

Influence of Intergroup Contact, Ethnicity and Education on Social Distance in Kosovo

Received 12. 1. 2021 / Accepted 13. 4 2021

Scientific article

UDC 316.64:159.922.4(497.115)

KEY WORDS: direct contact, extended contact, ethnicity, education, social distance

ABSTRACT - Reducing social distance between communities with a previous history of violence is one of the crucial challenges in post-conflict societies. Social distance refers to the degree of understanding and intimacy between members of different groups. In this respect, this study examined the influence of direct intergroup contact, extended intergroup contact (i.e., knowing that a member of the ingroup has a positive relationship with a member of the outgroup), education and ethnicity on social distance in Kosovo. The sample of this study consisted of Kosovo Albanian ($N = 125$) and Serbian participants ($N = 103$) from ethnically mixed and non-mixed areas in Kosovo. Using hierarchical multiple regression analysis, the results show that direct intergroup contact, extended intergroup contact, ethnicity and education are significant predictors of social distance in Kosovo. Among the variables studied, ethnicity was found as the best predictor of social distance in Kosovo. Consistent with the previous findings, the study results show that increased frequency of direct intergroup contact and extended intergroup contact reduced social distance in Kosovo. Similarly, the results show that an increased level of education reduced social distance only among Albanian participants.

Prejeto 12. 1. 2021 / Sprejeto 13. 4. 2021

Znanstveni prispevek

UDK 316.64:159.922.4(497.115)

KLJUČNE BESEDE: neposredni stik, razširjen stik, etničnost, izobrazba, socialna distanca

POVZETEK - Eden od ključnih izzivov postkonfliktnih družb je zmanjševanje socialne distance med skupnostmi, še posebej tistimi z dolgo zgodovino nasilja. Socialna distanca izraža stopnjo interakcije, razumevanja in zaupnosti med pripadniki različnih etničnih in družbenih skupin. V skladu z opredeljitvijo smo v naši študiji preučevali vpliv neposrednega medskupinskega stika, razširjenega medskupinskega stika (tj. védenja, da ima član skupine pozitiven odnos s članom druge skupine) izobrazbe in narodnosti na socialno distanco na Kosovu. Vzorec tvorijo kosovski Albanci ($N = 125$) in Srbi ($N = 103$) iz etično mešanih in nemešanih območij na Kosovu. Z uporabo multiple regresijske analize dokažemo, da so neposredni medskupinski stiki, razširjeni medskupinski stiki, narodnost ter izobrazba pomembni prognostiki socialne distance na Kosovu, med izbranimi dejavniki pa je etična pripadnost najpomembnejša. Rezultati pokažejo tudi, da povečana pogostost neposrednih medskupinskih stikov ter razširjenih medskupinskih stikov zmanjšuje socialno distanco. Podobno tudi višja stopnja izobrazbe zmanjšuje socialno distanco, kar velja za kosovske Albance v podskupini vzorca.

1 Introduction

In post-conflict societies, reducing social distance between communities with a history of violent conflict is one of the challenges for restoring reconciliation. The concept of social distance refers to the grades and degrees of understanding and intimacy that characterize pre-social and social relationships in general (Bogardus, 1925). To measure social distance, Bogardus developed the social distance scale, which is one of the instruments used to measure the degree of acceptance between ethnic gro-

ups. It is also used as a measure of intergroup prejudice, but its use is very rare nowadays (Wark and Galliher, 2007).

Intergroup contact is considered one of the most powerful strategies for reducing social distance between groups (Dovidio, Gaertner and Kawakami, 2003). Intergroup contact theory suggests that direct contact between members of different groups under optimal conditions (e.g., common goal, equal status, intergroup cooperation and institutional support) could effectively reduce intergroup prejudice (Gordon, 1954). A large meta-analysis of 515 studies with 713 samples found that intergroup prejudice is reduced even when optimal conditions are not present (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). The authors found that increased quantity and quality of direct intergroup contact was associated with prejudice reduction. Recent studies have also shown the benefits of direct intergroup contact in post-conflict contexts, such as Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (Tam et al., 2007) or Bosniaks and Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina (Cehajic, Brown and Castano, 2008).

An important recent extension of intergroup contact theory involves extended contact. Extended contact refers to the mere knowledge that an ingroup member has a positive relationship with one or more outgroup members (Wright et al., 1997). In post-conflict contexts, when opportunities for direct intergroup contact are limited, extended contact is another alternative strategy for improving intergroup relations. There are two main advantages of extended contact over direct contact. First, extended contact is an effective strategy for improving intergroup relations even in the absence of direct contact. Second, while direct contact may induce anxiety about the interaction, observing an ingroup member interact with an outgroup member is a nonthreatening experience (Eller, Abrams and Gomez, 2012). Thus, knowing or observing that an ingroup member has positive relationships with an outgroup member should decrease social distance toward the outgroup.

Previous studies have demonstrated the positive effects of extended contact on intergroup prejudice. For example, Wright and colleagues (1997) found that the greater the quantity of extended contact (the knowledge that multiple ingroup members have positive relationships with outgroup members), the weaker the prejudice. Extended contact was most effective among individuals who lived in segregated neighborhoods or had no opportunity to meet with outgroup members (Christ et al., 2010). Recent studies have also found the positive effects of extended contact between groups with a history of violence, such as between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland (Tam et al., 2009), Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo (Andrighetto, 2012).

While direct and extended intergroup contact are two important intervention strategies for improving intergroup relations, studies have also shown the effects of other predictors on intergroup relations. Two important predictors of social distance are education and ethnic identity (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Previous studies in post-conflict contexts have shown that ethnic identification is strongly associated with increased prejudice toward the outgroup (Ibid). Another study has shown that the strength of identification with ethnicity in post-conflict contexts negatively affects intergroup relations (Noor, Brown and Prentice, 2008). Education has also been cited as an impor-

tant predictor of intergroup prejudice. Studies across Europe and North America have shown that better educated people are generally more tolerant and show more positive attitudes towards outgroups (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011).

Based on the above-mentioned research, I will examine four predictors of social distance in Kosovo. The first hypothesis is that direct intergroup contact and extended intergroup contact will reduce social distance. Direct intergroup contact is a stronger predictor of social distance compared to extended intergroup contact. The second hypothesis is that more educated people will show less social distance toward other communities than less educated people. The third hypothesis is that ethnicity is a significant predictor of social distance in Kosovo.

The context of my research is Kosovo. The population of Kosovo is about 1.8 million people, consisting of 91% Albanians, 3.4% Serbs and 5.6% others (Kosovo Agency of Statistics, 2015). The territory with such a small population was marked by ethnic tensions and violence between the Albanian and Serbian communities in the 20th and early 21st century. The last violent conflict between Albanians and Serbs in 1999 resulted in the death of (at least) 10,000 people in Kosovo and the displacement of more than 800,000 Albanians (Judah, 2008).

In the aftermath of the conflict, the Serbian community was the target of murders, repeated threats and various forms of abuse. As a result, about 200,000 Serbs were displaced inside (Serbian inhabited territories) and outside Kosovo (Judah, 2008). Another major event that marks a new dimension in the relationship between Kosovo Albanian and Serbs is the declaration of independence on 17th February 2008. For the Kosovo Serbs, Kosovo is still considered part of Serbia. Therefore, the political status of Kosovo, along with other issues (such as war crimes, segregated education and health system, etc.) is a source of disputes and possible tensions between Albanian and Serbian communities in Kosovo (Demhaja and Peci, 2016).

2 Method

Participants and procedure

The number of participants was 228: 123 Albanians, 105 Serbs; 2% reported age under 18 years, 25% between 19-25 years; 28% between 26-35; 45% over 36; 132 participants were male and 96 female. By education, participants reported the following: 11 reported having completed primary education level, 123 reported having completed secondary education level, and 94 reported having completed tertiary education. Participants were recruited from different regions of Kosovo, in ethnically mixed and non-mixed towns. The data for this study were collected in the spring of 2015.

Participants filled out the questionnaire that included the measures described below. Each participant was instructed as follows: "This survey is part of a study on social distance between Albanians and Serbs. The information for this study aims to identify factors that influence ethnic distance between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo."

vo. The information provided will remain confidential. We will not ask for your name and the data from this survey will not be shared with other individuals/organisations. Please, answer the survey questions sincerely.” All participants completed the questionnaire on a voluntary basis.

Measures in the questionnaire

Education level: Respondents were asked to circle one of the following: 1 = primary education level, 2 = secondary education level, 3 = faculty level.

Direct intergroup contact. Quantity and quality of direct intergroup contact were measured by one item. For quantity, the question was “How frequently do you have contact with Albanians (Serbs)?” The response scale ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = never, 2 = rarely; 3 = sometimes, 4 = often; 5 = very often). For quality, the question was “In general, can you describe your contacts with Albanians (Serbs) as?”. Response scale ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = very negative, 2 = negative; 3 = neutral; 4 = positive; 5 = very positive). To obtain a single index of direct contact, we multiplied the scores of frequency and quality of direct contact (Voci and Hewstone, 2003).

Extended intergroup contact. The quantity of extended intergroup contact was measured by the following questions “How many of your friends have contact with Albanians (Serbs)?”. The response scale ranged from 1 to 5 (1 = none, 2 = 1-2; 3 = 3-6; 4 = 7-10; 5 = over ten). After each of these questions, participants were asked about the quality of contact, with response scales ranging from 1 (very negative) to 5 (very positive). To obtain a single index of extended contact, we multiplied the scores of frequency and quality of extended contact (Ibid.).

Social Distance. Social distance was assessed using the social distance scale (Bogardus, 1925), with the following question “Based on my initial feelings, would I readily classify members of the Albanian (Serbian) community into the following classifications (please think of each group as a whole and not the best or worst representative of that group that you know)?”. The response scale ranged from 1 to 7 (1 = exclude from my country, 2 = only as visitors in my country, 3 = only as speaking acquaintances, 4 = as my neighbours, 5 = in my work office, 6 = very close friends, 7 = close relatives by marriage).

3 Results

The descriptive analysis for all variables of the questionnaire is presented in Table 1 (see means and standard deviations). As shown in Table 1, for Albanian participants, the frequency of direct contact is low and the quality of direct contact is positive; the frequency of extended contact is almost at the midpoint and the quality of extended contact positive. For Serbian participants, the frequency of direct contact is above the mid-point and the quality of direct contact is positive; the frequency of extended contact is almost above the mid-point and the quality of extended contact is positive. The table also shows that Albanians score lower on social distance compared to Serbian

participants. Using an independent t-test analysis, the data show that the difference in social distance scores is significant $t(226) = -7.855, p = .001$.

Table 1. Mean and standard deviations for the variables

		Frequency Direct Contact	Quality Direct Contact	Frequency Extended Contact	Quality Extended Contact	Social Distance
Albanians	Means	2.37	3.42	2.42	3.39	3.33
	Std. Deviation	1.244	.847	1.437	.813	1.67
Serbs	Means	3.34	3.49	3.34	3.55	4.90
	Std. Deviation	1.134	.734	1.379	.718	1.376

Before performing the hierarchical regression analysis, we analysed the correlations between the variables (see Table 2). All predictors in the table correlated positively with social distance (higher social distance scores indicate higher levels of intergroup acceptance). Ethnicity, direct contact, and extended contact have a medium positive correlation with social distance scores, and education has a weak positive correlation with social distance scores.

Table 2. Correlations of Measured Variables

	1	2	3	4	5
Social Distance	-	.360**	.382**	.155*	.463**
Extended Contact	-	-	.580**	.070	.185*
Direct Contact	-	-	-	.077	.124*
Education	-	-	-	-	.012
Ethnicity	-	-	-	-	-

**Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Correlations are significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A preliminary analysis was performed to ensure that the relevant assumptions of the hierarchical regression analysis were met. An examination of the correlations (see Table 2) shows that there were no significant correlations ($r > .9$) between the predictors. The collinearity statistics (i.e., Tolerance and VIF) were all within accepted limits (Field, 2009). Examination of the residuals and scatterplots indicated that the assumptions of normality, linearity and homoscedasticity were met (Pallant, 2010).

The effects of predictors on social distance

Model 1: The effects of extended contact on social distance

Extended contact entered Step 1, explaining 12.9% of the total variance in social distance scores. The model was significant, $F(1, 223) = 33.129, p = .001$. As expected, extended contact in Kosovo reduces social distance ($b = .360$).

Model 2: The effects of extended contact and direct contact on social distance

The second block of hierarchical multiple regression analysis entered extended contact and direct contact with social distance. This model explained 17.5% of the total variance in social distance scores. The model was significant, $F(2, 222) = 23.527, p = .001$. In this model, the influence of extended contact was still significant but

reduced, $b = .208$, $p = .006$. The influence of direct contact was highly significant in this model $b = .262$, $p = .001$.

Model 3: The effects of extended contact, direct contact, ethnicity and education on social distance

In the third block of hierarchical multiple regression analysis, extended contact, direct contact, ethnicity and education were entered with social distance. This model explained 34.9% of the total variance in social distance scores. The model was significant, $F(4, 220) = 29.478$, $p = .001$. The first best predictor in the model was ethnicity, $b = .406$, $p = .001$, then direct contact, $b = .244$, $p = .001$, then extended contact as the third best predictor $b = .134$, $p = .048$, then education $b = .122$, $p = .026$. Compared to model 2, the contribution of extended contact and direct contact was further reduced in this model.

To determine the difference in social distance scores as a function of education level, the one-way method ANOVA was used. The results show that there was no significant difference in social distance scores $F(2, 225) = 2.85$, $p = .060$. The same analysis was conducted separately for Albanian and Serbian ethnicity. The results show that there is a significant difference in social distance scores based on education level for Albanian participants $F(2, 120) = 6.04$, $p = .003$, the effect size was medium ($\eta^2 = .091$). Tukey post hoc analysis shows that Albanian participants at faculty level ($M = 3.82$, $SD = 1.52$) score significantly ($p = .010$) higher on social distance than Albanian participants at primary school level ($M = 1.83$, $SD = 1.60$), and than compared to secondary school level ($M = 3.10$, $SD = 1.55$, $p = .039$). For Serbian participants, there is no significant difference in social distance scores as a function of education level $F(2, 102) = 0.14$, $p = .986$.

4 Discussion

In post-conflict contexts, finding ways to reduce the social distance between groups with a history of violent conflict is one of the crucial challenges for the reconciliation process. In this regard, this study examined the factors that reduce social distance in Kosovo. The primary aim of this study was to examine the influence of direct contact, extended contact, ethnicity and education on social distance values in Kosovo. The study also examined the predictive power of direct contact, extended contact, education and ethnicity on social distance values.

In line with previous findings (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011), this study found the positive influence of direct and extended contact on social distance. The study found that frequent and positive direct and extended intergroup contact reduces social distance. The study also found that direct contact is a stronger predictor of social distance compared to extended contact. It is important to note the beneficial effects of extended contact. Due to the high degree of segregation between Albanians and Serbs in Kosovo, extended contact may be a more realistic strategy to improve intergroup relations. However, if possible, we should not forget to promote direct intergroup contact, which

is one of the most powerful ways to improve intergroup relations (Hewstone et al., 2014).

In examining the role of education, we predicted that more educated individuals would exhibit greater social distance from the outgroup than less educated individuals. Previous study results in other contexts have found that better educated individuals show more positive intergroup attitudes than less educated individuals (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). The study results in our context confirm similar findings, respondents who reported higher levels of education show less social distance toward the outgroup compared to those who reported lower levels of education.

In our model, we also examined the predictive power of direct contact, extended contact, education and ethnicity on social distance scores. We found that all four predictors had a significant impact on social distance scores. Ethnicity is the strongest contributor to social distance in Kosovo, second is direct contact, then extended contact and last is education. One reason why ethnicity is the first stronger influencing factor in our model may be due to conflict centered on identity issues. Several studies in post-conflict contexts have confirmed that strong identification with ethnicity negatively affects intergroup relations (Cehajic and Brown, 2010; Noor, Brown and Prentice, 2008).

The study results may have important implications for peace practitioners. First, they show the importance of establishing direct contact between Albanians and Serbs in order to improve intergroup relations. One way to do this is to promote planned interventions that encourage direct contact between communities in Kosovo. Second, our findings highlight the importance of extended contact in reducing the social distance between communities in Kosovo. This is of particular importance as direct contact is difficult to establish in post-conflict societies. Therefore, one way to reduce social distance is to expose communities to positive interactions between communities in Kosovo.

Although the results of the study are promising, there are two main limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings of the study. First, this is a correlational study, so we cannot establish the casual relationships between variables. A longitudinal study would allow inferences about causality. Second, the predictors in this model accounted for 35% of the total variance in social distance scores. Therefore, other predictors, such as personality, perceived threat and political predictors were found to have an impact on social distance and are sources of unexplained variance in this model (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2011). Future studies will need to consider other variables in addition to those presented in this study.

5 Conclusion

In this study, we examined the influence of direct intergroup contact, extended intergroup contact, education and ethnicity on social distance. In line with previous findings, our results support that direct intergroup contact, extended intergroup con-

tact and higher levels of education reduce social distance between communities in Kosovo. Again in line with previous findings, our results support that ethnic identity is associated with increased social distance between communities in Kosovo.

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Vpliv medskupinskih stikov, narodnosti in izobrazbe na socialno distanco na Kosovu

V postkonfliktnih družbah je zmanjševanje socialne distance z zgodovino nasilnih konfliktov eden od izzivov za obnovitev sprave. Pojem socialna distanca se nanaša na stopnjo razumevanja in zaupnosti, ki je značilna za parasocialne in družbene odnose na splošno (Bogardus, 1925). Za spremljanje socialne distance je Bogardus razvil merilno lestvico, ki meri stopnjo sprejetosti med etničnimi skupinami. Uporablja se kot merilo medskupinskih predsodkov, a je dandanes njena uporaba redka (Wark in Galliher, 2007).

Medskupinski stiki veljajo za eno najmočnejših strategij za zmanjševanje socialne distance med skupinami (Dovidio, Geartner in Kawakami, 2003). Teorija medskupinskih stikov pravi, da bi lahko neposredni stiki med člani različnih skupin v optimalnih pogojih (npr. skupni cilj, enak status, medskupinsko sodelovanje in institucionalna podpora) učinkovito zmanjšali medskupinske predsodke (Gordon, 1954). Obsežna metaanaliza 515 študij je pokazala, da se medskupinski predsodki zmanjšajo tudi, če niso prisotni optimalni pogoji (Pettigrew in Tropp, 2011). Avtorji te študije so ugotovili, da sta povečana količina in kakovost neposrednega medskupinskega stika povezana z zmanjšanjem predsodkov. Nedavne študije so pokazale tudi prednosti neposrednih stikov med skupinami v pokonfliktnih okoliščinah, kot so katoličani in protestanti na Severnem Irskem (Tam et al., 2007) ali Bošnjaki in Srbi v Bosni in Hercegovini (Cehajic, Brown in Castano, 2008).

Pomembna nedavna razširitev teorije medskupinskih stikov vključuje razširjen stik. Opredelitev le-tega se nanaša zgolj na vedenje, da ima član skupine pozitiven odnos z enim ali več člani druge skupine (Wright in sod., 1997). V pokonfliktnih okoliščinah, ko so možnosti za neposredne medskupinske stike omejene, je razširjeni stik še ena alternativna strategija za izboljšanje medskupinskih odnosov. Dve glavni prednosti razširjenega stika pred neposrednim stikom sta: (a) razširjeni stik je učinkovita strategija za izboljšanje medskupinskih odnosov, tudi če ni neposrednih stikov ter (b) medtem ko lahko neposreden stik povzroči tesnobo zaradi interakcije, opazovanje interakcije člana skupine s članom zunanje skupine ni grožnja (Eller, Abrams in Gomez, 2012). Tako bi vedenje ali opazovanje, da ima član skupine pozitivne odnose s članom zunaj skupine, moralo zmanjšati socialno distanco do druge družbene skupine.

Raziskave so pokazale pozitivne učinke razširjenega stika na medskupinske predsodke. Na primer, Wright in sodelavci (1997) so ugotovili, da večja, kot je količina

razširjenega stika, šibkejši so predsodki. Razširjeni stiki so bili najučinkovitejši med posamezniki, ki so živeli v ločenih soseskah ali niso imeli priložnosti za sestanek s člani zunanjih skupin (Christ et al., 2010). Nedavne raziskave so potrdile pozitivne učinke razširjenega stika med skupinami z zgodovino nasilja, na primer med katoličani in protestanti na Severnem Irskem (Tam in sod., 2009), Albanci in Srbi na Kosovu (Andrighetto, 2012).

Medtem ko sta neposredni in razširjeni medskupinski stik dve pomembni intervencijski strategiji za izboljšanje medskupinskih odnosov, sta dva pomembna napovedovalca socialne distance tudi izobrazba in etnična identiteta (Pettigrew in Tropp, 2011). Raziskave v pokonfliktnih okoliščinah so pokazale, da je narodnostna identifikacija močno povezana s povečanim predsodkom do zunanje skupine (prav tam). Druga raziskava je pokazala, da trdnost identifikacije z etnično pripadnostjo v pokonfliktnih okoliščinah negativno vpliva na medskupinske odnose (Noor, Brown in Prentice, 2008). Izobraževanje je prav tako prepoznano tudi kot pomemben napovednik medskupinskih predsodkov. Študije po Evropi in Severni Ameriki so pokazale, da so bolj izobraženi ljudje na splošno bolj strpni in kažejo bolj pozitiven odnos do zunanjih skupin (Pettigrew in Tropp, 2011).

V pokonfliktnih okoliščinah je iskanje načinov za zmanjšanje družbene distance med skupinami, ki so že imele nasilni konflikt, eden ključnih izzivov za spravni proces. V zvezi s tem je ta študija preučila dejavnike, ki lahko prispevajo k zmanjševanju socialne distance na Kosovu. Primarni cilj te študije je bil preučiti vpliv neposrednih stikov, razširjenih stikov, narodnosti in izobrazbe na socialno distanco na Kosovu. Študija je preučevala tudi napovedno moč neposrednega stika, razširjenega stika, izobrazbe in narodnosti na stopnjo socialne distance. Naša prva predpostavka je, da bodo neposredni medskupinski stiki in razširjeni medskupinski stiki zmanjšali socialno distanco, zato postavimo hipotezo H1: Neposredni medskupinski stik je močnejši napovednik družbene distance v primerjavi z razširjenim medskupinskim stikom. Naša druga hipoteza je (H2): Bolj izobraženi ljudje bodo pokazali manjšo socialno distanco do drugih skupnosti kot manj izobraženi. Tretja hipoteza (H3) je, da je narodnost pomemben napovednik družbene distance na Kosovu.

Raziskovalno polje je Kosovo, kjer živi približno 1,8 milijona ljudi, od tega 91% Albancev, 3,4 % Srbov in 5,6 % drugih (Kosovska agencija za statistiko, 2015). Ozemlje s tako majhno populacijo so v 20. in v začetku 21. stoletja zaznamovale etnične napetosti in nasilje med albansko in srbsko skupnostjo. Zadnji nasilni konflikt med Albanci in Srbi leta 1999 je povzročil smrt (vsaj) 10.000 ljudi na Kosovu in razseljevanje več kot 800.000 Albancev (Judah, 2008).

Po konfliktu je bila srbska skupnost tarča umorov, ponavljajočih se groženj in različnih oblik zlorab. Posledično je bilo približno 200.000 Srbov razseljenih znotraj (srbska ozemlja) in zunaj Kosova (Judah, 2008). Drugi pomemben dogodek, ki zaznamuje novo dimenzijo v odnosih med kosovskimi Albanci in Srbi, je razglasitev neodvisnosti 17. februarja 2008. Kosovo je še vedno del Srbije. Zato je politični status Kosova skupaj z drugimi vprašanji (kot so vojni zločini, ločeno izobraževanje in

zdravstveni sistem, itd.) vir sporov in morebitnih napetosti med albansko in srbsko skupnostjo na Kosovu (Demhaja in Peci, 2016).

V skladu s prejšnjimi ugotovitvami (Pettigrew in Tropp, 2011) smo tudi v naši raziskavi prepoznali pozitiven vpliv neposrednega in razširjenega stika na socialno distanco. Rezultati so pokazali, da pogosti in pozitivni neposredni in razširjeni medskupinski stiki zmanjšujejo socialno distanco. Rezultati so razkrili še, da je neposredni stik močnejši napovednik družbene distance kot razširjeni stik. Pomembno je opomniti na blagodejne učinke razširjenega stika. Zaradi visoke stopnje segregacije med Albanci in Srbi na Kosovu so lahko razširjeni stiki bolj realistična strategija za izboljšanje medskupinskih odnosov. Če pa je le mogoče, ne smemo pozabiti spodbujati neposrednega medskupinskega stika, ki je eden najmočnejših načinov za izboljšanje medskupinskih odnosov (Hewstone et al., 2014).

Pri preučevanju vloge izobraževanja so rezultati prejšnjih raziskav v drugih okoliščinah pokazali, da imajo bolj izobraženi posamezniki bolj pozitiven odnos med skupinami kot manj izobraženi posamezniki (Pettigrew in Tropp, 2011). Tudi sami ugotovimo podobno za izbrano opazovano okolje. Anketiranci, ki so navedli višjo stopnjo izobrazbe, kažejo manjšo socialno distanco do zunanje skupine v primerjavi s tistimi, ki imajo nižjo stopnjo izobrazbe.

Preučevali smo tudi napovedno moč neposrednega stika, razširjenega stika, izobrazbe in narodnosti na stopnjo socialne distance. Ugotovili smo, da so vsi štirje napovedovalci pomembno vplivali na stopnjo socialne distance. Etnična pripadnost najbolj prispeva k družbeni distanci na Kosovu, drugi je neposredni stik, nato razširjeni stik in nazadnje izobraževanje. Eden od razlogov, zakaj je narodnost najmočnejši vplivni dejavnik v našem modelu, je lahko konflikt, osredotočen na vprašanja identitete. Številne študije v pokonfliktnih okoliščinah so potrdile, da močna identifikacija z narodnostjo negativno vpliva na medskupinske odnose (Cehajic in Brown, 2010; Noor, Brown in Prentice, 2008).

Ugotovitve raziskave imajo lahko pomemben praktičen vidik (npr. za mirovne delavce), saj nakažejo, kako pomembno je vzpostaviti neposreden stik med Albanci in Srbi za izboljšanje medskupinskih odnosov. Eden od načinov je podpora načrtovanim posegom za spodbujanje neposrednih stikov med skupnostmi na Kosovu. Poleg tega naša raziskava poudari pomen razširjenega stika pri zmanjševanju socialne distance med skupnostmi na Kosovu. V postkonfliktnih družbah je neposreden stik težko vzpostaviti, zato je izpostavljanje pozitivnim interakcijam med skupnostmi prav tako pomemben način za zmanjševanje socialne distance na Kosovu.

Kljub obetavnim rezultatom moramo opozoriti tudi na omejitve naše raziskave. Ker gre za preučevanje korelacij med spremenljivkami, ne moremo sklepati o vzročnosti med spremenljivkami. Poleg tega smo z linearno regresijsko analizo pojasnili le 35 % variance v stopnji socialne distance. Vir nepojasnenih razlik v našem modelu so drugi napovedovalci socialne distance, kot so osebnost, zaznana grožnja in politično stanje (Pettigrew in Tropp, 2011). Zato bodo morale prihodnje raziskave poleg preučevanih spremenljivk spremljati tudi druge dejavnike in njihovo napovedno moč socialne distance.

V raziskavi smo preučili vpliv neposrednega medskupinskega stika, razširjenega medskupinskega stika, izobrazbe in narodnosti na socialno distanco na Kosovu med skupinama Srbov in kosovskih Albancev. Ugotovimo, da neposredni medskupinski stiki, razširjeni medskupinski stiki ter višja raven izobrazbe zmanjšujejo socialno distanco med skupnostmi na Kosovu. Potrdimo tudi, da je narodna identiteta povezana s povečano socialno distanco med opazovanima skupnostnima. Naše ugotovitve potrjujejo tudi predhodne raziskave postkonfliktnih družb.

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