, they can accept those who are different from them. Conversely, when people feel threat, they develop prejudices
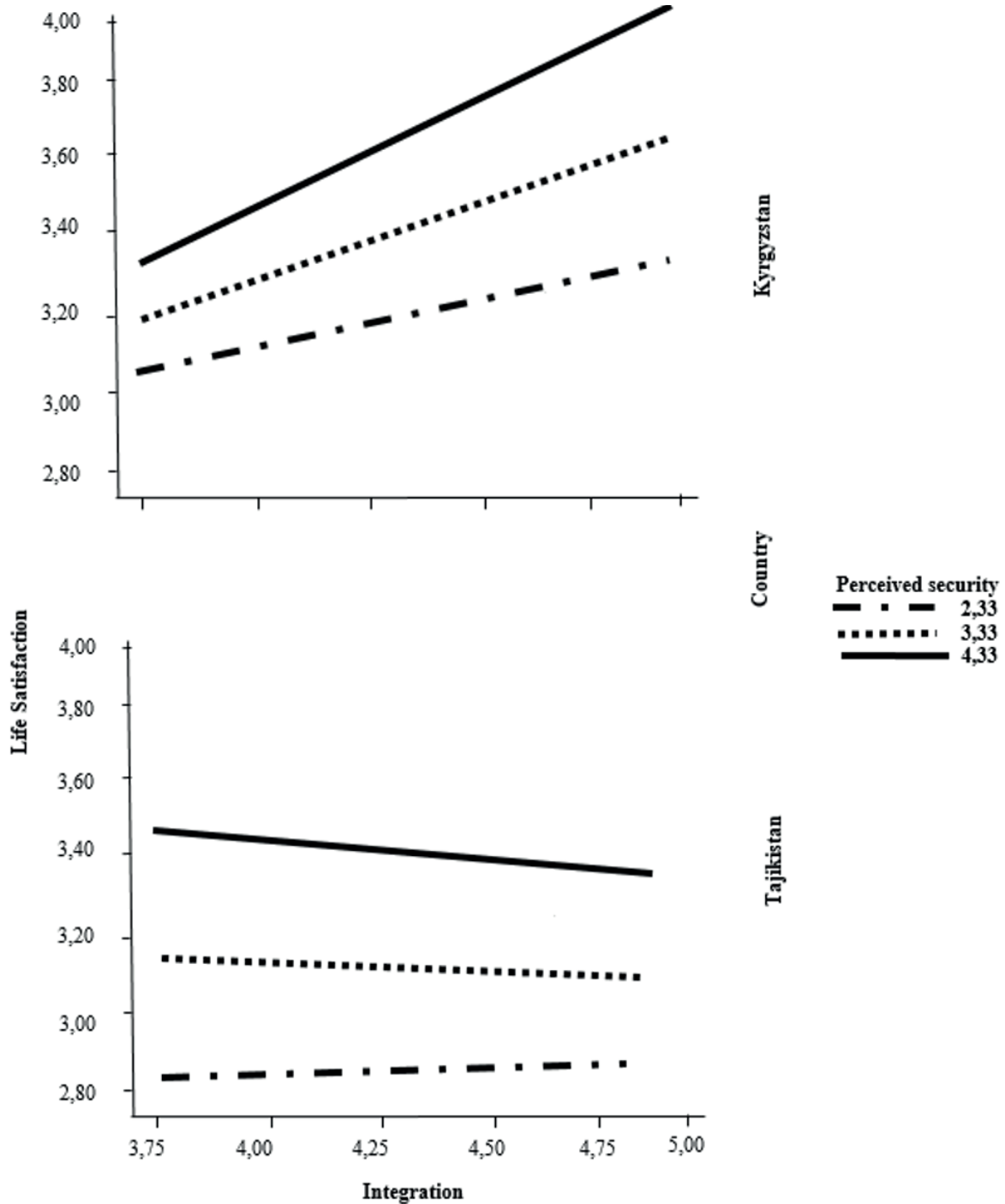

Fig. 7. Model 3 of the moderated moderation of perceived security in the relationship between integration and life satisfaction of the Russians in Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan

and discriminatory attitudes towards the group that threatens them. This entails a decrease in psychological well-being.

Our research has shown that in the case of high perceived security, the preference for the assimilation strategy contributes to the satisfaction with their lives of the Russians, and in the case of low perceived security, on the contrary, it hinders. However, our results demonstrated that this role of perceived security is more typical for the sociocultural context of Tajikistan. This context, according to the research, is unfavorable for the Russians [4]. We can say that in unfavorable sociocultural context only in the case of high perceived security does the assimilation strategy contribute to life satisfaction, and in the case of low perceived security, on the contrary, the attitude to accept the culture of the ethnic majority reduces life satisfaction. Our data are consistent with the results of Muldoon and Schmid [15]. The authors examined the relationship between perceived threat and psychological well-being, taking into account the role of political conflict in Northern Ireland. The results showed that only in situations where the conflict affected people, the perceived threat increased identification with their own culture, but decreased psychological well-being.

We identified the moderation role of the context when analyzing the moderation role of perceived security in the relationship between integration strategy and life satisfaction as well. The results showed that only in Kyrgyzstan (a more favorable sociocultural context), in the case of high and medium perceived security, the strategy of preserving their culture and adopting the culture of the ethnic majority contributes to the life satisfaction of the Russians; in the case of low security, this relationship is not significant. We can conclude that the integration strategy promotes life satisfaction when perceived security is high enough and the real context is favorable and does not pose an open threat [6].

In general, the results of the study demonstrated that for the Russians in Central Asia (Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan), perceived security plays a significant role in the relationship between their acculturation attitudes and psychological well-being. In the situation where the Russians feel threat, their separation attitudes contribute to their self-esteem, in contrast, assimilation attitudes do not contribute to their psychological well-being.

The study showed a significant role of the context as well. In Tajikistan, where the sociocultural context is not very favorable for the Russians, assimilation attitudes are associated with life satisfaction only in case of high perceived security. In a more favorable context for Russians - Kyrgyzstan, in case of high and medium perceived security, integration attitudes lead to life satisfaction. We can say that the context sets the pattern of preference for the strategy that provides the life satisfaction of Russians in the security situation: in Tajikistan, this is assimilation, in Kyrgyzstan - integration.

The study showed that the issue of perceived security/threat should be given more attention in the public discourse of these countries for the psychological well-being of the Russian ethnic minority.

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