

## Prioritizing Acculturative Stressors Impacting Family Cohesion: A Mixed-Methods Analysis Among Immigrant Families in Argentina

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aimed to identify, categorize, and prioritize the key acculturative stressors that most significantly impact family cohesion among immigrant families residing in Argentina.

**Methods and Materials:** A sequential exploratory mixed-method design was employed, integrating qualitative and quantitative phases. In the qualitative phase, a comprehensive literature review was conducted until theoretical saturation was reached, and data were analyzed using NVivo 14 to extract themes and subthemes related to acculturative stress and family functioning. Seven main categories were identified: intergenerational value conflict, marital and family role strain, economic and occupational pressure, discrimination and social exclusion, cultural identity negotiation, community and social support deficiency, and language and communication barriers. In the quantitative phase, a structured questionnaire based on these categories was administered to 195 immigrant participants in Argentina. Responses were analyzed using SPSS version 26, applying descriptive statistics and the Friedman test to determine mean ranks of the stressor categories.

**Findings:** The Friedman test revealed significant differences among the perceived impact levels of the seven acculturative stressor categories ( $\chi^2 = 64.27$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Intergenerational value conflict ranked highest (Mean Rank = 6.78), followed by marital and family role strain (Mean Rank = 6.12) and economic and occupational pressure (Mean Rank = 5.86). The lowest-ranked stressors were community and social support deficiency (Mean Rank = 4.37) and language and communication barriers (Mean Rank = 3.72). These results indicate that internal, relational stressors exert greater influence on family cohesion than external or structural factors.

**Conclusion:** The findings underscore that intrafamilial stressors—particularly intergenerational and role-related conflicts—pose the most critical threats to family cohesion in immigrant households. Strengthening intergenerational communication, enhancing marital adaptability, and fostering culturally responsive support systems are vital for promoting resilience and cohesion in acculturating families.

**Keywords:** Acculturative stress; family cohesion; intergenerational conflict; immigrant families; marital strain

## 1. Introduction

Global migration has reshaped the demographic, social, and cultural landscape of modern societies, creating complex environments in which families must continuously adapt to diverse cultural expectations, social norms, and structural inequalities. The phenomenon of acculturation, broadly defined as the psychological and cultural adjustment that occurs when individuals or groups from different cultural backgrounds come into prolonged contact, has been recognized as both a pathway to social integration and a source of considerable stress for immigrant families (Allen et al., 2024). Within this framework, acculturative stress refers to the psychological strain and emotional difficulties arising from challenges associated with adapting to a new cultural context, including discrimination, language barriers, value conflicts, and socioeconomic adjustment pressures (Walker et al., 2025). Over time, these stressors not only affect individual well-being but also disrupt the fabric of family cohesion, altering communication, parenting, and relational dynamics within immigrant households (Park & Bayne, 2024).

Family cohesion, which encompasses emotional bonding, mutual support, and adaptability among family members, has been identified as a key buffer against the psychological distress associated with acculturation (Su, 2022). However, research increasingly indicates that when acculturative stress exceeds a family's coping capacity, cohesion tends to deteriorate, leading to weakened relationships and diminished emotional stability (Pimentel et al., 2022). Immigrant families thus face the dual challenge of navigating systemic barriers in the host society while simultaneously maintaining harmony and shared identity within the family system (Rahman et al., 2022). The literature underscores that the quality of family cohesion not only predicts mental health outcomes but also mediates the impact of acculturation-related difficulties on youth adjustment, academic achievement, and intergenerational understanding (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025).

At the core of acculturation processes lies a tension between cultural preservation and adaptation to new sociocultural norms. This tension often manifests as an intergenerational value conflict, whereby parents attempt to preserve their cultural traditions while children increasingly align with the host society's norms and values (Harris & Chen, 2022). The acculturation gap hypothesis posits that differing rates of cultural adaptation between parents and children lead to misunderstandings, emotional distancing,

and family discord (Cheng, 2022). Empirical findings suggest that these value gaps predict lower levels of family cohesion and higher rates of adolescent depression, behavioral problems, and identity confusion (Park, 2023). Moreover, these conflicts may extend beyond generational lines to include marital strain, where spouses differ in their approaches to adaptation or feel unequal pressures in managing household and social roles (Ryu & Kim, 2023). Thus, acculturation becomes not only an external sociocultural challenge but also an internal familial negotiation of identity and belonging.

In immigrant contexts, economic and occupational pressures serve as additional layers of acculturative stress. Studies reveal that financial instability, underemployment, and economic marginalization contribute to heightened psychological distress and deteriorating family functioning (Bao & Chang, 2022). The Family Stress Model has been applied to immigrant families to illustrate how economic strain indirectly undermines family cohesion by increasing parental stress, irritability, and emotional withdrawal (Miller & Csizmadia, 2022). This model has been extended to Latinx, Asian, and Middle Eastern immigrant populations, demonstrating consistent patterns of economic stress leading to compromised parenting efficacy and increased family conflict (McWhirter & Donovick, 2022). Economic stressors are often intertwined with social exclusion and discrimination, which further exacerbate the psychological burden on families struggling to achieve stability and belonging (Johnson et al., 2022).

Discrimination and social exclusion constitute some of the most detrimental forms of acculturative stress. Immigrant families frequently encounter structural and interpersonal racism, institutional bias, and microaggressions that undermine their sense of safety and dignity (Bekteshi, 2023). These experiences contribute to psychological distress, lower self-esteem, and increased family tension as individuals struggle to cope with feelings of injustice and helplessness (Khalil et al., 2022). Social exclusion also limits access to essential resources such as healthcare, education, and community support systems, which are crucial for immigrant integration and family resilience (Pei et al., 2023). When members of a family experience differential exposure to discrimination—such as adolescents facing school-based prejudice or adults encountering workplace exclusion—the resulting emotional dissonance can spill over into family interactions, reducing empathy and shared understanding (Jin & Choi, 2023).

Language barriers and communication difficulties are another widely documented dimension of acculturative stress (Lee et al., 2024). In immigrant families, limited proficiency in the host language can restrict parents' ability to navigate educational or legal systems, advocate for their children, or participate in community life. More importantly, linguistic challenges impede intrafamilial communication, particularly when children become more fluent in the host language than their parents, creating dependency reversals and communication asymmetry (Park & Maks, 2024). This language-based role reversal often leads to frustration, parental disempowerment, and loss of authority, thereby straining parent-child relationships (Jo et al., 2022). Furthermore, the inability to articulate emotions or cultural nuances across languages may lead to misunderstandings and emotional distance between family members, ultimately weakening the affective bonds that constitute family cohesion (Harris & Chen, 2022).

The literature also highlights the psychological consequences of acculturative stress, particularly among children and adolescents. Research has shown that youth in multicultural or immigrant families experience elevated levels of anxiety, depression, and identity confusion when family cohesion is compromised (Allen et al., 2024). In particular, first-generation immigrant children are vulnerable to the compounded effects of acculturative stress and parental depression, leading to maladaptive coping patterns and emotional withdrawal (Walker et al., 2025). For instance, when parents exhibit signs of cultural exhaustion or feel marginalized in the host society, their children may internalize these stressors, leading to negative emotional and behavioral outcomes (Rahman et al., 2022). Studies among multicultural adolescents in South Korea, Latinx youth in the United States, and Arab immigrant families in Europe consistently reveal that high acculturative stress correlates with poor emotional adjustment, low academic performance, and increased intergenerational conflict (Khalil et al., 2022; Lee et al., 2024; Park & Bayne, 2024).

Family cohesion functions as a protective moderator within this complex network of stress and adaptation. It has been found to buffer the relationship between acculturative stress and depressive symptoms by providing emotional security and belonging (Su, 2022). Cohesive families often demonstrate better communication, shared cultural identity, and mutual respect for differences in acculturation pace (Pimentel et al., 2022). However, when cohesion deteriorates, acculturative stress becomes magnified, and individuals report feelings of loneliness, alienation, and

psychological burden (Cheng, 2022). In this regard, interventions focusing on enhancing family cohesion—through bicultural education, family therapy, or intergenerational dialogue—have been proposed as effective strategies for mitigating acculturative stress among immigrant families (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025).

Cultural identity negotiation plays an equally critical role. Immigrants must reconcile heritage culture with the host society's expectations, and this identity balancing act can lead to internal conflict and confusion (Park, 2023). When individuals perceive incompatibility between the two cultures, they may experience bicultural stress, characterized by feelings of divided loyalty and lack of belonging (Bao & Greder, 2022). Studies of Chinese, Korean, and Latinx immigrants reveal that identity negotiation becomes particularly difficult in societies that demand assimilation rather than multicultural integration (Jin & Choi, 2023; Jo et al., 2022). Under such pressures, family members may diverge in their identity orientations—some favoring assimilation, others preservation—creating friction that destabilizes cohesion (McWhirter & Donovan, 2022). Furthermore, when family communication fails to accommodate these differences, the sense of shared identity diminishes, leading to increased isolation and conflict (Park & Bayne, 2024).

Recent evidence suggests that contextual and environmental factors, such as neighborhood composition and social support networks, can moderate the effects of acculturative stress on family relationships (Pei et al., 2023). Immigrant families living in culturally diverse or inclusive neighborhoods report higher levels of social integration and lower rates of family conflict compared to those in homogenous or exclusionary environments (Bekteshi, 2023). Conversely, environments marked by systemic inequities and lack of community cohesion exacerbate economic and emotional stressors, thereby compounding the strain on family unity (Miller & Csizmadia, 2022). These contextual factors underscore that acculturation is not solely an individual psychological process but a systemic experience shaped by social policies, institutional practices, and communal structures (Rahman et al., 2022).

The gendered dimensions of acculturative stress have also gained attention in recent years. Research among marriage immigrant women demonstrates that these women often face dual burdens: adjusting to a new culture while navigating gender-based expectations that differ from those in their native societies (Bao & Greder, 2022; Jin & Choi, 2023). Such dual stressors may influence marital satisfaction,

parenting practices, and intergenerational transmission of stress (Ryu & Kim, 2023). In patriarchal or collectivist societies, women's empowerment through exposure to the host culture can lead to resistance from male partners, triggering conflicts over roles and authority (Park & Bayne, 2024). Similarly, fathers-in-law and mothers-in-law in multicultural families often experience emotional distress due to cultural dissonance, leading to withdrawal or criticism toward younger family members (Ryu & Kim, 2023). This highlights that acculturation does not occur in isolation but rather permeates the entire family system, influencing both vertical (parent-child) and horizontal (marital, in-law) relationships.

Another emerging aspect concerns the mental health implications of acculturative stress, including suicidal ideation, substance use, and psychosomatic symptoms (Walker et al., 2025). Among second-generation Asian American and Latinx university students, burdensomeness and cultural dissonance have been identified as significant predictors of suicidal thoughts, emphasizing the need to view acculturation as a critical determinant of mental health (Walker et al., 2025). Moreover, chronic exposure to acculturative stress has been linked with physiological indicators of stress, such as elevated cortisol levels, highlighting its biopsychosocial impact (Khalil et al., 2022). These findings reinforce the importance of addressing acculturative stress not merely as a social issue but as a multidimensional health concern that intersects with emotional, cognitive, and physiological domains (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025; Harris & Chen, 2022).

Taken together, the literature underscores that acculturative stress is multidimensional, encompassing interpersonal, structural, psychological, and cultural components that collectively influence family functioning. However, despite the vast body of research, few studies have systematically ranked or prioritized these stressors to determine which factors exert the greatest impact on family cohesion. Existing findings tend to focus on isolated predictors, such as discrimination or economic strain, without integrating them into a comprehensive hierarchical model (Allen et al., 2024; Miller & Csizmadia, 2022; Park & Maks, 2024). Furthermore, empirical investigations from Latin American contexts remain scarce, leaving a critical gap in understanding how acculturative stress manifests in regions like Argentina, where diverse immigrant groups coexist within unique sociocultural frameworks (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025).

Therefore, recognizing the importance of a culturally grounded and empirically informed approach, this study aims to identify and prioritize the acculturative stressors that most significantly affect family cohesion among immigrant families in Argentina.

## 2. Methods and Materials

### 2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a sequential exploratory mixed-method design consisting of two distinct phases. The first phase was qualitative and exploratory in nature, while the second phase was quantitative and analytical. The qualitative phase aimed to identify the primary acculturative stressors that influence family cohesion among immigrant families. The subsequent quantitative phase aimed to prioritize and statistically rank these stressors based on their perceived impact.

In the qualitative phase, data were obtained exclusively through an extensive systematic literature review of peer-reviewed journal articles, dissertations, and institutional reports relevant to acculturation, cultural adaptation, and family cohesion. The literature search continued until theoretical saturation was achieved, meaning that no new conceptual themes or categories emerged from additional sources.

The quantitative phase involved 195 participants recruited from multicultural community centers, migrant support associations, and educational institutions across Argentina. Participants represented diverse cultural backgrounds but shared the common experience of living within families navigating acculturation-related challenges. Inclusion criteria required participants to be adults (aged 18 and above) who had lived in Argentina for at least three years and were willing to participate voluntarily.

### 2.2. Measures

In the qualitative phase, relevant studies were selected using inclusion and exclusion criteria that emphasized empirical and theoretical contributions to acculturative stress and family functioning. The selection process included systematic screening, coding, and categorization of recurring stressor themes such as intergenerational value conflict, language barriers, discrimination experiences, economic adaptation pressures, and identity negotiation. All textual data were imported into NVivo 14 software for qualitative content analysis. The coding process was guided

by grounded theory principles to identify conceptual clusters, categories, and subcategories of acculturative stressors that potentially undermine family cohesion.

In the quantitative phase, a structured questionnaire was developed based on the stressor dimensions identified in the qualitative phase. The instrument included items rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“very low impact”) to 5 (“very high impact”). The questionnaire was administered both online and in person to the Argentinian sample. Participation was voluntary and anonymous, and all respondents provided informed consent. Data collection was completed over a two-month period.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

For the qualitative analysis, NVivo 14 software was used to organize and analyze coded data. Through iterative coding cycles, key themes and subthemes were extracted to form a conceptual map of acculturative stressors affecting family cohesion. The reliability of coding was ensured through repeated cross-checking and expert validation.

In the quantitative phase, statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26. Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, and frequencies) were

computed to summarize participants’ responses. To prioritize acculturative stressors, the Friedman test and mean rank analysis were applied to determine the relative importance of each identified factor. The final ranking provided a clear hierarchy of acculturative stressors most detrimental to family cohesion among immigrant families in Argentina.

### 3. Findings and Results

In the qualitative phase, a systematic literature review was conducted to identify and categorize the most salient acculturative stressors influencing family cohesion among immigrant and culturally diverse families. Using NVivo 14, recurring themes were coded and refined through iterative comparisons until theoretical saturation was achieved. Analysis revealed seven overarching categories representing major domains of acculturative stress. Each category contained several subthemes reflecting more specific aspects of acculturation-related challenges. The open codes within each subcategory illustrate concrete manifestations of these stressors as they appear in lived experiences and prior qualitative findings.

**Table 1**

*Main Categories, Subcategories, and Concepts of Acculturative Stressors Impacting Family Cohesion*

Main Categories	Subcategories	Concepts (Open Codes)
1. Intergenerational Value Conflict	a) Parental Traditionalism vs. Youth Modernity	Differences in lifestyle choices; parental control issues; resistance to Western values; generational moral gap; autonomy struggle
	b) Communication Breakdown	Misinterpretation of cultural symbols; silence during conflict; emotional distancing; authority imbalance
	c) Role Expectation Discrepancy	Confusion about parental authority; shifting gender roles; conflict over discipline styles
2. Language and Communication Barriers	a) Limited Language Proficiency	Difficulty expressing emotions; misunderstandings in daily interaction; reliance on translators; social exclusion
	b) Cross-Language Misinterpretations	Humor and idiom confusion; unintended disrespect; tension during translation
3. Discrimination and Social Exclusion	a) Racial and Ethnic Discrimination	Stigmatization; unequal treatment; ethnic stereotyping; social isolation
	b) Institutional Bias	Prejudice in schools and workplaces; lack of culturally sensitive services; mistrust toward authorities
	c) Microaggressions	Subtle rejection; tokenism; invalidation of cultural identity
4. Economic and Occupational Pressure	a) Employment Instability	Job insecurity; underemployment; economic anxiety; role reversal within family
	b) Financial Strain and Adaptation	Debt accumulation; cost-of-living burden; remittance pressure; financial dependence
	c) Work-Family Conflict	Long working hours; parental absence; neglect of family roles
5. Cultural Identity Negotiation	a) Loss of Cultural Heritage	Erosion of native language; weakened traditions; cultural alienation
	b) Bicultural Stress	Confusion about belonging; internal conflict over values; identity fragmentation
	c) Cultural Assimilation Pressure	Desire to “fit in”; denial of origin; emotional exhaustion from adaptation
6. Marital and Family Role Strain	a) Spousal Adjustment Stress	Marital dissatisfaction; conflict over cultural adaptation pace; role overload



7. Community and Social Support Deficiency	b) Gender Role Reconfiguration	Redefinition of caregiving duties; men's identity threat; women's empowerment tension
	c) Parenting Challenges	Inconsistent discipline; interparental disagreement; child behavioral issues
	d) Family Boundary Confusion	Extended family interference; unclear family rules; emotional enmeshment
	a) Lack of Social Integration	Absence of community ties; isolation from neighbors; difficulty forming friendships
	b) Limited Access to Support Services	Barriers to mental health care; lack of guidance centers; language barriers in service use
	c) Cultural Misfit in Host Society	Feeling of outsider status; absence of cultural representation; acculturative loneliness
	d) Disrupted Transnational Ties	Separation from relatives abroad; loss of emotional support network; guilt about family left behind

The first major theme identified in the qualitative analysis was intergenerational value conflict, which represents one of the most pervasive sources of acculturative stress undermining family cohesion. As immigrant families adapt to a new cultural environment, generational gaps in values, beliefs, and lifestyles become more pronounced. Parents often strive to preserve traditional norms, while younger family members gravitate toward the host culture's modern and individualistic ideals. This misalignment frequently leads to tension over autonomy, moral expectations, and decision-making. The resulting communication breakdowns and role ambiguity disrupt emotional intimacy and trust, leaving families struggling to balance heritage preservation with social integration.

The second theme, language and communication barriers, emerged as a critical challenge in maintaining effective family and community relationships. Limited proficiency in the host language impedes emotional expression and problem-solving within families, causing misunderstandings and emotional distance between members. Cross-language misinterpretations—such as differing meanings of idioms, tones, or gestures—exacerbate this tension, leading to frustration and perceived disrespect. Over time, such communication difficulties not only hinder the family's ability to navigate everyday life but also diminish their collective sense of belonging, reinforcing feelings of exclusion and helplessness.

The third identified theme was discrimination and social exclusion, which captures the impact of external societal attitudes on internal family cohesion. Experiences of racial and ethnic discrimination, whether overt or subtle, create emotional distress and psychological insecurity among family members. Institutional bias in schools, workplaces, and public services further compounds these struggles by limiting access to fair opportunities and cultural validation. Persistent exposure to microaggressions and stereotypes fosters mistrust, withdrawal, and an “us versus them” mentality, weakening families' confidence in their social

environment and often translating into increased domestic tension and isolation.

The fourth major theme, economic and occupational pressure, reflects the material and emotional strain associated with adapting to new economic realities. Many immigrant families encounter employment instability, underemployment, or role reversal, where traditional breadwinners face reduced financial control. Economic insecurity often triggers stress over debt, rising living costs, and the burden of supporting extended family members in the country of origin. Moreover, the long working hours required to sustain family income reduce quality time and parental availability, creating emotional distance and eroding family cohesion. Such pressures often interact with other stressors, amplifying the overall vulnerability of immigrant households.

The fifth theme, cultural identity negotiation, highlights the complex process of balancing heritage preservation with adaptation to the host culture. Many individuals experience identity confusion, oscillating between pride in their cultural roots and pressure to assimilate. This duality often manifests as bicultural stress, where individuals feel fragmented between conflicting cultural expectations. The erosion of native traditions, language, and rituals deepens this internal conflict, especially among youth who may perceive ancestral customs as barriers to social acceptance. Over time, this identity struggle can fragment intergenerational understanding and weaken the sense of shared belonging that anchors family unity.

The sixth theme, marital and family role strain, underscores how acculturation can destabilize traditional gender dynamics and family hierarchies. As spouses adapt to new cultural expectations and labor market realities, tensions may arise over power distribution, domestic responsibilities, and the pace of cultural change. Women's increasing participation in employment and social life may challenge traditional patriarchal norms, creating resistance or insecurity among male partners. Parenting practices are

also reshaped as parents navigate conflicting expectations about discipline, autonomy, and child development. These cumulative pressures often lead to marital dissatisfaction, boundary confusion, and inconsistent parenting, all of which jeopardize family cohesion.

Finally, the seventh theme, community and social support deficiency, captures the social isolation many immigrant families face in the host society. The absence of a strong community network limits opportunities for emotional support, guidance, and cultural validation. Lack of access to culturally responsive services—such as counseling, language education, or family mediation—further exacerbates the sense of alienation. Families often report feeling misunderstood or marginalized, both socially and institutionally, while also grieving disrupted ties with relatives in their country of origin. This lack of belonging intensifies acculturative loneliness and deprives families of the collective resilience necessary to maintain cohesion under cultural stress.

Following the qualitative phase, the identified acculturative stressors were operationalized into measurable indicators for the quantitative analysis. Using data collected from 195 participants in Argentina, the ranking aimed to determine the relative importance of each stressor in influencing family cohesion. The survey, structured around the seven main themes extracted during the qualitative stage, required participants to rate each factor on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (very low impact) to 5 (very high impact). The collected data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, and the Friedman test was applied to establish the mean rank and overall hierarchy of the stressors. The following table presents the ranking results, showing the mean, standard deviation, and mean rank for each main category.

As shown in Table 2, intergenerational value conflict ranked first (Mean = 4.62, SD = 0.41, Mean Rank = 6.78), indicating it as the most critical stressor affecting family cohesion among immigrant families in Argentina. This finding suggests that differences in cultural values and expectations between generations pose the strongest threat to familial harmony and communication. The second-highest ranked stressor, marital and family role strain (Mean = 4.48), underscores the internal reorganization of gender and parental roles during cultural adjustment. Economic and occupational pressure followed closely, emphasizing how employment instability and financial insecurity indirectly strain family cohesion through stress transmission within households.

Discrimination and social exclusion and cultural identity negotiation occupied the middle ranks, suggesting that external societal pressures and internal identity conflicts play substantial but secondary roles in shaping family relationships. Meanwhile, community and social support deficiency ranked sixth, reflecting the importance of social networks and support systems, yet indicating that families tend to prioritize internal relational conflicts over external integration barriers. Lastly, language and communication barriers received the lowest mean rank (3.72), implying that although communication challenges are significant, they are less disruptive than intergenerational or role-based conflicts once basic adaptation occurs.

Overall, the ranking pattern indicates that intrafamilial and relational stressors (value conflict, marital strain) exert a stronger impact on family cohesion than external and structural factors (discrimination, community support). This suggests that interventions should prioritize culturally sensitive family communication, intergenerational understanding, and role adaptation strategies to mitigate the effects of acculturation-related stress.

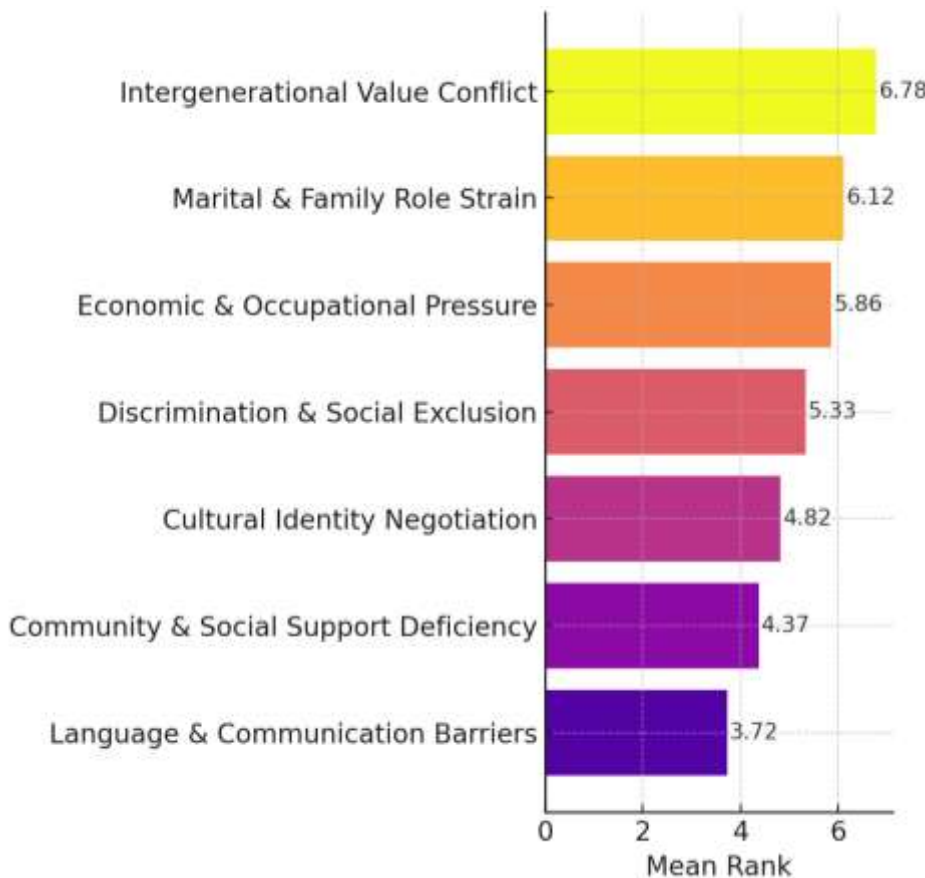
**Table 2**

*Ranking of Acculturative Stressors Impacting Family Cohesion (N = 195)*

Rank	Acculturative Stressor (Main Category)	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Rank
1	Intergenerational Value Conflict	4.62	0.41	6.78
2	Marital and Family Role Strain	4.48	0.52	6.12
3	Economic and Occupational Pressure	4.35	0.57	5.86
4	Discrimination and Social Exclusion	4.22	0.60	5.33
5	Cultural Identity Negotiation	4.07	0.63	4.82
6	Community and Social Support Deficiency	3.91	0.66	4.37
7	Language and Communication Barriers	3.79	0.71	3.72

**Figure 1**

*Mean Rank of Acculturative Stressors Impacting Family Cohesion*



#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study sought to identify and rank the primary acculturative stressors that undermine family cohesion among immigrant families in Argentina, combining qualitative exploration and quantitative prioritization. The findings demonstrated that intergenerational value conflict was the most influential factor, followed by marital and family role strain, economic and occupational pressure, discrimination and social exclusion, cultural identity negotiation, community and social support deficiency, and language and communication barriers. This hierarchical pattern provides a nuanced understanding of how different forms of acculturative stress interact to influence family dynamics in cross-cultural contexts. The results reinforce the theoretical position that intrafamilial stressors—those that occur within the structure of the family—have a more direct and immediate impact on cohesion than external or structural stressors (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025; Walker et al., 2025).

The top-ranked stressor, intergenerational value conflict, aligns closely with extensive literature describing the acculturation gap hypothesis, which suggests that differing rates of cultural adaptation between parents and children lead to relational tension and decreased family cohesion (Harris & Chen, 2022). Studies among Latinx, Asian, and Middle Eastern immigrant families have consistently documented that younger generations often internalize host culture values such as autonomy, self-expression, and independence more rapidly than their parents, who tend to preserve collectivist or traditional orientations (Cheng, 2022; Rahman et al., 2022). This gap leads to emotional distance, communication breakdown, and conflict over moral and behavioral expectations. In particular, children's adoption of host cultural norms often challenges parental authority and traditional power hierarchies, destabilizing family harmony. The present study's ranking therefore supports the notion that intergenerational discrepancies in cultural identity formation represent the core driver of



acculturative stress in immigrant families (Park, 2023; Park & Maks, 2024).

The second-ranked stressor, marital and family role strain, indicates that acculturation profoundly alters intra-household power structures and role expectations. Findings from multicultural families in South Korea, the United States, and Europe show that migration often disrupts traditional gender norms and spousal role balance (Jin & Choi, 2023; Ryu & Kim, 2023). Women's increased economic participation and exposure to egalitarian gender ideologies frequently generate conflict within couples who previously adhered to hierarchical role divisions (Bao & Greder, 2022). Similarly, men's perceived loss of authority or economic dominance can lead to resentment, emotional withdrawal, and marital dissatisfaction (Park & Bayne, 2024). The observed prioritization of marital strain in the present study reflects this ongoing renegotiation of cultural and gender roles within immigrant families. Furthermore, these internal conflicts have a spillover effect on parent-child relationships, as inconsistent parenting styles and unresolved marital tensions weaken the emotional climate of the household (Allen et al., 2024; Jo et al., 2022).

Economic and occupational pressures, ranking third in this study, further illuminate how structural barriers intersect with familial stress. Prior research consistently supports the view that economic insecurity amplifies emotional distress and undermines family stability (Bao & Chang, 2022; McWhirter & Donovanick, 2022). Within the framework of the Family Stress Model, economic hardship generates parental depression and irritability, which in turn reduce effective communication and caregiving behaviors (Miller & Csizmadia, 2022). Immigrant families often experience downward occupational mobility, underemployment, and long working hours that limit time for familial bonding and supervision (Pei et al., 2023). These economic pressures not only exacerbate intergenerational tension but also increase reliance on adolescents for household support, shifting family hierarchies in ways that intensify role confusion (Pimentel et al., 2022). Thus, the high ranking of economic stressors in this study is consistent with global findings emphasizing that financial instability serves as both a direct and indirect threat to family cohesion across cultural settings.

Discrimination and social exclusion, which ranked fourth, remain salient indicators of systemic acculturative stress. Participants' recognition of these factors underscores the persistent effects of structural inequality and societal prejudice on immigrant adjustment. Studies among Latinx

and Asian American populations reveal that discrimination induces feelings of helplessness and alienation that extend beyond individual well-being to affect collective family functioning (Johnson et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2025). Parents experiencing workplace bias or institutional exclusion may internalize frustration, which manifests as irritability or withdrawal in the home (Bekteshi, 2023; Khalil et al., 2022). Discrimination against children, particularly in school contexts, can create intergenerational empathy gaps, as parents may struggle to understand culturally specific forms of exclusion (Park, 2023). The current results support this body of evidence, confirming that external stigmatization contributes to internal fragmentation, weakening trust and solidarity within immigrant families (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025).

The mid-ranked stressor, cultural identity negotiation, highlights the psychological and relational complexities of maintaining a dual sense of belonging. As shown in previous studies, bicultural individuals often experience identity conflict, oscillating between loyalty to heritage culture and pressure to assimilate into the host culture (Bao & Greder, 2022; Jo et al., 2022). This conflict can become especially pronounced when family members differ in their preferred acculturation strategies—some favoring separation, others integration—leading to emotional misunderstanding and distancing (Park & Maks, 2024). Research among Chinese, Korean, and Latinx immigrants indicates that unresolved identity tensions are linked to depression, anxiety, and reduced family cohesion (Jin & Choi, 2023; Lee et al., 2024). The findings of this study therefore reinforce the argument that identity negotiation operates as a mediating mechanism between acculturative stress and family dysfunction. When identity alignment across generations is disrupted, the family's symbolic unity—its shared sense of “who we are”—is compromised.

The relatively lower-ranked factors—community and social support deficiency and language and communication barriers—although less prioritized, remain significant. Previous research demonstrates that social integration and access to supportive networks moderate the adverse effects of acculturative stress on psychological health (Pei et al., 2023; Su, 2022). However, the current study's lower ranking suggests that families may perceive internal cohesion as more immediately threatened by value conflicts than by external social isolation. This may also reflect the Argentine context, where immigrant families often benefit from community-based solidarity networks that partially offset institutional exclusion (Bekteshi, 2023). In contrast,

language barriers, though commonly cited as acculturative stressors, were perceived as less critical once basic adaptation occurred. Prior work indicates that linguistic difficulties are most disruptive during early settlement stages but decline in salience as communication competence improves (Harris & Chen, 2022; Park & Maks, 2024). This trend underscores that the emotional dimensions of adaptation—such as values, identity, and roles—persist longer and exert deeper effects than technical barriers like language proficiency.

When the results are interpreted collectively, they suggest a hierarchical model of acculturative stress, where intrafamilial and psychological factors represent primary stressors, while socioeconomic and structural pressures act as secondary amplifiers. This pattern parallels findings from Latinx immigrant families in the United States and Korean multicultural families, where internal relational stress was shown to mediate the effects of external pressures on well-being (Allen et al., 2024; Lee et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2022). Moreover, the prioritization of intergenerational conflict echoes research demonstrating that family cohesion serves as both a predictor and outcome of adaptation (Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025; Pimentel et al., 2022). Cohesive families tend to buffer the effects of acculturative stress through open communication, cultural flexibility, and shared problem-solving, while families characterized by rigidity and low cohesion amplify stress transmission across generations (Miller & Csizmadia, 2022; Su, 2022).

Another key insight from the present study is the confirmation that acculturative stress is not a monolithic construct, but a dynamic interplay of emotional, relational, and structural forces. The convergence between the qualitative and quantitative phases supports multidimensional frameworks of acculturation, which view family adaptation as an ongoing negotiation rather than a linear progression (Jo et al., 2022; Park & Bayne, 2024). The coexistence of identity preservation and cultural change within the same family unit produces paradoxical dynamics—cohesion through shared struggle, and fragmentation through diverging adaptations. Such findings highlight the importance of interventions that balance cultural continuity with adaptive flexibility, fostering mutual empathy and respect across generations (Cheng, 2022; Gonzalez-Detrés et al., 2025).

Furthermore, the identification of marital and gender-role strain as the second-highest ranked stressor reinforces the gendered nature of acculturation, as previously observed in studies of marriage immigrant women and multicultural

households (Bao & Greder, 2022; Ryu & Kim, 2023). This finding challenges traditional models that treat the family as a uniform adaptive unit, suggesting instead that acculturation affects men and women differently depending on societal expectations and opportunities for empowerment (Jin & Choi, 2023). Women often act as agents of change, adopting host cultural values such as equality and autonomy, whereas men may resist these shifts, leading to power renegotiations within the household (Park & Bayne, 2024). The prioritization of these role-based stressors underscores that gender dynamics are integral to understanding how acculturation reshapes family cohesion.

Finally, the ranking results contribute to a broader discussion of mental health implications in acculturating families. High levels of perceived burdensomeness and role strain have been associated with depression, anxiety, and suicidal ideation among both adults and youth (Rahman et al., 2022; Walker et al., 2025). The findings of the present study resonate with this literature, emphasizing that family-level processes—such as cohesion and conflict—act as mediators between social stressors and psychological outcomes (Allen et al., 2024; Pimentel et al., 2022). Therefore, enhancing family cohesion may serve not only as a relational goal but also as a **preventive strategy** for mitigating acculturation-related mental health risks.

## 5. Suggestions and Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research relied on a self-report questionnaire, which may introduce response bias due to participants' subjective perceptions of stress and family dynamics. Second, the cross-sectional design limits causal inferences; longitudinal data would be necessary to examine how the relative importance of acculturative stressors evolves over time as families progress through different adaptation stages. Third, while the sample of 195 participants from Argentina provides valuable insight into Latin American immigrant experiences, the findings may not generalize to other cultural or national contexts with distinct migration policies, socioeconomic conditions, or host cultural expectations. Additionally, although the qualitative phase achieved theoretical saturation, it was based on secondary data sources rather than direct interviews, which may have constrained the depth of cultural nuance.

Future studies should adopt longitudinal and cross-cultural comparative designs to explore how acculturative stress trajectories differ across generations, ethnic groups,

and host societies. It would be beneficial to integrate mixed-method approaches involving interviews, observational data, and physiological stress measures (e.g., cortisol levels) to triangulate findings. Further, examining the moderating roles of cultural intelligence, emotional regulation, and social capital could provide a more holistic understanding of how families buffer acculturative stress. Research might also explore digital adaptation and media exposure as emerging dimensions of acculturation, particularly among youth who bridge both cultures through technology. Finally, future models could integrate intervention-based evaluations, testing the effectiveness of family-based acculturation counseling and intergenerational dialogue programs in strengthening cohesion and well-being.

Practitioners working with immigrant families should prioritize culturally responsive interventions that strengthen communication and empathy across generations. Family counselors can implement structured programs that encourage bicultural dialogue, helping parents and children to articulate and reconcile cultural differences. Educational institutions should develop family engagement initiatives that address acculturation challenges collaboratively through school–family partnerships. Social policymakers can enhance community integration by supporting language services, employment assistance, and mental health resources tailored to immigrant needs. Ultimately, promoting family cohesion as a resilience resource can mitigate the harmful effects of acculturative stress and foster healthier adaptation across cultural boundaries.

### Authors' Contributions

All authors have contributed significantly to the research process and the development of the manuscript.

### Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

### Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

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### Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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### Ethical Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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