

## ECONOMICS

## Sociology

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### TRUST IN GOVERNMENT AND INTENTION TO EMIGRATE IN A POST-SOVIET COUNTRY: EVIDENCE FROM AZERBAIJAN

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**ABSTRACT.** Intention to emigrate has been one of the most challenging issues globally over the last decade for both migrant-sending and receiving countries. Rising emigration intentions trigger migration attempts and brain drain, while migrant-receiving countries are challenged by illegal emigration. Self-perceived trust in government is one of the fundamental determinants of citizens' emigration aspirations. This research applies path analyses to explore direct and indirect effects of trust in government on emigrating intentions in a post-soviet country – Azerbaijan. Using a pool of two social survey data ( $N = 4092, n_{Male} = 2106, n_{Female} = 1986, Mean_{Age} = 31.82$ ) within a serial mediation analysis framework, we conclude that the trust in government has a significant direct (65-70%) and indirect (30-35%) negative impact on emigration aspirations among the people of Azerbaijan. The relationship is mediated by self-reported life satisfaction. Perceived income adequacy also mediates the relationship indirectly via life satisfaction. A key novelty of the study is that, contrary to popular belief, emigration aspirations in Azerbaijan are revealed to be less economic in motivation and are mainly explained by the lack of trust in government, which also reduces individuals' satisfaction with life. Therefore, improving the quality of public services and the trust in government institutions would reverse intentions to emigrate. The research can be replicated in other developing countries, and the findings can be used to design policies aimed at controlling international emigration issues.

**JEL Classification:** I31, O15,  
P36

**Keywords:** trust in government, institutional trust, intention to emigrate, life satisfaction, perceived income adequacy, migration policy

## Introduction

Migrant crises of 2015 are still fresh in the minds of people and policymakers. Illegal migration to Europe produced the refugee crisis during which more than 1 million individuals entered the continent by sea, while at least 3700 drowned (Anderson, 2017). There is a common view that (e)migration significantly affects the socio-economic development of home and host countries. Remittances may play a significant role in economic growth (Williams, 2018; Gurung, 2019; Cazachevici, Havranek and Horvath, 2020; Abduvaliev and Bustillo, 2020) and diminishing poverty (Clemens and McKenzie, 2018; Sobiech, 2019; Abduvaliev and Bustillo, 2020) in migrant-sending countries, however, brain-drain and loss of high-skilled individuals, who have a greater chance of migrating, are permanent disadvantages – the majority are not interested in returning (Ekanayake and Amirthalingam, 2020). Skilled migration increases income inequality in the origin countries (Galiano and Romero, 2018; Uprety, 2020; Oliinyk et al., 2022), while reducing such inequality is the key to effective migration management (Castles, 2004).

Both economic and political factors affect people's emigration aspirations (Radnitz, 2006). It is not surprising that there is a negative link between trust in government and intention to emigrate. Citizens of countries with higher institutional trust are less inclined towards emigration (Bertocchi and Strozzi, 2008; Mueller, 2009; Gugushvili, 2011; Bygnes and Flipo, 2017; Macchia and Plagnol, 2019; Berggren and Bjørnskov, 2020; Aliyev, Gasimov and Eynalov, 2022). Paper by Etling, Backeberg and Tholen (2020) shows evidence of this fact by revealing that political discontent increases the emigration intentions among young people aged 15-29 in Arab Mediterranean countries. Additionally, the authors suggest that perception of democracy and ability to shape government policies are other significant determinants of emigration intentions. The quality of the democratic system and implementation of basic governance activities diminishes the intention to emigrate among individuals (Hiskey, Montalvo and Orcés, 2014). In Nigeria, Kirwin and Anderson (2018) find a more decisive role in low levels of trust in local security institutions and individual perceptions about the strength of democracy in Nigerian's desire to emigrate. Ariu, Docquier and Squicciarini (2016) argue that governance quality in origin and destination countries affects the move abroad, especially high-skilled emigration. Thus, perceptions of good governance and availability of public services increase the trust in government (Mishra and Attri, 2020) and strengthen the state security as a result (Shkolnyk et al., 2020).

However, policymakers should consider that trust in government also indirectly affects the intention to emigrate. Regarding socio-economic factors behind emigration intentions, studies indicate a causal relationship between intention to emigrate and satisfaction with household income (Hajduch, Orosová and Kulanová, 2018), income inequality (Lapshyna and Düvell, 2016; Laurinavičius et al., 2020) and its perception as a constituent of social justice (Mishchuk et al., 2018) as well as satisfaction with life (Cai et al., 2014; Ivlevs, 2015; Erlinghagen, 2016; Aliyev et al., 2021; Edara, 2021). When we consider the causality from trust in government to individuals' life satisfaction (Liu, Gao and Huang, 2020), and income – life satisfaction relationship (Bomhoff and Siah, 2019; Masuda, Williams and Tallis, 2021; Aliyev, Nadirov and Dehning, 2022), it would be better to employ the serial mediation framework.

In this context, we hypothesize that trust in government has significant direct and indirect impacts on the intention to emigrate in developing countries. The indirect effect happens through the perceived income adequacy and life satisfaction of individuals. Applying Hayes's (2018) serial mediation analyses framework on a pool of two nationally representative primary datasets (ASERC, 2018, 2019), we test the corresponding hypothesis in the case of a

post-soviet country, Azerbaijan. Results confirm the validity of the research hypothesis in Azerbaijan.

The remaining part of the research is structured as follows. Part I outlines the analytical framework. Data and empirical methodology are presented in Part II. The primary findings of the research are given in Part III.

## 1. Analytical framework

The relationship between trust in government and intention to emigrate among people has a complex framework when individuals' subjective well-being and perception of income are considered. As the research hypothesis mentions, trust in the government affects the intention to emigrate directly and indirectly. That is why the serial mediation analysis framework advanced by Hayes (2018) is appropriate to assess simultaneously the direct and indirect effects of trust in government over individuals' emigration intentions while the relationship is mediated by perceived income adequacy and self-reported life satisfaction. Figure 1 displays the serial mediation model of perceived income adequacy (PIA) and life satisfaction (LS) in the relationship between trust in government (TiG) and intention to emigrate (IE).

Methodologically,  $a_1$  shows the direct effect of trust in government over the intention to emigrate, expected to be negative, i.e., greater trustworthiness of public institutes should decrease emigration aspirations. Considering the association between TiG and PIA (perceived trustworthiness will trigger individuals to use relatively cheaper or free public services instead of private substitutes), TiG and LS (Liu et al., 2020), PIA and IE (Hajduch et al., 2018), LS and IE (Ivlevs, 2015; Erlinghagen, 2016; Aliyev et al., 2021; Edara, 2021) and PIA and LS (Bomhoff and Siah, 2019; Masuda, Williams and Tallis, 2021; Aliyev, Nadirov and Dehning, 2022), the model allows exploring the indirect effects of TiG over IE through 3 channels:

1.  $TiG \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} PIA \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} IE$
2.  $TiG \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} LS \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} IE$
3.  $TiG \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} PIA \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} LS \xrightarrow{\text{causes}} IE$

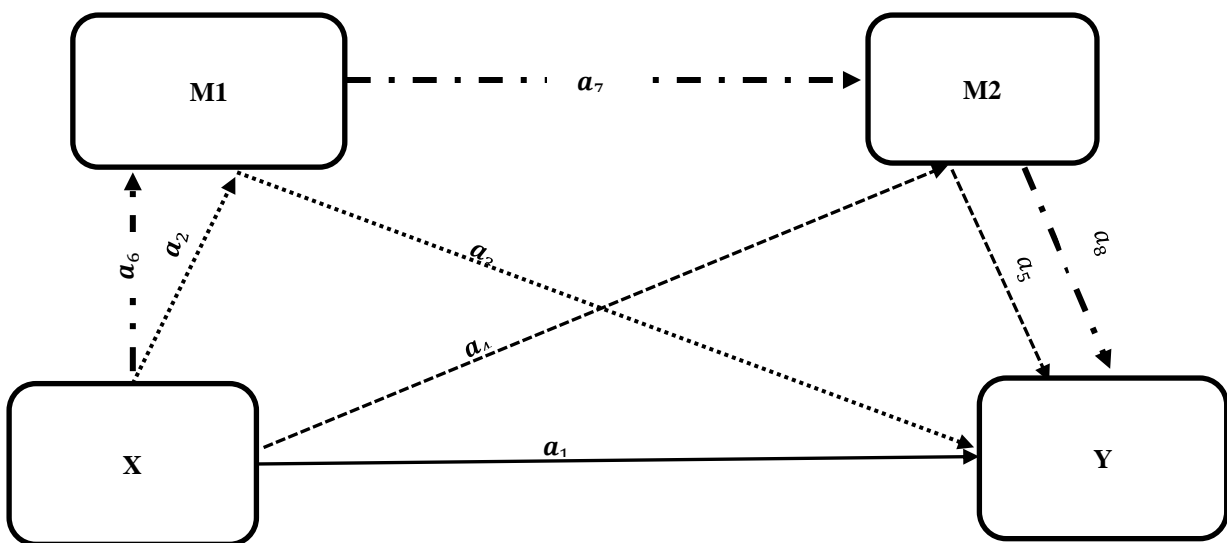


Figure 1. Serial mediation model of perceived income adequacy (PIA (M1)) and life satisfaction (LS (M2)) in the relationship between trust in government (TiG (X)) and intention to emigrate (IE (Y))

In figure 1,  $a_1$  represents the direct effect of TiG over IE, which is expected to be negative and statistically significant. The first ( $a_2 * a_3$ ) and second ( $a_4 * a_5$ ) channels of the indirect effects happen via M1 (PIA) and M2 (LS), respectively. We expect  $a_2 > 0$  (a positive impact of TiG over PIA),  $a_3 < 0$  (a negative impact of PIA over IE),  $a_4 > 0$  (a positive impact of TiG over LS) and  $a_5 < 0$  (a negative impact of LS over IE). In this context,  $a_2 * a_3 < 0$  and  $a_4 * a_5 < 0$ , which means decreasing the impact of TiG over IE via both mediators. Regarding the third channel, the point is  $a_6 = a_2 > 0$ ,  $a_7 > 0$  (a positive impact of PIA over LS) and  $a_8 = a_5 < 0$ . Because  $a_6 * a_7 * a_8 < 0$ , we expect to find the third indirect impact channel also negative.

## 2. Data and empirical methodology

### 2.1. Sampling

Here, we use a combination of two primary datasets. The datasets are Social Survey-2 ( $N = 2208$ , conducted during 01.10.2018-01.01.2019), and Social Survey-3 ( $N = 1884$ , conducted during 01.03.2019-01.06.2019) generated by ASERC (2018, 2019). The total sample size (including observations with missing values) equals 4092 ( $n_{Male} = 2106, n_{Female} = 1986$ ) within 17-88 ages ( $Mean_{Age} = 31.82, SD_{Age} = 12.41$ ).

The data collection method is non-probabilistic. More likely, convenient sampling (a mix of self-administrated questionnaire and self-select online surveys) is followed by ASERC (2018, 2019). However, using both data collection methods simultaneously increase the representativeness likelihood of the samples. Many groups with different socio-demographic features are reached, particularly via paid promotion of self-select online surveys via social media (Facebook and Instagram). Random generation of sample structure by gender, age groups living area etc., supports the representativeness likelihood. However, the relative disproportion of individuals with tertiary education and limited access to the people living in rural areas are the main limitations for representativeness.

### 2.2. Variables

#### 2.2.1. Dependent variable

*Intention to emigrate (IE)* measures the self-reported willingness of a respondent to emigrate, ranging from 1 to 7. The variable displays the responses to the statement "*I would like to emigrate and live in a foreign country*" on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree* to 7 = *totally agree*). A higher IE value means greater emigration aspirations.

#### 2.2.2. Independent variable

*Trust in government (TiG)* represents the self-perceived trust of a respondent in the government. Because directly asking "*do you trust in government*" may produce biased (and non-response bias) responses, ASERC (2018, 2019) assesses the trust in government indirectly by measuring an individual's trustworthiness of selected public institutes. Primary public institutions that all citizens are related to, such as education, health, police, and courts, are selected. Therefore, in the surveys, TiG is measured as the trust in the four selected public institutions. In this case, even apolitical citizens may present their trust in the government.

While measuring the trustworthiness of selected public institutions, we ask the questions indirectly to have an effective and unbiased measurement. Hence, an ordinary individual generally will not understand what "institute" implies in a self-administrated or self-select online survey. Therefore, in the surveys, respondents are asked to show their trust level for teachers (as a proxy for education institute), doctors (as a proxy for health institute), judges and court staff (as a proxy for courts), and police (as a proxy for internal security institute) on a five-point Likert scale (1 = *totallynottrust* to 5 = *totallytrust*). TiG is the sum of the trustworthiness score for each selected public institution, ranging from 4 to 20. A higher TiG score means greater trustworthiness of an individual to selected public institutions. The reliability of the scale has been confirmed with a high Cronbach's Alpha value ( $\alpha = 0.83$ ).

### 2.2.3. Mediator variables

*Perceived income adequacy (PIA)* denotes the self-reported sufficiency level of all earnings. In the surveys, respondents are asked to show their PIA score according to the following statement "Is your overall income sufficient for you?". The variable is measured with a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *totallynotsufficient* and 7 = *totallysufficient*). A higher PIA score denotes more satisfaction with overall income.

*Life satisfaction (hereafter LS)* denotes self-reported satisfaction with life for each respondent according to the Satisfaction With Life Scale (hereafter SWLS) methodology advanced by Pavot and Diener (1993, 2009). It is noteworthy to mention that the SWLS methodology is a good measure of individuals' subjective well-being based on responses to 5 statements (see Pavot and Diener, 1993, p.172) on a seven-point Likert scale (1 = *totallydisagree* to 7 = *totallyagree*). The corresponding statements are (1) *In most ways, my life is close to my ideal*, (2) *the conditions of my life are excellent*, (3) *I am satisfied with my life*, (4) *so far I have gotten the important things I want in life*, and (5) *if I could live my life over, I would change almost nothing*. LS score for each respondent equals the sum of quantified responses to all statements ranging from 5 (if a respondent chooses the "strongly disagree" option in all cases) to 35 (if a respondent chooses the "strongly agree" option in all cases). A greater LS score implies more satisfaction with life. A high Cronbach's Alpha value ( $\alpha = 0.82$ ) confirms the scale's reliability in assessing the self-reported life satisfaction of individuals.

### 2.2.4. Control variables

A set of individual-specific independent variables are included in the model for the robustness of research findings. These variables include:

- *Age<sub>i</sub>*: denotes the age of each individual attending the surveys, ranging from 17 to 88.
- *Gender<sub>i</sub>*: a dummy variable equals 1 for females and 0 for males
- Dummy variables displaying the highest educational attainment level (*School<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent's highest educational attainment level is graduation from compulsory comprehensive schools, *College<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent's highest educational attainment level is graduation from colleges or vocational schools, *Bachelor<sub>i</sub>* (left as the base group) – equals 1 if the respondent's highest educational attainment level is bachelor level from a university, *Master<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent is a master degree holder, and *PhD<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent has completed PhD degree),
- Dummy variables to take into account marital status of individuals (*Unmarried<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 for those never married before and left as the base group, *Married<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the person is married, and *Divorced<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 for those who are divorced/widowed).

- Dummy variables displaying religiosity level of individuals (*Religious<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent considers himself/herself as a religious person), *Believer<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent considers himself/herself not a religious person while believing in God and left as the base group, and *NonBeliever<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent does not believe in God).
- Dummy variables to consider the employment status of participants (*Employed<sub>i</sub>* – equals 1 if the respondent is employed (part-time or full time), *Student<sub>i</sub>* – if the respondent is a student, *Unemployed* – left as the base group equals 1 if the respondent does not work and looking for a job, *Other<sub>i</sub>* – cover all other employment status options equals 1 if the respondent is a retired person or housewife).
- *SS3<sub>i</sub>*: a dummy variable equals 1 for the observations belonging to the Social Survey - 3 and gets 0 for the observations belonging to Social Survey -2.

### 2.2.5. Descriptive analysis

Descriptive statistics of all variables are given in table 1. The first point that attracts attention is the mean value of IE (5.05), which denotes a moderate intention to emigrate in the country, considering that 4 implies neutrality. While IE is above "neutral", average TiG, LS and PIA scores are slightly under the "neutrality" score. The descriptive analysis identifies that people in Azerbaijan, on average, "do not trust (slightly)" in selected public institutions, are "slightly not satisfied with life", and consider their income not "satisfactory enough".

Regarding control variables, descriptive analysis enables to re-consider the sample representativeness. Considering the pooled two samples with approximately equal participation (54% from Social Survey -2 and 46% from Social Survey -3), we observe almost perfect gender-based representativeness. 51% of respondents are males, and 49% are females. The average age is also enough satisfactory score for Azerbaijan, with a relatively young population. The marital status structure of the sample is also successful. There is almost an equal participation of married and unmarried – 47% vs 49%, while 4% are widowed or divorced people.

Regarding respondents' religiosity, the sample structure is very close to the survey by Inglehart et al. (2014) in the case of Azerbaijan. 21% are religious, and 12% do not trust, while the majority (67%) of respondents consider themselves not religious but believe in God.

On the contrary, we observe the symptoms of non-response bias due to educational attainment level in the data collection. According to UNESCO (2021), Azerbaijan's gross enrollment ratio in tertiary education was 27.7% in 2018 and 31.5% in 2019. However, people with tertiary (post-comprehensive school) education are 75%, and 61% of respondents have university degrees. That is plausible in a self-administrated questionnaire or self-select online survey in which people with survey knowledge are more active. A relatively larger share of respondents with tertiary education is recorded in the 6<sup>th</sup> wave of the World Values Survey for Azerbaijan (Inglehart et al., 2014). Nevertheless, a quarter of the sample is people with no further educational attainment after graduation from 9- or 11-year comprehensive school (which is mandatory). Therefore, education bias should not affect the reliability of research findings substantially.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables

Variables	No. Obs.	Mean	Min	Max	Std. Dev.
IE	4027	5.05	1	7	2.108
TiG	3870	11.66	4	20	4.030
LS	4045	18.51	5	35	7.242
PIA	3645	3.39	1	7	1.905
Gender	4092	0.49	0	1	0.500
Age	4083	31.83	17	88	12.413
School	4092	0.25	0	1	0.433
College	4092	0.14	0	1	0.347
<i>Bachelor (Ref.)</i>	4092	0.45	0	1	0.498
Master	4092	0.13	0	1	0.342
PhD	4092	0.03	0	1	0.160
<i>Unmarried (Ref)</i>	4092	0.49	0	1	0.498
Married	4092	0.47	0	1	0.499
Widowed	4092	0.04	0	1	0.199
Religious	3954	0.21	0	1	0.408
Believer	3954	0.67	0	1	0.471
<i>Non_believer (Ref.)</i>	3954	0.12	0	1	0.327
Employed	4092	0.64	0	1	0.481
Student	4092	0.18	0	1	0.390
Other	4092	0.09	0	1	0.283
<i>Unemployed (Ref.)</i>	4092	0.09	0	1	0.286
SS3	4092	0.46	0	1	0.498

Source: Authors' own creation

The symptom of non-response also demonstrates itself in the employment status structure in the sample with similar logical reasoning. The share of students (18%) is relatively high, while the "other" category (retired individuals and housewives) takes a substantially lower proportion (9%).

### 2.3. Model

Following Hayes (2018), serial mediation analysis includes a set of 4 equations:

$$IE_i = \theta_0 + a_1 * TiG_i + a_3 * PIA_i + a_5 * LS_i + \sum_{k=1}^{14} \gamma_k * Z_k + u_i(1)$$

$$IE_i = \theta'_0 + a'_1 * TiG_i + \sum_{k=1}^{14} \gamma'_k * Z_k + u'_i(2)$$

$$PIA_i = \theta''_0 + a_2 * TiG_i + \sum_{k=1}^{14} \gamma''_k * Z_k + u''_i(3)$$

$$LS_i = \theta'''_0 + a_7 * PIA_i + a_4 * TiG_i + \sum_{k=1}^{14} \gamma'''_k * Z_k + u'''_i(4)$$

Note that  $\theta$ ,  $a$  and  $\gamma$  are parameters of the regression model.  $Z_k$  covers all control variables,  $u$  is the error term while  $i$  stand for  $i$ -th observation.

In equation (1),  $a_1$  shows the direct effect of TiG over IE while  $a'_1$  displays the total (direct + indirect) effect. The remaining models are used to calculate indirect effects through each of discussed indirect channels. We run serial mediation analyses and bootstrapping procedures in SPSS Process Macro version 3.4.1 (model 6) advanced by Hayes (2018).

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Preliminary analyses

Initial analyses of the dataset show a high level of emigration aspiration among the sampled group in Azerbaijan. Note that IE range between 1 (the least) and 7 (the highest), while the average score is 5.05. The response about emigration intention is positive among 67% of respondents, while 9% are neutral, and only 24% prefer not to emigrate.

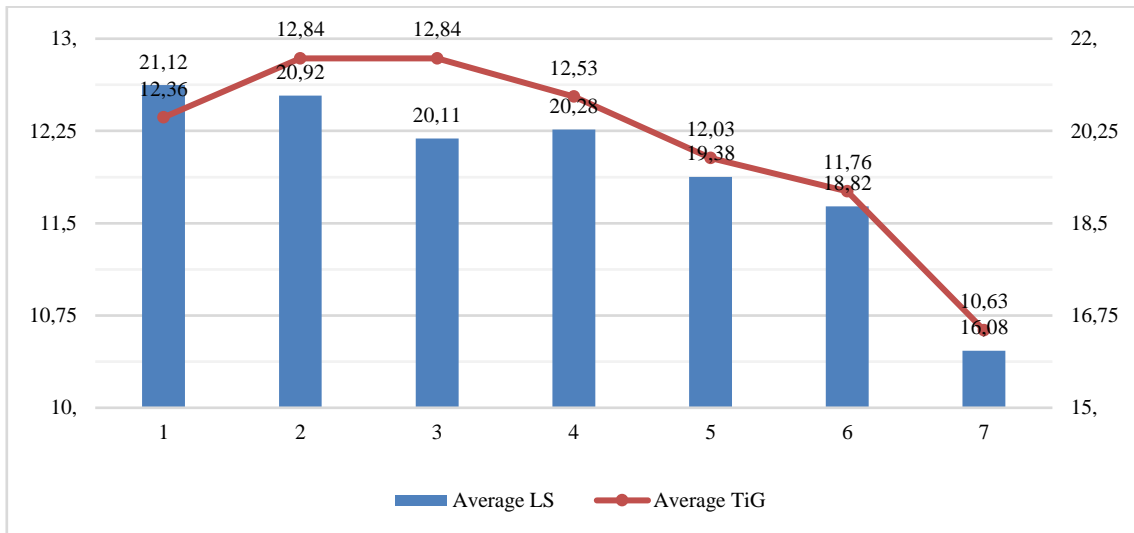


Figure 2. Trust in government (left vertical) and life satisfaction (right vertical) vs intention to emigrate (horizontal axis)

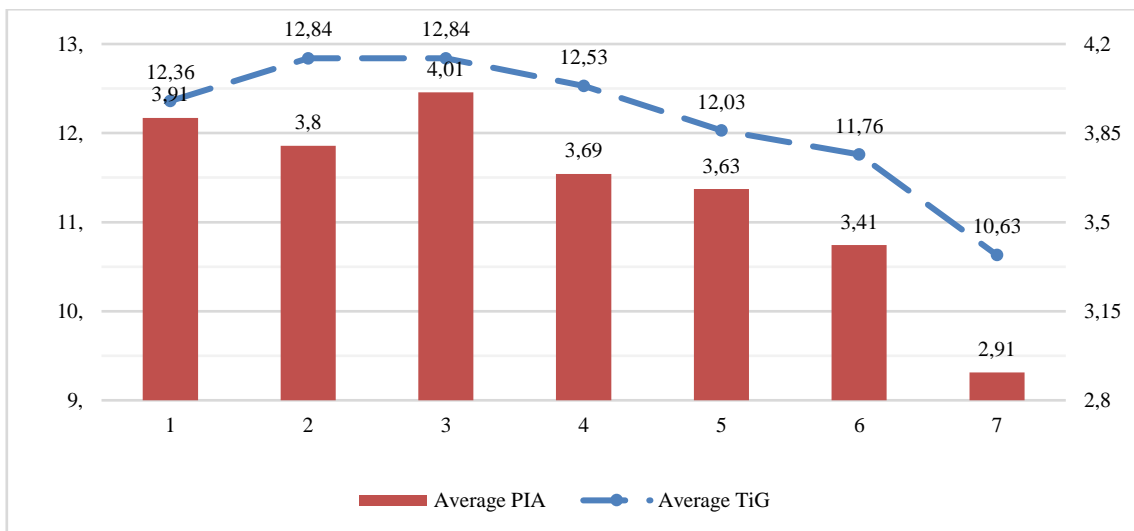


Figure 3. Trust in government (left vertical) and perceived income adequacy (right vertical) vs intention to emigrate (horizontal axis)



Preliminary analysis shows the existence of a negative association between IE and TiG, IE and LS, and IE and PIA (see Figures 2 and 3). We observe a downward co-movement between all variables of interest, which increases the probability of finding significant direct and indirect effects of perceived institutional trustworthiness over emigration aspirations among the people of Azerbaijan.

### 3.2. Serial mediation analysis

Though preliminary analysis creates some impression about the relationship between trust in government and emigration intention, serial mediation analysis helps to strengthen the arguments and find robust empirical evidence while controlling for a set of socio-demographic factors. Table 2 tabulates the results from serial mediation analysis – direct and indirect effects of trust in government over the intention to emigrate in Azerbaijan. We apply a 4-step estimation approach and add a group of covariates at each stage to get more reliable results. Model 1 includes only a covariate ( $SS3_i$ ), while Model 2 also includes age, gender, educational attainment and marital status dummies. Religiosity dummies are added in Model 3. Finally, Model 4 includes employment status dummies in addition to all covariates in Model 3.

Table 2 reports direct and indirect effects at all stages. To conserve space, we only present the final specification (Model 4) regression outputs in Appendix A. Regression output from Model 1-3 can be shared if requested.

According to Appendix A, the causality from TiG and LS to IE is negative and statistically significant at 99% confidence level. At the same time, PIA is a weak determinant of emigration aspirations in Azerbaijan ( $0.05 < p < 0.1$ ). Simultaneously, TiG and PIA have an increasing effect on the self-reported happiness of individuals ( $p < 0.01$ ). The impact of TiG over PIA is also positive and statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ).

Serial mediation analysis confirms the existence of significant direct and indirect effects of trust in government over the intention to emigrate among the people of Azerbaijan. Regardless of the content of covariates, the total effect and direct effect is statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ). Despite having different covariates, all models present almost the same results about the significance of indirect channels. At a 95% confidence level, indirect effects through the second and the third channels are found to be significant ( $0 \notin [BootLLCI; BootULCI]$ ). However, the indirect effect of trust in government through perceived income adequacy is not significant at a 95% confidence level ( $0 \in [BootLLCI; BootULCI]$ ).

Taking Model 4 into consideration, results show that a 1-point increase in institutional trustworthiness score decreases the emigration aspiration of an individual by 0.075 points while holding other factors fixed, on average. 68.2% ( $\frac{-0.0513}{-0.0754} = 0.682$ ) of the impact happens directly from the trust in government to intention to emigrate, while the remaining 31.8% ( $\frac{-0.0240}{-0.0754} = 0.318$ ) goes through indirect channels. As mentioned above, the causality from institutional trustworthiness to emigration intention of people in Azerbaijan indirectly through perceived income adequacy (*IndI*) is not statistically significant at a 95% confidence level.

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Table 2. Results of Mediation Analyses: direct and indirect effects of trust in government (X) on intention to emigrate (Y) considering individuals' perceived income adequacy (M1) and life satisfaction (M2)

	<i>a</i>	<i>SE</i> <i>BootSE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>LLCI</i> <i>BootLLCI</i>	<i>ULCI</i> <i>BootULCI</i>
<b>Model 1: Covariates (<i>SS3<sub>i</sub></i>)</b>						
<i>Total effect</i>	-0.0975	0.0091	-10.71	0.0000	-0.1154	-0.0797
<i>Direct effect</i>	-0.0692	0.0092	-7.538	0.0000	-0.0872	-0.0512
<i>Indirect effect (total)</i>	-0.0283	0.0029	-	-	-0.0341	-0.0226
<i>Ind1</i>	-0.0036	0.0021	-	-	-0.0078	0.0004
<i>Ind2</i>	-0.0130	0.0020	-	-	-0.0172	-0.0092
<i>Ind3</i>	-0.0117	0.0016	-	-	-0.0150	-0.0087
<b>Model 2: Covariates (<i>Age<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Gender<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>School<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>College<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Master<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>PhD<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Married<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Widowed<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>SS3<sub>i</sub></i>)</b>						
<i>Total effect</i>	-0.0782	0.0088	-8.9230	0.0000	-0.0954	-0.0610
<i>Direct effect</i>	-0.0522	0.0088	-5.9001	0.0000	-0.0695	-0.0348
<i>Indirect effect (total)</i>	-0.0260	0.0028	-	-	-0.0316	-0.0206
<i>Ind1</i>	-0.0038	0.0021	-	-	-0.0080	0.0002
<i>Ind2</i>	-0.0110	0.0019	-	-	-0.0148	-0.0075
<i>Ind3</i>	-0.0113	0.0016	-	-	-0.0144	-0.0082
<b>Model 3: Covariates (<i>Age<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Gender<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>School<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>College<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Master<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>PhD<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Married<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Widowed<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Believer<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Religious<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>SS3<sub>i</sub></i>)</b>						
<i>Total effect</i>	-0.0762	0.0089	-8.5469	0.0000	-0.0936	-0.0587
<i>Direct effect</i>	-0.0509	0.0090	-5.6615	0.0000	-0.0685	-0.0333
<i>Indirect effect (total)</i>	-0.0253	0.0028	-	-	-0.0310	-0.0199
<i>Ind1</i>	-0.0036	0.0022	-	-	-0.0080	0.0006
<i>Ind2</i>	-0.0105	0.0019	-	-	-0.0144	-0.0070
<i>Ind3</i>	-0.0111	0.0016	-	-	-0.0143	-0.0082
<b>Model 4: Covariates (<i>Age<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Gender<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>School<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>College<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Master<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>PhD<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Married<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Widowed<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Believer<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Religious<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Employed<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Student<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>Other<sub>i</sub></i>, <i>SS3<sub>i</sub></i>)</b>						
<i>Total effect</i>	-0.0754	0.0089	-8.4245	0.0000	-0.0929	-0.0578
<i>Direct effect</i>	-0.0513	0.0090	-5.6952	0.0000	-0.0690	-0.0336
<i>Indirect effect (total)</i>	-0.0240	0.0027	-	-	-0.0296	-0.0192
<i>Ind1</i>	-0.0034	0.0020	-	-	-0.0075	0.0005
<i>Ind2</i>	-0.0103	0.0018	-	-	-0.0140	-0.0069
<i>Ind3</i>	-0.0104	0.0015	-	-	-0.0134	-0.0077

*Note:* Level of confidence is 95% for all confidence intervals; Number of bootstrap samples for percentile bootstrap confidence intervals is 5000; Cribari-Neto heteroscedasticity consistent standard errors and covariance matrix estimator were used.

*Source:* Authors' own creation

The second and third indirect impact channels have almost the same share in total. Approximately the second channel (*Ind2*) accounts for 13.7% ( $\frac{-0.0103}{-0.0754} = 0.1366$ ) of the total impact and 42.9% ( $\frac{-0.0103}{-0.0240} = 0.429$ ) of the whole indirect effect, while the share of the third channel is 13.8% ( $\frac{-0.0104}{-0.0754} = 0.1379$ ) and 43.3% ( $\frac{-0.0104}{-0.0240} = 0.433$ ), respectively.

Among the covariates, the impact of gender, religiosity and employment status is insignificant at 95% confidence. An individual's age is an important determinant of intention to emigrate ( $p < 0.01$ ), which reveals that younger people have much willingness to emigrate. Emigration intention decreases as the person gets older. Regarding the educational dummies, only the coefficient of "master" is significant at a 5% level which implies an individual with a

master degree has more likelihood to emigrate than others. This is a crucial sign of brain drain from the Azerbaijan economy. Particularly individuals who received a master degree in a reputable foreign university have no language barriers and are estimated to be a greater chance to emigrate. That is an important loss of skilled labour force and the opportunity for knowledge transfer to the national economy.

### **Conclusion and discussion**

The migration issue has been one of the most critical problems in the last decade. Despite some positive impact of remittances for the origin countries (Cazachevici, Havranek and Horvath, 2020; Abduvaliev and Bustillo, 2020), especially emigration of highly skilled individuals should be on the agenda of policymakers. On the other hand, migrant-receiving countries would prefer to host "happy individuals" who can more quickly adapt to the new environment (Ivlevs, 2015) or support the socio-economic development of migrant-sending states (Castles, 2004) to diminish the size of potential emigrants. Learning the motives behind individuals' emigration aspirations can play a key role in understanding the problem's roots and address adequately to find a possible solution. Existing literature already confirms a negative causality from the trustworthiness of public institutions and intention to emigrate (Macchia and Plagnol, 2019; Berggren and Bjørnskov, 2020; Aliyev, Gasimov and Eynalov, 2022). Because trust-building is one of the major responsibilities of the government, policies to increase the trustworthiness of public institutions can be an excellent start to diminish emigration aspirations in a society which is a direct function of good governance perceptions and availability of public services (Mishra and Attri, 2020).

Current research investigates the relationship between trust in government and emigration intentions in a post-soviet resource-rich developing country – Azerbaijan. Despite being a resource-rich country, Azerbaijan has a problem with confidence in public institutions (Aliyev, 2021), showing itself in moderately high emigration intentions in society. Results of serial mediation analysis provide scientific evidence for this argument which happens through direct and indirect channels. Self-reported life satisfaction and perceived income adequacy mediate the relationship between trust in government and the intention to emigrate. 65-70% of the impact happens directly, while mediating impact accounts for 30-35% of the total impact.

Therefore, focusing on enhancing trust in the government may significantly decrease the emigration intention in Azerbaijan society. Here, trust in government implies an individual's confidence in education, health, security forces and juridical systems. Public policies simultaneously enhance the quality of government services, and perceptions about good governance will show themselves as decreasing people's emigration intentions in line with recent studies (Macchia and Plagnol, 2019; Berggren and Bjørnskov, 2020). Meanwhile, increased public trust will affect people's expectations for now and the future (Macchia and Plagnol, 2019) and make people happier (Liu et al., 2020). Increasing happiness will extend the influence of trust-building policies (indirect impact) in addition to directly decreasing emigration intentions among citizens (supporting Aliyev et al. (2021) and Edara (2021). Institutional reforms have the potential to affect life satisfaction in society (Berggren and Bjørnskov, 2020). Developed countries with illegal migration problems and international organizations may play an active role in institutional capacity-building projects.

A key finding is that satisfaction with household income has a weak direct effect on emigration intentions in Azerbaijan. The impact of perceived income adequacy is significant only at a 90% confidence level. However, its impact on life satisfaction is statistically significant. Therefore, satisfaction with income indirectly affects emigration intentions in Azerbaijan.

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## Appendix

## Appendix A. Regression outputs (Equation 4) of serial mediation analyses

Indep. Var.	Outcome variables			
	$IE_i$ (1)	$IE_i$ (2)	$PIA_i$	$LS_i$
TiG	-0.0513*** (0.009)	-0.0754*** (0.009)	0.0882*** (0.008)	0.1872*** (0.026)
$PIA_i$	-0.0382* (0.023)	-	-	2.1472*** (0.055)
$LS_i$	-0.0549*** (0.006)	-	-	-
<i>Covariates</i>				
$Age_i$	-0.0517*** (0.004)	-0.0545*** (0.004)	0.0117*** (0.003)	0.0180* (0.011)
$Gender_i$	-0.0621 (0.067)	-0.0762 (0.069)	-0.3027*** (0.065)	1.1177*** (0.206)
$School_i$	-0.1524* (0.089)	-0.1131 (0.092)	-0.0289 (0.082)	-0.6341* (0.260)
$College_i$	0.1100 (0.103)	0.1428 (0.105)	-0.1441 (0.096)	-0.1882 (0.304)
$Master_i$	0.2134** (0.0954)	0.1252 (0.098)	0.2255** (0.096)	0.9655*** (0.286)
$PhD_i$	0.1432 (0.200)	-0.0009 (0.196)	0.4592** (0.180)	1.3188* (0.602)
$Married_i$	-0.0741 (0.092)	-0.0651 (0.095)	-0.3198*** (0.086)	0.7453*** (0.264)
$Widowed_i$	-0.2755 (0.199)	-0.0801 (0.202)	-0.6297*** (0.167)	-1.7688*** (0.541)
$Believer_i$	-0.1153 (0.095)	-0.1870* (0.097)	0.0717 (0.100)	1.1032*** (0.315)
$Religious_i$	-0.1568 (0.112)	-0.2746** (0.115)	0.2360** (0.115)	1.4735*** (0.359)
$Employed_i$	0.0549 (0.1313)	-0.2469* (0.128)	1.5907*** (0.095)	0.9746** (0.382)
$Student_i$	0.1831 (0.147)	-0.1483 (0.145)	1.2812*** (0.129)	2.3947*** (0.464)
$Other_i$	0.0488 (0.183)	-0.2403 (0.184)	1.4070*** (0.151)	1.2661** (0.519)
$SS3_i$	-0.0723 (0.069)	-0.0337 (0.071)	-0.0411 (0.065)	-0.5859*** (0.203)
$C$	8.5635*** (0.180)	8.1229*** (0.183)	0.8447*** (0.165)	5.6224*** (0.5775)
R	0.435	0.387	0.333	0.633
N	3377	3377	3377	3377

Note: \*, \*\*, and \*\*\* denote rejection of null hypothesis at 10%, 5% and 1% significance level, respectively. Standard errors are in ( ). Cribari-Neto heteroscedasticity consistent standard errors and covariance matrix estimator were used.