



Eventual Integration or Delayed Transit: Interaction of Residents in Reception Centres with their New Environment in Serbia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of our study was an analysis of reception centre residents' attitudes in the Republic of Serbia toward the state and the local population. Using a questionnaire, we tried to identify the differences in respondents' attitudes toward their new environment depending on their various socio-demographic characteristics. The survey was conducted in the spring of 2019 on a sample of 173 residents of centres using the PAPI method, face-to-face, and voluntary response sampling. The data obtained are the result of descriptive and inferential analysis and were processed by the SPSS statistical data processing program.

Our statistical analysis showed that attitudes of reception centre residents toward their new environment may not correlate strongly with their mother tongue, knowledge of foreign languages, marital status, number of family members, number of minor children in the family, work status, or religion. Instead, it is more like-

ly to depend on their level of education, age, nationality, and gender. Such results show us where we need to improve interaction, especially among women, young people, and people with a low level of education. We can also suggest that, under favourable conditions, these three categories of reception centre residents will be the first to leave the Republic of Serbia, which they probably see exclusively as a transit country. At the same time, older people and people with a high level of education (most likely men) are more likely to integrate into their new environment in the Republic of Serbia. The more interaction they have with local people and institutions and the higher the quality of that interaction, the more likely they are to integrate.

KEY WORDS

refugees' reception centres | integration | asylum seekers | migrants' attitudes | inferential analysis

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INTRODUCTION

Migration is not a new process in the territory of present-day Serbia and the surrounding area. There are several well-known and factually recorded major historical migrations – the Great Migration of Serbs (Čakić 1990), for example, as well as internal migration when Serbia was one of the SFRY republics, like the settlement of Vojvodina after WWII (Blagojević 1979), for example. Regular economic migration and forced migration during and after the division of the SFRY have also taken place.

Now, for the first time, the Republic of Serbia finds itself on the “Balkan Route” of a large-scale forced migration termed by scholars as the “European Migration”, which started in 2015. This has resulted in a large number of refugees and asylum seekers coming to Serbia. This experience is absolutely new to Serbia, as opposed to the historical examples of migration mentioned above, and the difference is particularly emphasised in ethnic terms (Petrović and Pešić 2017). This is because, unlike events like the forced migration of Serbs from Croatia and from Kosovo and Metohia, this time we face a completely different form of interaction because of the newcomers’ different ethnicity, nationality, religion, and language. As this further complicates the already complex issues regarding migrants and their interactions with the native population, we see a reason for scientific research.

These new circumstances have already been noticed in Serbian society, and suggestions of possible interethnic integration versus the original idea of transit have already been raised by academics: “It can be expected that by joining up the European Union and improving socio-economic opportunities, Serbia will become a country of immigration” (Bobić 2013). This thesis has been supported by children of reception centre residents going to Serbian schools and refugees and asylum seekers finding jobs in the local community, which together represent the first recorded cases of structural integration, although Serbia is not the target country for these migrants, nor is it a European Union member. These new circumstances have generated considerable interest in this topic, as is evident through research performed by the non-governmental sector (Vuletić et al. 2016), the academic sector (Lutovac and Mrđa 2018), the international community (UNHCR 2015), and even the Serbian media’s portrayal of migrants (Vukchevich 2019).

This research, as expected, has largely been performed from a domestic perspective. Our work deals with interaction as part of the integration process from the perspective of the refugees and asylum seekers themselves. Simply placing groups in proximity is not enough to ensure positive interactions. Moreover, limited interactions of poor quality can increase negative inter-group relationships (MacInnis and Page-Gould 2015). We hope that through this work, we will at least partially compensate for the defi-

ciency in studying migrants' opinions and perspectives on these issues, so as to improve social cohesion.

The aim of our study was to examine people's interaction with their new environment using descriptive and inferential analysis of the attitudes of refugees and asylum seekers located in all five reception centres in Serbia. The research problem relates to the fact that, so far, research has been performed and published on the attitude of the host society towards migrants, while the attitude of the refugees and asylum seekers themselves towards Serbian society remains outside the scope of scientific work.

Our study focuses on refugees and asylum seekers in the reception centres in Serbia. Our hypothesis is the identification of differences in the attitude of migrants to their new environment according to their various characteristics (gender, age, nationality, religion, family position, number of children in the family, social status, level of education, and language proficiency). If our hypothesis is confirmed, as expected, it will align with similar opinions that are already represented in status construction theory (Ridgeway 2006).

According to a joint statement by the Coalition for Protection of the Rights of Forced Migrants along Euro-Balkan Routes (which brings together organisations from Serbia, North Macedonia, Croatia, and Italy), more than 16,000 refugees entered Serbia in the first half of 2019. At any given time, more than 5,000 of these people are in Serbia, about 3,000 of whom are settled in reception centres. The rest

are living in alternative accommodation, along the open length of the border, or in urban centres. Between 01/01/2019 and 31/08/2019, 7,396 people expressed their intention for asylum in Serbia and 14 refugee protections were granted. Every day, hundreds of migrants enter Serbia from North Macedonia and Montenegro, while hundreds try to leave Serbia in the direction of Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Hungary, and even Romania (Asylum Protection Centre 2019a).

However, that departure of refugees to their desired destinations (which are mostly EU countries) is becoming more and more difficult, especially across Croatia and Hungary, which border Serbia. Those EU countries from the transit station have become an impassable obstacle (Asylum Protection Centre 2019b). This is evidenced by the increasing number of illegal attempts to cross these borders and the increased level of criminal activities that result in the use of force and the deaths of refugees. According to data from the Asylum Protection Centre (2019a), which is a member of the European Council for Refugees and Exiles and the European Asylum Support Office, from the beginning of 2019 until September 19, there were at least 1,256 individual push-backs from neighbouring countries into Serbia, including 472 from Croatia and 485 from Hungary. On the one hand, this situation has contributed to the shifting of views from the humanitarian perspective, which dominated at the beginning of the refugee crisis, towards conflict and greatly reduced

empathy. On the other hand, this justifies newcomers' thoughts about staying in Serbia, and it also explains the fact that the number of asylum seekers in Serbia increased significantly in 2019 according to the Asylum Protection Centre.

Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Integration is a two-way process (Hellgren 2015). "The process in which migrants become accepted into society, both individuals and groups...[Integration] refers to a two-way process of adaptation of both migrants and host societies...[and implies] consideration of the rights and obligations of migrants and host societies, of access to different kinds of services and the labour market, and of identification and respect for a core set of values that bind migrants and host communities in a common purpose" – this is the definition by the International Organization for Migration (2019a). There is an opinion that responsibility in this two-way process lies primarily on the side of the domicile state and society. However, we think it is equally important to investigate and reverse problems with the attitudes of migrants' (refugees and asylum seekers) towards their new environment, in our case towards Serbian society.

"Although the integration of migrants into the receiving society is the result of the interaction of the institutional structures and the migrants themselves, the outcome of the integration process seems to be more dependent on the institutional structure

and attitude of the members of the receiving society towards the immigrants than vice versa" (Institut za migracije i narodnosti 2016: 6). While not disputing the importance of the relationship between the state and society towards migrants (which is the first dimension of the two-way process), we also emphasise the importance of the perspective of the migrants themselves (which is the second dimension of the two-way process) to identify dominant discourses and proposals for preventing discriminatory practices, to preserve or establish the required minimum of social cohesion in mutual interaction.

In our study, we face at least two theoretical challenges. There is no theoretical consensus on the issue of the coexistence of migrants and the receiving society, as evidenced by the various terms used to study this relationship: assimilation, integration, incorporation, inclusion, acculturation, and adaptation. Some theories have been rehabilitated even though they were created in a limited environment, as in the case with assimilation theory, which emerged in the USA. Similarly, the theories of the Chicago School, which were created at the very beginning of the 20th century, are incomparable to ours because of how times have changed (Alba and Nee 1997). Although the concept of culture is widely accepted as a very important factor in the interaction of the local population and migrants, some authors completely exclude these considerations when analysing the integration process (Delanty 2000).

More recent theories refer to a third dimension – the country of origin – in addition to the two mentioned above. In our case, we cannot use this theory because our research focuses on asylum seekers and refugees; it is quite improbable that country of origin will contribute given that the migrants fled their home country in the first place. Perhaps the reason for the lack of the theoretical consensus we have specified here could be found in this point. That is, each broadly used term describes one dimension of the process.

It is impossible to speak with absolute precision about the integration of asylum seekers in Serbia, since their expressed intention for asylum is not usually based on the intention to remain permanently and eventually integrate into Serbian society. This situation is not only typical for Serbia, but also for other nearby countries. Refugees and asylum seekers are not covered by integration programs; however, in some cases such programs grant them limited opportunities if they have a temporary residence permit (Malakhov 2014). In the Republic of Serbia, asylum seekers are not entitled to assistance with integration, although individuals who have been granted asylum are entitled to such assistance according to the law (ZAPZ 2018).¹

This is also logical when taking into account the average refugee residence time: 24-48 hours in regional recep-

tion centres like those in the towns of Vranje or Bujanovac, or three to six months in a permanent reception centre, according to data received from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration. However, many people remain in reception centres for much longer, even over a year, according to data obtained from the Asylum Protection Centre. Either way, it is indisputable that in any of these cases we can benefit from analysing interactions and the existence of relations between the parties involved.

On the theoretical level, social integration indicates principles by which individuals (actors, agents, or subjects) are bound to each other in the social space and it refers to relations among the actors, such as how they accept social rules. The integration of a social system means the *reciprocal interaction* of segments of a certain social structure. Regardless of the direct meaning of integration as a word, it is not presumed that the relations or interactions are harmonious (Beresneviciūtė 2003: 97). “Without interaction, migrants can end up living ‘parallel lives’... In the absence of actual engagement with each other, prejudice and inaccurate stereotypes are more likely to shape attitudes about others. As well as undermining social cohesion, this can undermine migrants’ opportunities to turn any rights of social and economic equality into realities... this can seriously undermine migrants’ empowerment and potential for greater integration” (Orton 2012: 13).

When we talk about social interaction, which is realistic and inevitable,

¹ Both groups are entitled to accommodation, social assistance, healthcare, education, legal assistance, freedom of religion, and access to the labour market, while those who have received asylum are also entitled to family reunification, property, and integration assistance.

we can note that it is an indispensable factor in the theory of integration. For example, Penninx (2007: 10) describes integration as “the process of becoming an accepted part of society,” then distinguishes the three dimensions of integration: legal-political (which includes status achievement, family reunification, and electoral rights), socio-economic (which includes housing, employment, education, healthcare, and social insurance), and cultural-religious (the autonomy of cultural and religious practices, perception, and interaction between immigrants and members of the host (receiving) society interactions in the integration process, which include immigrants and their host society. Penninx (2007: 11-12) also identifies three levels in the integration process: individuals, groups / organisations, and institutions.

Integration is not just about the skills and efforts of refugees themselves, but rather the interaction between refugees and their social environments (Hynie 2018: 272). Clearly, integration and inclusion in society take place primarily through contacts and interactions between people who are under protection and the institutions and citizens of the local communities where they are received and accommodated (Ajduković et al. 2019: 24).

We also find the focus on interaction as a fundamental mechanism of integration in the Common Framework for the Integration of Non-EU Nationals. This document is the first step towards the creation of a coherent European framework for the integra-

tion of non-European Union (EU) nationalities. It proposes concrete national and EU-level measures for putting the Common Basic Principles (CBPs) into practice, together with a series of supportive EU mechanisms. In this document, it is written that: “Frequent interaction between immigrants and EU citizens is a fundamental mechanism for integration.” (EUR-Lex 2010).

Because of all the aforementioned, where we use the term integration in this work, we refer to interaction as an indispensable part of integration theory. There are two dimensions to interaction: unplanned, spontaneous interaction that takes place naturally between people, and planned interaction, such as that between migrants and state institutions. Essentially, one can talk about interaction without integration, but one cannot talk about integration without interaction.

METHOD

Definition of terms

For the purposes of our study, it is necessary to determine the boundaries of the concept of a ‘migrant.’ As part of our work, following the key definitions of the International Organization for Migration, we settled on the following definition: a migrant is an individual who, without coercion, voluntarily, and for personal reasons, moves from his or her place of permanent residence to another place with the intention of permanent residence.

The term is increasingly used as an umbrella term to refer to any “person who moves away from their usual

place of residence, whether internally or across a border”, and regardless of whether the movement is ‘forced’ or voluntary (International Organization for Migration 2019b). Such is the general public perception and media narrative in Serbia that even some people who are professionally engaged in this topic use the umbrella term incorrectly. The UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) recommends that people who are likely to be asylum seekers or refugees should be referred to as such, and that the word ‘migrant’ should not be used as a catchall term to refer to refugees or people who are likely to need international protection. Doing so can risk undermining access to the specific legal protections that states are obliged to provide to refugees (UNHCR 2015).

Asylum seekers are people who have applied for recognition as refugees under the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees (the Convention) (UNHCR 2017). The Convention defines a refugee as a person who has crossed international borders as the result of a “well-founded fear of being persecuted” on account of their religious, political, sexual, or other social identity, and whose country will not or cannot protect them or may, in fact, be the body that is persecuting them (UN 1951: 14).

A refugee is a person who qualifies “for the protection of the United Nations provided by the High Commissioner for Refugees, in accordance with the UNHCR’s Statute and, notably, subsequent General Assembly resolutions clarifying the scope of the

UNHCR’s competency, regardless of whether or not he or she is in a country that is a party to the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol – or a relevant regional refugee instrument – or whether or not he or she has been recognised by his or her host country as a refugee under either of these instruments” (UNHCR 2011: 7).

According to the laws of the Republic of Serbia, which in our case is the receiving country, a refugee is a foreigner who, due to his or her justified fear of persecution because of his or her race, gender, language, religion, nationality, or affiliation with a particular social group or because of his or her political beliefs, is unable or unwilling to be put under the protection of their home state. A refugee can also be a stateless person who is outside the state of his habitual residence and who is unable or unwilling to return to that state because of this fear (ZAPZ 2018).

According to the laws of the Republic of Serbia, an asylum seeker is a foreigner who has applied for asylum in the territory of the Republic of Serbia, but on which no final decision has been made (ZAPZ 2018).

In the Republic of Serbia, there is a special structure for the state regulation of the migration process. This is the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, which implements activities for the protection, return, and integration of migrants on the basis provided by law (ZAPZ 2018; ZS 2019).

The organisational structure of the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration is as follows: the Commissioner manages this structure, which di-

rectly reports to the Missing Persons Department, the Migration and European Integration Department, and the Information Technology Department; there is one Deputy Commissioner, to whom the Reception, Protection, Return, and Implementation of Durable Solutions Department is directly subordinated. This consists of the Reception, Protection, and Return Department and the Coordination Department of Work in Reception Centres. All forms of premises can be used for the housing of applicants for international protection and other categories of migrants, including refugees, while individuals await decisions on their applications for international protection (European Commission 2018).

There are two types of reception centres. The first type are centres where refugees do not stay for any significant period of time. At these centres they get basic help, then move on immediately. At the second type of reception centres, refugees spend an average of three to six months, sometimes much longer. There are five such reception centres in the Republic of Serbia.

The Commissioner also constantly works with an external auditor. Accordingly, all five reception centres we have researched in the Republic of Serbia (in the town of Tutin, the city of Senica, the town of Banya Kovilyaca, the village of Bogovadzha, and in Krnyaca on the outskirts of Belgrade) are administered by the Reception, Protection, and Return Department.

Data collection

In this paper, thanks to the permission we received from the Commissariat for Refugees and Migration, we investigated the relationship of refugees and asylum seekers to their new environment in all five reception centres in Serbia, in spring 2019, on a sample of 173 residents of these centres. The survey was conducted using the PAPI method, face-to-face, and voluntary response sampling. The data were processed by software using the SPSS statistical data-processing program and are the result of descriptive and inferential analysis.

According to the theoretical approach to integration as a two-way process (Hellgren 2015), we focused on migrants (in our case refugees and asylum seekers) themselves as one dimension within that process. To test the hypothesis of our study, we examined the relationship of refugees and asylum seekers to their new environment – in our case towards Serbian society and the state – by surveying and crossing two sets of data.

Following status construction theory (Ridgeway 2006), the first group of questions was designed to collect respondents' profile data: gender, age, mother tongue, foreign language knowledge, marital status, number of family members, number of minor children in the family, working status, educational level, nationality, and religion.

The second group consists of questions (with offered answers) that characterise migrant interactions as an indispensable factor within the theory of integration (Penninx 2007):

1. *How would you rate your co-existence with the local population?*

- a) We have a very good relationship.
- b) We have a fairly good relationship.
- c) Our relationship is neither good nor bad.
- d) Our relationship is bad enough.
- e) Our relationship is very bad.

2. *Do you think that the local population in the Republic of Serbia has an aversion to migrants?*

- a) Yes, this absolutely takes place.
- b) Yes, this takes place to some extent.
- c) It cannot be said that this takes place, but also it cannot be said that it doesn't take place.
- d) No, almost not the case.
- e) No, not at all.

3. *Have you ever had any problems with the local population in the Republic of Serbia?*

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

4. *Have you ever had any problems with government agencies and institutions (migration services, police, social centres etc.)?*

- a) Yes.
- b) No.

5. *Do you think that you could integrate into the local population if you lived in the Republic of Serbia?*

- a) Yes, I believe that I could fully integrate into the local population.
- b) Yes, I think I could integrate into the local population fairly well.
- c) I cannot say that I could fully integrate into the local population, but I also cannot say that I could not.
- d) No, I think that it would be difficult for me to integrate into the local population.

- e) No, I think that I would not be able to integrate into the local population at all.

6. *Do you think public organisations provide migrants with the assistance that is necessary for full integration in the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent?*

- a) Yes, completely.
- b) Yes, sufficiently.
- c) Neither yes nor no.
- d) No, not really.
- e) No, not at all.

The statistical analysis was conducted using IBM's SPSS Statistics v.23, while the power analysis took place using G Power v.3.1.9.2 software. The power of the study is more than 0.87 for the sample size of 173, with the chosen level of significance (p-value) of 0.05 and the obtained medium effect size. In other words, there was more than an 87% chance of detecting a medium effect size in a sample of 173 migrants (Figure 1.). The absolute and relative frequency of the categorical variables is shown in tables and graphically. The central tendency of the continuous variables is shown using mean and mode, while the spread is given by standard deviation, quartiles, minimum, and maximum.

The comparison of categorical variables with two categories was done using Fisher's exact test and reporting the odds ratio. The comparison of variables with more than two categories was conducted using the chi-squared test, reporting Cramer's V as the effect size.

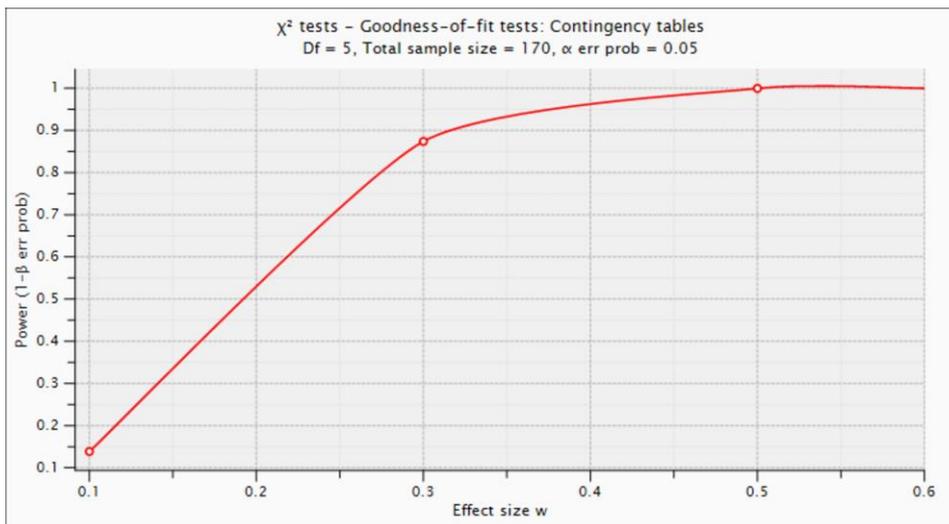


Figure 1 The power of the study versus the effect size of the significant results

The research protocol was approved by the Department of Sociology and Management of Belgorod State Technological University named after V.G. Shukhov, which means it fully meets the moral standards, principles, and professional ethics of sociologists. The expert commission prepared a conclusion on the possibility of openly publishing the results of this scientific study. Due to the sensitivity of the group of respondents, it was decided that a voluntary response sample method should be used in the study.

To conduct the study, Belgorod State Technological University named after V.G. Shukhov sent an official request to the Commissioner for Refugees of the Republic of Serbia. Thus, we established communication with authorised officials and got official permission to conduct a survey of residents housed in reception centres. At the same time, we agreed on the research protocol (with the questionnaire), then approved the dates of the

study and the procedure for the work of interviewers with respondents.

According to the geographical location of the reception centres, students from the University of Belgrade and the University of Pristina temporarily settled in Kosovska Mitrovica (Republic of Serbia), acting as volunteers. The recruitment of volunteers was carried out through official announcements at universities, while official letters were sent to university administrators asking for assistance in conducting the study. Of all the candidates who expressed a desire to participate in the study, nine students were selected as interviewers. In making this decision, each volunteer's level of English proficiency, social and emotional intelligence, experience of participating in similar projects, and desire and willingness to communicate with employees of reception centres and refugees were considered priorities.

Before starting fieldwork at the reception centres, our team members received information about the time when they were allowed to stay in the centres for the purpose of questioning, contact details of the responsible authorised official, detailed instructions, questionnaire forms, and forms for subsequently entering results. Since some of the residents of the reception centres did not speak English, during the study it became necessary to translate and explain the questionnaires in their native languages. In most cases, a professional interpreter employed in the reception centre helped the volunteers; in others, the migrants themselves helped establish communication. Participation in the questionnaire was voluntary and anonymous, and respondents could leave the study at any time. Minors residing in the centres participated in the survey in the presence of their parents.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

Testing the statistical hypothesis of the relationship between the two groups of data (H0 hypothesis) calculated using the non-parametric chi-squared test showed the presence of statistical significance (p -value < 0.05) for four sociodemographic indicators – gender, age, level of education, and nationality – with three questions from the ques-

tionnaire with the suggested answers: How would you rate your coexistence with the local population? Do you think that the local population in the Republic of Serbia has an aversion to migrants? Do you think public organisations provide migrants with the assistance that is necessary for full integration in the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent?

However, the results do not exclude the existence of such a relationship and the possibility of descriptive analysis for other indicators, since, in general, the statistical power was more than 0.87.

The identified statistical significance complies with the status construction theory (Ridgeway 2006). In this way, we will consider the attitude of residents of reception centres towards Serbian society and the state (according to their new environment) based on analyses of the interconnection of gender, age, educational level, and nationality, and the results of respondents' answers to the survey questions using the provided answers.

Sociodemographic sampling structure

In total, 173 residents from five reception centres in the Republic of Serbia (Banya Kovilyaca, Bogovadzha, Krnyaca, Senica, and Tutin) participated in the survey (Figure 2).

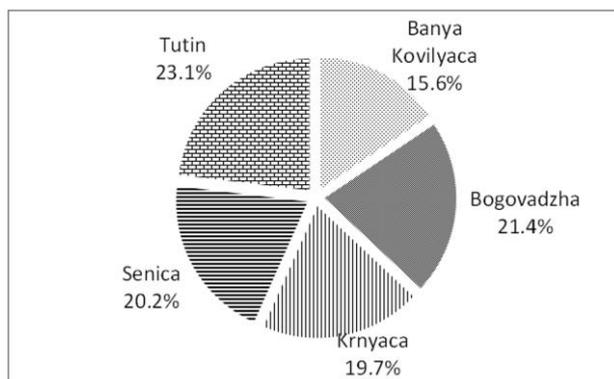


Figure 2 Distribution structure of respondents by reception centres in the Republic of Serbia.

In the sample, there are 132 male and 41 female participants. Our sample is dominated by men (76.3%). In the Table 1, we see the nationality of the respondents.

Table 1 Structure of respondents' nationality

Nationality	F	%
Afghanistan	57	32.9
Syria	5	2.9
Pakistan	4	2.3
Algeria	1	0.6
Iran	82	47.4
Burundi	8	4.6
India	2	1.2
Guinea	2	1.2
Cameroon	1	0.6
Congo	1	0.6
Nigeria	1	0.6
Pakistan	1	0.6
Palestine	1	0.6
Russia	2	1.2
Somalia	1	0.6
Zimbabwe	1	0.6
Bangladesh	1	0.6
Iraq	1	0.6
Italy	1	0.6
Total	173	100

We can only consider a small number of nationalities (six) to have high

frequency, which is why we put all the low-frequency nationalities together in the "Other" category, as can be seen in the following table (Table 2).

Table 2 Optimised structure of respondents' nationality

Nationality	F	%
Afghanistan	57	32.9
Syria	5	2.9
Pakistan	4	2.3
Other	17	9.8
Iran	82	47.4
Burundi	8	4.6
Total	173	100

The mean age in the sample is 28.84, with a standard deviation of 10.54 years. The most frequent age is 17. The youngest respondent is 15 and the oldest is 78 years old. Of the respondents, 25% are 20 years old or younger (Figure 3), 50% are 28 years old or younger, while 75% are 34 or younger.

For the purposes of comparison, we divided respondents into two age groups: 30 or younger, and over 30 years of age. In the sample, 61% of respondents are 30 or younger, while the remaining 39% are older than 30.

All in all, 8.2% of the respondents have no education whatsoever, 12.9% have primary education, 13.5% have lower secondary education, 5.3% have incomplete secondary schooling, 34.5% have finished secondary school, and 25.7% have higher education.

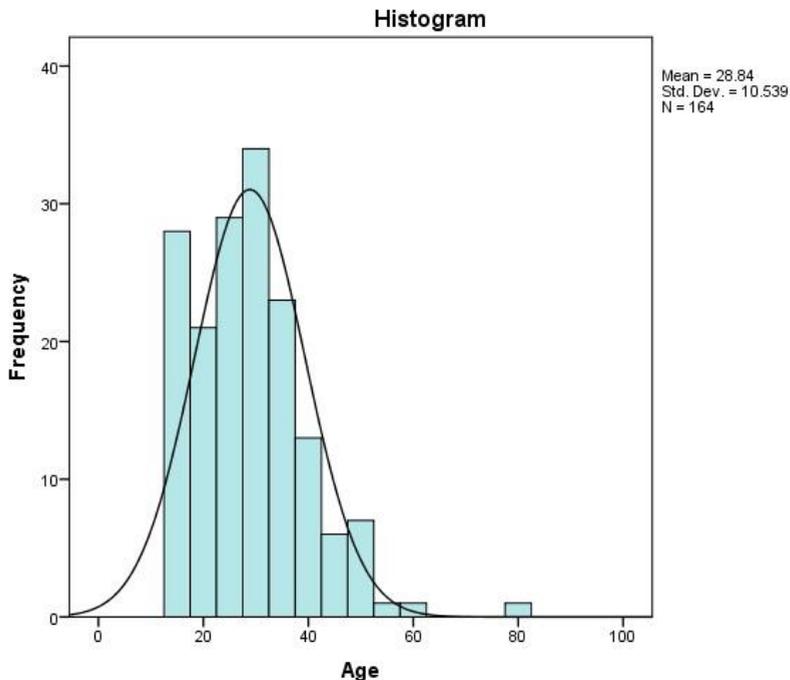


Figure 3 Age histogram of respondents

Statistically significant correlations

When asked “How would you rate your coexistence with the local population?” 45.6% of respondents answered that they have “a very good relationship”, 31% rated their coexistence with the local population as “fairly good”, and 20.5% said “our relationship is neither good nor bad.” Only 1.8% of all respondents answered

“our relationship is bad enough” and 1.2% said “our relationship is very bad.” In the case of that question, we got the following results $X^2(4) = 9.398, p = 0.048, V = 0.234$. There is a significant gender difference of a small size in the proportions of the answers. The ratio of the answers of men and women to the question are presented in Figure 4.

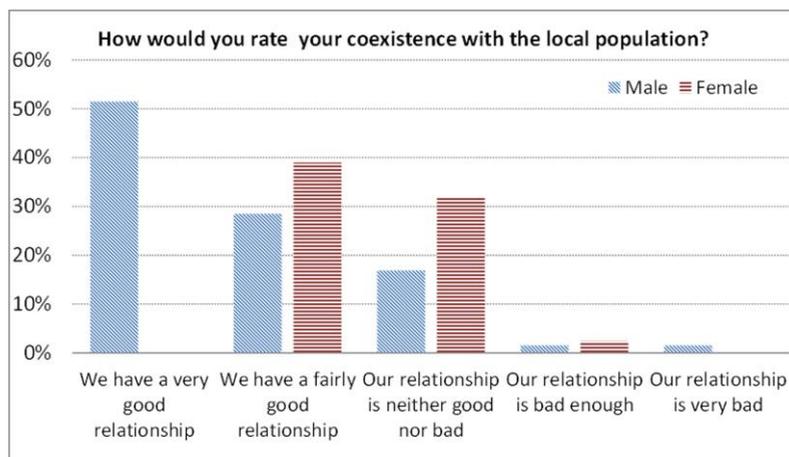


Figure 4 Distribution chart of respondents' answers to the question "How would you rate your coexistence with the local population?" depending on their gender

When asked "Do you think that the local population in the Republic of Serbia has an aversion to migrants?" 6.4% of all respondents answered that "this absolutely takes place", 15.8% said that "it takes place to some extent", and 25.7% said that "it cannot be said that it takes place, but also it cannot be said that it doesn't take place". On the other hand, 12.9% of

all respondents said this was "almost not the case" and 39.2% answered "not at all". Figure 5 shows the differences in responses according to the gender of the respondents. In the case of this question, we got the following results $X^2(4) = 9.391$, $p = 0.049$, $V = 0.233$. There is a significant gender difference of a small size in the proportions of the answers.

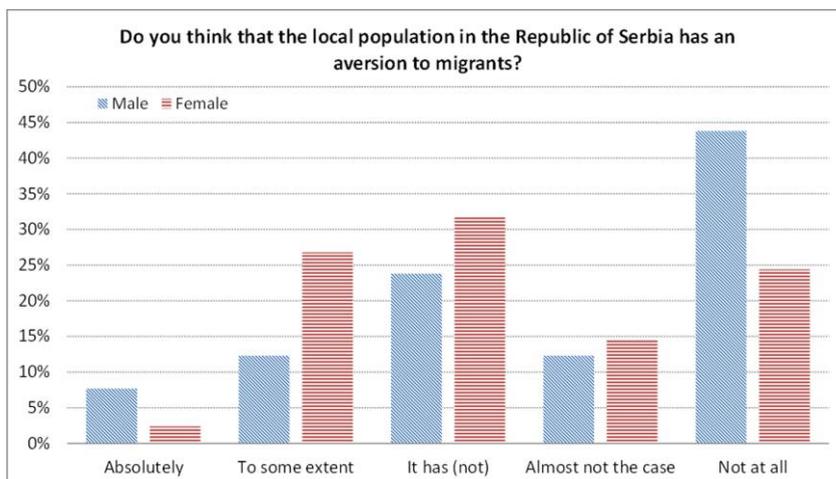


Figure 5 Distribution chart of respondents' answers to the question "Do you think that the local population in the Republic of Serbia has an aversion to migrants?" depending on their gender

In the case of the question “Do you think that you could integrate into the local population if you lived in the Republic of Serbia?” we got the following results: 48.5% of all respondents said “Yes, I believe that I could fully integrate into the local population”, 24.6% said “Yes, I think I could integrate into the local population to a large enough extent”, and 17.5% said “I cannot say that I could fully integrate into the local population, but I also cannot say that I could not”. In terms of negative answers, 5.8% and

3.5% of respondents said “No, I think that it would be difficult for me to integrate into the local population” and “No, I think that I would not be able to integrate into the local population at all” respectively. In Figure 6, we can see that the responses of men and women are different. With this question we got the following results: $X^2(4) = 10.213$, $p = 0.037$, $V = 0.244$. There is a significant gender difference of a small size in the proportions of the answers.

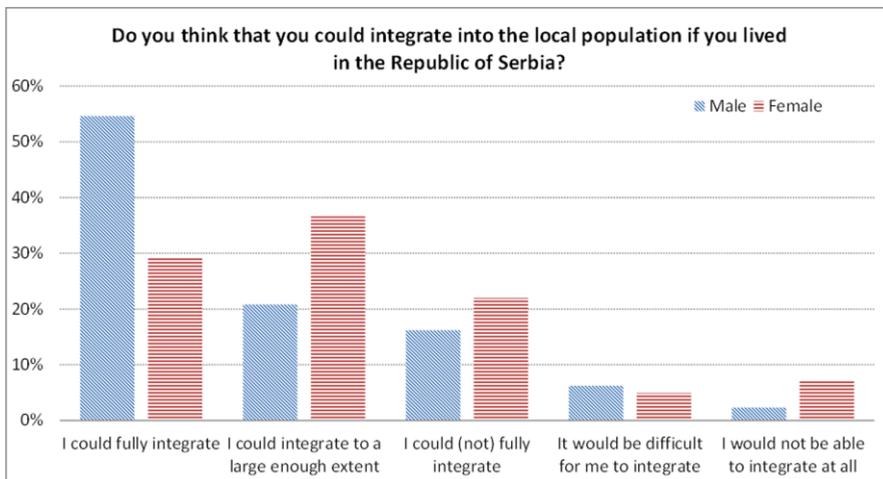


Figure 6 Distribution chart of respondents’ answers to the question “Do you think that you could integrate into the local population if you lived in the Republic of Serbia?” depending on their gender

When asked “Do you think public organisations provide migrants with the assistance that is necessary for full integration in the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent?” we got the following results: 24% of all respondents answered “Yes, completely”, 22.8% said “Yes, sufficiently,” 29.2% said “Neither yes nor no”, 12.9% said “No, not really”, and 11.1% said “No, not at

all”. In Figure 7, we can see the differences in the answers depending on respondents’ nationality. After analysing the answers to this question, we got the following correlation results: $X^2(12) = 28.455$, $p = 0.005$, $V = 0.241$. There is a significant difference of a small size in the proportions of the answers according to respondents’ nationality.

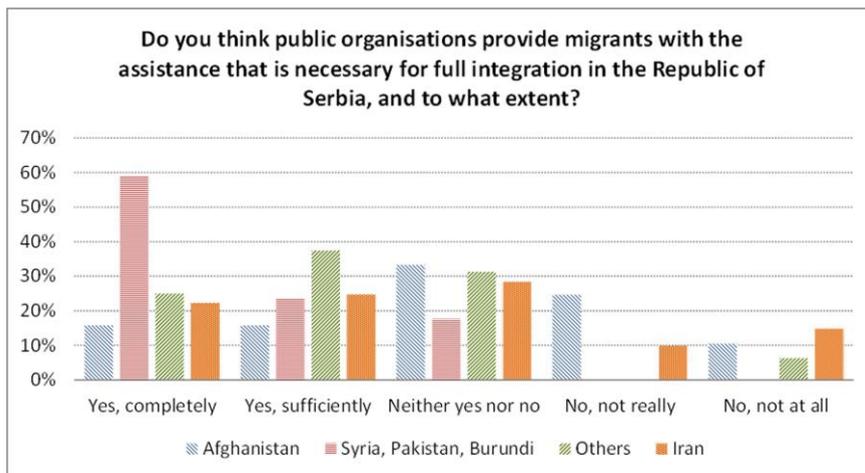


Figure 7 Distribution chart of respondents' answers to the question "Do you think public organisations provide migrants with the assistance that is necessary for full integration in the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent?" depending on their nationality

In the case of analysing the answers to the same question (Figure 8), we obtained the following correlation results $X^2(4) = 13.979$, $p = 0.007$, $V =$

0.294. There is a significant age difference of a small size in the proportions of the answers.

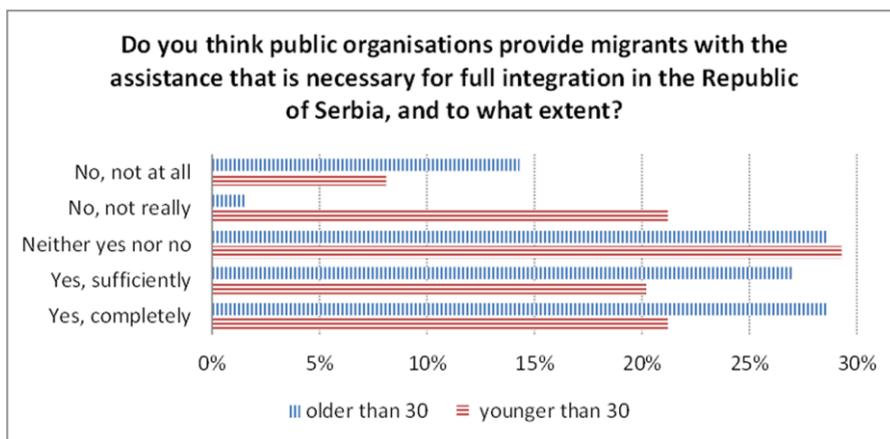


Figure 8 Distribution chart of respondents' answers to the question "Do you think public organisations provide migrants with the assistance that is necessary for full integration in the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent?" depending on their age group

An analysis of the relationship between respondents' level of education according to the ISCED 2011 and their answers to the same question (Figure 9) allowed us to obtain the

following data: $X^2(20) = 33.639$, $p = 0.029$, $V = 0.446$. There is a significant difference of a medium size in the proportions of the answers according to respondents' level of education.

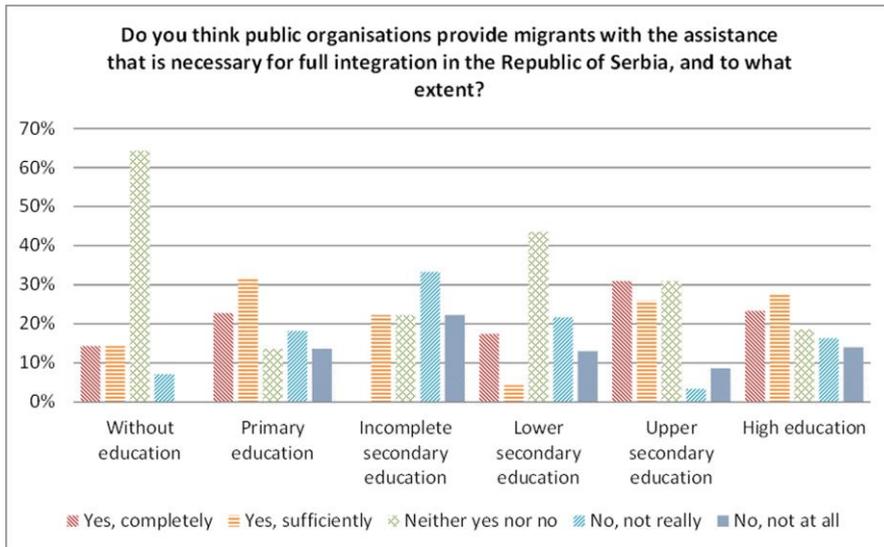


Figure 9 Distribution chart of respondents' answers to the question "Do you think public organisations provide migrants with the assistance that is necessary for full integration in the Republic of Serbia, and to what extent?" depending on their level of education

Interpretation

In general, based on the data obtained, we can note that men give a more positive assessment of the level and quality of their relationship with the local population (51.5%) than women (26.8%). This result did not come as a big surprise to us, since, in our opinion, it can be explained by the fact that it is natural for men to have a more open attitude towards the environment. Men have, in general, had a higher level of self-confidence than women throughout human history, since the days when men went hunting and explored new territories while women typically stayed at home. Generally, all residents of reception centres – both men and women – positively assessed their relationship with the local population, which can be considered a favourable factor for integra-

tion. From the revealed possible relationship between gender and the quality of the relationship with the local population, we can draw some practical conclusions that are useful for managing the interaction process of social groups in accordance with the theory of integration (Penninx 2007). Taking into account this, and also the fact that the Republic of Serbia is a modern society in which emancipation has already taken place (women have gained the right to vote, educational opportunities, freedom of profession selection etc., as well as achieving a significant percentage of women in government bodies and representative organisations enshrined in law), efforts can be made to strengthen the self-awareness of female refugees as a group and increase their level of education and inclusion in public life, especially where women represent the

majority state (in the fields of pre-school and school education, healthcare, and social protection) within the Law on Asylum and Temporary Protection (ZAPZ 2018).

The results relating to the question about aversion are supported by the data concerning the question about coexistence. Although in this case the correlation coefficient is lower, we can generally detect higher estimates of the level of migrant aversion by the local population among female residents of reception centres. However, this does not illustrate a purely negative situation; even though women are less open to their new environment, they are also less critical in their assessments, that is, they rarely give extremely negative assessments (only 2.4% of all female responders said that complete aversion takes place).

The same applies for the question about coexistence; these data can tell us what areas we need to work on with residents of reception centres – in particular, female residents of reception centres and their interaction with the Serbian community. Therefore, this may be an argument in favour of the fact that the perceived aversion to reception centre residents by the local population is not so great as to be a barrier to integration. This conclusion is also confirmed by the data of a similar study conducted in Russia (Malakhov 2014).

According to the statistical difference between the answers given to the question about possible complete integration in the local population by men (54.6%) and women (29.3%), we can again note that, in general, men give

more positive answers. However, as we saw in answers to the questions: “How would you rate your coexistence with the local population?”, “Do you think that the local population in the Republic of Serbia has an aversion to migrants?”, and “Have you ever had any problems with the local population in the Republic of Serbia?” it is striking that there are not a large number of reception centre residents who believe that these interactions are completely unsuccessful. The more negative assessments by women may indicate that there is a need to focus on this category of activities to improve the interaction process. We believe that when developing these measures, it is necessary to take into account the provisions of status construction theory (Ridgeway 2006).

We see in Figure 7 that Syrians, Pakistanis, and people from Burundi are most satisfied with the level of state support provided to residents of reception centres. In this regard, it can be taken into account that Serbia has historically developed good international relations with Syria and Pakistan. These positive relationships were established during the times when Serbia was part of the Republic of Yugoslavia and Belgrade was the capital city.

According to the volunteers who conducted the survey, reception centre residents from Africa generally demonstrated the highest level of satisfaction with both the conditions of stay in the reception centres and the level of support provided. The least satisfied with the level of the state support for integration were reception

centre residents from Afghanistan and Iran (Figure 7). The aforementioned results of the study suggest that perhaps for this group of residents of reception centres, the Republic of Serbia seems to be exclusively a country of temporary transit. However, it is advisable to say that during their stay in the centres, special attention should be paid to these national groups in order to enhance interaction and prevent any intergroup conflict in accordance with status construction theory (Ridgeway 2006).

We see that the relationship between age and satisfaction with the level of state support for migrant integration is statistically significant. As we can see, in general, young people (under 30) are less satisfied than the older generation (over 30). We could explain this by the fact that young people have specific needs and great expectations. In general, young residents of reception centres are not provided with enough basic forms of state support to help their integration into the Serbian community.

Although overall residents of reception centres showed rather positive assessments of the level of support, during personal communication with our volunteers they expressed that they find it difficult to find work. Because of their lack of knowledge of the Serbian language and despite their significantly positive assessments of living conditions in reception centres, they feel somewhat isolated. While spending time in the centres, they don't have enough personal space for games, walking, sports, or self-realisation. It would definitely be use-

ful to put into practice the theoretical propositions of studies carried out so far in the field of migration, such as displayed in (Bobić 2013; Hellgren 2015; Hynie 2018; Lutovac and Mrđa 2018). In our opinion, in order to interact more efficiently within the framework of the migration management process, the state needs to focus on young residents of reception centres and significantly modernise its approaches and methods.

Regarding the relationship of the level of education and satisfaction with the level of state support for migrant integration, it should be noted that the correlation coefficient is much higher than in the previous comparisons. Interpretation of the value of Cramer's V indicates the relatively high strength of the relationship. This result can be considered a significant milestone in our study. Again, it is not unexpected that there are differences in the attitude of migrants to their new environment depending on the various characteristics of our respondents.

Within our descriptive analysis, it is striking that people without education most often find it difficult to assess the level of state support for their integration. It seems that this category of residents of reception centres simply cannot assess this issue due to a lack of knowledge, experience, and the ability to compare and criticise. As we can see, it is the people with higher education, as well as reception centre residents who have graduated from colleges, who are more satisfied with the level of the state support. This suggests that reception centre residents belonging to this category re-

ceive information more easily and promptly, and accordingly are more likely to get various types of state support. Therefore, it is easier for these people to interact with their environment, build better relationships with the local population and, finally, improve their interactions. It can be assumed that it is likely that reception centre residents belonging to this particular category consider the Republic of Serbia the endpoint of their journey and wish to integrate into this new environment.

To manage migration processes, it seems appropriate to strengthen educational work with residents of reception centres in order to improve their education. In this regard, in addition to organising seminars and courses for reception centre residents themselves (and according to the testimony of our volunteer interviewers, such events are carried out often and intensively), it would be quite progressive to provide them scholarships to Serbian colleges and universities. This would follow a positive trend; today, children of refugees go to Serbian schools, which is the result of an extremely good interaction and a big step forward in the integration process.

It should be noted that the calculation of the correlation coefficient (Cramer's V) reveals that the reaction of reception centre residents to their new environment most likely depends more on their level of education than it does on their age, nationality, and – to a much lesser extent – their gender for the questions about aversion and the possibility of integration.

CONCLUSION

As our statistical analysis has shown, the attitude of reception centre residents in the Republic of Serbia to their new environment probably in many ways depends on gender, age, education level, and nationality, which is in accordance with status construction theory (Ridgeway, 2006). Therefore, we can say that our hypothesis is largely confirmed; that is, we can identify differences in the attitude of reception centre residents to their new environment depending on the various characteristics of their profile.

The statistical reports we have carried out have shown a high probability of the absence of a statically significant dependence of the answers to the given questions on the characteristics of our target group (refugees and asylum seekers): mother tongue, foreign language knowledge, marital status, number of family members, number of minor children in the family, work status, and religion. The probability of a lack of interconnection here seems to us very interesting. Revealing this fact could provide applied material for adjusting the intensity and direction of activities within the framework of the migration management process. It could also allow us to rethink our perception of the attitudes of reception centre residents to their new environment and the prospects for their integration or transit in the Republic of Serbia.

It is also likely that, under favourable conditions, women, young people, and people with a low level of education will be the first to leave the Re-

public of Serbia, which they probably see as a transit country, while older people and people with a high level of education (most likely men) would be more likely to integrate into their new environment in the Republic of Serbia. Such results oblige us to improve interaction, especially among women, young people, and people with a low level of education. Otherwise, limited interactions of a poor quality can exacerbate negative intergroup relationships (MacInnis and Page-Gould 2015).

Examining the attitudes of reception centre residents themselves towards their new environment in Serbian society certainly requires additional attention, effort, and analysis – especially in the case of integration – which is possible according to the results of this research. Frankly, we can say that examining interaction as a dimension of the integration process as a practical application of the theory of integration (Penninx 2007) would be beneficial to all parties in the migration process in general.

Our work is novel in that it's the first study in Serbia to analyse how reception centre residents react with their new environment from their own perspective. We expect our research to have a positive practical effect in the relevant field.

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Eventualna integracija ili odloženi tranzit: Odnos migranata prema novom okruženju u stalnim prihvatnim centrima u Srbiji

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SAŽETAK

Migracije nisu novi proces na teritoriji današnje Srbije i okruženja. Ali prvi put se Republika Srbija nalazi na „balkanskoj trasi“ velikih prisilnih „evropskih migracija“.

Tokom ovog procesa, postoje mišljenja da će Srbija od zemlje tranzita postati željeno krajnje odredište, što je bio jedan od impulsa za naš rad. Većina dosadašnjih istraživanja na ovu temu, očekivano, sprovedena su iz perspektive domicilnog stanovništva. Polazište ovog rada je iz obrnute perspektive, odnosno, perspektive samih migranata.

Anlizirali smo odnos stanovnika svih pet prihvatnih centara u Republici Srbiji prema državi i lokalnom stanovništvu koristeći se teorijom integracije, preciznije, interakcijom kao jednom njenom dimenzijom. Odnos izbeglica prema novom okruženju, u našem slučaju prema srpskom društvu i državi, ispitivan je ukrštanjem dve grupe podataka. Prva grupa su podaci o sociodemografskom profilu ispitanika. Druga grupa podataka su pitanja koja prepoznajemo kao faktor odnosa s društvom. Svrha naše studije bila je da identifikujemo odnos izbeglica prema novom okruženju, u zavisnosti od različitih karakteristika njihovog sociodemografskog profila. Pomoću upitnika utvrdili smo razlike u stavovima prema novoj sredini, u zavisnosti od različitih sociodemografskih karakteristika ispitanika. Istraživanje je provedeno tokom proleća 2019. godine na uzorku od

173 stanovnika centara pomoću PAPI metode, licem u lice, i metodom dobrovoljnog uzorkovanja. Podaci su obrađeni pomoću SPSS statističkog programa i rezultat su opisne i inferencijalne analize. Naša statistička analiza pokazala je da stav stanovnika prihvatnog centra prema novom okruženju nije u očekivanoj meri u korelaciji sa materijalnim jezikom, znanjem stranih jezika, bračnim statusom, brojem članova porodice, brojem maloletne dece u porodici, radnim statusom, i religijom. Ali, u mnogo čemu, najverovatnije zavisi od nivoa obrazovanja, starosti, etničke pripadnosti i pola. Takvi rezultati pokazuju nam gde treba poboljšati interakciju, tj. posebno među ženama, mladima i ljudima sa nižim nivoom obrazovanja. Takođe, možemo da sugerišemo da će, pod povoljnim uslovima, ove tri kategorije stanovnika prihvatnih centara prvi napustiti Republiku Srbiju, koju verovatno vide kao isključivo tranzitnu zemlju. U isto vreme, stariji ljudi i oni sa visokim stepenom obrazovanja (najverovatnije muškarci) imaju veću verovatnoću da se integrišu u novo okruženje u Republici Srbiji, u skladu sa ocenom interakcije sa novim okruženjem.

KLJUČNE REČI

stalni prihvatni centri | integracija | tražioci azila | stavovi migranata | inferencijalna analiza

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