SOCIAL DISTANCE TOWARDS MIGRANTS IN BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA AND THE ROLE OF SOCIAL WORK IN THEIR INTEGRATION

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ABSTRACT:

The paper discusses the domicile populations' attitudes towards migrant population and the mediating role of social work in Bosnia and Herzegovina – a prevailing migrant hotspot on the Balkan route. This empirical study relies on the theory of cultural conflicts and uses the Bogardus Social Distance Scale. It draws from the first-hand data, involving 300 respondents from the local population, who were surveyed in the cities with the highest density of migrants. The results yield an explicitly high social distance score, not influenced by the ethnic affiliation of the domicile population. The study suggests that social workers should take a proactive role in mitigating risks of the idenitified ruptures between the locals and the migrants. It notes the importance of applying all three theoretical and methodological approaches to social work: work with individuals, to support the adaptation to the administrative and socio-cultural requirements of the receiving society; work with the migrant groups, to enable migrant families and other social groups to maintain or (re)establish high-social cohesion and influence on their own group members; work in the community, which would most effectively connect the local and the new migrant population around commonly identified social needs and issues.

Introduction

The countries of the Western Balkans (hereinafter: WB) have traditionally been labour emigration countries as well as being affected by war-displacement in their recent history. Bosnia and Herzegovina (hereinafter: BiH), in particular, was severely affected by war-induced displacement during the 1990s' dissolution of Yugoslavia, when around 2.5 million people were forced to flee their homes. During

this period in BiH (1992-1995) .half of the country's population forcibly migrated. Of nearly four and a half million inhabitants at the time, over one million left the country and settled in more than 150 countries of the world, while another million migrated internally and resettled among the same ethnic population (Ministry of Human Rightsand Refugees of BiH, 2005).

In the post-war period, the process of rights-based return, headed by the international community as a part of the peace-building efforts, has led to over a million of returns to BiH – statistically counted through the property restitution process – although sustainable return has been difficult to achieve, and in the past decade there has been a large scale brain drain and increase in labour emigration from BiH (Porobić, 2017). In general, BiH has kept its multiethnic and multiconfessional communities by politically and territorially separating the three major ethnic groups (Bosniak, Croat and Serbs) into an ethnically homogenised society. The sense of belonging to an ethnicity in BiH is primarily based on the confessional affiliation in that the ethnic and broader cultural identity is based on the respective religious identity: Bosniaks with Islam, Croats with Catholicism, and Serbs with Orthodoxy. At the same time, while the efforts are still being invested in finding the models for dealing with the war past and ethnic segregation, these days there is an increase in immigration and transition from the countries outside of the WB region. The trend of migrant influx to Bosnia and Herzegovina started in March 2016, after closing the so-called Balkan route, which, until then, went from North Macedonia to Hungary and Croatia. The government statistics on illegal crossings collected by the BiH Border Police point to three main directions of irregular migration: one from Serbia to the city of Bijeljina, the other from Serbia to the towns of Višegrad and Zvornik, and the third one from Montenegro towards the city of Trebinje and the towns of Bileća, Gacko, and Foča. Thus, the majority of entrances are recorded from the two countries with which BiH borders in the south (Serbia and Montenegro), with the same individuals attempting to exit BiH and enter the EU area across the border with Croatia further in the north. (Jukić, Mitrović, Džumhur, 2018, p. 58). Nearly 70,000 refugees and migrants from the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa have passed through Bosnia-Herzegovina in the past three years, according to the International Organisation for Migration (IOM).

Today, according to the IOM, some 6,000 of them live in five main camps scattered across the country, run by this United Nations agency in coordination with local authorities. The situation in these camps is grave and there are various reports of human rights abuses, especially at border crossings with the EU in the Una-Sana Canton, of northwestern Bosnia (Amnesty International Country Report for Bosnia and Herzegovina, 2021). While the EU is failing to effectively address the humanitarian crisis unfolding on its doorstep, the economic deprivation of BiH, high unemployment rates, a complex political system, corruption, and war

legacies all contribute to increasing resentment towards migrants, thus creating a crisis within a crisis.

In connection with this situation, we want to investigate the domicile populations' intolerance towards the migrants on the territory of BiH. Numerous media reports testify to tensions and latent or open conflicts between the local population and the migrants. The question arises whether these conflicts are sporadic or they are an indication of a generally negative attitude of the domicile population towards migrant populations. Do people in BiH reject to interact and accept the presence of migrants in their communities? Is there a real social distance between "us" and "them" (the population of BiH and the migrants) and how significant is it? What is it affected by? Finally, what should be the role of social work in the present societal context?

The research presented here has shown that the social distance of BiH population towards the migrants is neither influenced by biological factors (sex, age) nor by social factors (place of residence and level of education), with the ethnic affiliation of the domicile population featuring a certain level of impact. However, despite the ethnic factor and the potential of the in-group ethnic diversity of the local population to absorb the migrants' cultural diversity, the results of the study clearly indicate a unilateral intolerance towards migrants, perceived as 'other' and 'different' infringing on the *perceived domestic cultural space*. In the following text, these results and methods are further explicated and discussed. We also reflect on the future role of social workers in mediating the societal impacts of our findings.

1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: CULTURAL CONFLICTS THEORY

The theory of cultural conflict, developed within the Chicago Sociological School, is grounded in studying the integration of new generations of immigrants in the United States. The basis of this theory is the idea that cultural style, values, and beliefs determine the behaviour of immigrants in their new environment. If this new social environment does not provide an aswer to the internalised system of values, beliefs, and experiences the migrants carry from their home environment, there is a possibility of conflicting norms and values arising during the integration process in the host society. As was noted early on "A migrating person … is more than flesh and bones, more than clothes, a bundle on his back, and a satchel in his hand - he is a cultural medium, and a part of the whole human life that preceded him." (Bogardus, 1928, p. 3).

Moreover, Thorsten Sellin (1938), an American sociologist of Scandinavian origin, considered cultural conflict as a consequence of collisions of normative systems of different ethnic groups, in situations where an individual or group is influenced by two different cultures - the rules of behaviour of the immigrant ethnic group and the rules of behaviour of the majority, domicile ethnic group - and

in situations when these apply to some specific life situation of a person. Hence, the pluralism of cultures and systems of social values leads to a different definition of preferred patterns of behaviour. Migration of people is, at the same time, the migration of norms of a cultural area that come into contact with the norms of another cultural area. The emergence of the theory of cultural conflict has contributed mostly to the study of labour migration, which implies movement of the population from unfavourable social conditions to the more favourable ones. The arrival of immigrants with patterns of behaviour that differ from domicile cultural norms is considered to pose a risk of inter-group conflicts, resultant from the 'unacceptable' social behaviour or social deviations.

Connected to this risk is a notion of social distance between the interacting groups. The concept of social distance in social psychology was introduced by Emory Bogardus, under the influence of sociologists like Park (1924), who by social distance imply different degrees of understanding feelings of intimacy that occur in different social situations and in different social relationships. More explicitly, the concept of social distance expresses the degree of closeness in social relations that a person accepts with members of social groups, and it can vary from close and warm relationships through indifferent to hostile towards either whole social group(s) and their values, or individual memebers of the group(s) (Supek, 1968; Petz, 1992).

Bogardus published numerous works in 1925; 1928a.; 1928.b .; 1959; 1960 and 1967 (Pilić, 2013 and 2014, p. 530), and developed a well-used scale to measure the degree of closeness, that is, social distance, between different social groups (Petz, 1992, p. 461). The logic of the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, which offers seven degrees of social relationships, is that the degree of closeness a person is willing to have with a member of a particular group, expressed by self-assessment, corresponds to his/her choice and behaviour in real life. Although it is most commonly used for the exploration of ethnic distance, the scale is applied to examine other forms of social distance such as racial, educational, religious, and similar (see Sociological Dictionary, 2007).

The social distance, according to the Bogardus Social Distance Scale, thus largely explains the interactions of people and determines the character of social relationships. Regardless of subsequent criticism, the Social Distance Scale is the oldest measure of social attitudes in sociology and primarily relates to the diversity of interval between particular social relationships. It is still the main instrument for measuring of the ethnic relations and prejudice. However, it should be noted that a high distance score is not always a sign of hostility but also an indication of the extent to which the group is unknown and alien to the respondent. It is also noted that people are inclined to give simplified and general judgments which often serve as the navigation in a social environment in which one's own group is favoured by

distancing the other. Accordingly, the affiliation to one particular group can also be the cause of the intergroup discrimination (Tajfel and Turner, 1986).

By developing this research, we were not only concerned with exploring the prevaling attitudes towards migrants but also connecting the gained research findings with the social work profession in dense migrant communities. The task of social work is to mediate between domestic population and migrants as well as to facilitate the integration of migrants. Effective social work involves cultural sensitivity and practices of familiarising with the cultural patterns and norms of migrants, and it supports the social protection and cohesion withiin the immigrant community. Well-organised migrant communities exhibit functioning social control mechanisms which in turn act to prevent deviant behaviour of their members (Milosavljević, 2009). Likewise, the attitude of the local population and institutions towards immigrants has a significant impact on the possibility of socially unacceptable behaviour. In other words, the attitude of social control institutions like the police and the public opinion toward migrants is an important factor of conflicts and social deviations triggers. In this context, a research into the social distance of BiH residents towards current migrants in their respective comunities can be a guideline for culturally competent social work, as well as further support and social protection practices extended to migrants.

2. METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

The subject of this research is the social distance between the inhabitants of BiH and migrants who pass through the territory of BiH on their way to the EU.

The objective of this research is to establish the distance between the domestic population of BiH and migrants in BiH in terms of biological factors (age and sex), social factors (place of residence and education level), and ethnicity of the inhabitants of BiH.

The main hypothesis is that the social distance between the domestic population and the migrants in BiH is very pronounced, with no significant differences in terms of biological factors (age and sex) and social factors (place of residence and the level of education), while the ethnicity of the inhabitants of BiH affects the level of social distance towards migrants.

The specific hypothesis are that the population of BiH shows a distinctive social distance towards migrants in BiH, that biological factors (age and sex) do not significantly affect the social distance of BiH residents towards migrants, that social factors (place of residence and level of education) do not significantly affect the social distance of BiH residents towards migrants, and that the social distance of BiH residents towards migrants is related to their ethnicity.

The research method used in the study is a questionnaire consisting of two parts. The first part contains socio-demographic data of respondents (sex, age, place of

residence, level of education, ethnicity). The second part is the Social Distance Scale with seven rating sections understood as the cumulative levels of relationship that a person accepts with members of the group such as migrants in BiH. Although the scale is often used in the way that a person completes all the degrees of closeness to which they are ready to commit, a slightly different approach has been used in this study. In this particular case, the respondents identify the highest level of closeness they would agree with towards the migrant population in BiH. The scale consists of the following seven units: 1. Close kinship / marital partner 2. Personal friend 3. Neighbour in the street where I live 4. A colleague at work 5. Citizen in the country where I live 6. A visitor to the country where I live 7. I would expel him/her from the country.

The respondents determine the highest degree of closeness, that is, the degree of interaction they are willing to agree with a migrant group member. The assumption is that the degrees are arranged to cover the "continuum" from the lowest to the highest level of acceptance. The numbers associated with particular categories of social distance point to a certain degree of perceived closeness - a greater number indicates a greater social distance. With average values, it is possible to express how many respondents are willing to accept close relations with members of migrant groups in BiH. The Indicative scores show the results of the social distance of BiH residents towards current migrants in BiH.

The data is collected by individual surveys in the households of the respondents. The survey is conducted by trained student surveyors from the Faculty of Political Science in Banja Luka, and the research involves six surveyors controlled by the authors of this paper as supervisors. The survey is conducted in three locations - three cities where migrants are concentrated after entering BiH (from the direction of Serbia and Montenegro in the cities of Bijeljina and Trebinje, and towards the exit to the Republic of Croatia in the city of Bihać). The choice of locations is determined on the established practice of the local people's contact and ongoing interactions with the migrants on a daily basis, as we aim to examine the perceived degree of acceptable social closeness and distance as a result of this close contact. During the data analysis, the social distance is represented by means of descriptive analysis (frequencies and percentages) and by means of Pearson's coefficient of correlation.

The sample of the survey is determined on the basis of the previously described migration flows in the territory of BiH. Thus, two areas for migrants entering BiH from neighbouring countries of Serbia (Bijeljina) and Montenegro (Trebinje) are selected, as well as one area where migrants stay expecting to leave BiH to neighbouring Croatia (city of Bihać). The method of random selection in the survey is attended by 300 respondents (100 from each of these cities) who belong to the three major ethnic groups in BiH (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs).

The full structure of the respondents consists of 155 men (52%) and 145 women

(48%). The age structure of the respondents is 131 respondents (44%) aged 18-29,, 111 respondents (37%) aged 30-49 , and 58 (19%) respondents older than 50 years. The structure of respondents by ethnicity is as follows: Bosniaks 106 (35%), Serbs 180 (60%), Croats 11 (4%), and other ethnic groups 3 (1%).

2. Results and Discussion

The total level of social distance of BiH residents towards the current migrants is presented in accordance with the social distance index, that is, the arithmetic mean of the responses to the levels of acceptance on a scale of 1 - I would agree to a close relationship to 7 - I would expel him from the country. Social distance and social closeness are in inverse relation, and the higher numerical value represents greater social distance, while the lower one represents social closeness.

Table 1.

Respondent distribution of social distance towards migrants in BiH

Social distance grade/city	Bijeljina	Trebinje	Bihać	Total	%
1. Close kinship / marital partner	0	1	3	4	1.3
2. Personal friend	1	9	12	22	7.3
3. Neighbour in the street where I live	0	4	9	13	4.3
4. Colleague at work	0	0	11	11	3.8
5. Citizen in the country where I live	2	10	6	18	6,0
6. A visitor to the country where I live	21	39	19	79	26,3
7. I would expel him/her from the country	76	37	40	153	51,0
Total number of respondents	100	100	100	300	100
Social Distance Index	6.7	5.7	5.2	5.9	

Of the seven levels of social distance towards migrants, the largest number of the respondents (51%) opted for level 7, or for the option "I would expel him/her from the country". Since such an attitude is expressed by every other respondent, a high degree of non-acceptance of members of migrant groups in BiH by BiH citizens can be noted. A significant percentage of respondents (26.3%) of the migrants accept as BiH visitors, which also indicates a high degree of social distance. These two responses make up 76.3% in total. The percentage of respondents is followed by the option "personal friend", which was stated by 7.3% of respondents, followed by "citizen of the country in which I live" (6%), neighbour on the street where I live (4.3%), "colleague at work" 3.8 and "close kinship/spouse" (1.3%). The arithmetic means (social distance index) of the abovementioned values confirm that the inhabitants of BiH show a notable social distance towards the migrants. For the total number of respondents, the social exclusion index is 5.9 (out of 7 for

the highest social distance to 1 for the highest degree of social closeness). Below are the results that reveal social distance towards migrants with regard to gender, age, place of residence, education, and ethnicity of respondents.

Gender

Although some studies have shown that men are more inclined to express explicit prejudices than women and that women are expected to show lower social distance (according to Ekehammar et al., 2003), this study demonstrates that gender is not a decisive factor in expressing social distance.

Table 2.

The social distance of BiH respondents towards migrants according to sex

Social distance grade/sex	Man	Women	Total	%
1. Close kinship/marital partner	3	1	4	1,3
2. Personal friend	11	11	22	7,3
3. Neighbour in the street where I live	9	4	13	4,3
4. Colleague at work	2	9	11	3,8
5. Citizen in the country where I live	4	14	18	6,0
6. A visitor to the country where I live	39	40	79	26,3
7. I would expel him/her from the country	87	66	153	51,0
Total number of respondents	155	145	300	100
Social Distance Index	5,9	5,8	5,9	

From Table 2, it can be seen that the social distance index in male respondents is almost identical to the social distance index in women (5.9 for men and 5.8 for women). The Pearson coefficient of correlation, ranging around 0 (r = 0.06), confirms the assumption that the full affiliation of the respondents has no significant impact on the degree of social distance. Full and equal participation of men and women in public life of any society is a socially conditioned factor. Namely, different social circumstances determine full and active roles of respective sex in the public and political life as well as male-female relationships. Although in traditional communities such as Bosnia and Herzegovins stereotypes are persistent. the process of emancipation of women has been continuing in the domain of social and cultural affirmation through education, professional engagement, and social and political participation. For this reason, it may be that sex differences could not be found as relevant to social distance index.

Age

In most studies, the age of respondents is viewed as a factor of social distance, and the respondents are considered to have specific characteristics in a particular

period of growing up and personality growth and maturation in general. In this study, the youngest respondents were 18 years old while the oldest were 90.

Table 3.

The social distance of BiH respondents towards migrants according to age

Social distance grade/age	18-29	30-49	50 +	Total	%
1. Close kinship/marital partner	3	1	0	4	1.3
2. Personal friend	14	8	0	22	7.3
3. Neighbour in the street where I live	6	6	1	13	4.3
4. Colleague at work	6	5	0	11	3.8
5. Citizen in the country where I live	8	7	3	18	6.0
6. A visitor to the country where I live	33	34	12	79	26.3
7. I would expel him/her from the country	61	50	42	153	51.0
Total number of respondents	131	111	58	300	100
Social Distance Index	5.3	5.8	6.6	5.9	

The results of the study yield a certain difference between the young and the elderly, in the form of less distance demonstrated by the former (social distance index 5.3) compared to the latter (social distance index 6.6). The social distance index of middle-aged subjects ranks around the average social distance index (5.9). However, Pearson's coefficient of correlation ($r = 0.10$) shows that there is no significant correlation between age and social distance, which confirms the assumption that age is not a significant factor in expressing social distance towards migrants. Although a younger generation is expected to have a mondialistic orientation, openness towards another human being, and less social distance towards members of other cultures, this study finds only a mild tendency of showing less social distance by the respondents aged 18-29. Lifetime does not appear to be a significant factor as well. Obviously, generational affiliation cannot be viewed separately from other situational factors, since the attitude towards members of other social groups is influenced by various socialising agents, such as primary and secondary social groups, institutions like the media, and general (negative) political discourses on migration.

Place of residence

In order to determine the differences in social distance of the respondents regarding the place of residence, the respondents are classified into three groups: respondents living in the city, respondents living in a suburban area, and respondents living in the countryside

Table 4.

The social distance of BiH respondents towards migrants according to the place of residence

Social distance grade/place of residence	City	Suburban area	Village	Total	%
1. Close kinship / marital partner	3	0	1	4	1.3
2. Personal friend	14	7	1	22	7.3
3. Neighbour in the street where I live	6	5	2	13	4.3
4. Colleague at work	7	4	0	11	3.8
5. Citizen in the country where I live	10	5	3	18	6.0
6. A visitor to the country where I live	38	26	15	79	26.3
7. I would expel him/her from the country	48	40	65	153	51.0
Total number of respondents	126	87	87	300	100
Social Distance Index	5.5	5.8	6.5	5.9	

The results (Table 4) show a somewhat greater social distance of the inhabitants of the countryside (social distance index 6.5) in relation to the social distance of the inhabitants of the city (social distance index 5.5) and suburban settlements (social distance index 5.8). Based on the coefficient of correlation (r = -, 08) it is concluded that there is no significant connection between the place of residence and the expressed social distance. The type of settlement in which people live can be a significant indicator of some differences in intercultural coexistence, since everyday communication, living space, homogeneity and the structure of the place of residence form social, cultural, and other relationships among people (Previšić, 1996). In their respective research, some authors point to greater (ethnic) tolerance of people from urban areas (Wilson, 1985; Tuch, 1987). However, starting from the fact that today there is a less pronounced difference between the inhabitants of the countryside and urban areas, it follows from the assumption that the place of residence does not have a significant impact on the level of social distance. Similarly, the places where this research is carried out are not highly urbanised and they do not differ significantly in terms of urban life from the outskirts of a city or in the countryside. Accordingly, the results of this research reveal that the place of residence, as one of social factors, does not exert a significant influence on public opinion today. This is a consequence of the changes that took place during the intensive urbanisation of former Yugoslavia in the 20th century, followed by the recent technological society development that has reduced the gap between rural and urban populations. It additionally contributed to the possibility of equal access to information and the expansion of mass culture products, in this case resulting in uniform anti-migrant sentiments cultivated by the mainstream media vocalising the govermentćs policies. Hence the place of residence (in terms of division into the village, town and suburban settlement) is not a significant factor of social distance.

Education

The structure of the respondents with regard to the level of education is as follows: the respondents who completed elementary school (a total of 32 respondents, including seven respondents without a primary school), the respondents who finished secondary school (199), and the respondents who gained a university degree (a total of 69 respondents are also three Master of Science).

Table 5.

The social distance of BiH respondents towards migrants according to education

Social distance grade/education	Primary school	Secondary school	University degree	Total	%
1. Close kinship / marital partner	0	2	2	4	1.3
2. Personal friend	0	11	11	22	7.3
3. Neighbour in the street where I live	0	8	5	13	4.3
4. Colleague at work	0	6	5	11	3.8
5. Citizen in a country where I live	4	14	0	18	6.0
6. A visitor to a country where I live	2	51	26	79	26.3
7. I would expel him/her from the country	26	107	20	153	51.0
Total number of respondents	32	199	69	300	100
Social distance index	6.7	6	5.1	5.9	

The results (Table 5) show that the respondents of lower level of education feature a somewhat higher social distance towards migrants (the social distance index is 6.7). This index is slightly lower in the respondents with completed secondary school (6), and the lowest is for those with an academic degree (5,1). Therefore, education influences attitudes. Technological advancement and the creation of a "global society" imposes a need for continuous improvement, so that a person with acquired knowledge and skills survives in conditions of market competition. At the same time, as a "citizen of the world," they develop awareness on the necessity of living with each other and of the fact that the human community is a conglomerate of diversity - racial, national, religious, and cultural. All of this should imply a higher degree of tolerance. However, although in this research people with a higher education degree show a somewhat lower degree of social distance towards migrants, the correlation is insignificant (r = -, 025). This confirms the hypothesis that the level of education of the inhabitants of BiH is not a significant factor of social distance towards migrants.

Ethnic background

In the overall sample of the survey, there was a insufficient representation of members of the Croatian ethnic group (11 respondents) and respondents from the so-called others (3). For this reason, the results for these two groups cannot be considered relevant. It should be noted that the share of respondents from these ethnic groups is in line with their share in the overall population structure in the cities where the survey is conducted. Bijeljina and Trebinje are mostly Serb-dominated, and in Bihac the majority of inhabitants are Bosniaks.

Table 6.

The social distance of BiH respondents towards migrants according to ethnic background

Social distance grade/ethnic group	Bosniak	Croat	Serb	Other	Total	%
1. Close kinship / marital partner	2	1	1	0	4	1.3
2. Personal friend	11	2	9	0	22	7.3
3. Neighbour in the street where I live	7	2	4	0	13	4.3
4. Colleague at work	10	1	0	0	11	3.8
5. Citizen in the country where I live	6	0	12	0	18	6.0
6. A visitor to the country where I live	21	1	56	1	79	26.3
7. I would expel him/her from the country	50	6	97	2	153	51.0
Total number of respondents	107	11	179	3	300	100
Social Distance Index	5.5	5.7	6.2	6.6	5.9	

The results of the survey (Table 6) confirm that Serbs show a higher social distance (social distance index 6.2) compared to Bosniaks (social distance index 5.5). In addition, a positive correlation is established between the respective ethnicity of the inhabitants of BiH and the degree of their social distance towards migrants. It can be noted that the initial hypothesis is confirmed by which the social distance of the inhabitants of BiH towards migrants is related to their ethnicity, in that Bosniaks, belonging to the same (Islamic) confessional group as most migrants, show a somewhat less degree of social distance, in contrast to Serbs who, as members of the Orthodox Christian denomination, show a somewhat higher degree of social distance. Yet, this information should be interpreted with more detail and caution. First, this is a very slight correlation (r = 0.20). Secondly, Bosniaks also show an extremely high degree of social distance. In the case of this ethnic group, the social distance index is 5.5, which is close to the average index of 5.9 and not so far from the social distance index of Serbs, which is 6.2. We note that 47% of Bosniaks declare that migrants are to be expelled from the country, and 20% of them agree that migrants are only short visitors to BiH. A much smaller share of the respondents (33%) accept greater closeness. More precisely, only 5% of the respondents agree

to migrants being residents of BiH, 9% to having migrants as colleagues at work, 7% to migrants as neighbours, 10% to migrants as personal friends, and only 2% accept the option of close kinship/spouse with a migrant.

Hence, it is logical to conclude that although there is a slight difference in attitude between Bosniak and Serb ethnic groups in BiH, they have a similar attitude towards migrants in general. In this different BiH ethnic groups affirm the memebership in similar 'national' cultural space despite their ethnic affiliations being strengthened in the post- war BiH. Here we recall that the word ethnicity (from the Greek word "ethnos", that is, people) in ancient times was used as a reference for pagan peoples who were of non-Hellenic origin. The use of this term has retained some of this original derogatory character today (Malešević, 2004). The analysis of frequency of occurrence of key determinants of the notion of ethnicity in numerous definitions has shown that "in these definitions the most commonly mentioned elements are the characteristics of the myth of 'common origin', then of 'common culture', of 'desire to form a group', and of 'language' and 'common symbols' "(Turjačanin, 2014, p. 39).

The specificity of BiH is that it is a multiethnic state in which manifestation of confessional affiliation also serves as a framework for national consciousness, tradition, culture, and even politics as a factor of ethnic homogenisation. Nevertheless, the post-war ethnic homogenisation in BiH did not prove to be a decisive factor in the social acceptance of migrants into the domestic cultural space. Clearly, the ethnic differentiation and diversity of the population of BiH is not tied to multicultural acceptance and inclusivity, but rather a feature of in-group belonging demonstrating an exclusive national cultural identity.

CONCLUSION

The results of social distance research have shown that the population of BiH shows a high degree of social distance towards migrants, since the social index is 5.9, and little readiness to accept these new groups in their cultural environment. More than half (51%) of the respondents favour the highest level of social distance (on a scale of 1 to 7, rounding out option 7), which means that every other citizen of BiH would expel migrants from the country. A slightly lower degree of distance (option 6) is featured by more than a quarter of the respondents, or more exactly 26.3%. They agree that the migrants can be visitors to their country. 22.7% of the respondents selected all other options (from 1 to 5). Only 1.3% of them would agree to a close relationship/spouse, 7.3% to be friends with a migrant, 4.3% to have them as neighbours on the same street, 3.8% to have migrant colleagues at work, and 6% to admit migrants as citizens of Bosnia and Herzegovina. This confirms the main hypothesis of a very pronounced social distance between the local population and migrants in the current BiH society.

Sex, age, place of residence and level of education of BiH citizens do not have a significant impact on their social distance towards migrants. It is found that the ethnicity of the respondents has a slight influence on the social distance towards the migrants, in that the respondents with the same confessional affiliation as the migrants show a somewhat lower degree of social distance. However, it is not significant to overall results of this research which show strong rejection of migrants in the commonly shared national cultural space.

We cotent that theory of cultural conflicts can be more utilised in designing approaches and methods of culturally sensitive social work in order to improve the observed situations and better respond to the needs of migrants in BiH. We propose close engagement of social workers with representatives of the dominant culture (citizens, institutions, and local and other communities) on the one hand, and of migrants with their own social leaders and community representatives, on the other hand. Social workers should be mediators that can navigate, meet and connect comonly identified concerns at the local level and use their authority and services to lower the social distance and/or mitigate any potential conflicts. Accordingly, in addition to the expected social protection that social workers provide to risky and vulnerable groups, the new social work content could include relating to different value systems and lifestyles and coordinating the interactions between domestic and migrant populations. In this sense, the use of cultural conflicts theory as a guided approach to culturally sensitive social work with migrants can be relevant for all the current segments of profession. Looking at the tasks of social workers as intercultural meditators, we suggest focusing on work with individuals, so that migrants can easily adapt to the administrative and cultural requirements of the host society, on social work with a group, for the migrant families and other social groups to establish social cohesion and stability, that is, retain their influence on their in-group members, and on social work in the community, which most effectively connects domestic and new populations in identifying the common needs. This is one of the possible contributions from the social work perspective in tackling the prejudices and high social distance of the population of BiH towards migrants.

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SOCIJALNA DISTANCA PREMA MIGRANTIMA U BOSNI I HERCEGOVINI I ULOGA SOCIJALNOG RADA U NJIHOVOJ INTEGRACIJI

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APSTRAKT:

Rad govori o stavovima domicilnog stanovništva prema migrantima i ulozi socijalnog rada u Bosni i Hercegovini – žarištu migranata na balkanskoj ruti. Ova empirijska studija oslanja se na teoriju kulturnih sukoba. Korištena je Bogardusova skala socijalne distance za ispitivanje 300 ispitanika iz reda lokalnog stanovništva, koji su anketirani u gradovima s najgušćim ulazom migranata. Rezultati pokazuju eksplicitno visok stepen socijalne distance, na koju ne utiču biološki faktori (pol, dob), niti socijalni faktori (mjesto stanovanja i stepen obrazovanja), dok etnička pripadnost domicilnog stanovništva ima određeni uticaj. Studija sugeriše da socijalni radnici treba da preuzmu proaktivnu ulogu u ublažavanju rizika od identifikovanih raskola između lokalnog stanovništva i migranata. Bitno je primijeniti sva tri teorijsko-metodska pristupa u socijalnom radu: socijalni rad s pojedincem, kako bi se migranti lakše prilagodili zahtjevima društva u kome borave; socijalni rad sa grupom, kako bi migrantske porodice i grupe uspostavile kvalitetnu međusobnu koheziju i stabilnost te zadržale uticaj na svoje članove; socijalni rad u zajednici, koji najefikasnije povezuje domaće i dolazeće stanovništvo oko zajedničkih potreba i problema.

Ključne riječi:
migranti, socijalna distanca, kulturalno-konfliktna teorija, medijacija, kulturno osjetljiv socijalni rad